'The Campaigns of Garibaldi': A Look at a

Surviving Panorama

By Ralph Hyde

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Hundreds of moving panoramas were painted and toured in Britain in the nineteenth century, visiting every town of any consequence. It is extraordinary, therefore, that not a single example of this popular medium, forerunner of films and the cinema, seems to have survived in Britain. The only known example of a British moving show panorama is in the US in a private collection in Greenwich, Connecticut. It is devoted to 'The Campaigns of Garibaldi.' Here's more:

Giuseppi Garibaldi, enemy of tyrants, liberator of captive peoples, unselfish patriot, and popular hero of Italian Unification, visited London in 1864. A contemporary diarist described the scene:

All the afternoon the neighbourhood of Whitehall was in a bustle; bells ringing, music playing, and everyone getting ready to witness the entry of Garibaldi into London... By four o'clock the crowd was impassably dense as far as one could see, from Trafalgar Square to Parliament Street. It was a

crowd consisting mainly of the lowest classes; a very shabby and foul smelling crowd...Yet for three hours...the course mob behaved with the utmost good humour and peacefulness. The procession...came in sight at 5, and went on till 5.50. Then it suddenly ended...No-one could tell what had become of Garibaldi himself or why he did not appear...Then at last the rest of the procession struggled up: more banners of Odd Fellows and the like, more carriages and cabs filled with working men and foreigners...a small bodyguard of Garibaldians; and the General himself seated on a box of a barouche...The excitement had been rapidly rising, and now, when this supreme moment came, it resulted in such a scene as can hardly be witnessed twice in a lifetime. That vast multitude rose as one man from their level altitude of expectation: they leapt in the air, they waved their arms and their hats aloft, they surged and struggled round the carriage, they shouted with a mighty shout of enthusiasm that took one's breath away to hear it, and above them on both sides thousands of white handkerchiefs were waving from every window and housetop.¹

Britain was in the grip of Garibaldi-mania. By 1864 a veritable Garibaldi cult was in full swing. There were mementoes in abundance. You could acquire Garibaldi sheet-music, popular portraits, Staffordshire figures, linen labels, medals, handbills, invitations, broadsides, and *cartes de visite* galore. And at least two moving panoramas had been painted – one that was being exhibited by the panorama proprietor, Moses Gompertz, and another that was associated with the name of Burford.² This latter panorama survives. It is the subject of this paper. Garibaldi's

popularity was such that the commercial success of the panoramas was more or less assured. And of course the panoramas fed in turn that Garibaldi-mania.

Moving panoramas had been popular in Britain since the beginning of the century.³ Just twelve years before the Garibaldi panorama was painted there had been a great revival of interest in the medium, occasioned by the visit to London of two rival American panoramas of the Mississippi, one by John Banvard, the other by John Rowson Smith. ⁴ The success of these panoramas caused several theatre scene-painters to try their hand at panorama painting. The panoramas exhibited at the Gallery of Illustration in Regent Street were painted by some of the most talented of them -Thomas and William Grieves, William Telbin, and John Absolom, for instance. The subjects dealt with included not only trips abroad and voyages of exploration, but also military campaigns. There was, for example 'The Diorama of the Wellington Campaigns' (1851); and 'The War with Russia' (i.e. the Crimean War) (1855). London's most popular panorama in the 1850s was Albert Smith's 'Ascent of Mont Blanc', exhibited at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly. Between 1852 and 1858 it enjoyed 2000 performances. In April 1860, immediately before Smith's death, it was being exhibited once again as 'Mont Blanc Revisited.' It inspired thousands of Britons to take holidays in the Alps. Some of the London-based panoramas in due course toured towns in the provinces.

Some companies specialised in taking their panoramas on provincial tours. Those who patronised them were very much the sort of people who turned out to welcome Garibaldi. The largest moving panorama company in the 1850s and 1860s was that of Moses Gompertz. His stock of panoramas included 'A Passage of the Alps', a 'New

and Gigantic Panorama of the Arctic Regions', and 'The Principal Events Connected with the War with China.' In 1860 he added a new panorama to his stock – 'The Gigantic Diorama illustrating every Event of Importance in Connection with Garibaldi's Campaign in Italy and Sicily.' It covered the period from Garibaldi's Defence of Rome in 1849, to the Battle of Volturno in 1860. I have seen handbills advertising its visit to the Corn Exchange, Braintree⁶; the Prince's Theatre, West Nile Street Glasgow,⁷ the Corn Exchange, Stirling, and the Lecture Hall, St Andrews.⁸ We know too that it visited Maldon and the New Corn Exchange, Chelmsford in Essex. At the Prince's Theatre the revolutions of the panorama were accompanied by Gompertz's Quartet Band. The lecture was delivered by a Mr C.G. Bell.

