

Report from Workshop on how to write live action role-plays (LARPs) Spring Peaky held the weekend of 21-23 April 2017 Appleby Magna, Leeds, UK

Michaela Aschan and Petter Olsen, BRIDGE, NGH, BFE, UiT attended Peaky for the first time in April 2017 <http://peakygames.wikidot.com/future-peaky-writing-weekends>. The aim was to learn to write live action role-play games (LARPPs) that can be utilized for educational purpose. We have for several years had discussions around a game that we want to write set in the academic / scientific community (combining all the intrigues, drama and rumours we have seen and heard during 20+ years in the field), but we did not pitch that game this year as we want to learn the writing process better first. So far we have only written one small work-related game together (set in the fisheries sector, with tragedy of the commons as a key theme), and that was great fun both to write and to run with colleagues, in a n EU project and with students. The positive experience we had and our ambition to write games for teaching purpose are the reasons why we attended Peaky. We have also had a look at various versions of Prawn, and Michaela in particular (as a professor of marine biology) feels that at some stage we should write a biologically more accurate version of that game (while hopefully still retaining the fun aspect of it), as it would be well suited for educational purposes.

We arrived on Friday evening and gathered for a common brainstorming with all 34 participants present. Approximately 16 role game ideas were pitched. Some of the themes connected naturally and were merged. We expressed our interest in a couple of themes each, thereby identifying six topics with the highest score. We then divided in to six gropes with 5-6 members in each. The grupes worked intensely after dinner until midnight.

Michaela choose to write “Everybody’s war” set on the countryside in England in September 1940. We had done some research, listened to a radio documentary and had a short look at a few propaganda movies set in England during the war. We then had an open discussion identifying 12 characters, six living in the village, three returning to the village and three newcomers, namely the film cure. By midnight, we had a graph depicting the characters, the relation between them and a draft of the plot (Figure1).

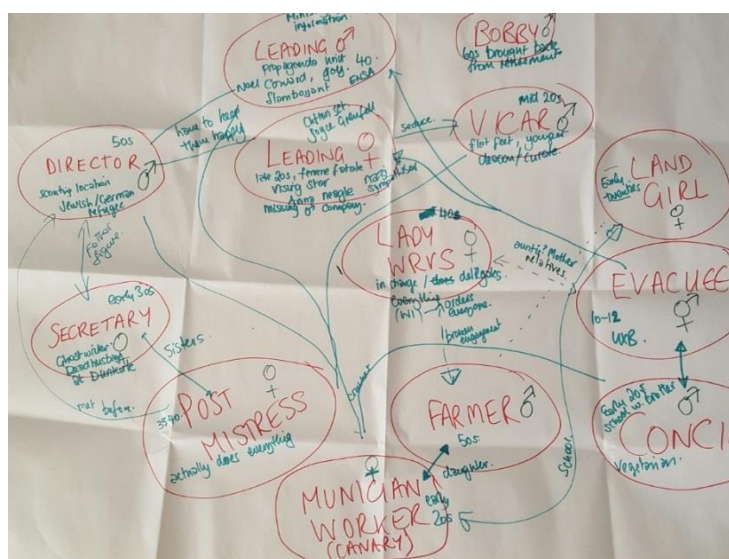


Figure 1. Characters and their relationships in “Everybodys war”.

Next morning we wrote the blue sheet (see below) setting the background, the timeline in an excel table, and described the main plots. Then each group member wrote the character sheet of two characters. The character sheets were shared in dropbox, then read by at least two other group members, and further developed to ensure constancy and enough goals for the character. The game was casted on Saturday evening and we run a trial game on Sunday morning lasting for 1,5 hours.

The game runs smoothly and the players seemed busy and engaged. We (the Game Masters who wrote the game) introduced telegrams to the players through the Post Mistress that delivered the telegram to respective player when we saw it relevant. The telegrams included messages that changed the goals or ambitions of the player in some manner. I think this twist increased the intensity of the game. The plots worked fine for a 1.5 hour game, but for a 3-4 hour game we would need to expand and increase number of plots. There is space o increase number of characters to host 22 players. I think this could work as an educative game in a class, but at this stage it is more for entertainment. The ambition is to further develop the game and run it in Consequences (a LARP event in Wales) in November. Sue Lea takes the lead and the other writing group members will (Michaela Aschan, Natalie Curd, Kevin Jacklin, Heidi Kaye and Alison Rider Hill) will contribute.

