

Horace

UK TV serial : 1982 : dir. James Cellan Jones : Yorkshire TV : 6 x 30 min
prod: Keith Richardson : scr: Roy Minton : dir.ph.:
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Barry Jackson

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⌘	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Halliwell's Television Companion review:

"Mishaps and muddles of a simple-minded youth in a Yorkshire village. Developed by Roy Minton from a single BBC play, the series bravely borrowed the semblance of a half-hour sitcom to spin what were quite serious parables about the care of the handicapped. It was lovely for Horace to live amid an ordinary community instead of in some institution, able to stare into the pet shop window for hours on end or buy indiscriminate bargains at the church jumble sale; the price was the burden on his aged mother, stuck forever with the responsibility of a child. And what would happen to him when she could no longer cope?
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No further information currently available. Minton's original BBC play (also called "[Horace](#)") is dated by an NFT flier as 1972, but it seems unlikely there'd have been a ten-year gap between the two. In any case, that play (assuming the NFT flier is correct) concerned a "misfit schoolboy" befriending a mentally retarded man. Presumably that boy was Horace, and in this series he has left school, but in that case the serial would be of minimal interest to the archive, except as a follow-up to the original play (and the friendship in the play would have to be seen in a rather different light).

Halliwell's Television Companion, evidently, was published before the inception (under Thatcher) of the "care in the community" programme, by which UK mental homes were closed down – more money to spend on tax bribes for the electorate – and their inmates thrust onto their own resources with erratic (and low-cost) social services support. No-one could seriously dispute that institutionalisation is an option to be avoided, a last resort not a first, or that the lives of mental patients are **potentially** enriched by mingling with the wider community. However, such a programme requires intensive support from a well-budgeted, well-trained social services network, and that was certainly never provided, nor envisaged, since the move was devised as a blatant cost-cutting measure.

But it also pre-requires a healthy and vibrant sense of community, one which will readily absorb and care for its less able members – as to some extent was the case before the growth of the welfare state – but Thatcher's political agenda for Britain did all that it could to undermine that very sense of community ("There is no such thing as society"), while

disastrous urban planning mistakes of the 1960s (under Labour) created soulless high-rise estates with little or no provision for recreation, further undermining the spirit of “neighbourhood”, and it is precisely into these human filing cabinets that the displaced mental patients were, and still are, decanted. That is not “care in the community”, it is abnegation of responsibility. Many of today’s high rise slums are simply lunatic asylums where the inmates each have their own key.

Perhaps this 1982 serial maps out the way it was supposed to have been – a slow-witted youth recognised and accepted amid his native surroundings, and the “nanny state” kept at a respectable arm’s-length. What works admirably on an individual case level, of course, is not necessarily tenable as general practise. Perhaps a better solution would have been to build smaller, less obtrusive mental homes scattered among the community as retirement homes are, and a more active process of reintegration than merely to tip the Horaces of the world back onto the streets with a pocketful of “medication”.

See the original play, and subject index under **DISABLED / HANDICAPPED** and **SERIALISATIONS**.