

Edna

the Inebriate Woman

*Every person who...
...or believes, or...
...exceeding...
Every person...
...any letter or other document...
...regulations, into or out of...
...exceeding 50 pounds...
A person shall be deemed...
...to the regulations of...
...or deposits it at any...
...into the possession of...
No person shall with...
...prison, or convey...
...in any place with...
...money, clothing, or...
...Anything so...*



JEREMY SANDFORD

EDNA

THE INEBRIATE WOMAN

by

JEREMY SANDFORD

Marion Boyars London

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INTRODUCTION

Edna was written because of my anger at the sort of lives that we, an affluent country, are prepared to tolerate for those in the bilges of our population.

In *Cathy* I had written of the cruelty done to our homeless families. Now I wanted to look at the lives of our *single* homeless—the sort of person that *Cathy* had become when, stripped of her family, she walked into the night away from the railway station.

Specific impetus was given by the Rev. Ian Henderson of the Christian Action Hostel for Homeless Women in Lambeth High Street, and I kept in close touch with and received much help from the staff and clients of the hostel.

The response of society to the single homeless is, I believe, both absurd and expensive.

We send them on a trek from prison to psychiatric hospital, to common lodging house, which does nothing to help them and is immensely expensive to the taxpayer.

How many people are there like *Edna* in Britain? And what attitude should we take to them? At the time when *Edna* was first written, concern about the homeless family has been mobilised in 'Shelter' and the Squatters, but the equally grave problem of homeless single persons had so far received less attention. Such people are often dubbed 'socially inadequate', and information about them was fairly hard to come by.

Kenneth Stonely, representing the National Association of Voluntary Hostels, an organisation that tries to find homes for such people, told me, 'We alone now try to find homes for thousands of such people each year. Some thousands sleep out. Others will come from a meagre bed in a common lodging house (about 30,000 beds in Britain) or psychiatric hospital, or prison, or some other type of institution.' These are the exits from the down-and-out world. The fruitless heavens for those who've fallen foul of 'Britain basking in its contemporary affluence'.

Anton Wallich-Clifford of the Simon Community Trust has campaigned through most of his life for such people. He said, 'The Survey done by the National Assistance Board in 1966 estimated many thousands of people who sometimes or habitually sleep rough. My researches indicate an even greater number. To the thousands of people in reception centres and common lodging houses must be added thousands of homeless inadequate single people who are, at the moment, in mental hospitals or prison or other institutions. The homeless single person—who is he? So often he is someone who has suffered a series of acts of violence which have been directed against him. I estimate there are in Britain 100,000 people of this type for whom there are no social services available from which they could get real benefit. We at the Simon Community Trust have set up many hostels to try to help these people. I am hopeful—but also sometimes feel despair. Even

in Brighton in February, so a survey showed, there were at least fifty people sleeping on the beach—some in pleasure shelters overlooking the waves.’

‘What makes them like they are?’ I asked a doctor.

‘Some claim it’s very simple—and sad. That hardly any of them had the pleasure of a loving relationship with their parents. This is what maims them, so that they can’t normally make contact with society. Many others had foster parents. Others again were institutionalised in psychiatric hospital or prison.’

Christian Action has established a hostel for such people and describes them in a recent handout, written by Leslie Tuft, as follows: ‘Many live in shiftless existence, moving restlessly from one lodging house to another. Others are to be found in psychiatric and general hospitals, casualty departments, police stations, and in prison. Yet others have no alternative but to sleep rough in doorways or all-night laundrettes, telephone kiosks, or on the wooden benches of the main-line railway stations. Traumatic childhood experiences—early departure from the family home, loss of family ties, inability to settle for long on one job or one place, no marriage or a disastrous failure of marriage, all contribute to the development of a possible social isolation.’

