

Ian Beale and His Girls Friday

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY

What can we say about Ian Beale that hasn't already been said?

He's selfish, self-centred, obtuse, snide, vindictive, and a good father always on the lookout for a suitable woman to share parenting chores.

Ian and Cindy

A match having no connection to heaven.

Cindy, a woman with needs, marries Ian out of boredom. Her restless sexuality results in her being attracted to Ian's half-brother Simon Wicks, and she becomes pregnant by Wicksy, a rake. Ian finds out and is so outraged by their infidelity that he crashes his van, breaking a leg. Ian agrees to raise Steven as his own son, and Cindy has another go at forsaking all others.

But Simon and Cindy can't stay away from each other, so they make plans to leave the Square. A pattern is established whereby Simon always manages to leave Cindy at the station. They always miss that last train to Clarksville.

Cindy delivers twins (this time her husband's), while Ian changes professions from loan shark to owner of a fish and chips shop. Cindy's new object of affection is Matt, a lifeguard, and then David, Wicksy's brother.

She plots to put a hit on Ian's life. Ian survives the shooting. David then refuses to run away with Cindy, who once again returns to Ian, recovering from his bullet wound none the wiser as to who was responsible.

She eventually goes solo, ends up in prison, pregnant, and dies from a blood clot. Ian is now father to Steven and the twins. *One marriage down.*

Ian and Melanie Healy

Mel is drop-dead gorgeous, on the rebound from Steve Owen. She goes from being Ian's babysitter to his caretaker. When Lucy has a brush with lymphoma, Ian sees a way to get Mel down the aisle.

He feeds on her maternal impulses, lies to Mel about how sick Lucy really is and on the day they are to wed, Mel finds out just how low Ian can go. She does walk down the aisle, but leaves Ian and falls into the arms of ex-flame Steve. Another one down.

Ian and Laura Dunn

Laura begins as his paid babysitter. Marriage and children are part of

Laura's DNA, so Ian pops the question. He gains a devoted wife and 24/7 free childcare provider, a perfect arrangement from his perspective so that he can expand his business interests, which by then include the café. The would-be mogul finds a cheering section in Laura. What could possibly go wrong?

Laura wants a child of her own with Ian, who wants no part of another up-all-night crying infant. He gets a vasectomy without telling Laura, and seeks solace in the company of Janine Butcher, who has become a call girl.

As happens so often where Ian and marriage are concerned, Laura has a drunken night out with Garry Hobbs, and wouldn't you know, Laura is finally pregnant. She is under all kinds of pressure amid



what should be a joyful event. For Ian, it's the last straw when he finds out about his wife and Garry, and he throws Laura out on the street on Christmas Day. Garry is there with Laura when she delivers a boy, Bobby. Laura finds out her son is really Ian's – anything is possible on *EastEnders*.

Ian devotes his life to making Laura's a living hell. She dies alone, accidentally falling down the stairs to her death. Ian then finds out the truth from Garry, and takes Bobby away from a far better man than he could ever be. One more marriage down.

Ian and Kate and Jane

Ian, injured when the fun house comes down on the Square, manages to worm his way into Kate Mitchell's life. She wheels him around while Ian plots yet another marriage. No doubt part of Ian's plan would be a thorn in his nemesis Phil's side. Kate realises her marriage to Phil, who's now stitched up, taking the fall for a caper masterminded by Dirty Den, is over. Unbeknownst to Ian, Kate is getting it on with Den. Ah, the

