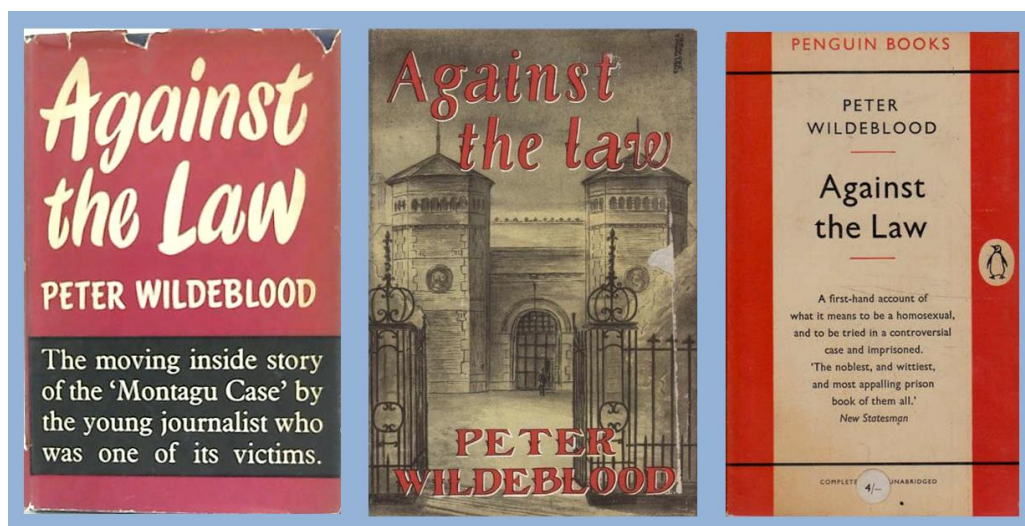


50 years since Decriminalisation, Keele University, 21st February 2017

***“Serious offences with male persons”*: the media representation of the ‘forgotten’ gay campaigner Peter Wildeblood (1923–99).**

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Slide: 1

This paper examines the work of Peter Wildeblood (1923–99) who has been regarded as one of Britain’s forgotten or unsung campaigners who had a direct impact upon what we are exploring today for *LGBT History Month* and the fiftieth anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in the UK. Wildeblood, a journalist for the Daily Mail remains a name that has appeared and disappeared in the story of the struggle for gay equality. In the 1954 ‘public’ trial which later became known as the infamous Montagu Trial his actions were quoted in newspapers and subsequently in this authored texts. The criminal trial has often been miss-quoted as leading to the setting up of the Wolfenden Committee and the eventual change in the law in 1967 (the records shows that a change in the law pre-dates this case by a short amount of time). Wildeblood’s experience of the trial and his subsequent 18 month imprisonment at H. M. Prison Winchester and Wormwood Scrubs were documented in his book *Against the Law*, first published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 1955, before being reprinted as a mass book club edition by The Quality Book Club (1955) and then in paperback by Penguin (1957). See: Slide. 1. This was a ‘confessional’ autobiographical book, which was an early example of a ‘coming out’ text

with Wildeblood openly declaring 'I am a homosexual' and promoting a new kind of gay 'selfhood' (Waters, 1999: 136). As a narrative text, Wildeblood wrote it in response to the representations of his character which had been formulated and documented daily in the tabloid press reporting on the trial. He also aimed to create a text with a more personal record that would contrast with the other representations of homosexuality that had been identified by the medical, psychiatric and sociological discourses of the post-war period.

Wildeblood also felt that by writing the book there was nothing left to lose, as his 'private' life had now been made public through the press. We need to acknowledge that this book did have an impact on the change in the law as it was provided as formal evidence to the Wolfenden Committee. Wildeblood was called as the only openly gay witness to be interviewed as part of the hearing and his book/witness statement serve as a passionate proposal in the case for a need for reform. See Lewis (2016) for his witness statement which summarises many of the points which he elaborates on in his book. As such Matthew Parris notes his status as a 'leading witness to history' (1999: v), although his version of events have been questioned and we need to be aware of the intention that the book was written as a propagandist campaigning text that was designed to change the law and emotively move readers. Post-trial it was also produced and marketed to capitalise on the early tabloid coverage of the case (with the hardback red cover edition boldly claiming 'The moving inside story...').