I arranged in the script for Edna to pass through many of the traditional lodging places of persons of her type. Sometimes she was sleeping out in ‘derries’ (derelict buildings). Occasionally she used the ‘Spike’—or reception centre. These places are so named because in the old days, in exchange for a night’s shelter, you had to break up a certain number of rocks on a spike. There used to be Spikes arranged as a network all over Britain, usually connected to the old workhouses, and each a day’s walk apart. Since the war, however, the policy has been to close them down, so that there are not many of them left now and they’ve been renamed ‘Reception Centres’.

A rung above these again come the ‘kiphouses’. Many of these are run by the Salvation Army, some run by local authorities, others by Rowton Houses, the Church of England, the Army, and others. Beyond these are psychiatric hospital and prison.

The events of my story of Edna are all based on real events that happened to real down-and-outs—men and women—within the last few years.

Move on, move on. This seems to be the reality of life for thousands of dossers and down-and-outs in Britain.

‘Oh yes, the shades (police) like to have a clean beat,’ one tells me. And yet down-and-outs possess many Christ-like virtues. They take no thought for the morrow, lay up no worldly goods.

People like Edna are people to whom violence has been done. And to a certain extent this has kept them, though adult in physical appearance, at the stage of development of children.

If I behave unjustly to a child he will sulk and say, ‘I hate you’. But what he is really saying is, ‘Please love me’. A wise parent or schoolmaster realises this, and that a fit

the sulks, accompanied by', Fuck society, put me back in the nick, at any rate that warm,' etc. etc., is a plea for help.

Help we must and care we must. More and more people each year are going into care and, despite pruning, entry into psychiatric hospitals remains roughly constant. More people are going into the courts, into homes for juveniles and into prison—especially teenagers.

The flood of homeless teenagers who seem unable to cope with society is becoming so great that it now constitutes one-third of all the NAVH placements. And this is a grave sign. Many of course will find a happier orientation in life when they 'settle down'. But the numbers are too great for us to write off the danger so easily.

And, if we don't learn better how to cope with the Ednas of Britain they will continue to grow in numbers—until they constitute a population numbering, not one hundred thousand, but hundreds of thousands.

I believe that the answer for Britain's thousands of Ednas' lies in permissive hostels akin to the fictional one run by Josie in my script. Hostels like this that I have been connected with and applaud are run by the Cyrenians. There are too many people around who are not capable of functioning outside a protective set-up. But, once provide the protective set-up, which need be little more than a house that they can be confident they'll not be thrown out of, and these people can achieve a happy and fulfilled life. Those considering what life-style would be most fulfilling for themselves and also helpful to others could do worse than consider going through the necessary stages to set up such a place. Most people make the decision to have a family and look after their own children. But there is a need for hundreds of people to make a different decision, and instead, set up artificial families.

This is happening. All the time, new hostels or 'houses of hospitality' are springing up and there are now hundreds of places in Britain corresponding more or less to the one run by Josie in this script. But the situation is not a rosy one. There have also been many closures. Many people in this field of social work have told me that pressure gets worse, not better. There is need for hundreds more. What threatens this sort of hostel?

Firstly, the problem of personnel. It is hard to find someone of the right personality to run them.

Secondly, finance. The Government can underpin the price of beds for certain types of hostel. This is good. Some hostels, however, are run on such a shoestring that it is impossible for them to get up to the standards which would be passable by the local Health Inspector. Receiving Government money would make them liable to be inspected and so they do not claim money because they fear that if they were inspected they would be closed down.

In those hostels which are not afraid of this, one of the most important things that the kindly person running them can do is to help their residents claim what is their right from Social Security. So often a failure in communication has resulted in a breakdown in

relationships with the Social Security and this can be put right. The Social Security will then pay their rent.

A few local authorities are making available houses which are not to be developed for a few years to those who would like to run houses of hospitality. Otherwise it is necessary to find such a place to rent or to buy—this again presents money problems.

A third thing which threatens the establishment of hostels is the antagonism of neighbours. Here there is a need for greater understanding. And I would be happy if I felt that Edna had helped a little with this.