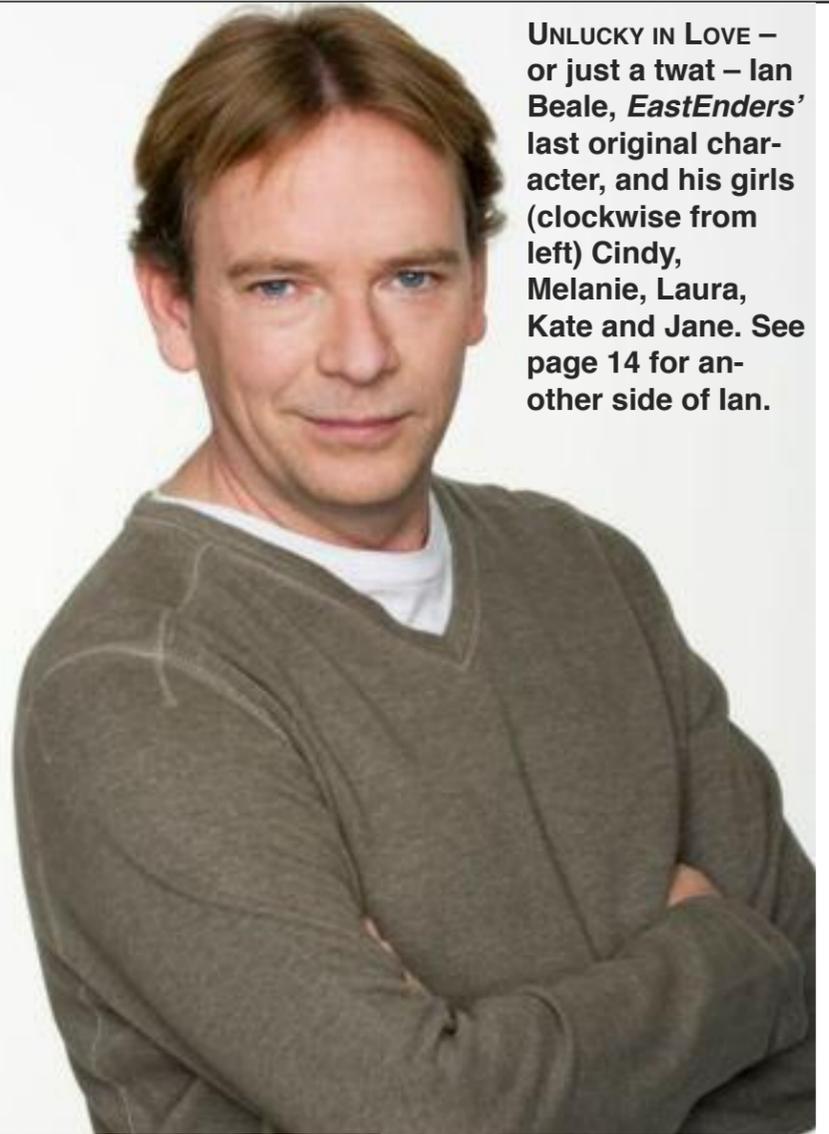


web we weave – this triangle deserves a big finish.

Ian, meanwhile, has found Jane, a no-nonsense, hands-on manager of the café. She handles the customers and the boss with equal success, and catches a supposedly wheelchair-bound Ian on his feet. He confides to Jane his attraction to Kate.

Jane advises him to woo Kate, who is not impressed by Ian faking the seriousness of his injury. Do you see a pattern here? Ian has made the wheelchair a chick magnet. Kate is definitely done with

UNLUCKY IN LOVE – or just a twat – Ian Beale, *EastEnders'* last original character, and his girls (clockwise from left) Cindy, Melanie, Laura, Kate and Jane. See page 14 for another side of Ian.



Ian, to whom she never seemed to be attracted. Strictly mates. Based on her dalliance with Phil and then Den, this ex-copper obviously is attracted to a different kind of bloke than Ian.

Meanwhile, Jane seems to be Ian's next girl Friday. He met her as rivals in the market. You sense an attraction between the two, as Jane becomes part of Albert Square. Will Ian grasp the obvious? It's Jane, you numbskull. But if she's lucky, Jane won't get involved with the Mickey Rooney of Albert Square, Ian Beale.

Dennis Rickman, A Dangerous and Troubled Man

BY CHARLES S.P. JENKINS

I remember well the episode when Dennis Rickman finally arrived at Albert Square. We had seen him earlier at his mother's funeral and learned that he was in prison. Actually his haircut should have given that fact away!