The book has recently been adapted by Brian Fillis for a television drama/documentary *Against the Law* by BBC Studios for BBC-2 which will be broadcast later this year (and screened at the opening night gala of the BFI Flare London LGBT Film Festival next month), as the BBC press release on 8 February 2017 notes: 'With his career in tatters and his private life painfully exposed, Wildeblood began his sentence a broken man, but he emerged from Wormwood Scrubs a year later determined to do all he could to change the way these draconian laws against homosexuality impacted on the lives of men like him' (SB2, 2017). The drama is to combine documentary interviews with 'real-life testimony from a chorus of men who lived through those dark days' (SB2, 2017). Wildeblood is played by actor Daniel Mays, who tweeted 'Peter Wildeblood epitomised courage in the face of adversity. An

unsung hero for Gay Rights. Honoured to bring his story to life 4 @ BBC-2' (Slide 2). A positive move for a man who really since the late 1990s has largely been forgotten. A drama on the case is not new. In 2007 Channel 4 screened Patrick Reams' directed and scripted *A Very British Sex Scandal* (Blast! Films). Wildeblood was played by actor Martin Hutson. Though the BBC press release, as with all drama-documentaries or factually accurate historical dramas does raise questions about which version of history are portrayed on screen. Will history be rewritten to portray Wildeblood as a significant gay campaigner, working tirelessly for the cause? How will it present an understanding of the 1950s troubled gay man or the 'victim'? This image widely circulated by the press a few weeks ago shows a secretive park bench encounter – in total contrast to the openness of the *A Very British Sex Scandal* publicity image. What 'truths' will be added or constructed for the purpose of dramatized effect and a version of gay history which supports the narrative of the sad lonely gay victim?



Slide: 2

The trial itself has been detailed by a number of subsequent writers building upon Wildeblood's own testimony (including Montagu's account which appeared later in his autobiography *Wheels Within Wheels* published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 2000). Although, few subsequent resources actually make use of any original court transcripts

(often re quoting the court proceedings reported in the press), the 'narrative' of the trial is largely assembled from Wildeblood's own account and newspaper coverage of the scandalous details in the tabloid papers of the day. The key point about the court proceedings and Wildeblood's involvement in it was that it was an example of a 'trial by media', largely presented as a sensationalist story in the press. Wildeblood was represented as a tragic figure and the press attempted fix a 'homosexual' type, offering a stereotype that their readers would understand and accept, feeding into established narratives and discourses around the homosexual up to that point. In this case, it was the upper class men having sex with the working classes. The subject of cross-class relationships, Lord Montagu, Wildeblood, Pitt-Rivers having liaisons with RAF men offered an exploration of the post-war erosion of social class structures, as well as the stereotype of the upper class man enjoying a 'bit of rough').

The scandal sold newspapers, in much the same way as a celebrity based high profile court case would today. What is certainly ironic about this journalistic approach is that Wildeblood himself was a journalist - was this an attempt by the 'masculine' world of the journalist to publicly shame one of their own, or was it the ultimate disowning by an industry and establishment that Wildeblood had been a part of. The tabloid press pretty much ignored his journalistic role, focusing more on Lord Montagu. In terms of Wildeblood's own written texts forming evidence on an historical basis and despite all of the facts being reported in newspapers, we also need to be aware of Wildeblood's position as a dramatist. In fact, this aspect was largely ignored by the press at the time and he was defined by his role as a journalist (a professional news-teller), rather than a theatre writer. Looking back, this seems an unusual stance to take as it would have offered the tabloid press an easier stereotypical representation of the effeminate gay man who moved in theatrical circles. His first piece was the farce *Primrose and the Peanuts* (Playhouse Theatre, 1949) and *Cold Comfort Farm* (co-written with Kenneth Tynan) at the Haymarket Theatre (1951). Wildeblood used the theatre to create musicals and dramas that contrasted with his factual work as a journalist.



Slide: 3

In terms of the trial, we can argue that Wildeblood was a 'hero' as a result of the circulated serialised narratives in the court reporting, as it is believed he was the first man in a British court to admit that he was a homosexual since Oscar Wilde. He described himself as an 'invert' rather than a 'pervert' to the court (Montagu and Pitt-Rivers denied that they were homosexual). Many writers acknowledge his status as a gay 'hero' and Waters summarises his status as 'an image of a crusader for reform whose trial contributed martyrs to the cause and galvanised resistance to what were held to be antiquated laws at odds with modern society' (Waters, 1999: 33). In *Against the Law* Wildeblood's admission of 'guilt' was clarified to expose the underhand methods used by the police and the prosecution in the case. Following criticism of his pleading guilty, in a letter he noted that this was important to raise publicity of the case and the law.