Jeremy Sandford

CREDITS

Written by	Jeremy Sandford
Director	Ted Kotcheff
Photography	Peter Bartlett
Sound	Peter Edwards
Editor	Peter Coulson
Producer	Irene Shubik

Edna, the Inebriate Woman was written in late 1968 and early 1969. It was filmed by Ted Kotcheff for the BBC and transmitted in 1971.

This version of the script is the one from which the film was made, (BBC project number 02140/3484). I have tidied it up in places to make it easier reading. I have added two scenes that I wrote, at Ted Kotcheff's suggestion, while the film was being made. These are the 'Blimey O'Reilly' scene in the dormitory at the spike, and the scene in the washroom at the 'Manor House'.

CAST

EDNA	Patricia Hayes
JOSIE	Barbara Jefford
IRENE	Patricia Nye
ATTENDANT AT THE SPIKE	June Watson
DOCTOR AT THE SPIKE	Denis Carey
OLD MEN	Gerry Verno
	Rex Rashley
PROPRIETOR OF COMMON LODGING HOUSE	Walter Sparrow
JESSIS	Amelia Bayntun
SOCIAL SECURITY CLERK	Douglas Ditta
TRAMPS	Chris Gannon
	Talfryn Thomas
	Charles Farrell
	Vivian Macherrell
PADDY AT COMMON LODGING HOUSE	Marie Conmee
DORIS, ON THE ROAD	Jenny Logan
MAN IN CAR	Anthony Dawes
SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICIAL	Elaine Mitchell
PSYCHIATRIST	John Hussey
OLD WOMEN	Dorothy Lane
	Patsy O'Shea
	June Brown
CLARA	Jumoke Derayo
STAFF NURSE	Jo Maxwell Muller
NINA	Malcolm Terris
PSYCHIATRIST IN HOSPITAL	Keith Marsh
PORTER	Eamonn Boyce
PROPRIETOR OF LODGING HOUSE	James Cairncross
ROGO AT CHARITABLE INSTITUTION	Virginia Snyders
BED TICKET PROPRIETOR	Alex Marshall
SOCIAL SECURITY CLERK	Norman Lumsden
MAGISTRATE	Mark Moss
POLICEMAN	Merelina Kendall
NUNS	Francis Tomelty
	Freda Dowie
MOTHER SUPERIOR	John Trigger
GRAHAM	

TRUDI	Geraldine Sherman
VANGI	Cheryl Hall
TERESA	Kate Williams
VICTOR	Roger Hammond
LIL	Peggy Aitchison
COUNSEL AT PUBLIC HEARING	Jeffrey Sega
DEFENCE	David Garth
CHAIRMAN	George Belbin

The author acknowledges, with much gratitude, the splendour of Patricia Haye performance as Edna, and the magnificence of Ted Kotcheff's direction.

EDNA THE INEBRIATE WOMAN

screenplay

A Road. Night

Out of the darkness, out of the night, a frayed decrepit fragile old figure emerges.

First she is a speck lit up fitfully by the headlamps of passing cars. Then she gets closer and we see her solitary trudge. Under one arm she has a polythene parcel. She passes us and continues.

Common Lodging House. Kitchen. Night

Tatty room with two or three gas stoves in it.

EDNA a curious bundle of rags, is leaping up and down on the floor of the kitchen, a bizarre figure trying to stamp on beetles.

She stops to turn on the gas for a cup of tea, then returns to her occupation.

PROPRIETOR. Out you go Edna now, you know you can't stay here—we're closed. Haven't I told you that?

EDNA. Sorry. Sorry. I was just trying to rid it of the beetle. After so many beetle ...

PROPRIETOR. Never mind the beetle. Anyway, they won't harm you no more. You're going. Remember?

EDNA. I was just trying to stamp out the beetle.

PROPRIETOR. Why?

EDNA. Cos I don't like them.

PROPRIETOR. They won't worry you. You're going. Edna, (*hustling her*) Remember? G-O-I-N spells going.

