

THE GOON SHOW:  
THE AFRICA SHIP CANAL

First broadcast on March 7, 1957. Script by Spike Milligan and Larry Stephens. Produced by Pat Dixon. Announced by Wallace Greenslade. Orchestra conducted by Wally Stott. Transcribed by Kurt Adkins, corrections by Peter Olausson.

Greenslade:

This is the BBC. We commence with a flourishing chorus of "The Gallant Hussar" by Fotheringay's Singing Midgets.

Grams:

*[Speeded up banjo and vocal followed by an explosion]*

Greenslade:

And here is the midget composer, Harry "Nuts" Secombe.

Secombe:

Hallo folks! Hallo folks. Now let me inform you Wallace, that no midget composer am I. Haaallo folks! My vocation is engineering, I graduated in tunnel building.

Greenslade:

How terribly, terribly.

Secombe:

Yes, yes, yes, yous, yes, yus, my first big tunnel I built in 1931.

Greenslade:

Oh yes, I remember now, six other convicts escaped with you.

Secombe:

What, what what, what, what, what, what, all lies I tell you, we were just dressed as convicts, it was carnival night. That's how we slipped away unnoticed, all lies I tell you, all lies! *[Mutters off into the distance...]*

Sellers:

Yes, this is a story of how an escaped convict became a great engineer and vice-a-versa.

Secombe:

What, it's true.

Sellers:

I will, if you just stand naked on the piano with your back to the audience, you will hear the story of The Great Trans Africa Canal!

Milligan:

Oww...

Orchestra:

*[Fanfare type link]*

Greenslade:

Scene one, that well known variety theatre, the House of Commons.

Milligan:

*[Unintelligible echoey Houses of Parliament type background speechmaking]*

Secombe:

Hallo folks, on that fateful day in Parliament, two sinister figures were present.

Grytpype:

Hello folks! It was us. We were camping in the lobby, an al fresco mode forced on us by the dreaded Rent Act. I refer of course to the Rent Act of 1831, which introduced rent.

Moriarty:

Hallo folks!

Grytpype:

Shut up you la grip ridden steaming french nit!

Moriarty:

...I, I only wanted to go "owww"!

Grytpype:

You fool! Anyone found going "owww" in the lobby can be charged with "fellow da siege"!

Grams:

*[Donkey braying]*

Grytpype:

Don't forget, when the Honourable Minister's finished this speech, we put forward our plan.

Moriarty:

The plan, ahhh what a plan that will be, I tell you!

Henry Crun:

Yes Mister Minister...

Minnie Bannister:

Speak up!

Henry Crun:

What, what?

Minnie Bannister:

Speak up, speak up, what about the suffragette...?

Henry Crun:

With the closing of the canal our ships have been forced to travel around the Cape.

Politician:

Ahhhhh, just a minute, couldn't they travel overland?

Henry Crun:

Yes, we've tried that, but it ruins the bottoms of the ships! Has the Hon. Min. any suggestions?

Prime Minister (Eccles):

Me, no, no, you just carry on! You just forget I'm here... I've got other things... I got things...

Orderly:

Er... 'Scuse me Mr. Minister, there's a...

Prime Minister:

What my good man?

Orderly:

A blonde suffragette chained to the railings outside No. 10, Sir.

Prime Minister:

I know, I chained her there, ha ha ha! Oh dear, I'm no fool. What?

Seagoon:

Haallo folks. Haallo folks!

Prime Minister:

What's dis? What what what! What's da matter? What what what what what what..!

Narrator:

The voice came from a man in the distinguished visitors gallery, who lowered himself into the chamber on a rope attached to a distinguished visitor.

Seagoon:

Haallo folks. I've just come from France.

Churchill:

Down the rope?

Seagoon:

I always travel by rope, it's cheaper! Haallo folks.

Henry Crun:

Wait a minute.