The details of the Montagu Trial (1954) have been covered by many texts over the years: Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, his cousin the land-owner Michael Pitt-Rivers and Wildeblood being prosecuted for 'homosexual offences' (gross indecency and buggery) with two RAF airmen John Reynolds and Edward McNally on the Beaulieu estate in Montagu's beach hut. Wildeblood picked up McNally at Piccadilly Circus Underground station, subsequently

having a relationship with him and building up a regular correspondence. These incriminating documents were found by the RAF amongst other letters from other men, and the RAF Special Investigation Branch/police became involved when there was a reference in one of Wildeblood's letters to McNally of Beaulieu (home of Lord Montagu). Montagu at this time had recently been in court on a separate charge involving a stolen camera and two boy scouts on his estate. There is some evidence to suggest that there was a 'witch-hunt' against Montagu, although we need to be careful when examining the tabloid press coverage because they give an impression (quite wrongly) that there was an organised persecution by the police/authorities of essentially a homosexual witch-hunt. There's evidence to suggest that the authorities disapproved of Montagu, who tended to reject the class system and present an image of himself which was at odds with a young peer – he realised the commercial potential of his home by opening up Beaulieu as a tourist attraction and displaying his collection of cars (National Motor Museum), which still exists to this day.

Various writers have disputed the gay witch hunt theory, emphasising that it was a 'hype' created by the press (Pullen, 2012: 58-62). Writing in *The Observer* in 1955, Margaret Lane notes how the trial was 'widely believed to have been part of an organised drive to suppress male homosexuality by making an example of well-known persons' (Cause Celebre, *The Observer*, 27 November 1955), but there's been no evidence discovered to suggest this. Higgins notes the Montagu trial were not the 'show-trials of a homosexual witch-hunt launched by reactionary administration' (1996: 231). Although it's a neat narrative that does fit widespread assumptions, and many gay men at the time, did feel as though they were under threat or prosecution. Despite the 'fear' narratives that circulated, we also need to acknowledge that there was a recognition that the law was wrong and that it needed to change (evidenced by Lane and others in the 1950s making a case in the press). Montagu in his autobiography notes that on leaving court there was a 'small crowd, mainly female, but to our surprise there was no booing or hissing. Instead, there was clapping, backslapping, cries of 'good luck' and 'keep smiling'. As we were driven away in the dark to prison, the crowd went on waving and one or two gave rather forlorn thumbs-up signs' (2000: 115): offering quite a different perspective.

The serialised narratives around the trial added to the gossip and sensational detail of what actually happened when the men met. As Jeffrey Weeks notes: 'a small party attended by all three was turned, in the prosecution's vivid imaginings into a wild orgy; a meal of simple food and cider was turned into luxury food and champagne... what emerged in this, as in other trials of the period, was the attempt to sustain a stereotype of male homosexuals as decadent, corrupt, effete and effeminate' (Weeks, 1990: 162). The imagination of the reader is key here, and we can speculate how much of the exaggeration of the story was based upon the hidden meanings and interpretations in the press of the acts as: 'serious offences' or 'gross indecency', giving the readership an ownership and opportunity to fully imagine the acts that had taken place within the confinement of the set-up on the Beaulieu estate.

In order to understand this position further, we have to contextualise the press and its representation of homosexuality: the Montagu trial followed a number of other cases in the press, such as the spies Burgess & MacLean, actor John Gielgud, Labour MP William Fielding and writer Rupert Croft-Cooke (who wrote his own book with a similar aim to Wildeblood, *The Verdict Of You All* in 1955). The tabloid discourse of homosexuality centred on 'the fears and voyeuristic fascination of readers' (Waters, 1999: 139). The 1950s press interest in the subject matter consisted mainly of the *Daily Mail* (Wildeblood's own paper), *Mirror*, and *Sunday Pictorial*. The latter most famously published its series 'Evil Men' (1952): 'Most people know there are such things – 'pansies' – mincing, effeminate, young men who call themselves queers... but simple decent folk regard them as freaks and rarities'. In fact Wildeblood's account of the trial lays blame firmly upon the RAF men who were pressurised by the authorities to give evidence, described by Wildeblood's defence as 'rotten, worthless creatures...evil little men'. In many ways continuing a narrative role of gay men as deviants who cannot be trusted (epitomised publically by the coverage of the gay spy scenario). There was certainly a homophobia of the 1950s represented in 'sensationalist' newspaper stories, see: Bengry (2014) for a full coverage of the way homosexuality was explored in 1950s and 1960s Mirror Group newspapers.

