

S6 E14 - The Greenslade Story

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GREENSLADE:

This is the BBC Home Service.

FX:

GASPS. WILD APPLAUSE. CRIES OF "ENCORE!"

GREENSLADE:

Encore? Certainly. (CLEARS THROAT) This is the BBC Home Service.

FX:

WILD APPLAUSE

SEAGOON:

Hear that applause, dear listener? It was not for Danny Kaye. Not for Fred Lane. No. It was all for a common or garden BBC announcer, Wallace Greenslade. How did he come by this rapturous applause? It is with heavy heart and light kidneys that we tell you...

GREENSLADE:

The Greenslade Story or...

SELLERS:

Winds Light to Variable.

ORCHESTRA:

MYSTERY MUSIC

SNAGGE:

My name is Snagge, John Snagge.

FX:

TWO COINS LAND IN A CUP

SNAGGE:

Thank you, Sir Ian. It was in June, 19-quifty-qua that the lad, Wallace Greenslade, first came to the BBC seeking refuge from hard work.

FX:

TYPEWRITER. DOOR OPENS.

GREENSLADE:

Good morning, Miss. I'm Mr. W. Greenslade.

RECEPTIONIST:

[SELLERS]

(FEMALE) Oh, yes, you've come for the vacant post of announcer.

GREENSLADE:

Yes, I have.

RECEPTIONIST:

Do take a seat with the other applicants.

GREENSLADE:

Thank you. I sat down next to a man wearing a brass deerstalker, white cricket boots and a shredded cardboard wig.

ECCLES:

Ha-llo!

GREENSLADE:

Good morning.

ECCLES:

Winds light to variable.

GREENSLADE:

Pardon?

ECCLES:

I said, "Winds light to variable."

GREENSLADE:

Oh, really.

ECCLES:

Yeah. Winds light to variable. I'm practicing, you know.

GREENSLADE:

Don't tell me *you're* applying for the post of announcer?

ECCLES:

Oh, yeah! And I'll get it, too, you see! I'm wearing a Cambridge tie!

GREENSLADE:

You? You were at Cambridge?

ECCLES:

Yeah!

GREENSLADE:

What were you doing there?

ECCLES:

Buying a tie.

FX:

DOOR OPENS

RECEPTIONIST:

Mr. Liddell will see you now, Mr. Eccles.

ECCLES:

Fine, fine, my good woman. This is it 2,000... £2,000 a year and a pension...

FX:

DOOR CLOSSES AND RAPIDLY OPENS AGAIN

SELLERS:

Get out, you idiot!

ECCLES:

Wait a minute, wait a minute! You ain't even heard me speak yet!

SELLERS:

We'll write to you.

ECCLES:

Well, that's no good, I can't read.

FX:

DOOR CLOSSES.

ECCLES:

Hey! Did you see that? He threw me out! Threw *me* out, the famous Eccles! He got no respect for the dead, that man! You can all laugh, but he never even let me say "winds light to variant." I'm going to tell my electrocution teacher about that...

FX:

DOOR OPENS

RECEPTIONIST:

Will you come in now, Mr Greenslade?

GREENSLADE:

Thank you, madam. I was lead into the presence of a BBC official. I took off my shoes and knelt down.

FX:

GONG SOUND

POMPOUS BBC OFFICIAL:

[SELLERS]

Now, Mr Greensleaves, can I... can I hear you say something?

GREENSLADE:

Certainly. Erm... "Winds light to variable."

POMPOUS BBC OFFICIAL:

By Jove, you couldn't have picked a more... appropriate phrase.

GREENSLADE:

Oh, it was nothing.

POMPOUS BBC OFFICIAL:

Come, come! Say it again. Say it again... with a smile in the voice.

GREENSLADE:

Of course. (CLEARs THROAT) "Winds light to variable."

POMPOUS BBC OFFICIAL:

Delicious! Quite enchanting! Now, say it as though it were a national catastrophe.

GREENSLADE:

(TRADEGIC)"Ohhhh! Winds light to variable! Ohhhhhh!"

POMPOUS BBC OFFICIAL:

(WEEPY) Very touching! Quite, quite touching. Yes I... I think you have it, Mr Greenslade. You can start work at once.