Once released, he comes to Albert Square. Vicky and Sharon invited him for dinner, but he did not turn up. Instead, he went into the café. Here, he met Dot Cotton, and this very odd couple strike up an acquaintanceship that lasted throughout his time on the programme. It was Dot that Dennis ran to for solace when he reached his lowest point.

Dot, whose son Nick has given her nothing but disappointment and misery, seems to understand Dennis's pain and senses his neglect as a child and young adult and did not turn away from him.

Dennis Rickman did have a hard life. He did not know his father, and his mother seemed to have little time for him. I did not suffer from such a life, but my mother did. I remember that she felt the pain of rejection of her mother and stepfather throughout her life and was never able to understand it. As a result of his early sufferings, I was disinclined to dismiss poor old Dennis as just another East End 'yobbo' or thug.

In his quest to be part of a family, Dennis turns to crime and eventually becomes the prodigy of an underworld kingpin. Eventually this way of life lands him in jail. Experience taught Dennis not to trust his fellow man and he led his life as a loner. Soon after his arrival at Albert Square, he makes an enemy of Phil Mitchell, which sets the scene for a vendetta that eventually leads to Phil being on the run.

Dennis Rickman is a perfect soap opera character, the kind to send the hearts of the women in the audience fluttering. He was introduced as a character who looked out for himself; someone who gave little thought for others; someone unwilling to give help when asked. He was quickly roused to violence and not afraid to threaten or punch anyone who got in his way or when he was paid to do so.

What made him a worthy rival to Phil as the Square's most villainous character was that besides being dangerous, he was handsome and could be charming when he chose. Dennis's physical attributes were soon noticed by the women of Albert Square. Quickly there was a line waiting for him to spend some time in their beds.

Once Dennis had taken his



NIGEL HARMAN
as Dennis Rickman

EastEnders

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pleasure, he took off. Naturally the women were left disappointed since they failed to appreciate his strictly no-strings policy. His women were expected to play by his rules. They could either take it or leave it.

Dennis rarely, if ever, left a partner following a fling without the woman feeling resentful. The women always wanted more while he did not. They wanted a relationship while he wanted a drink. They felt cheated, used and resentful once tossed aside, while he left without feeling.

Of course the women were angry. They were annoyed that they had allowed themselves to fall for such a charmer and convinced themselves that they hated him. However, their hate resulted in more frustration since most were willing to accept him back in the hope of changing him.

Meanwhile, Dennis had moved on to pastures new. There was always a new woman in the café or the Queen Vic that would soon be bedazzled by him.

Actor Nigel Harman plays Dennis Rickman. I have to admit that at first I was not overly enthusiastic about his acting capabilities. He seemed wooden and lacking in depth. However upon reflection, I think this was probably how he was asked to play the role.

We meet him first at his mother's funeral. Vicky runs up to him and tells him who she is and pushes a piece of paper with her address into his hand. As he is led away, Vicky along with Sharon stand silent with open mouths. Neither had bargained for a jailbird as a brother.

Once we see him in a sequence with his erstwhile crime boss, we realise that Mr. Harman's acting abilities should not be dismissed.

And in case they were still in doubt, his capabilities were substantiated later during his scenes with his father and with Sharon.

There have been a number of tender, tortuous and tempestuous scenes between Sharon and Dennis, which clearly demonstrated that both actors are capable of moving on to greater things in the future, should they wish, and more importantly, if

they are given the chance.

It was during his scenes with Sharon that I was impressed by Mr. Harman's ability to introduce us to his character's metamorphoses. Suddenly Dennis begins to show feelings for someone else. He is confused and more than a little lost and cannot understand what he now feels.

The dangerous and obviously licentious Dennis had fallen in love. No longer can he hide his vulnerability despite his efforts. Like anyone in love, he is both elated and in despair. We follow him as he wanders lost through the Square. His personality changes overnight. He no longer wants to be the uncaring, unfeeling, violent thug that takes what he wants without the least consideration for anyone else.

I cannot wait to see how Mr. Harman tackles the events that are to come, which will eventually lead to his leaving the programme. I expect great things from him. Since his departure from the show, Harman has worked in theatre, television and the occasional film.