Politician:

Will the "Hallo Folks" intruder kindly explain why he's disguised as Frodman Delissups?  
Frodman Delisuuups...

Milligan (aside):

I thought I'd get that in!

Seagoon:

Yeeees, my other suit's at the cleaners. Hallo folks! Gentlemen, you realise of course...

Politician:

Yes?

Seagoon:

...That due to the canal closing British aeroplanes are forced to fly around the Cape. *[Pauses for laughs]* It is my intention to cut a canal across Africa so that they can fly over that!

Henry Crun:

High over a canal? But if they crash, they'll all drown!

Minnie Bannister:

Yes.

Seagoon:

Don't worry folks, hallo folks! All aeroplanes will be fitted with the new wooden lifeboats.

Attlee:

Yes, but even lifeboats can sink!

Seagoon:

They can't in this canal, there's not going to be any water in it!

Attlee:

Oooooooooerrr, you're cleverer than I am you know. Come to think of it anybody's cleverer than I am!

Seagoon:

Thank you. Hon. Membs. you will have guessed of course from my ragged clothes, that this canal is going to cost you a lot of money.

Prime Minister:

Ooooh!

Bevan:

*[Welsh accented]* But you'll have to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer about that, won't you?

Seagoon:

But you're the Chancellor of the Exchequer!

Bevan:

*[Welsh accented]* Awwhhh am I? Lend us a coupla quid will you boy?

Politician:

Gentlemen, gentlemeeeeeeen... No please, quiet please; gentlemen. This idea of a dry canal for aeroplanes is brilliant. Brilliant I saaaaaaay! I think Mr. Seagoon's Frodman Delissups Mk. 2 should receive some kind of support... And wear it at all times!

Seagoon:

What, what, what, what, what, what, what, what, what, what, what, what, what!

Churchill:

Silence in the gallery. What would be the cost of this scrins and scrans?

Seagoon:

I – wouldn't like to say.

Voice:

Hoorah!

Grytype:

Gentlemen, why spend all this money, when for 14 shillings, the Moriarty horse drawn zeppelin service will fly you round the Cape in 80 days...

Moriarty:

Owwwww!

Grytype:

...Thereby avoiding the traffic at Oxford Circus! Anyway, this idiot knows nothing about canals!

Moriarty:

Captain!

Geldray:

Honourable members!

Politician:

I move that... I moooooooooovvvve. I move that as it is customary in our beloved country England, a man so totally unsuitable for the job, should be given the contract.

Milligan (stage rear):

Thank you, thank you.

Seagoon:

Thank you folks, thank you, I'll start work right away, hold my coat.

Grams:

*[Pneumatic drills]*

Moriarty:

Curse Grytpype, he's got the contract!

Grytpype:

But not for long, get my lawyer, Max Geldray on the blower.

Moriarty:

Right!

Orchestra:

*[Music starts]*

Grytpype:

Shall we dance Moriarty?

Moriarty:

Ahhhh, the leaping divine of a modern melody...

Max Geldray:

*[Musical interlude]*

Greenslade:

The well known Trans Africa Aeroplane Canal, part derx.

Bloodnok:

We move now to Congo jungle and district Commissionaire.

Orchestra:

*[Jungle drums]*

Bloodnok:

La da da de dum.... *[sings along with the drumming]* Ooohhhooohh, that saved paying for an orchestration anyway! Ooohhhooohh, I've had a hard day... I thought she'd never go, ohh... Ellington, take my boots off, will you... And don't let me catch you wearing them again! Oooooohhhhhh, goooo ging gong gueeeh...

FX:

*[Rapid knocking on door]*

Bloodnok:

Ethel, bring that door in here for me to open will you?

FX:

*[Door rattles and opens]*

Seagoon:

Oh thank you, hallo folks! Haaaallo folks!

Bloodnok:

Hello folks.

Seagoon:

I'm Neddy Seagoon, you've heard of me Neddy Seagoon? *[sings operatically]* "Falling in love...When you come home again to Wales..."