The 'Burford' Garibaldi panorama, however, consists of far more scenes than that of Moses Gompertz, and is more biographical. It tells the story from Garibaldi's youth up to his Triumphal Entry into Naples with Victor Emmanuel in 1860, supplementing it with the Aspromonte incident of September 1862. It therefore covers not only his campaigns in Europe for uniting Italy, but also touches on his earlier campaigns of liberation in South America.

The 'Burford' panorama measures 4 ½ feet by 273 feet (1.371 x 83.265 m). Since it is painted on both sides the total length of the image is 546 feet (166.53 m). The maximum area of the panorama displayed within the proscenium at any one time would most probably have been four and a half feet by ten feet. It is painted in tempera on a single web of robust paper. Some moving panoramas consisted of a series of distinct tableaux. This one consists of 49 scenes linked by transitions to form one continuous image. The present owner, Dr James Smith, had it restored in 1984

and wound onto two large rollers. Unrolling it is a major undertaking, which was one reason why a DVD of it was made in 2004.

The story on the 'Burford' Garibaldi panorama is presented in two parts. In Part 1 the scenes consists of an incident in Garibaldi's childhood; three incidents in Garibaldi's twelve-year spell as a privateer in South America (in Scene 3 we are introduced to his partner, Anita, the heroine of Part 1); Garibaldi's return to Italy in 1848; seven scenes in the Alps; the Defence of Rome; the fate of the Garibaldian Flotilla; and finally the death of Anita. An Interval is announced of five minutes allowing Part 2 to be prepared.

In Part 2 we see Garibaldi waging war against the Austrians; the disembarkation of Garibaldi's volunteers (the 'Thousand') in Sicily (lacking a source the artist has made use of a later *Illustrated Times* engraving of his troops landing on the coast of Calabria), and the rapid liberation of the island; and then a fond farewell to Sicily. At this point things go haywire. A view of Garibaldi's self-built farm-house on the inaccessible island of Caprera off Sardinia, appears, which would have been more appropriate either before the Defence of Rome or after the Triumphal Entry into Naples when Garibaldi retreated there. Then we have a view of Bear Rock, also off Sardinia, which is of no obvious relevance. Then we have two torture scenes, no doubt intended to make us dislike the Bourbonians in preparation for the story's climax. And then finally we have the Battle of Milazzo on Sicily which should have appeared a few scenes earlier. After this hotchpotch we are back on track again with the lightning liberation of the mainland including the Capture of Reggio and the Battle of Volturno. Part 2 concludes with the triumphal entry of Victor Emmanuel II

and Garibaldi into Naples. After the final, forty-ninth scene there are a number of supplementary scenes: (1) a hunter shooting a lion in an African landscape; (2) a sketchy, unfinished landscape; (3) Garibaldi looking through his telescope at the Piedmontese army, with his volunteers on the hill behind him; (4) the wounded Garibaldi with a group of companions-in-arms on the edge of a wood, receiving medical treatment; (5) Garibaldi being carried on a litter to Scylla; and (6) boats on a lake. '(3)', '(4)', and '(5)' refer to the Aspromonte incident and its aftermath, when an impetuous Garibaldi, in an independent and ill-advised bid to reach and liberate the Papal States, was confronted by the Piedmontese army.