Attachments:

- The blue sheet for "Everybody's war" - 1940's information sheet
- Timeline for "everybody's war"
- Two character sheets for demonstration

The blue sheet for “Everybody’s war”- 1940’s information sheet

World War II, 1940

In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, a non-aggression treaty. In September 1939, just after Britain and France declared war on Germany following the invasion of Poland, the independent countries of the British Commonwealth – Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa – all declared war on Germany and joined the Western allies. Winston Churchill replaced Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister in May 1940. 300,000 British and French troops were evacuated from the continent at Dunkirk in June 1940, marking a low point for the Allies. The Battle of Britain began in June 1940 when the German Luftwaffe started its bombing attacks against shipping and British towns; the campaign continued until May 1941. After Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the USSR declared an alliance with the United Kingdom. The United States entered the war after Japan bombed Pearl Harbour in December 1941.

Conscription

At the outbreak of war, on 3 September 1939 National Service (Armed Forces) Act, and the first intake was absorbed into the army. This act imposed a liability to conscription of all men 18 to 41 years old. Men could be rejected for medical reasons, and those engaged in vital industries or occupations were "reserved" at a particular age beyond which no one in that job would be enlisted. For example, lighthouse keepers were "reserved" at 18 years old.

Conscientious objection

A legal status of refusing to fight. Some conscientious objectors (COs) joined the Non Combatants Corps (NCC). Some did Bomb Disposal, Ambulance Driving etc.

Ministry of Information - Crown Film Unit

The Crown Film Unit was an organisation within the British Government's Ministry of Information during the Second World War. Formerly the GPO Film Unit it became the Crown Film Unit in 1940. Its remit was to make films for the general public in Britain and abroad. Its output included short information and documentary films, as well as longer drama-documentaries, as well as a few straight drama productions.

Evacuation

The evacuation of civilians in Britain during the Second World War was designed to protect civilians in Britain, particularly children, from the risks associated with aerial bombing of cities by moving them to areas thought to be less at risk. Operation Pied Piper, which began on 1 September 1939, officially relocated more than 3.5 million people. Further waves of official evacuation and re-evacuation occurred on the south and east coasts in June 1940, when a seaborne invasion was expected, and from affected cities after the Blitz began in September 1940.

Stop lines

British anti-invasion preparations of the Second World War entailed a large-scale division of military and civilian mobilisation in response to the threat of invasion by German armed forces in 1940 and 1941. The British army needed to recover from the defeat of the British Expeditionary Force in France, and 1.5 million men were enrolled as part-time soldiers in the Home Guard. The rapid construction of field fortifications transformed much of the United Kingdom, especially southern England, into a prepared battlefield. The German invasion plan, Operation Sea Lion, was never taken beyond the preliminary assembly of forces. Today, little remains of Britain's anti-invasion preparations; only reinforced concrete structures such as pillboxes are commonly found.

Rationing

On 8 January 1940 bacon, butter and sugar were rationed. This was followed by successive ration schemes for meat, tea, jam, biscuits, breakfast cereals, cheese, eggs, lard, milk, and canned and dried fruit.

Restrictions (Communications/Water)

Many other ways of life were curtailed. Telephones were relatively rare, and only well to do private houses would be likely to have one. Water was also in short supply, and keeping it fed to houses in cities with frequent bombing raids was a major challenge.

Pig clubs

Meat rationing increased the need for people to keep animals. The Small Pig Keepers' Council persuaded local councils to allow people to keep a pig in their back yard. All over the country, local people grouped together to form pig clubs.

Pig club membership offered several advantages:

- cut-price pig feed (from bulk purchase)
- help with food scrap collection
- a share in the meat

Black Market

The black market was a response to rationing that was introduced during World War Two. While illegal, the black market became a driving force in the Home Front especially in the cities – for those who could afford the prices. Examples of these are extra food, clothes, nylons and cosmetics.