GREENSLADE:

Gad! *Me*, a BBC announcer!

FX:

VICTORY MUSIC LINK

SEAGOON:

Dear listeners, how could my private school for announcers, with its 56,000 trainees succeed, if the BBC kept turning down my ace pupils like Eccles?

OMNES:

(SHOUTING) We want bread, bread we want...(CONTINUES UNDER)

SEAGOON:

(SHOUTING) Steady on, lads! Please! Lads! Thank you! Settle down! Settle down! Thank you! Please, gentlemen, keep up your spirits, lads. I mean, say after me, "Winds light to variable."

OMNES:

"WINDS LIGHT TO VARIABLE."

SEAGOON:

There you are, lads. Good! Doesn't that make you feel better?

OMNES:

NEGATIVE ANSWERS, PARTICULARLY FROM MAJOR BLOODNOK

SEAGOON:

What? What? What? What? What's that? Bloodnok, please.

BLOODNOK:

Listen, listen, Neddie...

SEAGOON:

Mr. Bloodnok, please, I mean...

BLOODNOK:

Never mind these naughty winds light to variable! What about some earthquakes in East Acton?

SEAGOON:

What about earthquakes in East Acton?

BLOODNOK:

What about...? I've been training at this school for six years to say "earthquakes in East Acton."

SEAGOON:

So what?

BLOODNOK:

Well, they never have one!

SEAGOON:

Ah! Ah, yes! But at the slightest tremor, I'll write to the BBC!

BLOODNOK:

Ohhh...

SEAGOON:

I will indeed!

BLOODNOK:

Ahhh...

SEAGOON:

Now then, keep up your morale, man! Say after me: "Earthquakes in East Acton."

BLOODNOK:

Earthquakes in East Acton.

SEAGOON:

There you are.

BLOODNOK:

Yes.

SEAGOON:

Yeah? How about that, eh? Eh? Eh?

BLOODNOK:

Yes, I... I... I feel better already.

SEAGOON:

Of course you do!

BLOODNOK:

Yes.

SEAGOON:

Now here's a model of Sir Ian Jacob. Let's stick pins in it!

BLOODNOK:

Right!

FX:

TELEPHONE RINGS, RECEIVER LIFTED

ELLINGTON:

Owww! Man, don't you dare do that again!

FX:

HANGS UP PHONE

SEAGOON:

Thank you, Fred Jacobs. Now... It's no good, dear listener. I can't deceive my pupils as to the seriousness of the situation. While Greenslade grew in popularity, I decided to strike!

FX:

DRAMATIC MUSIC

MORIARTY:

(OMINOUS LAUGHING) Yes.

GRYTPYPE:

So, Neddie, you want us to kidnap the entire BBC announcing staff?

SEAGOON:

Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! I've got to create vacancies for my own men. You'll be well paid.

MORIARTY:

Paid? Money? Money? How much? How much?

SEAGOON:

For every announcer removed I'll pay one simulation lead florin. And you can have that in writing.

GRYTPYPE:

We'd rather have it in cash, if you don't mind.

SEAGOON:

Very well, here's a photograph of a pound.

GRYTPYPE:

Thank you. Moriarty, see if this is a forgery.

MORIARTY:

Ohh, at once, at once.

SEAGOON:

Now, gentlemen, when do you start work?

GRYTPYPE:

When? Switch on the talking wireless.

FX:

CLICK

ANNOUNCER:

[MILLIGAN]

(ON RADIO) Here is the nyn a'clock noise. The president of Scrampsonpage drudnosit black...

(GRABBED BY THE THROAT)

GRYTPYPE:

You see, Neddie, we've started already! Now, excuse me while...

FX:

WHOOOSH!

MORIARTY:

Don't switch off, listen to this.

GRYTPYPE:

(ON RADIO) We must apologise for the break in the news. In the meantime, here is a record...

(SELLERS CRACKS UP)

FX:

RADIO INTERFERENCE

ECCLES:

Hello, folks! Winds light to variable. Further outlook: Fine, fine, fine.

SEAGOON:

Wonderful! Or if you're French, wunderbar! At last, Mr Eccles was being heard on the radio. One by one, the BBC announcers were kidnapped. Or, if they're over 21, adultnapped! Get it? (LAUGHS) Adultnapped! (SIGHS) Max Geldray, pull up a bollard!