The painting would seem to have been undertaken by a single artist. The panorama calls itself a 'diorama' which indicates it was painted by a scene-painter. A manuscript lecture for the panorama survives (see below) which carries the name J.J. Story of Burton Street, Nottingham. A John J. Story, scenic artist, is listed in the 1871 census for Nottingham. He was 43 in that year. If this is our man, as seems very probable, he would have been 32 when painting the Garibaldi panorama. In 1881 John J. Story is listed as a photographic artist, and in 1891 as a landscape artist. He exhibited his paintings in shows at Nottingham in 1881, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1892, 1893, 1895 1899, and 1900. The Gabibaldi panorama was not his only show. He was responsible for a 'Grand Moving Panorama Illustrating an Ocean and Overland Journey Round the world', exhibited at the Agricultural Hall, Bridgnorth in 1867; a 'Panorama of Seventy-four European Scenes', exhibited in Edinburgh in 1871; and an 'Original and Superb Diorama, Second Grand Tour Round the World', exhibited in Cheltenham in 1884.

Story's work on the Garibaldi panorama is technically excellent. Dr Pieter van der Merwe's expert view is that it is the work of an experienced and capable scene-painter who knew how to paint very rapidly and was experienced in using all the tricks of the trade. Large areas of it were painted with a broad, 4-inch or 6-inch pound brush. The artist may have used scenic tempera bound with size. It was probably painted horizontally rather than upright (there no sign of dribbles). The artist has deliberately used contrasting colours in the foreground and avoided subtle tones except in the distance. He has chosen to use a simple, basic range of pigments.

The detail whilst crude is very suggestive (look at soldiers in mid-distance in several of the scenes – achieved with a few dabs). As one might expect with a work produced at such speed and to a deadline, the artist has taken liberties, and he was sometimes imperfectly informed. Thus Garibaldi is shown in a yellow poncho instead of the grey poncho that he habitually wore; and the Garibaldini universally wear red shirts whereas we know in practice many of them didn't since they weren't always available.

Though with a moving panorama one focuses one's attention on the figures, the landscape is always important. In many of the scenes on this panorama it constitutes the greater part of the image. The panorama artist will begin with the landscape, then draw the groups of figures, and finally paint the principal characters on which the story hangs. In this Garibaldi panorama the background landscape is especially attractive and well painted. (Look for instance at Scene 5: 'The Plains of Turin and Piedmont'). The sense of distance is effectively created by the use of subtle tone-changes - atmospheric perspective. The inclusion of the group of scenes of the Alps

has probably far more to do with the popularity of the Alps with contemporary panorama audiences than real incidents in Garibaldi's career. As we have seen, Albert Smith's 'Ascent of Mont Blanc' panorama at the Egyptian Hall had been phenomenally successful.

Devil's Bridge, the ultimate in landscape sublime, had long been a favourite with panorama artists. It had been the subject of Robert Ker Porter's 'Defeat of the French and Passage of St Gothard', exhibited at the Lyceum in the Strand back in 1804, which so pleased the Russians that Porter had been made court painter to the Tsar. Daguerre featured the bridge in his diorama of St Gothard in 1830, and so did Mr Wilson, assisting Danson & Sons, painting an 'Entirely New Modelled Dioramic Picture Representing the Passage of the Alps by Napoleon and his Army', exhibited at the Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens in 1850. When the artist for the 'Burford' Garibaldi panorama was starting his work, a 'Stereorama of the St Gothard Route into Italy' by Grieve and Telbin was on exhibition at Cremorne Gardens in Chelsea.

The 'Stereorama' had real water issuing beneath Devil's Bridge at a rate of 900 gallons per minute. The artist for the 'Burford' Garibaldi boldly includes 'an Alpine bridge' in his composition, with tiny silhouetted figures marching over it. Perhaps prompted by the 'Stereorama' he then awkwardly sweezes into the composition just beyond that bridge a rather disappointing Devil's Bridge, old and new.

Infinitely more successful is the avalanche. It consists of a Turnerean frenzy of very broad brush-strokes, applied wet on wet. Scene 21, 'Garibaldi and his Volunteers leaving Rome', is a night scene. The scene is illuminated by the moon and neighbouring clouds. The dioramic moon was *de rigeur* in any moving panorama.

The transitions from one scene to the next are ingenious, and almost always successful. The panoramist's habitual aim was to make the audience exclaim 'Ooooo!' when each new scene was cranked into view. Only one or two of the transitions on the Garibaldi panorama are abrupt: most allow one a pause before the new scene is introduced, especially important when the mood of the new scene contrasts with the previous one, and this is quite often the case.