Tuberculosis (TB)

Tuberculosis caused widespread public concern in the 19th and early 20th centuries as the disease became common among the urban poor. In 1815, one in four deaths in England was due to "consumption". By 1918, one in six deaths in France was still caused by TB. After TB was determined to be contagious, in the 1880s, it was put on a notifiable disease list in Britain; campaigns were started to stop people from spitting in public places, and the infected poor were "encouraged" to enter sanatoria that resembled prisons (the sanatoria for the middle and upper classes offered excellent care and constant medical attention). Whatever the benefits of the "fresh air" and labor in the sanatoria, even under the best conditions, 50% of those who entered died within five years (c. 1916).[124] When the Medical Research Council was formed in Britain in 1913, its initial focus was tuberculosis research.

WRVS - Woman's Royal Voluntary Service

The WVS/WRVS was a voluntary organisation, and it was its leader Lady Reading's vision that there would be no ranks. It was perhaps the only organisation where you could find a Duchess and a Char lady working side by side. While many members of the WVS mucked in on pretty much all tasks, the idea of an organisation without a hierarchy would not have worked and so while there were no ranks, there were titles. Women were recruited for specific tasks, whether that was to drive ambulances, to be a member of a knitting work party or collect National Savings. Inevitably those women who signed up for one thing often ended up being co-opted for other work, especially if they showed aptitude.

Timeline for "everybody's war"

Year	Month	Cropstone Leicestershire	Since
1880	1	Otto Golding Born Goldstein in Hungary	60
1880	2	Bill Worthing born	60
1885	3	Rupert Vernon born	55
1893	4	Jack Carter born	47
1895	4	Francis Hophouse	
1897	6	Clive Winterbourne born actually Cecil Stimpson Lavinia Older brother	43
1900	2	Lavinia Stimpson born	40
1904	9	Majorie Osbourne born	36
1905	8	Bill leaves village for Birmingham to train as a constable	
1908	9	Harriet Osbourne born	32
1912	3	Joyce Fielding born	28
1911	8	Steadfast Alexander Fry + Makepeace born	29
1913	11	Jack Carter marries Alice Parsons	
1914-1918		Ruper Bill Otto Jack all fighting, Cecil in Switzerland and he did lots of dodgy things, Lavinia thinks he was a slacker. Francis Hobhouse in the navy doing signals	
1915	12	Howard Jennings born	25
1919		Bill and Edith come back to the village after the first world war	
1920	4	Clara Pettigrew born	20
1920	5	Gladys Carter Born	20
1920	5	Walter Worthing born	
1922	3	Otto Golding goes to America taking banking money and painting and jewels to make films	
1923	3	Cecil goes to Hollywood and becomes Clive Winterbourne	
1924	3	Marjorie marries Francis Hophouse she carries on being the post mistress	
1926	5	Valentine conceived	
1926	5	General strike Lavinia and Jack on opposite sites	
1926	10	Lavinia goes off to give, their father write to Cecil.	
1927	2	Valentine born on 14th February	13
1927	2	Jan also born in Belgium	13
1928	5	Bill gets promoted and goes to Northampton	
1929	1	Lavina marries Rupert Vernon New Year's Day	
1929	10	Great crash Jack loses all his money Oct 24	
1929	11	Rupert calls in Jack's mortgage, Jack becomes tenant farmer	
1930	9	Gladys and Clara at Grammar school together	
1931	3	alice dies of childbirth	
1935	6	Bill and Edith come back to the village Walter would be 15	
1935	11	Ruper elected as MP National Government	
1937	9	Walter Worthing joined his fathers old regiment	
1938	6	Clive meets Cameron Fraser Canadian in Hollywood when they are both in a film	
1939	6	Clara volunteers for the land army	
1939	8	Gladys joins up to build spitfires Castle Bromwich	
1939	8	Veronica Lawrence and Howard Jennings engaged	
1939	8	Curate Howard Jennings rejected from RAF due to shadow on lung	
1939	9	Sept Val arrives in Operation Pied Piper billeted with the Post Mistress	
1939	9	Steadfast and Makepeace drafted both joined the non combatants corps	
1939	9	Francis Hobhouse called up with Naval reserve	
1939	9	Clara arrives in the village	
1939	10	Vicar volunteered to be a chaplain when the Yeoman's left	
1939	10	Val moved to Lavinia's house	
1939	11	Gladys recruited to commies	
1940	2	Curate Howard Jennings arrives	
1940	3	Edith Worthing dies	
1940	5	Otto's relative Jan leaves Netherlands on Kindertransport	
1940	6	BEF left behind at Dunkirk - Walter missing presumed dead	
1940	7	Steadfast gets PTSD in Norwich	
1940	7	Steadfast sent here	
1940	8	Spitfire factory bombed Gladys injured	
1940	8	August Gladys arrives to recuperate	
last month		15th the Benares departs in the Atlantic Convoy Marjorie's husband on one of the war ship	
		17th Benares torpedoed	
		decision made on what the movie is about, It's everybody's war. Harriet has written the script	
		Clara got a lipstick via some Canadian airmen that she met at a dance	