Minnie:

Ohhh!

MAX GELDRAI:

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

SEAGOON:

I still maintain it's all wrong. I can't understand it at all. I... I expect it's...

GRYTPYPE:

Relax, Neddie, relax.

SEAGOON:

Well, it... it's...

GRYTPYPE:

Your record's selling well, you've nothing to worry about...

SEAGOON:

[UNCLEAR], relax, you say. By heaven, it's three months since you promised to kidnap Greenslade, but still no result!

MORIARTY:

Oeoww! I tell you, don't worry, Neddie! At last we've found a chink in his armour

SEAGOON:

These Chinese get everywhere!

MORIARTY:

What?

GRYTPYPE:

Greenslade has a huge public. They want to see him in the flesh.

SEAGOON:

What, all of it?

GRYTPYPE:

Yes.

SEAGOON:

He's a danger to shipping!

GRYTPYPE:

Neddie, we're going to offer him a contract to appear on the stage.

SEAGOON:

Gad, yes! If he leaves the BBC, the way will be clear for Mr. Eccles! An excellent plan! We'll do it!

GREENSLADE:

And do it they did. But the BBC didn't give me up without a fight. In fact, they even sent John Snagge round to my private abode.

FX:

KNOCK ON DOOR, DOOR OPENS

BUTLER:

[ELLINGTON]

Thou knocked? Oh, shivering white infidel, cor blimey!

SNAGGE:

Yes, is... er... Wallace in?

BUTLER:

"Wallace"? Does thou mean The Great Greenslade? He whose voice drips like honey 'pon the ears of the waiting world? He of the velvet petal tongue?

SNAGGE:

Yes, yes, that's Wal.

BUTLER:

Whom shall I say craves audience?

SNAGGE:

Tell him it's John Snagge. No, no, no, no, wait. Tell him... it's Snaggers. He who's voice once-yearly rings out from the Thames motor launch that usually fails. He who's voice tells the masses of a watery combat twixt men in two slender willow slim craft that race on the bosom of our river and race past Mortlake Brewery towards their Olympic goal.

BUTLER:

Cor blimey, man, follow me.

SNAGGE:

Dear listeners, I was lead across a marble courtyard of solid wood. And here and there silver fountains gushed claret. And there... there, lying in a silken hammock suspended between two former television toppers... was Wallace Greenslade.

GREENSLADE:

Ah, John. Dear John! You couldn't have arrived at a better moment. I was just about to unveil a small, bronze statue of myself.

SNAGGE:

Now, look here, Wallace. There's a rumour going around the Corporation that you're thinking of leaving.

GREENSLADE:

Well, John, I have been getting offers.

SNAGGE:

But Wallace, you're not going to leave us. Remember you're British.

GREENSLADE:

Dear John. What can I say?

SNAGGE:

What's the matter, Wallace? Aren't you happy with us. Isn't £3.10 a week enough?

GREENSLADE:

Not quite, John.

SNAGGE:

But man alive! You've a free copy of the Radio Times every week.

GREENSLADE:

Yes, there is that.

SNAGGE:

Well... now, look, Wallace.

GREENSLADE:

What, John?

SNAGGE:

I've been given authority to offer you £4 a week. And you can read the 9 o'clock news at half past if you want to. And take your own time about...

SEAGOON:

Not so fast, Mr. John "Boatrace" Snagge!

SNAGGE:

That voice came out of a little ball of fat that sprang from behind a piano stool.

SEAGOON:

My name is Neddie Seagoon!

SNAGGE:

What a memory you have.

SEAGOON:

Not so fast!

SNAGGE:

I said it as slowly as possible.

SEAGOON:

So! You're the famous John Snagge, eh? Known as the male Sabrina of Portland Place.

SNAGGE:

Now steady, Seagoon, or I'll ban your record on Housewife's Choice.

SEAGOON:

Huh-hum! (TITTERS AND STARTS TO SING) Be my lov... Never mind, I still have my shaving turn.

FX:

WHOOSH

GRYTPYPE:

Mr. Snagge, I fear you have arrived too late to save Mr Greenslade. He has already signed a theatrical contract at £5 a week.