Some detail on the panorama, it has to be said, is less than successful. The dome of St Peter's basilica in Scenes 14 and 16 is distinctly distorted, and the white horse upon which Garibaldi is mounted in Scene 18 is anatomically odd.

The artist would have had to work at break-neck speed to complete the painting and to get it on the road while the subject was still hot. A modern panorama artist who I have consulted (Mao Wen Biao) calculates each scene would have taken between one to two days to complete.

What sources did the artist use? It is unlikely that many, if any, of the scenes would have been painted without reference to existing images. For Scene 7 - 'The Mountain Torrent' – he referred to a plate in *Switzerland* by William Beattie (London: Virtue 1836), vol. II, facing page 100; and for Scene 11 – 'Dangerous Mountain Pass' – the source was the same - vol. I, facing page 110. Both of these plates had been engraved by W.H. Bartlett after J.T. Willmore. The illustrated newspapers provided obvious sources for an artist collecting images for such an assignment. In 1860 the *Illustrated London News's* editor despatched two 'special artists' to Sicily to record the progress

of Garibaldi's invasion – Frank Vizetelly, who had already supplied an enormous number of sketches for that journal, and Thomas Nast, an American who normally contributed to *Harper's Weekly* but who happened to be in London at that moment. Wood engravings after their sketches were used by Story for Scenes 35, 46, and 48. The man being interrogated and tortured in the centre of the 'Chamber of Horror' (Scene 39) is related to an engraving that the *Illustrated London News* published on 9 June 1860. Another illustrated newspaper which provided sources for the artist was the *Illustrated Times*. Scene 47 is copied from a wood engraving entitled 'The Battle of Volturno – The arrival of the Piedmontese on the field of Capua', which was from a sketch by Konrad Grob. Three of the scenes relating to the incident at Aspromonte were also copied from wood engravings in the *Illustrated Times*, 20 September 1862, p.329.

The Garibaldi artist was dependent on what prints he was able to assemble. In consequence in his panorama there is no image of Garibaldi's critical meeting in 1833 with the intellectual Italian patriot, Giuseppi Mazzini, when he became involved with Young Italy; there is no scene depicting his arrival back in Italy from South America in 1848 with eighty legionaries, vainly offering to fight for Charles Albert, King of Piedmont; and there is no scene showing him candle-making in New York in 1850, or visiting Newcastle in 1854 which would have been of very great interest to panorama audiences in the North of England. For the landing of the 'Thousand' at Marsala on the west coast of Sicily in May 1859 Story resorts to a view depicting the disembarkation of his troops on the coast of Calabria which took place in August.

There is no sign in it therefore of the two steamboats that had transported them from Genoa. Even the hand-shake at Teano when Garibaldi handed over the South to

Victor Emmanuel – one of the most vital moments in Italian history - is not represented.

We have no information whatsoever on what the music was played as background to the panorama during its performance, but there was no shortage of appropriate stirring music available. Small advertisements appeared in the *Illustrated London News* (29 Sept. 1860; 9 and 23 April 1864) and the *Illustrated Times* (1 Sept. 1860) for 'D'Albert's Naples Quadrille', dedicated to Garibaldi; 'D'Albert's Garibaldi Galop', splendidly illustrated with a portrait of Garibaldi; Garibaldi's song – 'Oh, follow me', by George Linley; and 'Garibaldi's Triumphal March', for the piano by Steven Glover 'in honour of the great Italian patriot.' A number of Garibaldi hymns and music sheets are to be found in the British Library¹³.

A manuscript lecture for the panorama survives and this is also in the possession of Dr Smith. It consists of about 140 pages. A note on the first page suggests when its compiler began work – 'J.J. Story Burton Street, Nottingham Sep. 7th 1860.' ¹⁴ Though it does not say so, and the author would not have learnt this yet, 7 September was the very day that Garibaldi captured Naples. Scenes of events after this date are shown on the panorama and are described in the text, so the text for the lecture must have been started before the panorama's completion. The author supplies his sources: *Garibaldi: An Autobiography*, by Alexander Dumas, published by Routledge; *Vie et Exploits de Garibaldi*, by Leopold Spini; *The Times*, and the *Daily Telegraph*.