EDNA. Goodbye. Goodbye beetle.

EDNA *leaves.*

On the Road. Night

EDNA *walking. She mutters.*

EDNA. After so many. After so many beetle.

A tree is lit up fitfully by the headlamps of a passing car.

EDNA. Life ... I call it a study in dry rot. Flitter. Flitter.

OFFICIAL VOICE. Some of the inmates of the lodging house took it badly. Two of them even went out and threw a brick through a window.

EDNA. But I didn't do it. Oh no, I didn't do it. No. Flitter. Flitter

In a Ruined Building in the Country. Night

EDNA *sitting by a very small fire.*

She explains to an OLD TRAMP

EDNA. It's me legs, see, it's me legs. Yes, it's me legs play me up. In the summer, in the summer things are much better. It's the while we have all this cold, that's the trouble, that's when me legs go numb with an awful lot of pain ... Well, like today, there was a little bit of sun, I went and sat in the sun and I felt a great improvement. As long as it don't get too hot. But it don't do that this time of the year. Too much hot draws it. Worse than the other. But we should be all right now. Well, sometimes the sun draws them sometimes it's the cold draws them, draws me veins you see.

Spike. Night

A metal door in which there is a small grill. The little panel behind the grill opens and ATTENDANT's face peers out. The panel closes and door opens. EDNA enters.

Spike Hallway. Night

FEMALE SPIKE ATTENDANT. Name?

EDNA. Edna O'Casey

ATTENDANT. Let's see your cards

EDNA. Ain't got no cards

ATTENDANT. Sorry, you can't come here if you've got no cards.

EDNA. I can. You've got to take me in. It's me right

ATTENDANT. Sod your right. No cards and you don't come in here. Any other way of identifying yourself?

EDNA. I've got a right to come here and I've a right to put right me right to putting me right foot sock you in the ear'ole!

ATTENDANT. Sod off.

Spike. Bath-house. Night

EDNA *naked. Being inspected by ATTENDANT with the aid of a small portable searchlight.*

ATTENDANT. Where are you from?

EDNA. From around. From round about. Just from the round about.

ATTENDANT. Yes, but before you got to the roundabout.

EDNA *shyly in the form of a small question;*

EDNA. I was in the Psychiatric? No, I been roundabout. Just from round about the rounds—the roundabout.

ATTENDANT. *Sighs.* You used to be on the road once long ago wasn't you? Always popping in from some different direction?

EDNA. Yes. I used to be on the road at one time. But now I'm more settled down. (*pause*) regular work. Why have they moved this place? It used to be in the centre of the town.

ATTENDANT. Administrative difficulties.

EDNA. They moved it because they want to stamp out us people. Stamp us off the earth.

ATTENDANT. It was thought to be better to put it here.

EDNA moves to bathe herself.

The ATTENDANT now searches her clothing for nits and lice with the same powerful searchlight.

During her search she comes across a half bottle of V.P. wine, which she throws into a dustbin.

ATTENDANT. Are you sure you're skint? You know you have to be skint to come here.

EDNA in shower or bath, says:

EDNA. I'm sure.

ATTENDANT. I know you say you're sure, but are you really?

EDNA. Yes.

ATTENDANT. Well, you know you'll have to leave tomorrow.

EDNA. Yes.

*The ATTENDANT places EDNA's clothing in a strong polythene bag and adds ethyl formate
it.*

ATTENDANT. I'll have to de-infestate these clothes. Here you are.

She hands EDNA a coarse nightdress.

Spike. Dining-room. Night

There are ten tables.

Silence

EDNA sitting eating a large hunk of bread, corned beef, a large cup of tea.

A WOMAN sits to whom EDNA talks.

EDNA. An old fella tells me the other day; I've given up gambling and I've given up drinking and swearing. Bloody 'ell, says he, I've left me playing cards down the pub.

EDNA laughs. She looks at the WOMAN hoping for some reaction.

But there is none.