The celebrity trials did offer readers an excitement and interest away from the ordinary convictions which appeared across both national and local press. Was the country largely supportive of these stories appearing in newspapers and to what extent were these reflective of the attitudes of the time? As before, there was some evidence to suggest that the public were upset at the way that the Montagu trial had treated the men and anger from the crowds at the court (which doesn't really come across in the newspaper coverage) although Lane writing after the trial in 1955 in a review of Wildeblood's book noted that it 'altered public opinion to the point where the law, and not the homosexual is forced to change' and that there was criticism about the "unsavoury" evidence gathering and the "dubious tone of the police proceedings". It is important to note that this was a trial by just the printed press. In fact, Higgins notes that all of the men were arrested on a Saturday so that the story (following briefing by the police) would appear in the Sunday newspapers the next day (1996: 242). To date, I've been unable to uncover any film newsreel or television news footage of the trial (from BBC TV news rather than ITN which was formed a year later). The only visual depictions of the trial are the original press images.

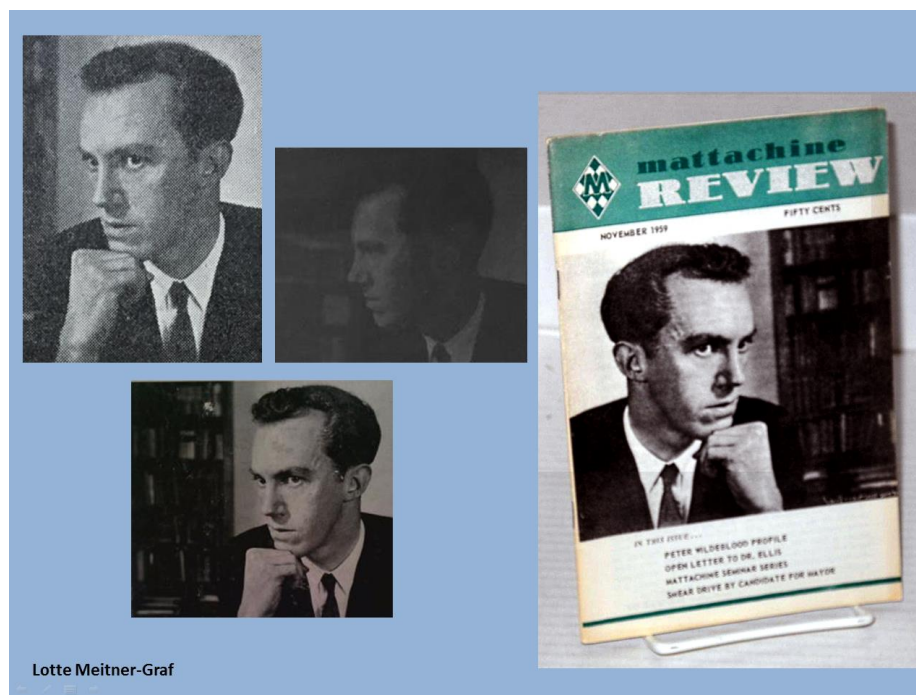


Slide: 4

In this section, I want to explore Wildeblood's representation as the 'image' of a homosexual by the press. As the press did not print the exact details of the 'acts' that had taken place, they spent a lot of time giving coverage to establishing the types of men who would commit such acts. This was in many ways an attempt to make visible the invisible, a position which the press and the media had to address in order to anchor and clarify certain types in the coverage of their stories. So, what does the homosexual look like? Much later the press would spend time on this in the infamous 'How to Spot a Possible Homo' (*Sunday Mirror*, 28 April 1963) article. In terms of the Montagu trial, the press explored the 'signs' of the homosexual by emphasising the effeminacy and effete qualities of the men involved in the trial and how they were not real men. Waters argues that journalists saw themselves as moral crusaders by doing this. The invisibility of homosexuality leading to journalists overly dramatising their 'danger and authorise their own quest to ferret out that danger' (Waters, 1999: 146). This coverage would therefore attempt to 'fix' and expose the hidden/secret homosexual.