SNAGGE:

Five pounds? There *isn't* that much!

GRYTPYPE:

Yes, there is. And here it is in used stamps.

SNAGGE:

Alas! I cannot offer him more. So this, then, is the end of the once-great BBC announcing staff.

ORCHESTRA:

A CORNET PLAYS THE "LAST POST" UNDER:

SNAGGE:

Where are they now? That noble band. Andrew Timothy - missing. Alvar Liddell - went down with his lift. Richard Dimpleby - overweight. And finally, Ronald Fletcher - gone to the dogs.

SEAGOON:

Stop! Stop! (CRYING) You're breaking my heart. I could help you! I have a man here to take their place. Speak, lad, speak!

ECCLES:

Winds light to variable. Wait a minute, Mr. Nagg, you're... you're very lucky to get me!

SNAGGE:

I have no choice. Put him in a sack.

SEAGOON:

So saying, Mr Snagge took the famous Eccles off on his tricycle. Next day, we took Greenslade off on his triumphal stage tour. Everywhere he went, success. Then the first opening night at the London Palladium. What a night that was! What a night! His merest whim was catered for.

GREENSLADE:

Neddie, bring me a merest whim.

SEAGOON:

At once! At once, Wallace! In cellophane! Gad, there's a packed house out there waiting for you.

GREENSLADE:

How they love me!

FX:

KNOCK ON DOOR

GREENSLADE:

Neddie? Say "come in" for me.

SEAGOON:

Of course, Wal, of course. Come in! Who is it?

LEW:

(YIDDISH) It's Lew. I've come to say good evening.

SEAGOON:

It's your agent! Come in!

FX:

DOOR OPENS

LEW:

Oh, my lovely little Wallace! Oh, you're gonna kill 'em tonight, you're a lovely boy! Ooh, you're lovely, make a lot of lovely money for me, make a fortune!

SEAGOON:

Don't forget, I'm his manager, you understand. I mean, I...

LEW:

Out the way, Secombe, you're finished. All that shaving and singing, it's all finished.

SEAGOON:

Whatwhatwhawhawhat?

LEW:

On with the motsers, It's all washed up.

SEAGOON:

You can't...

LEW:

Now, then, here. Wallace. Wallace, Wallace, Wallace. Val Parnell's outside tonight so do your best. I'll see you get a nice, big bonus. Goodbye, my lovely boy, the geld he's making for me...

FX:

DOOR SHUTS

SEAGOON:

You'd never think that man's father was a duke, would you?

GREENSLADE:

No.

SEAGOON:

Well, don't, cos he wasn't.

FX:

KNOCK ON DOOR

SEAGOON:

Who's there?

HENRY CRUN:

We are, mnk.

MINNIE:

Autograph hunters, buddy.

SEAGOON:

What do you want, Buddy?

HENRY CRUN:

An autograph.

MINNIE:

Autograph.

HENRY CRUN:

Autogram.

MINNIE:

We're modern-style bobby soxers, buddy. Dim-bund-giddle-oh! We want Wal's autograph, buddy.

SEAGOON:

I'm very sorry, Mr Greenslade left his autograph at home.

MINNIE:

Oh...

FX:

POUNDING ON DOOR

SEAGOON:

Stop that knocking-type knocking!

HENRY CRUN:

Who are you to stop us doing knocking-type knocking?

FX:

MORE POUNDING ON DOOR

SEAGOON:

I'm Neddie Seagoon-type Neddie Seagoon.

HENRY CRUN:

Never heard of you-type, sir. Go away, sir.

SEAGOON:

Go away? Never heard...? I... I... I won't stand for this! Go away? Never heard of me? Open this door at once.

FX:

MORE POUNDING ON DOOR

SEAGOON:

Come along! Who's there?

HENRY CRUN:

Open the door!

SEAGOON:

I can't. Some fool's taken the bolt off. Can you open it your side?

MINNIE:

No, no, no. Don't come in, I'm in the bath.

SEAGOON:

What are you doing in the bath?

MINNIE:

I'm not doing anything in the bath!

SEAGOON:

Miss Bannister!

MINNIE:

What?

SEAGOON:

Explain what Mr Henry Crun is doing in your bathroom, you sinful woman!