Spike. The Dormitory. Night

Silence

EDNA finishes taking off top clothes and is getting into bed.

Twenty beds. A few occupied.

EDNA gets into bed and lies down.

WOMAN. Lie down. Lie down. Come on chicken.

EDNA sits up.

EDNA. What did you say?

WOMAN. Lie down! Blimey O'Reilly. Don't know where you're going or what you're doing! Lie down! Now here. Now there. This place isn't the bloody beach you know.

EDNA. I'm sorry.

EDNA lies down.

WOMAN. I saw you. Lie down. And go to sleep. Blimey O'Reilly. Awake half the night.

EDNA sits up.

EDNA. Shut up.

She lies down again.

WOMAN. Taking it easy. This place isn't the beach you know.

Spike. A Room

A bench on which sit OLD MEN and EDNA

DOCTOR. Are you in work now?

OLD MAN I. Oh, yes, sir.

DOCTOR. What are you doing?

OLD MAN I. I'm doing the buckets and that outside the bathroom. And swilling down the tiles.

The DOCTOR sits at a green baize covered table.

A fire is burning brightly.

DOCTOR. Oh, so you work *here*.

OLD MAN I. Yes

DOCTOR. Did you ever try for work outside?

OLD MAN I. Yes sir.

DOCTOR. Where?

OLD MAN I. Yes sir.

DOCTOR. How did they treat you at the Social Security?

OLD MAN I. No, sir.

DOCTOR. What. They didn't treat you well?

OLD MAN I. No, sir.

DOCTOR. Did they suggest you get work?

OLD MAN I. No, sir.

DOCTOR listens hopefully.

OLD MAN I. Said I was too old.

DOCTOR. Did they go by how old you are, or how old you look?

OLD MAN I. Sir, don't know sir.

DOCTOR. Would you like to stay here inside through the winter?

OLD MAN I. Oh, yes, sir.

Pause. Looks at books and at his ASSISTANT for any possible objections.

DOCTOR. All right. We'll let you stay here through the winter and then turn you out in the summer. That all right?

A smile of joy lights up the OLD MAN's face.

OLD MAN I. We thank you sir!

The OLD MAN goes.

ASSISTANT beckons brusquely to the next OLD MAN. The OLD MAN comes over.

The ASSISTANT is a man about fifty. He is dressed in a white lab coat.

DOCTOR. You're almost the oldest inhabitant?

OLD MAN II. Sorry, sir.

DOCTOR. *shouting* I think you're about the oldest inhabitant?

OLD MAN II. I *can* hear what you're saying, sir. I can hear what you're saying. I *can* hear what you're saying, sir.

DOCTOR. *shouts.* I said, you're almost the oldest inhabitant here!

OLD MAN II. Oh, No, sir. Yes, sir, yes, sir. No sir!

DOCTOR. *aside.* Oh, yes. I remember. He worked in an ammunition factory, didn't he, and it blew up, and he didn't get a pension.

CUT TO:

MAN III locked in his own particular silence. The DOCTOR clutches him gently by the shoulder and makes spade shovelling gestures and then points at him questioningly.

There is a pause, and then the OLD MAN makes vigorous boot-repairing gestures.

DOCTOR. No, born deaf, hence dumb. He could speak if he were taught.

CUT TO:

MAN IV *has black slightly thinning hair, black eyes protruding from pink lids.*

MAN IV. I've shrunk. Dunno why. I've shrunk. I feel better when I'm drunk.

DOCTOR. Weren't you light-weight champion for England once?

MAN IV. Oh yes.

His face lights up.

EDNA. Please sir.

EDNA appears at the door.

She stands, wringing her hands round her bit of polythene.

DOCTOR. Yes?

EDNA. Can you take me in, sir? Can I be tachy to the house? Can you take me in for the winter
And something for a cough. And I want to complain about the dreams I've been getting. Terrible
dreams.