Two types of photographs of Wildeblood appeared in the press at the time (Slide 4) and were published to emphasise his effeminacy/tragedy. The photograph in the Daily Mirror was doctored with red paint to give the impression that he wore red lipstick. This links back to an earlier period (reported in the press and magazine publications) of the cosmetic products (powder puffs, lipstick, and make-up) being used as evidence in trials/arrest of gay men importuning. Highlighted in Matt Houlbrook's essay on 'The Man With The Powder Puff': 'that homosexual desire was contingent upon an essentially woman-like character' (2007: 148). The first photographs from the preliminary hearing (Lymington) was also used: 'my face, half-frozen, had acquired a tragic, hunted look which I suppose they [journalists] thought appropriate' (Wildeblood, 1999: 75). Contrasting representations, the upper class effeminate make-up/lipstick clad queer, versus the tragic troubled soul or victim. Either way, these established Wildeblood as a representation of homosexuality and a 'character' in a drama and a narrative that was played out in the serialised coverage of the trial. The doctored photographs give an attempt by the press to visually construct him as an effeminate homosexual and in doing so offering a confirmation of the stereotypical image, which could have been stabilised further by references to his work in musical and comedy theatre, rather than his role as a journalist.

Wildeblood was not alone in this depiction, as Montagu was also portrayed as a flamboyant unconventional peer. Writing in *Against the Law*, he was keen to distance himself from the effeminate homosexual: 'Everyone has seen the pathetically-flamboyant pansy with the flapping wrists... Most of us are not like that. We do our best to look like everyone else, and we usually succeed. That is why nobody realises how many of us there are. I know hundreds of homosexuals and not more than half a dozen would be recognised by a stranger for what they are. If anything they dress more soberly and behave more conventionally in public than 'normal' men I know; they have to if they are to avoid suspicion'. The court case presented men who lacked effeminacy and were 'hidden homosexuals' - and therefore threatening. Wildeblood attempted to present an image of the acceptable homosexual, and by doing so represented the outcome of the new law in terms of decriminalisation.



Lotte Meitner-Graf

Slide: 5

After the trial there was really only one image of Wildeblood which was circulated (Slide 5). His black and white publicity still for his books and subsequently theatre programmes. This was a portrait by Lotte Meitner-Graf (1899-1973) whose work included many photographic

pieces for books, posters, LP sleeves, programmes and who only worked in black and white (her work appears in the National Portrait Gallery). Richard Hornsey describes Meitner-Graf's image as the 'picture of a notorious convicted invert trying to re-present himself as a serious intellectual' with 'a certain forced theatricality' and 'staring eyes that seem a little too desperate; the theatrical fist that tries to disavow its own limpness... This is the only way in which Wildeblood's essential homosexuality can possibly be visually articulated' (2007: 100). An image which is open to a range of readings and interpretations. The key point is that this was the image of the 'homosexual', and we have to consider the comfort that this may have brought to gay men coming out at the time when there were so few depictions elsewhere. We can read the semiotics of this image in a range of ways. Although I feel it's important to be aware of Meitner-Graf's position as an artist and how, as her *The Times* Obituary notes, 'hands often fascinated her as much as faces' (O. R. Frisch, 'Lotte Meitner-Graf' 2 May 1973). Was this image about conveying or fixing his homosexuality? What was Meitner-Graf attempting to convey in this image? How much involvement did Wildeblood have in this? We can only speculate on the dynamics of their relationship as artist and subject. *The Times* notes that 'no print left her studio unless she had achieved what she wanted, with shades from velvety black to the most delicate grey'. It is true to say that Hornsey gets tied up in his semiotic reading of this image, with little disregard for the photographer who he describes as 'the mysterious name of the photographer... which may or may not signify a connection to the queer excesses of pre-war Germany' (2007: 100). Meitner-Graf was Austrian. It would have been a little too 'neat' to have linked Wildeblood to pre-war gay Germany.