Sadly, with there being no real film industry in Britain, his transition to the big screen is taking its time. Seemingly Hollywood has not called.

To us in North America, we were not aware of Nigel Harman before *EastEnders*, but it seems that he has been acting for the past 25 years. Harman was born just outside London in 1974 and started acting as a child while still at school when he appeared in two commercials and then on television.

Apparently Mr. Harman was brought up in musical theatre and has appeared in a number of stage productions ranging from Shake-

peare to Chekhov to *Mamma Mia*, where Jessie Wallace (Kat) did his make-up. It seems he is a dancer and attended a dance school along with Lucy Speed (Natalie). Imagine ... Dennis Rickman in Shakespeare ... Dennis in a Russian garden ... but Dennis dancing and singing!

Can you imagine Phil Mitchell's reaction? The mind boggles. I know mine does. Who knew he was so versatile! Despite his many talents, *EastEnders* was Harman's big break. When he got the call to appear in the show, he was between parts and working as a grocery delivery man.

Since leaving *EastEnders*, Harman has played Sky Masterson in *Guys and Dolls* both on the London stage and on tour throughout Britain. He has further shown his versatility in tackling the role of Mick in Harold Pinter's play, *The Caretaker*. This is a pivotal role in a play that is not an easy for an actor. According to the reviewer of *The Guardian*, Harman played the role with suitable menace. I can believe this.

He was also seen on PBS in the television series, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, where he played a married man with a drinking problem. Recently Harman completed a stint as Lord Farquaad in the London production of *Shrek*. I have not seen the film or the musical and did not know that this role requires the actor to play the part on his knees!

I suspect that he did not have to have his ankles strapped to his thighs as Jose Ferrer did in the film *Moulin Rouge*. However, I am sure that it was not pleasant to support oneself on one's knees for several hours a night for eight performances a week.

For his role in this production, Harman was awarded the 2011 Olivier Award for Best Performance in a Musical. Olivier Awards are the highest theatre awards given in Britain. This is quite an achievement for any actor, let alone one from a soap opera.

We know that Dennis was both a dangerous and randy character, but what is Nigel Harman, the person, like? Little is actually known about him. He is a very private person and tends to shun the limelight. He recently took an organisation to court, as he claimed that they pursued him to the point where fans could know where he lived. Although the judge did not side with him, the organisation was told to cut back in their interest in him.

I think that Harman will continue to find success in his profession and I hope that he gets his chance to appear in some well-produced films and so go on to receive international fame.

Further Memories of the Second World War

BY RUTH DAVIES

Having arrived in the USA after a harrowing Atlantic crossing on a Liberty boat. I found a land where most people had enough to eat and seemed much less affected by the ravages of war.

I looked back on my life in Britain and thought how well we had managed, not just to survive but to actually enjoy every morsel of our meagre food rations.

While I lived at home I had home grown vegetables, fruit and eggs and the occasional chicken in addition to our rations. There were no signs that America had ever been at war, no defence buildings or devices as we had along the south coast in Britain.

John was teaching at Stanford for a year. I reflected back upon my wartime years in Britain as I watched the American high school children racing their cars around the schoolyard in Palo Alto.

I was at the same time impressed at the way the middle-aged women kept the juniors in order – telling them to clear up something if they had spilled it and not to disarrange things etc. and this never met with disrespect.

Somehow the mothers had taken on a role of responsibility not just in their family but outside wherever they happened to be. It led to good hygiene, good appearance and orderly behaviour.

I thought back to the English children who were walking or cycling a mile or two to school every day. There were very few cars on the road in Britain, not only for a lack of vehicles but also because of the rationing of petrol.

I had witnessed the barrage balloons over London early on in the war and the posters in pubs and eating places saying the “The walls



AS BOMBS DROPPED ON LONDON – Ruth Davies working on the land in 1941 at a farm in Hampshire.

have ears” and “Careless talk costs lives,” warning us not to speak of someone coming home on leave or departing for duty, or any other significant piece of information.