DOCTOR. Oh, Edna! Oh dear, we've nowhere for you! I'm sorry, Edna. They're closing down a
the beds in the women's wing. Except for the one-night casuals. I'm sorry. (*Gently*). I would talk
you in if I could, dear.

EDNA. Thank you very much sir.

She goes.

Gothic passage in the Spike

EDNA and OLD WOMAN II sit on bench.

EDNA. Look what I've found.

OLD WOMAN II. You can't smoke that in here.

EDNA. It's only a fag end.

*ASSISTANT enters and EDNA hides the burning cigarette behind her. Smoke rises behind her.
ASSISTANT exits: EDNA jumps, slaps her behind, trying to put out the fire.*

An Office

OFFICIAL I *sits behind a table.*

EDNA *has lifted her grubby lengthy skirts to show her boot to OFFICIAL I.*

She shows a booted foot, worn away through the sole.

OFFICIAL I. Yes, I can see it is in a bad way.

EDNA. I've been walking quite a bit, this one is through.

OFFICIAL I. Yes. But, how do I know you don't have other pairs in your lodgings?

EDNA *triumphant.* I ain't got no lodgings! I sleep out, don't I? I don't have no lodgings.

OFFICIAL I. Could you come back and ask me again on Monday?

EDNA *smiles.* If I'm around I'll come back. 'Tis only one boot. This one's all right.

OFFICIAL I *hardened, but also harassed.* I'm sorry, not till—Listen, I do understand. You think I don't understand, but I do. You need money, accommodation. You need a decent job. I know about you. You need decent clothes. I know all about you really, and I do understand. Listen Miss, er— I've got fifty people on my books... all right. I'll give you a coat.

On the Road

EDNA, *walking, in the overcoat. Her face, wrinkled, bears the marks of decades of grime. She wears no socks, boots, an assortment of dingy, ill-fitting, flapping clothes. A pork-pie hat stuffed down over her head.*

She looks about seventy-five but is not, and peers out at the world through moist and luminous eyes. She is sexless—could be man or woman.

She is walking doggedly along the road.

EDNA. I haven't had a meal since yesterday. I didn't have a meal today. *Pause.* I kept going on apples. I am on the tramp all night and I've kept on tramping after the day has broken. And I've kept on tramping.

Now she passes through a small market town, surrounded by a wide expanse of common land.

Chimneys of working-class houses issuing bluey-white smoke.

A working-class cafe: MEN having breakfast.

EDNA. People are getting up, the cafes are opening. You can smell the breakfasts. And I ain't got any money to buy me breakfast.

She climbs down to a stream and drinks from her hat.

Police car passes over bridge above EDNA, slows down a moment, then moves on.

The voice of EDNA;

EDNA. You can't stop. The shades won't let you. You go on. So you say, all right, I'll go on. So you got a target. So you go on, you say, I'll go on to the next town. And from there—it's only a short step back home to where you come from.



By the stream, she spies potatoes growing and goes and roots one up.

A MOTHER waves her CHILDREN off to school.

Lodging House

A tall blank brick wall with a single door.

A notice on the door says: No Beds. It is chalked on cardboard.

TWO OLD WOMEN are waiting outside—but largely indistinguishable from men.

EDNA approaches.

EDNA. They got any beds?

JESSIE. I don't know.

EDNA. What's it like in there?

JESSIE. Cold.

Pause

The side of JESSIE's mouth twists for a moment into a grin.

JESSIE. You know anyone would care to publish some drawings?

EDNA. No, dear.

JESSIE. I had a portfolio once. Full of drawings.

EDNA. You got it still, dear? *Ritually, she knows the answer*

JESSIE. No. Somebody whipped it.

EDNA. Will they take you in without money?

A momentary wry grin, then JESSIE looks at her again from her piercing eyes.

JESSIE. How would they take you in without money?

JAMIE an Irishman, joins the group.

JAMIE. Any beds guv?

EDNA. *cheerfully* No beds. I think.

JAMIE. Where do you sleep if there's no beds here?

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