In *Against the Law* and his Wolfenden witness statement, Wildeblood considered himself as someone with a 'tragic disability' (an unseen disability by today's standards) and that being gay was like having 'colour blindness' (citing Havelock Ellis): 'I am no more proud of my condition than I would be of a having a glass eye or a hare lip'. He argued he was the type that was "similar to heterosexual men in all respects except for their sexual object choice' (cited in Waters, 1999: 149). Wildeblood's book attempted to provide a case for a respectable homosexual identity. He was also aware of how his book could help others and that other gay men would feel supported/comforted by his writing: 'I would be the first homosexual to tell what it felt like to be an exile in one's own country. I might destroy

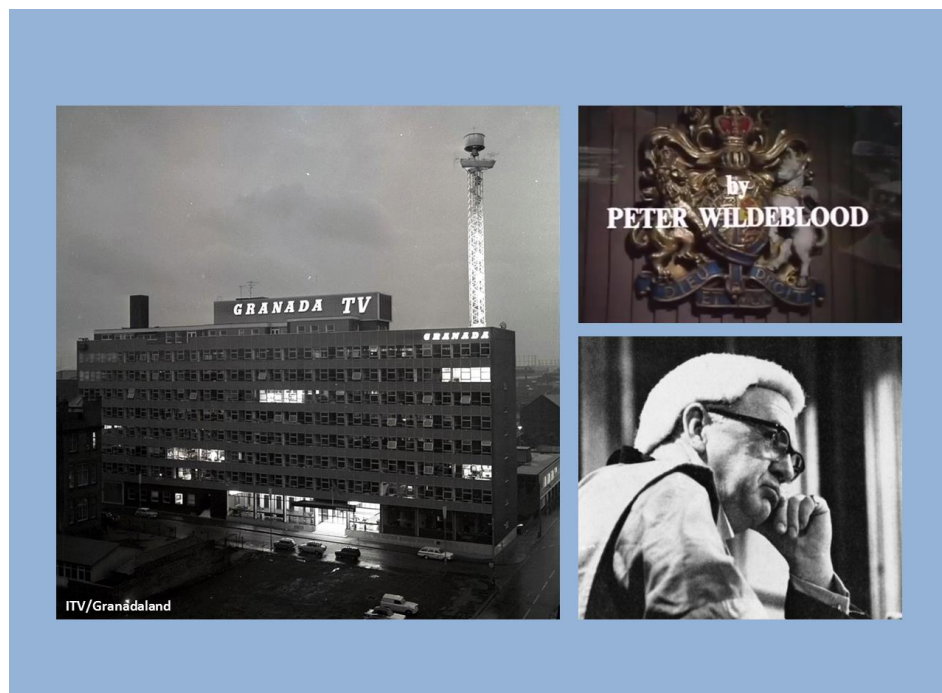
myself, but perhaps I could help others' (cited by Parris, in Wildeblood, 1999: v).

Wildeblood's stance as a writer and in particular a letter writer gives us an invaluable insight into his character. His whole involvement in the criminal case was brought by his letters 'expressing a deep emotional attachment, which turned the scales against me' (1999: 177). Importantly, his letters/correspondence with members of the public who he did not know gives insight into his role as a 'private' rather than public campaigner, away from the limelight. He would write to various publications which would often print his letters, complete with the full details of his home address at 30 St. Paul's Road, Canonbury, London NW1. This led to many gay men corresponding with him, telephoning him (finding his number in the London telephone directory) and turning up unannounced at his home unannounced (as noted in Wildeblood's second book 'A Way of Life', also published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 1956). Peter Scott-Presland writing in his book *Amiable Warriors* (2015) records that one visitor to Wildeblood's address was Allan Horsfall (1927-2012) who worked alongside him in the late 1950s to implement the Wolfenden Report through the Homosexual Law Reform Society. Horsfall was in many ways the pioneer 'campaigner' that Wildeblood never really was, as his work did have a direct impact on a campaign for gay equality for many years. Wildeblood did become something of a 'gay celebrity', after being released from prison and after the publication of his book he was in some demand as a lecturer (including one invitation to speak at Oxford University) and had autograph requests sent to his home address.

