



Les Barker

A short biography from the age of three until nearly teatime.

Les Barker writes strange poems and comes from Manchester. He was an accountant before he became a professional idiot. He's written 63 books, which sell in large numbers at his gigs because people don't quite believe what they've just heard. His poems have spawned a number of folk heroes: **Jason and the Arguments, Cosmo the Fairly Accurate Knife Thrower, Captain Indecisive and Spot of the Antarctic**, to name but two.

Les began his career as assistant to **Mrs Ackroyd**, a small hairy mongrel who lay around in folk clubs, bit people and became famous. Mrs Ackroyd was the only dog ever to own her own record label. Since her sad demise, Les is mainly a solo performer, though he has taken to working with humans from time to time.

The Mrs Ackroyd Band gradually evolved from an ever-changing who's who of the folk scene into a tightly knit, well-rehearsed group.

Les has several solo albums to his credit: '**Dogologues**', '**An Infinite Number of Occasional Tables**', '**A Cardi and Bloke**', '**Up the creek without a poodle**' and his new album, '**Arovertherapy**'. He has travelled the length, breadth and height of **Great Britain**, as well as **Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, the United States** and - both solo and with the band - **Canada**.

The Mrs Ackroyd Band - supplemented by guest members such as **June Tabor and Martin Allcock** - has released three albums; **Oranges & Lemmings**, '**Gnus & Roses**' and '**Tubular Dogs**'.

In addition there are three highly acclaimed albums of his serious work; the folk opera 'The Stones of Callanish', 'Some Love', and most recently '**The Wings of Butterflies**', all involving a galaxy of talent. His serious songs have also featured on recent albums by **Martin Carthy and Dave Swarbrick**, and by **June Tabor**. June invariably includes a smattering of Mr Barker's serious and comic songs in her live performances.

Les and the **Mrs Ackroyd Band** burst furtively onto national radio with a series of six programmes for **BBC Radio 2** entitled '**Mrs Ackroyd explores up her roots**'. A new, and much larger audience were led in ever decreasing circles by Mr Barker's strange mind. A growing number of radio programmes worldwide are featuring his recorded work. Dr Demento has included the Mrs Ackroyd Band's performance of '**Dachshunds with erections can't climb stairs**' on one of his compilations, and '**Will the turtle be unbroken?**' on another.. What else can one say about Les Barker? He was Old York Victoria's footballer of the year in the season

when they finished top of the Altrincham League. He has run a marathon in two hours forty one minutes; but he was younger then.

He's very difficult to describe. But there's only one of him. Go and see him (and buy some of his books).

Les Barker - A selection of quotes: -

...he may be the best writer of parodies and wordplays that the English-speaking world has ever heard.
-Tom Nelligan, *Dirty Linen*

There are subtleties which you didn't notice the first time round, and there are clever puns and turns of phrase so good you look forward to hearing them again.
-Caroline Walker, *Folk Roots*

This man is a genuine genius of comic rhyme who appeals to people of all ages with a truly entertaining family show. I have seen him reduce a whole marquee full of festival goers at Victor Harbor to a mass of helpless laughter and aching sides. -Ron Ashton, *Port Lincoln Times*

Les Barker is the greatest comedy talent we possess....This is probably the funniest tape I have ever heard. He's a master at exploiting the idiosyncracies of the English language, weaving in myth and history to build bizarre Stories.
-Agraman, *City Life*

Idiot Returns South Australian
newspaper headline

*Les, long known as an inveterate punster who reads his improbable verse monologues to increasingly hysterical audiences, wrote that serious and attractive tale, the *Stones of Callanish*. But it was the comic Barker that then entertained this audience with his other new direction, the *Mrs Ackroyd Band*.*
-Barry Seddon, *Manchester Evening News*.

The Lancashire monologist equivalent of Tom Lehrer... Scintillating daftness, absurdity run amok.
-Ken Hunt, *Q Magazine*

'Mrs Ackroyd Explores her Roots' is not about national or regional identity. Radio 2's gentle, modestly off-the-wall comedy is a discovery...mild-mannered presenter Les Barker blends Edward Lear's nonsense, Stanley Unwin's wordplay, the surreal inconsequentiality of Reeves and Mortimer and the demotic robustness of Stanley Holloway monologues. -Martin Hoyle, *Financial Times*

...his jokes, having slipped the surly bonds of earthly logic, go marching on.
-Nick Beale, *Folk Roots*

*This man even sells his own underwear. He was a big hit at the Winnipeg and Vancouver Folk Festivals in the summer with the *Mrs Ackroyd Band*. Now he's tackling Canada all by himself.*
-Steve Edge, *Rogue Folk Club*

The man's a comic genius with a solid presence in folk music and at folk festivals.
-Don Mills.

Depending on your state of health this man could be a real Ionic to your wellbeing or fatal. Mostly he's a ray of sunshine capable of brightening up the darkest day.
-Kevin Meehan

Les Barker's strange imagination soars to musical heights on the stunning voices of Alison Younger and Hilary Spencer and the wizard keyboard arrangements of Chris Harvey, accompanied by a collection of hats, fruit and inflatable pigs. Find out more about Les and the Mrs Ackroyd Band.