The text of the manuscript describes the first four scenes, and then begins again with Scene 1, continuing now straight through to Scene 27 and the Interval. It then

recommences, continuing through to Scene 49. The text reads as if written by a passionate English Garibaldi devotee – an anti-clerical, republican, middle class, armchair revolutionary, of which there were plenty in England just then. He is proper, sparing us the fact that Anita was already married when she met and moved in with Garibaldi. Their nuptial hymns were the songs of battle and the noise of cannon... He can also be chauvinistic. In describing St Peter's he compares it with our own St Paul's Cathedral... The streets [of Rome] are generally narrow and the houses crowded together, and the dirt and filth which everywhere abounds is a disgrace to a civilised country. When the French enter Rome (Scene 20) the writer presents the situation as a stark struggle between good and evil, 'the religion of Christ against the religion of the Pope.' The style of the text is romantic and heroic, yet nevertheless heavy and wooden, and utterly devoid of humour. The script has been dashed off. It suffers from a multitude of radical alterations and deletions. It is difficult to believe that what we have can be anything but an early preparatory draft.

The lecture ends with the words, 'Ladies and Gentlemen the entertainment is now concluded. Allow me to thank you all for your kind attendance here this evening.' On the same page appears a note, 'Blue Book on Italian Affairs – Nott[ingham] Daily Express Feb 9 1861.' On the same opening a note informs us that the lecture text was 'Finished at 2.10 A.M. Dec. 26 1860 Viva Garibaldi.'

The manuscript concludes with a list of the scenes, and then several pages of miscellaneous notes. These include a description of the equestrian portrait that features in Scene 18. In this Garibaldi is depicted characteristically in poncho and a broad-brimmed hat ornamented with a black ostrich feather. His horse, to comply

with already established Garibaldi iconography, is white. He is accompanied by his friend and protector, the black Brazilian rebel, Aguiar.

What was the purpose of the panorama? There can be no doubt Story intended it to be toured. A note on the first page of the manuscript for the lecture confirms this contention: 'For small Town have a small pulling bill (use [unclear] address) One that can be printed quickly – try also white bill with blank heading to be written on – have the paper fit to write on.' This instruction calls for the printing of a handbill, on uncoloured paper, with a 'blank heading.' In this blank space would be inserted as required the venue, dates, and times of performances for whichever town was being visited. The Poole dynasty of panoramists produced such handbills for their touring panoramas. So did this Garibaldi panorama tour? And was its purpose purely commercial, or was it political - to radicalise those who saw it?

In 1862 (or could it be 1882?) the panorama was purchased from Mr Story by Anthony Burford, a member of a Cotswold family, who had emigrated to the United States in 1854 and settled at first in Holidayburg, Pennsylvania, but who was now on a visit to his native country, accompanied by his eldest son, Robert. Garibaldi seems to have been a hero of the family: a daughter of John Burford (1836-1912), born in 1864 - the year of Garibaldi's visit to England – was baptised Anita. Anthony is said to have paid between £30 and £40 for the panorama. He brought it back to East Liverpool, Ohio, and died there on 9 November 1882. The panorama at first seems to have aroused little interest. In the 1930s a local newspaper, however, ¹⁷ recorded that several older residents could remember it. According to this source the panorama had toured, and had visited Wellsville, Lisbon, New Cumberland, W. Va.; Holidayburg,

and Pittsburg, Pa. We are told it was not a financial success. By that date it was owned by Robert Burford's widow. In 1935 it was inherited by Grace Burford from Robert Burford's second wife, Clarrissa. Some of us remember Grace Burford well as an active member of the International Panorama & Diorama Society. It was purchased from her in 1982 by her nephew, Dr James W Smith, medical director of a hospital in Manhattan and owner of a unique collection of penny arcade machines in Greenwich, Connecticut. Dr Smith remains its proud owner.

That a Burford family should have a panorama seems logical and just. For thirty-nine years John Burford, Robert Burford, and finally Robert's son, Robert William Burford were the proprietors of the Panorama rotunda in Leicester Square, and for fifteen years John and Robert ran the Panorama in the Strand, too. Both of these rotundas exhibited 360-degree panoramas, and both John and Robert painted them, sometimes with assistance. The Robert Burford who was Anthony Burford's uncle was born on 26 September 1790 in Nypesfield, Gloucestershire, at the western end of the Cotswolds. His father was Thomas Burford. The family tree states he died on 30 January 1861. In the John Johnson collection in the Bodleian Library is a note signed 'Robert Burford.' It reads: 'Robert Burford was born in London on 3rd of Feby. 1791 and articled to Mr Robert Barker, the inventor of the Panorama, in the year 1802...' According to both Stephan Oettermann in Das Panorama (1980) and Richard Altick in The Shows of London (1978), Robert's father was John. If Oettermann and Altick are right, and if the Bodleian's note is genuine, it would seem that the London panorama proprietor was born on a different date and had a different father, but died on the same date. Can they both be the same man? It does not seem that probable.