What has never been explored before is his impact in America. One, incorporated (Los Angeles) the publisher of ONE magazine contacted him after newspaper cuttings of the Montagu trial, book previews/reviews were sent to them by people in Britain. The One archive contains several letters of correspondence. William Lambert, secretary of ONE even wrote to Wildeblood requesting him to write articles and keen to widen the magazine's UK circulation, offered him a role as a Contributing Editor as a 'spokesman for the English homosexual' (which he declined possibly because there was no money involved and there's an indication that he was well aware of his status as a professional journalist, referring the editor of ONE magazine to his New York literary agent Marion Saunders). This correspondence which has been retained by the ONE archive gives us a rare insight into Wildeblood's post release life: in a letter to Lambert he notes: 'I don't think anyone has

appeared on a public platform as a homosexual before, and the attitude of the audience is remarkably sympathetic, with one or two exceptions of course!’ (Letter to William Lambert, 7 June 1956).

In the late 1950s as the face of the English homosexual, his Meitner-Graf image appeared on the cover of the Mattachine Review (November 1959) Slide 5. A cover star of a gay magazine in the USA (although the lack of a new image – by this time it was 4 years old gives us an indication that perhaps he wasn’t keen to take on the role of the ‘visible’ homosexual). However, his position as the first public figure homosexual was also something that Wildeblood appeared to be enjoying, writing to Lambert on 1st May 1956 after his Oxford University appearance he notes: ‘The reception was extraordinarily cordial; prolonged applause and a very full account of my speech (attacking the present laws) in the local press. This of course as produced the usual barrage of letters from maladjusted morons, but the significant thing was that I was invited to speak at all, considering my record!’. A comment that gives insight into how he regarded himself as a convicted criminal and the ‘maladjusted morons’ a possible indication of some of the more negative correspondence to his home address.

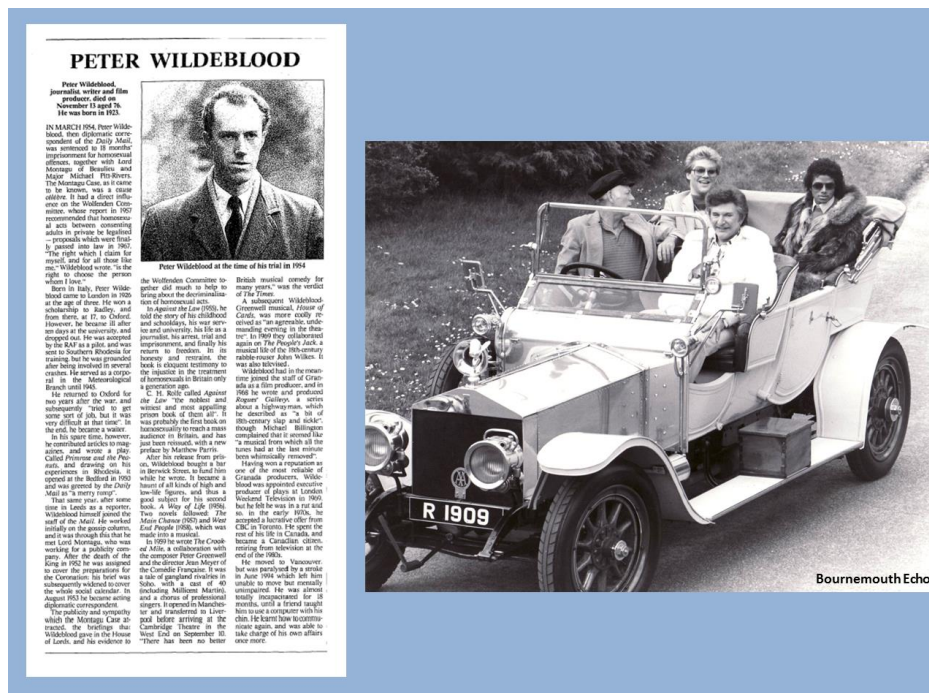


Slide: 6

Wildeblood's career after prison was not really in 'tatters'. He moved with ease into television and in 1958 he started writing scripts for Granada television (North West ITV region) and his experiences of his time in Manchester are fondly recalled in his penned chapter 'The hindsight saga' in John Finch's edited book 'Granada Television: The first generation' (Manchester University Press, 2003: 132-134). For a convicted criminal, it seems an unusual move that Wildeblood should become employed by such a high profile ITV company. There are no details in the Granada TV paper archive clarifying the circumstances around this employment, although they were the more liberal of the companies, and took risks in terms of their production content. In 1957 Granada produced the first gay documentary *Homosexuality and the Law* (ITV, tx. 5 September 1957) which followed on from the Wolfenden Report (the documentary was also transcribed and sold as a pamphlet). They also employed openly gay men (Tony Warren, the creator of *Coronation Street* being a good example). Wildeblood's appointment may have been connected to the difficulties that Granada experienced appointing producers/directors, as most were tied up with appointments to the BBC.