Bloodnok:

You'll get a punch up the duster you will! Ohh.

Seagoon:

Major! I've come to inform you that we are building a canal and, I'm afraid it's going to cut right through your house.

Bloodnok:

What! Well if you think I'm going to run downstairs and open the door everytime a ship wants to come through you're barmy!

Seagoon:

You don't have to open the door, you can leave the key under the mat!

Bloodnok:

Over my dead body!

Seagoon:

No, under the mat. Ha ha ha ha ha! Under the mat, hahahahah... Hu hum.

Bloodnok:

Are you sure it was a prison you escaped from?

Seagoon:

Lies, lies, all lies, I'm perfectly sane I tell you! It's a lie, never, all lies, lies I tell you!

Bloodnok:

Look here. I tell you, I won't have aeroplanes flying through my house. Now get out!

FX:

*[Door slams shut]*

Seagoon:

Very well. If that's the way you feel about it, goodbye.

FX:

*[Door slams shut]*

Bloodnok:

Never darken my door again.

FX:

*[Door slams shut]*

Seagoon:

Since you insult me, I shall leave, goodbye.

FX:

*[Door slams shut]*

Greenslade:

Listeners with a degree in higher mathematics will have counted 4 doors slamming; this was in fact an aural illusion. What you did hear was not 4 doors being slammed, but 1 door being slammed 4 times. Or, in your parlance, 1 to the power of 4. You see, it is these little snippets of information that makes me feel that my job is worthwhile, thank you.

Seagoon:

'Ave you done?

Greenslade:

Yes.

Seagoon:

Thank you. So work began on the Great Trans Africa Aeroplane Canal folks. But meanwhile, on the top of a number 11 A3, two sinister figures sit steaming in a brown airing cupboard.

Moriarty:

Ahhh, I tell you Grytpype, we've got to sabotage the canal with sabotage type sabotage.

Grytpype:

Don't worry Count Jim.

Moriarty:

Owww!

Grytpype:

The best laid plans of mice and men gangath d'aglave.

Moriarty:

Aye man. Aye. Ah wee towering timorous beastie, oft gang a glave.

Grytpype:

You like Burns?

Moriarty:

Yes.

Grytpype:

Well hold this white hot poker!

Moriarty:

Aargggghhhhh! Aargggghhhhh, you fool!

Grytpype:

This is no time for beauty Marquee, hold this leather piano in the key of C.

Moriarty:

Yeargghh, now, what's the plan?

Grytpype:

We are going to steal the Trans Africa Aeroplane Canal!

Moriarty:

Where are we going to hide it?

Grytpype:

We are going to bury it.

Moriarty:

It's dead?

Grytpype:

As good as, Moriarty!

Grytpype and Moriarty:

Becauuuussee: *[sings together]* "We're riding along on the crest of a wave..." *[speeds up]*

Narrator:

And so they headed for Seagoon, who was watching the canal being dug by 40,000 british labourers...

FX:

*[One hammer blow on brick]*

Voice:

*[Whistling]*

Seagoon:

I say there, foreman!

William:

'Allo mate.

Seagoon:

Why are you the only one working?

William:

Weell, all the men are on strike, mate!

Seagoon:

What for?

William:

We can't think of anything yet. *[Pauses for laughs]* ...But uh, we will, we'll think of somefink.

Seagoon:

What are they doing here this morning?

William:

Errrr, they come along for the tea-break.

Union rep.:

Yesss, you want a... *[Trade union/officious type mumbling, eventually repeating:]* £15 a week...

William:

That was the head striker, that was, he says what they stricked for is £15 a week.

Seagoon:

Alright – I'll pay them £15 a week.

Grams:

Hooray! *[Sings: "Land of Hope and Glory" – suddenly turns silent]*

Seagoon:

What's up?



William:

They've gone on strike again.

Seagoon:

Why?