MINNIE:

He's washing a savage tiger.

SEAGOON:

A tiger?

MINNIE:

Yes.

SEAGOON:

A sinful savage tiger?

MINNIE:

Ohhh!

SEAGOON:

I've had enough of this!

FX:

DOOR OPENS.

THROAT:

Urrrrrr!

SEAGOON:

(SCREAMS)

GREENSLADE:

Obviously time for Mr Ray Ellington.

RAY ELLINGTON QUARTET:

'JINGLE BELLS'. THE END OF THE SONG INCLUDES ELLINGTON BARKING LIKE A DOG.

GREENSLADE:

Ray Ellington is now appearing at the Battersea Dog's Home. The Wallace Greenslade Story, Part 3. As this scene opens, I am found in the star dressing room at the Palladium with my manager. I have five minutes to finish my Black Russian cigarette before I'm on.

FX:

DOOR OPENS

LEW:

Oh, my life! Ruined! My business, my wife and children, my wail, ruined! Ohhh!

SEAGOON:

Something wrong, Lew?

LEW:

Something wrong he says? The audience, they've gone, the momsers! 5 to 9, they got up and left!

SEAGOON:

5 to 9? What? Wait! I've got a hunch!

GRYTPYPE:

It suits you.

SEAGOON:

Switch on the electric-type wireless.

FX:

CLICK

ECCLES:

(ON RADIO) Ha-llo, folks! Here's the old weather, there. The old winds light to variable. Gonna have the sun in the day and gonna get dark at night. (SINGS) The man from Coventry...

FX:

CLICK

SEAGOON:

So, that's where the audience are, back home listening to Eccles. He's the new idol. Greenslade? I fear he's stolen your public.

GREENSLADE:

Oh, I... I feel faint.

ECCLES:

Relax.

GREENSLADE:

Pour some brandy down my throat.

SEAGOON:

Gad, Grytpype. You've got to kidnap Eccles or Greenslade is finished!

GRYTPYPE:

Right. Moriarty? Have you got a black jack?

MORIARTY:

No, mine's red.

GRYTPYPE:

Never mind, Eccles is colour-blind anyway. Let's go!

MORIARTY:

Gidup, there!

FX:

HORSE GALLOPS AWAY; SCENE-CHANGE MUSIC

SEAGOON:

Next morning, we read the terrible news.

GREENSLADE:

Listen, "Ace BBC announcer Eccles, signed by Grytpype-Thynne for stage tour."

SEAGOON:

The swine single-crossed us!

GREENSLADE:

You mean 'double'.

SEAGOON:

No, this is the first time.

GREENSLADE:

This means... ruin? No more... luxury? I'll have to stop eating in the canteen? Give up my subscription to The Nursing Mother?

SEAGOON:

And so, we became vagrants.

ORCHESTRA:

SINGLE VIOLIN - HEARTS AND FLOWERS

SEAGOON:

We wandered the streets. A bitter wind blew up from the east and I cursed the fact I was wearing a kilt! One Christmas we were trying to make a living by diving for coins in the gutter from passing ships, when we found ourselves outside the London Palladium.

FX:

STREET SCENE, COIN DROPS IN CUP

SEAGOON:

Thank you...

SEAGOON AND GREENSLADE:

(SINGING) Comrades, comrades, ever since we were boys...

FX:

COIN DROPS IN CUP

SEAGOON:

Thank you, lady.

THROAT:

A pleasure.

SEAGOON:

(SINGING) Sharing each other's...

GREENSLADE:

Here comes a rich customer.

SEAGOON:

A hansom cab drew up and out stepped an ugly passenger.

ECCLES:

Stand aside, my good man, my public awaits for me.

SEAGOON:

Spare a copper for the guy?

ECCLES:

What guy?

SEAGOON:

This guy here, he's starving.

ECCLES:

You see my secretary, my good man, I've got... (FADES)

SEAGOON:

He brushed me aside with his brush. The north wind blew. Flakes of white settled on my shoulder.
To cap it all, I've got dandruff!

SEAGOON AND GREENSLADE:

(SINGING) Comrades...

SEAGOON:

Sadly.

SEAGOON AND GREENSLADE:

Comrades...

SEAGOON:

Sadly.

