

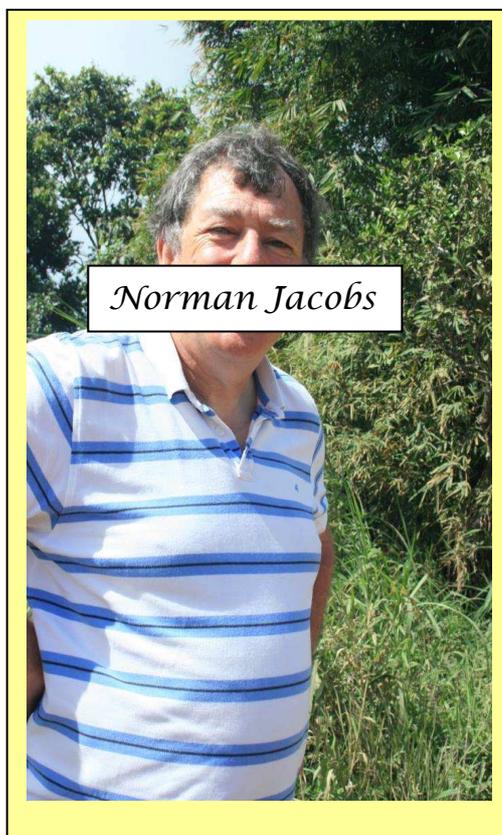
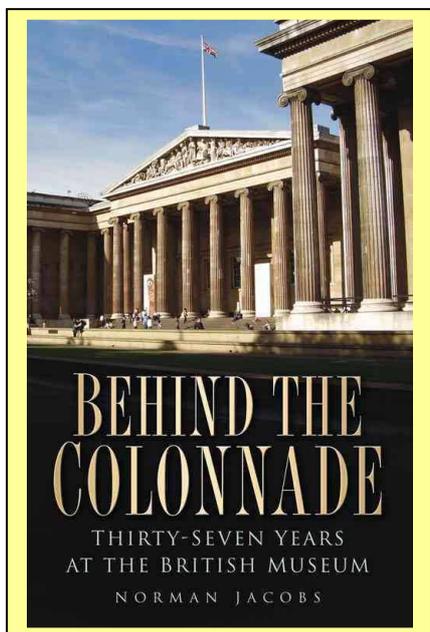
## WE ALL THINK WE CAN WRITE A BOOK!

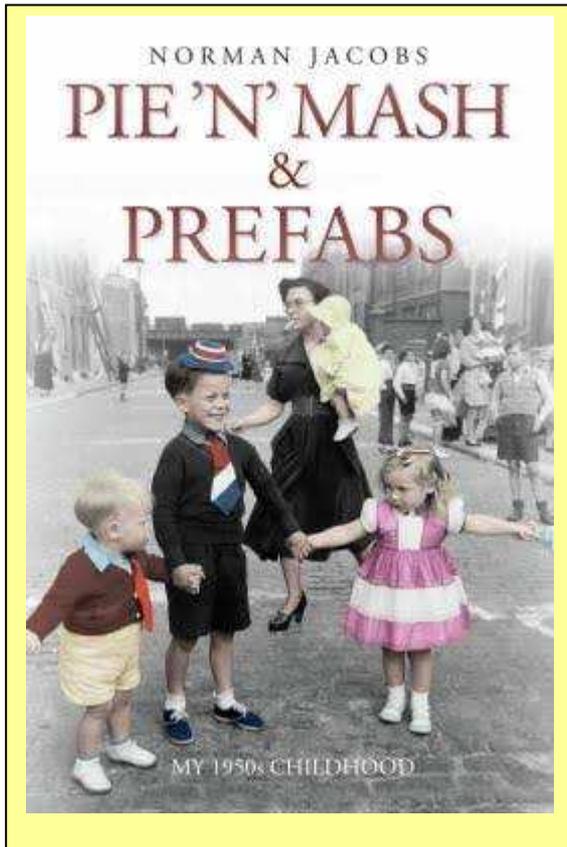
*Mick Hawes (1964-1967) praises **Norman Jacobs**, a friend from the year below him at Keswick, for his writing accomplishments.*

They say that everyone has a book in them. Many of us have said, “I will write a book about this someday.” But that is far as it goes. In contrast, Norman has written and has had published twenty six books. Twelve of them are about speedway and many are concerned with local history. There is also one entitled, “Vivian Woodward – Football's Gentleman,” a biography of the amateur who led England to victory at both the 1908 and 1912 Olympic Games.

Most recently, Norman has completed two volumes of autobiography. “Behind the Colonnade,” tells of Norman's 37 years at the British Museum - a career that took him from stationery clerk to manager of human resources for the Museum's 1,100 employees. Robert G.W. Anderson (former Director of the museum) writes in his forward to the book, “The kind of

information we are able to obtain from Norman's forthright memoir would be very difficult to gain from other available sources.” It is certainly a 'no holds barred' account. Norman is quite prepared to criticise certain colleagues, praise others and give some the benefit of the doubt. He clearly loved working at the museum and both his satisfactions and frustrations show through. He is just as honest about what brought him there in the first place. “I had left Keswick Hall Training College in January 1969 as, after two teaching practices, I realised that teaching wasn't for me.”





Norman followed this success with, “Pie 'n' Mash & Prefabs: My 1950s Childhood” - an account of his first 18 years. College is a time when you meet a lot of people but with little knowledge about the background of any of them. To have, 50 years later, such a detailed account of one of their lives up to the point where you met them is fascinating. It is Norman's own favourite book to date and certainly shows that a wealth of previous writing experience is an advantage when it comes to writing one's own life story.

I asked Norman if he had any advice on writing an autobiography. In typical fashion, he writes: “Start when you were born and keep going. Make it interesting for other people by referencing events that would be common to people who lived

through the same period or would be of interest to those who didn't, to show how people lived. Don't go through the minutiae of your life as it could get very boring. Humour and a bit of sadness are good. Human interest, I suppose, is the key.”

I also asked his advice about getting published. Norman commented: “It might sound odd but I'm not really sure about how to go about getting it published, as once I got started back in 1984 (by being asked to compile a photographic book about Clacton) it's all just sort of followed on for me. If you do write an autobiography, I suppose there are two ways of getting it published. The first is find an agent. You can look them up on the Internet. Send off a couple of chapters and a synopsis of the rest. It's no good contacting publishers direct as most of them only accept work through an agent and, in any case, agents have more clout with publishers. The second is to self-publish. As far as I understand it is relatively easy now to publish your work as an e-book, though I've never done it myself. You have to be prepared to put a lot into publicising it if you do that.”

So having covered the first 18 years of his life and the 37 years of his career, what about the bit in the middle? Having spent only 16 months at Keswick Hall, will Norman be able to get another book out of it? Knowing Norman, I wouldn't put it past him...

**Mick Hawes**