Wildeblood's talent as a dramatist in the early days of commercial television were noted, in particular in court room based dramas and he helped Granada television to establish its 'reality' led anthology drama-documentary series. In 1960 he was appointed as a producer for the court room reconstruction series *On Trial* (1960-61) and this continued with *The Verdict Is Yours* which was an improvised court drama. Autobiographically his experiences of the courts feeding into the drama. What is particularly interesting here is that his success as a writer of court/law based drama tied in with his role as a figure that campaigned for prison reform. I'd argue that this was at the heart of his interests post the publication of his *Against the Law* book, and was subsequently the subject matter of a number of his television projects, rather than his gay campaigning. In researching all of his writing/producing credits on television it has not uncovered one single openly gay character or major gay themes in any of his broadcast scripts. An unusual position for someone who has been identified as a key 'gay campaigner' or hero to the cause. As a campaigner, Wildeblood had access to television (a platform that could potentially reach millions of viewers and produce dramas that may have been supportive to gay rights and promoted change). His distance from the cause at Granada is certainly worth noting here. He could

have developed a number of gay narratives in the post-legislation period in the 1960s/70s but he didn't. A number of the popular drama series which he would write/produce for went on to give other writers a platform to write for gay characters and themes in: *Crown Court* (Granada, 1972-84), *Within These Walls* (London Weekend Television, 1974-78) and *Upstairs, Downstairs* (London Weekend Television, 1971-77). In fact, the only gay related television productions that I have been able to locate in his thirty year career in television was as the producer of two editions of the series *On Trial* which reconstructed the trials of 'Sir Roger Casement' (ITV, tx. 8 July 1960) and 'Oscar Wilde' (ITV, tx. 5 August 1960). Perhaps he wanted to distance himself from being the face of the public homosexual and making dramas along these lines seemed too clichéd (or could it have reopened the viewers' memories of the earlier trial). His final 'gay' role was in 1971, many years after establishing himself as a successful TV producer and writer working for different ITV companies and the BBC, he was made Honorary Vice President of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE). Although, there's nothing to document what he did in this position.



Slide: 7

As a person, Wildeblood could be difficult and arrogant. Scott-Presland presents him as Peter Tatchell figure: "many found him uncomfortable, abrasive and difficult to work with,

which is often the lot of the gay campaigner with strong convictions and the sense that there's no time to waste" (2015: 101). I'm not sure it's helpful to compare Wildeblood to Tatchell here, but the point being made is fair. Wildeblood moved to Canada in the late 1970s and continued to work in television as a writer/producer for the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) in Toronto. He retired from TV in the 1980s and became a Canadian citizen, suffering a stroke in 1994 and passing away in November 1999. His forgotten status is somewhat emphasised by his *The Times* using the image of his first court appearance for his obituary.

Wildeblood was certainly the 'brave' face of homosexuality in Britain in the 1950s, an image that was circulated in the press and his publications both in the UK and other countries. However, as a hero/gay campaigner we need to give credit to what he actually achieved. We shouldn't forget that Wildeblood was a private campaigner, one whose work was largely hidden after his public scandal/books. It is hoped that more letters will be uncovered to add to a wider sense of his unrecognised work that has not been discussed. His letters reveal, are a man who spent time to corresponding with others, offering support where needed and bringing gay men a sense of hope at a time when they needed it most (and I'm sure he was not forgotten by those people). As such Wildeblood's work mirrored more of the many other 'forgotten' individuals whose work has never been recognised and who helped to mentor, support, and connect with everyday gay men and women. These are the unsung heroes who contributed to the changes that happened.

I hope that the way Wildeblood is represented in the forthcoming BBC drama is fair, and that it acknowledges his private persona away from the constructed public image and the propagandist nature of his original campaigning text (all indications are that the drama is an adaptation of his book) doesn't end up skewering his place in LGBT history and presenting him as the type of gay pioneer/campaigner that he never was during the 1950s and beyond.

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