Two character sheets for demonstration:

It's Everybody's War

Marjorie Hobhouse

Cast of *It's Everybody's War*

Lavinia, Lady Vernon – County Organiser for the WRVS wife of Sir Rupert Vernon the local MP

Sergeant Bill Worthing – retired from Birmingham Police, widowed, called back to serve as local policeman

Rev Howard Jennings – Curate

Jack Carter – digging for victory - tenant farmer (to Lavinia)

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Marjorie Hobhouse – Post Mistress – drives all the local activities

Clara Pettigrew - land girl

Gladys Carter – daughter of Jack Carter - recuperating from explosion at the spitfire factory

Valentine (Val) Kingsley – (13 ish) plucky evacuee – missing their parents always found climbing trees and looking out for Jerry

Steadfast Alexander, Mr Fry – engineer, member of the Non Combatant Corps, was involved in Bomb Clearance in London – recently arrived in the village

Otto Golding – Eastern European film director, seconded to the newly-formed Ministry of Information Film Unit, preparing his latest film

Harriet Osborne – part of the Ministry of Information Film Unit sister of Marjorie

Clive Winterbourne – dashing British leading man, erudite, charming, just back from Hollywood

Joyce Fielding – leading lady, epitome of charm and sophistication

Marjorie Hobhouse (born Marjorie Osbourne)

You are the village postmistress, you run the WRVS in the village and you sing in the church choir.

Background (divided into plot sections)

You were born in Cropstone in 1904, the elder daughter of Harry and Ellen Osbourne. Your younger sister Harriet was born four years later. You discovered much later in life that your mother had lost several babies before you were born. At the time you were simply aware that you were much loved.

You were a bright girl and you gained a scholarship to the local Grammar School. When you left school in 1922 you joined the General Post Office. You met and married Francis (Frank) Hobhouse in 1925. He had been in the Royal Navy during the Great War and continued as a signaller in the Royal Naval Reserve. He was the Postmaster and you acted as his unofficial assistant. When he was mobilised you were delighted that the Post Office appointed you as the Post Mistress in his absence although you do miss him dearly.

The helper

You also act as the doctor's assistant, not that you are medically qualified but as the WRVS co-ordinator and because you have a telephone, people in the village come to you to discuss their symptoms and you contact the doctor.

Lady Vernon is the County Organiser for the WRVS and you work closely with her to ensure that the village pulls its weight.

Bill Worthing, the local police sergeant, has given you a sour look on occasions over the last few months which is a shame because his wife Edith was a very good friend of yours before her recent death, and you would be happy to help him out with an occasional home-cooked meal.

Edith was the local district nurse and you have learnt a lot from her over the years.

You appreciate the opportunity that you have to help people. As the Post Mistress you see the telegrams that people receive and that gives you the opportunity to help people in distress. For example, when you discovered that Edith was ill, you mobilised the local people who loved her to take meals for Bill & Edith. You knew that Edith didn't want the details of her condition made public but she was visibly ill and people wanted to help.

You also organise the Cropstone Pig Club, the other members are Lady Vernon, Sergeant Bill Worthing, Jack Carter, Rev Jennings. You need to organise the slaughter and distribution of the pig. You need to discuss using Jack's slaughterhouse to kill the pig, which is currently in his piggery.

Where is your husband?

You are waiting for news of your husband's safe return from his latest voyage. Last week you received a strange phone call telling you to "watch out for news of the Benares". You have seen the blaze of publicity but there is no news of him. You have seen enough telegrams to know that if anything had happened you would have received one too, but you can't help being on edge.

A group of children arrived at the Vicarage a year ago. But the vicar then could not look after them, so you took the children into your house. After a few weeks Lavinia approached and offered to take care of the child called Valentine. You were happy about this offer as you had your hands full and the child did not protest. Since then the other children have been relocated or sent back to their homes.