SEAGOON AND GREENSLADE:

Ever since we were boys...

FX:

COIN DROPPING INTO CUP

SEAGOON:

Oh, thank you, kind sir.

SNAGGE:

It's nothing. I've plenty more buttons. Aren't you Jewell & Wallace, or Morecambe & Wise?

SEAGOON:

No, it's Seagoon & Greenslade.

SNAGGE:

Oh, horrors. How the mighty have fallen!

SEAGOON:

You, too?

SNAGGE:

Here, here's a photograph of a bowl of soup.

SEAGOON AND GREENSLADE:

Thank you.

SNAGGE:

And when you've finished it, come and see me at the BBC. In six weeks' time.

GREENSLADE:

And so, six weeks went by.

SEAGOON:

Good heavens, Wal, six weeks have gone by!

GREENSLADE:

At the same time, inside the London Palladium, six weeks had also passed at the same speed.

ECCLES:

Winds light to variable, that's what I'll say to them out there.

FX:

KNOCK ON DOOR

ECCLES:

Oh, who is it?

LEW:

It's Lew, I've come to say good evening to you.

ECCLES:

Come in, my good fellow.

FX:

DOOR OPENS

LEW:

Oh, Eccles, Schmeccles, my lovely boy! You're gonna make a lot of money for me! We sold every seat in the place!

ECCLES:

What are they gonna sit on?

LEW:

(LAUGHS) What a sense of humour he's got, he's funny! Witty, yes. Here, do your best, my little Eccles. Oh, think of the geld, oh...

FX:

DOOR CLOSES

ECCLES:

What a nice fellow. That's a nice... I like that fellow! He's a ni...Oh, hello, I didn't see you standing there.

GRYTPYPE:

Eccles, don't forget, now. You do well tonight and we'll give you a five-shilling rise.

ECCLES:

Oh! That will bring my money up to 6 shillings a month! I'm rich! I'm rich! Oh, it's good to be alive!

GRYTPYPE:

Yes, yes, yes, yes. Steady, lad, steady. Don't let it go to your head.

FX:

DOOR OPENS

MORIARTY:

Grytpype! Here's his pay check, just arrived.

GRYTPYPE:

What? Let's see. £2,000. Moriarty, take 6 shillings out and give it to our Charlie.

ECCLES:

I heard that. Don't you dare give that six bob to Charlie, that's *my* money!

FX:

DOOR OPENS

LEW:

Oh, my life, it's happened again!

ECCLES:

What?

LEW:

The audience got up and gone home. Someone's took 'em away!

ECCLES:

I'm going home, then.

GRYTPYPE:

No, no, no, no, wait, wait. Switch on the radio.

FX:

CLICK. BIG BEN CHIMES.

BLUEBOTTLE:

This is the BBC Home Service. And here is Bluebottle with the news!

ECCLES:

You swine, Bluebottle! You...

ORCHESTRA:

END MUSIC

GREENSLADE:

And that was the Goon Show, a BBC recorded program featuring Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan and John Snagge, with the Ray Ellington Quartet and Max Geldray. The Orchestra was conducted by Wally Stott, script by Spike Milligan, announcer Wallace Greenslade, the program produced by Peter Eton.

ORCHESTRA:

'CRAZY RHYTHM' OUTRO

Notes:

Danny Kaye was an American actor, singer and comedian.

John Snagge was a BBC newsreader and commentator on BBC Radio. He provided commentaries for the Boat Race.

Sir Ian Jacob was Director-General of the BBC from 1952 to 1959.

Sabrina was a famous British ample-bosomed glamour model and actress.

Housewife's Choice was a radio show that played popular music.

Andrew Timothy, Alvar Liddell, Richard Dimbleby, Ronald Fletcher were all BBC announcers/presenters.

The Ed Sullivan Show was a long running US variety TV series, hosted by Ed Sullivan.

"On with the Motsters" refers to Harry Secombe's first UK solo musical hit entitled 'On with the Motley'.

Val Parnell was a British television producer and theatrical impresario.

Bobby soxer was a term coined in the 1940s to describe the overly zealous, usually teenage, fans of singer Frank Sinatra.

The Television Toppers were a group of very attractive female singers and dancers on the then popular TV programme, the Black and White Minstrel Show.