



Round Mr Horne: The Life of Kenneth Horne

Barry Johnston

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When Kenneth Horne died in 1969 at the age of 61, he was described as 'the last of the truly great radio comics'. In a broadcasting career spanning more than 25 years he starred in three of the most popular radio comedy series of all time - "Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh", "Beyond Our Ken" and "Round the Horne". Born in 1907, Horne was the youngest of seven children of a Congregationalist preacher and MP. He won a half-blue for tennis at Cambridge but was sent down for failing his exams. In 1939 he joined the RAF and rose to the rank of Wing Commander before he broke into broadcasting after compeering a troop concert on the BBC. With his brother officer, Richard 'Dickie' Murdoch he created the hugely popular Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh set on a remote RAF station 'somewhere in England' which ran for ten years. After leaving the RAF he successfully combined two careers, as a businessman and a broadcaster, until he suffered a stroke in 1958 and had to cut short his business career. During his convalescence he helped to devise the legendary radio series "Beyond Our Ken" in which he presided amiably over a cast of anarchic characters played by Kenneth Williams, Hugh Paddick, Betty Marsden and Bill Pertwee. This was followed by "Round the Horne" which has been called 'the funniest comedy series in radio history'. In 1969 Kenneth Horne collapsed and died on stage while presenting a television awards programme.

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