There were shortages of all materials during the war. We had waste paper collections and people were asked to donate their aluminium pots and pans for aircraft construction. We used every piece of cloth and wool and even saved string to tie up parcels.

On the whole there was a great willingness to help in the war effort and it brought people together. A black market existed but it was negligible compared to that in France.

Rationing of food and clothing meant that no one starved or went without shoes or a coat. The butcher would use every part of the animal, the head and the feet were used to make brawn, which was unrationed and quite nourishing.

Cigarettes were smoked by almost everyone and they were often used like currency. Nylon stock-



PRINCESS ELIZABETH – a driver in the British military, changes an ambulance’s tire. At 19, she was the only female member of the royal family ever to enlist in the military.

ings were in short supply until the Americans arrived, and girls would draw a fake seam up the back of their legs to give the appearance of wearing nylons.

It was a very different matter when I moved to London. Because of the devastating V2 rockets falling unpredictably, supplies were very limited. Little was known about these rockets until after the war. At that time, even bread and biscuits were in short supply, or were unobtainable.

The Salvation Army had a canteen near where I lived, and occasionally I felt the need to eat there because I was so hungry. I still remember that and support the great work they do today. I think the toughest time for most Brits was towards the end of the war.

When I visited France in 1946, I learned how badly the French had fared. They had been eating horse meat and even dogs and cats in

order to survive. At home in England people dug up their flowerbeds and lawns to grow vegetables.

I helped to gather the hay and harvest the potatoes in the fields during the holidays. The men were out of the country fighting, so women did a lot of the farm work and were known as The Women’s Land Army (WLA) They were commonly referred to as Land girls.

Women also drove ambulances, taxis, and buses, delivered the post and emptied dustbins. They became butchers and bakers.

They also took on some tough jobs such as road repair, construction, and demolition. Queen Elizabeth II (at that time a princess) drove an ambulance.

Rationing continued for some time after the war, but the Marshall Plan, which started in April 1947, helped Britain get back on her feet.

A Look Back at EastEnders Villainy

continued from page 4

A homeless man burned up with the car that he was sleeping in. Not only was there no insurance payout; Frank was also looking at criminal charges. Frank hit the road for parts unknown.

Grant and Phil Mitchell, the Krays of Walford. Grant, younger brother of Phil, was an ultra-violent psychopath, killing a 16-year-old boy while in the army during the Falklands War.

A bottle of nitro is a milkshake compared to Grant. In a jealous rage, he beat Vic owner Eddie Royle to a pulp for looking at then wife Sharon, who married Grant because she thought it was real love. Grant wanted children, which does not interest Sharon, who, all



Grant & Phil Mitchell

of a sudden, has the hots for his older brother Phil.

None the wiser, Grant busies himself with a raid on a betting shop, and then in a rage torches the Queen Vic, thinking he can collect insurance money. A pattern formed: Grant beats Sharon, he

he goes to prison, gets out swearing he’s reformed. The only problem was that he found out about Sharon and Phil carrying on behind his back. Grant beats his brother to a bloody pulp in the Arches.

Phil ends up marrying Kathy, who’s pregnant with his child. Grant beds Tiffany. Adultery rears its ugly face, and Grant lets his fists do the talking. Sharon, Michelle, Tiffany, Kathy – all attracted to Grant?! Tiffany gives Grant his child. So how does all this end? Grant flees to Rio with his daughter. Phil owns the Vic, the

Arches, the pool hall. He uses the used-car lot (now run by Roy Evans) for stolen cars. When last seen, Phil broke out of jail, and was still in the wind.

Steve Owen, suave manipulator. The owner of the E20 nightclub accidentally kills his girlfriend Saskia, and talks his teenage employee Matthew into taking the rap. A coke addict with a guilty conscience, Steve woos and marries Melanie Healy.

A drug dealer and high roller, no pun intended, Steve is being chased by Phil throughout London. Trapped inside his car, Steve manages to hand over Phil’s daughter Louise, who was in the back seat, just before the car explodes and consumes Steve in flames.

Also-rans: Jack & Andy