A number of puzzles remain unresolved: Why was the panorama painted on both

sides? How standard or unorthodox was this practice? What were the artist's sources?

Some of them I have identified, but it would be good to identify the rest. In which

towns in Great Britain was the panorama exhibited? Did Anthony purchase the

panorama on its own, or did he arrive back in America with the cranking machinery

and a portable proscenium too? Which member of the Burford family was responsible

for touring the panorama in United States, which agent did the family use, and who

presented the lecture? There is plenty of work still to be done.

In October 2005 Dr James Smith gifted his panorama to Brown University Library.

He died on August 15, 2006.

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¹ Man of Two Worlds: The Life and Diaries of Arthur J Munby, by Derek Hudson (London: Abecus 1974), cited in *The Chronicles of London*, by Andrew Saint and Gillian Darley (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1994).

² In addition to moving panoramas, Garibaldi's victories influenced the choice of 360-degree panoramas exhibited at the Panorama, Leicester Square: 'View of Messina' from 21 Dec. 1860 till March 1863, 'View of Naples' from 5 Sept. 1861 till 14 Feb. 1863. A 360-degree panorama devoted specifically to Garibaldi's Defence of Rome was later painted by the Belgian artist, Léon Philappet (81-92 in *Roma Veduta* (Rome: Artemide Edizioni 2000)). It was exhibited in Milan, 1883; Turin, 1884; the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, London, 1887; and the New Panorama, Vienna, 1889. Garibaldi had made a triumphant appearance at the Crystal Palace during his London visit in 1864.

³ Ralph Hyde, 'Das Moving Panorama zwischen Kunst und Schaustellung', in *Sehsucht* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern 1993); Errki Huhtamo, 'Global Glimpses for Local Realities: The Moving Panorama, a Forgotten Mass Medium of the 19th Century', *Art Inquiry*, 4, pp.193-227.

⁴ Smith's panorama was managed by a juggling showman, Richard Risley Carlisle (professional name 'Prof.' Risley).

⁵ Mike Simkin, 'Albert Smith: Entrepreneur and Showman', *Living Pictures*, 1 (2001), pp.18-28.

⁶ Poole Scrapbook, Bill Barnes Collection.

⁷ Poole Scrapbook.

⁸ David Robinson Collection. By the time it reached St Andrew's it was managed by G.W. and C. Poole.

⁹ The progressive updating of moving panoramas to take account of recent developments was common. Thus 'The War with Russia' at the Gallery of Illustration was updated with a new tableau by James Randell consisting of a view of the Battlefield of the Tchernaya.

¹⁰ Information kindly supplied by Donna Moughty.

¹¹ Reviewed and illustrated in the *ILN*, 8 Sept. 1860.

¹² See illustration in *ILN*, 9 June 1860, p.549. It accompanies an article, 'Torture in Sicily', its detail being taken from a pamphlet by Charles de la Varenne, *La Torture en Sicile*. The torture of Garibaldi in South America is described on p.6 of the lecture.

¹³ See Copac on www.

¹⁴ Nottingham trade directories for the 1860s list traders in Burton Street but do not include Story. This does not mean that he was not there, of course.

¹⁵ See 'Garibaldi and England', by John A Davis, *History Today*, Dec. 1982, pp.21-26; see also *Garibaldi: A Portrait in Documents*, edited by Denis Mack Smith (Florence: Passigli Editori c.1982), and *Holy Madness: Romantics, Patriots and Revolutionaries, 1776-1871*, by Adam Zamoyski (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1999).

¹⁶ Examples in the Poole Scrapbook.

¹⁷ Tom T Jones, 'The Sunlit Road', [newspaper not identified], 4 Sept. 1934.