William:

They want more money, Mate! ...And here's their spokesman, Rage Nurglegoos to give the message on the old bonjoes, now let's get wrap round back the old brandy there...

Seagoon:

Alright...

Ray Ellington and his Quartet:

*[Musical interlude]*

Greenslade:

Now the Trans Africa Aeroplane Canal, part the derx.

Orchestra:

*[Descending fanfare musical link]*

Seagoon:

To break the strike, I had sent for two professional strike breakers, who even now were on their way from England by electric rowing boat.

Grams:

*[Waves breaking on the shore and seagull crys. Oars in the rowlocks.]*

Bluebottle:

Eccles? Why... *[Pauses for applause]* Why did they throw you out of being Prime Minister?

Eccles:

Well, um, um, anybody listening?

Bluebottle:

Yes, me.

Eccles:

Well den, ah um 'Bottle, you remember that blonde suffragette chained to the railings outside No. 10?

Bluebottle:

Yes, yes!

Eccles:

Weeell... Well, I chained myself to her, ha ha ha ha! Ohh!

Bluebottle:

Good, that was naughty that was Eccles.

Eccles:

Oh yeah, was that naughty?

Bluebottle:

Yes, it was.

Eccles:

Welllll, owwowwwwoowww...

Bluebottle:

I never did that when I was Prime Minister you know. Did you know what hurted my good man?

Eccles:

What did my fellow?

Bluebottle:

Well den, when I found the lady what was chained to the railings...

Eccles:

Yup, yup, yup, yup.

Bluebottle:

In a flash I whipped out my boy scout knife...

Eccles:

Ohhhh...

Bluebottle:

...And in a flash I removed a stone from her hoof.

Orchestra:

*[Punchline type fanfare]*

Seagoon:

Alright you two, that's your bit done, that's all! ...Now, welcome to Africa!

Bluebottle:

Hello Captain.

Eccles:

'Ello.

Bluebottle:

We have broughted from England this modern Kelsop super canal digging machine.

Eccles:

Ma-ch-i-ne.

Bluebottle:

Yes. It's inside this parcel.

Seagoon:

Inside the parcel? What a neat idea.

Bluebottle:

Yes it is a neat idea, ye-es.

FX:

*[Rustling paper]*

Bluebottle:

Save the brown paper Eccles, I need a new suit.

Eccles:

Ooh.

Bluebottle:

Now Captain, let us demonstrate this machine. Do you know that that it can dig up four tons of earth in three seconds?

Seagoon:

Hallo folks.

Bluebottle:

I will time it with my watch.

Grams:

*[Comical sounding machinery operating. (bleeps, burbles etc.)]*

Seagoon:

That was a noisy machine.

Bluebottle:

Machine!? That was my watch! *[Pauses for applause]*...Captain, this machine can do the work of two men.

Seagoon:

Well let's see it.

Bluebottle:

Alright, but you'll have to help us, 'cos it takes three men to work it.

Seagoon:

Right! Eccles and Bluebottle, you three get it going.

Bluebottle:

'Ere, wait a minute Captain... Eccles and me only make two!

Seagoon:

Nonsense. *[Sarn't major type shouting]* Fall in, from the left, number!

Eccles:

One.

Bluebottle:

Two.

Seagoon:

Two and one equals...?

Eccles:

Three.

Seagoon:

Right, off you go!

Bluebottle (mumbling):

No it isn't.

Eccles (mumbling):

I don't believe that!

Seagoon:

...And get cracking. Now, the next problem is this fellow Bloodnok.

FX:

*[Bang... whoosh!]*

Grytpype:

Neddie?

Seagoon:

Grytpype, you!

FX:

*[Running footsteps, getting closer]*

Seagoon:

What's this?

Grytpype:

My legs, I thought they'd never get here!

Moriarty:

I'm sorry, Grytpype, it's my fault, I let them out for a run in the park.