Goals

- Find out where your husband is. Make sure he is safe.
- As local organiser for the WRVS, arrange for the slaughter and distribution of the Cropstone Pig Club Pig
- You
- Bill Worthing
- Lady Vernon
- Rev Jennings
- Jack Carter
- Forward any telegrams you receive as soon as you receive them
- Keep the contents of telegrams etc confidential
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- Ask Lavinia how the child is doing as you are concerned about the time “Val” spends with Sergeant Bill Worthing.
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It's Everybody's War
was written by Michaela Aschan, Natalie Curd,
Kevin Jacklin, Heidi Kaye, Sue Lee and Alison Rider Hill.

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Everybody's War

Howard Jennings

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Marjorie Hobhouse – Post Mistress – drives all the local activities

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Valentine (Val) Kingsley – (13 ish) plucky evacuee – missing their parents always found climbing trees and looking out for Jerry

Mr Fry – engineer, recently arrived in the village

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Howard Jennings

- You are a curate working in the village of Cropstone
- You studied Theology at Oxford
- Your ambition was to sign up for The RAF as a chaplain, unfortunately your hopes were dashed when you were rejected due to a shadow on your lung.
- You are engaged to your sweetheart Veronica Lawrence. You asked her to marry you the eve prior to your recruitment test with the RAF
- You are a member of the Cropstone pig club

Background

You were born in December 1915 in the tiny Hamlet of East Coker in Somerset. You are an only child and your mother always calls you her Christmas angel. Your family were fairly religious, and you grew up regularly attending church and Sunday school. From an early age you developed an equal love and respect for the bible and God's teachings. It became as no surprise when you announced your intention to read theology at Oxford.

When you were 15 you became ill with tuberculosis (TB). You had to endure 11 months in sanatorium. It was a lonely time spent away from your parents, they were not allowed to visit in case they caught the disease. You grateful for your bible and God answered your prayers and eventually you were able to return back home. You know this was a scary time for your parents as they didn't know if you would ever return to them. It was because of this that you have been rejected when you tried to enlist in the RAF – your illness has left a shadow on your lungs.

You came to the village shortly after being rejected from the RAF last August. A vacancy came up after Cropstone's Vicar volunteered to be a chaplain when the Yeoman's left.

You met Veronica during your time at Oxford. You have been smitten with her from the onset, it wasn't long before you knew she was the one

for you. She will make a wonderful wife and will settle in so well into village life. You proposed to her with your Grandmother's ring, something that is very special to you.

You like to be there for the parishioners and lend a friendly ear when needed. If you can't serve for your country you are determined to do all you can on the home front.

You are one for tradition and are proud of doing things the right way. You will wait until you and Veronica are married to consummate your relationship.

Hatches Matches and Despatches

You were sorting the birth, deaths and marriage records from church. You have not long arrived and wanted to make some sort of order out of things. You came across a record that Lady **Lavinia Vernon** – well she was Lavinia **Stimpson** then – had a child born in 1927. You are not sure who else is privy to this information.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

With God's guidance and prayer you will remain a virgin until your wedding night, but you are still a man and naturally you are tempted. **Joyce Fielding** the actress has caught your eye, she is a handsome female but you will endeavour to remain faithful to your beliefs.

The pig club

You are a member of the pig club of Cropstone and you are delighted to hear that **Marjorie Hobhouse** who organises the club is about to get the pig slaughtered. You are looking forward to some meat as the present rations have almost made you a vegetarian. Ensure that you get your fair share of the pig.

People you know

- **Lady Lavinia Vernon** – gave birth in secret to a child in 1927 who was promptly given away.
- **Bill Worthing** – had retired from Birmingham Police, widowed, called back to serve as local policeman.
- **Jack Carter** – The local tenant farmer.
- **Marjorie Hobhouse** – Post Mistress who drives all the local activities. She is also organising the Cropstone pig club where you and the people above are all members.
- **Valentine Kingsley** – The child from London who now lives with Lady Lavinia Vernon.

Goals

- Be someone your parishioners can confide in.
- Resist temptation off attractive females
- Ask Bill and Marjorie if you can assist with the slaughter to ensure that you get your share.
- Talk to the young and encourage them to attend Sunday prayer.

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