Grytpype:

You sentimental steaming latin you. Never let my legs out unchaperoned again, you hear! The world must never know those thin measurements.

Seagoon:

Gentlemen, I see from the next line, that you can help me with this Bloodnok problem.

Grytpype:

Neddie? You see this piece of knotted string leading from Moriarty's wrist up into that cloud?

Seagoon:

You mean... You mean, there's... There's something on the other end of it?

Grytpype:

Yes Neddie, it's the perfect device for removing Bloodnok's house. Id est, Count Moriarty's hand-sewn blue-serge zeppelin.

Moriarty:

Yes Neddie, we can lower our sky hooks and lift Bloodnok's house out of the way in a second!

Grytpype:

Now Neddie, go in and tell Bloodnok that in 15 minutes his house becomes skyborne.

Seagoon:

Right!

FX:

*[Door opens]*

Grytpype (straining):

Right up there?

Moriarty (very faintly):

Jawohl.

Grytpype:

Easy.

Moriarty (very faintly):

OK.

Grytpype:

Attach skyhooks and haul away.

Grams:

*[Collapsing building type sounds]*

Moriarty:

*[very faintly]* Ah Grytpype.

Grytpype:

We've got him.

Bloodnok:

Whooooarggghhh, call a doctor!

Moriarty:

Major Bloodnok, Kee-es-quer-ce-ces-say-sain!

Bloodnok:

Cest-in-fence. I, I stept out of the back of my house...

Moriarty:

What?

Bloodnok:

...Walked down to the bottom of the garden...

Moriarty:

Ah!

Bloodnok:

Tres sur bent... Finally, I turned around, and to my building society's horror, my house had vanished! There was nothing there!

Moriarty:

Nothing there! You must have been seeing things.

Grytpype:

Moriarty?

Moriarty:

Owww!

Grytpype:

Never mind that man of no fixed abode. I've got great news. I've bribed the workmen to fill in the canal.

FX:

*[Telephone bell rings]*

Moriarty:

Splendid, answer that door.

Grytpype:

Hello? Yes?

Seagoon:

Hello Grytpype? I'm speaking from Bloodnok's house, and he's not here.

Grytpype:

Oh Neddie, don't wait any longer, you come out lad.

Seagoon:

Right.

FX:

*[Telephone hung up.*

Grytpype:

Moriarty? Quick, put that fire bucket over there.

Moriarty:

Right, how's that.

Grytpype:

A little bit more to the right... That's it.

Moriarty:

Right.

Seagoon:

Yeaaaaaarrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrggggggggggggggghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

FX:

*[Water splash]*

Little Jim:

He's fallen in the water!

Grytpype:

Thank you Little Jim for telling us where he is.

Little Jim:

Der.

Seagoon:

Thank heaven for that water. It broke my fall and my neck. But wait! The canal, where is it?

Grytpype:

It's gone Neddie, and the Moriarty Zeppelin Service is back in operation.

Seagoon:

You devils of green...

Grytpype:

Now Neddie, we're still good friends aren't we?

Seagoon:

Why?

Cast:

Because... *[Sings with saxophone and orchestra]* We're arm in arm together, just like we used to be...

Greenslade:

The cast, having no strong finish to the show, now go into a cowardly song and dance routine.

Hern:

And so, as the Goon Show sinks slowly in the popularity polls, and the audience move menacingly towards the stage, we say goodnight from happy...

FX:

*[Arrow fires, whoosh!]*

Hern:

Ye-ipp!

Cast:

*[Cries of distress]*

Orchestra:

*[End theme]*

Secombe:

There he goes... He's always there.

Greenslade:

That was the Goon Show, a BBC recorded programme featuring Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and Spike Milligan. With the Ray Ellington Quartet, Max Geldray and the orchestra conducted by Wally Stott. Script by Spike Milligan and Larry Stephens. Announcer, Wallace Greenslade, the programme produced by Pat Dixon.

Orchestra:

*[End theme continues]*