

# Last night's TV



## Nancy Banks-Smith This week, Griff Rhys Jones gets so furious, he even swears at that nice Ben Fogle

“We will start with a belly laugh because we all badly need one. In **Losing It: Griff Rhys Jones On Anger** (BBC2), he was telling a sports psycho-therapist (search me) how he would fly into a rage with some blameless vicar who asked him to open a fete. Out of earshot, naturally. Well, usually.

Once he was appearing on breakfast TV “to advertise something”. (So now you know what you are getting on breakfast TV, advertisements.) He had been in the green room since 7am and the presenter was announcing that he would go on at 9am after the news. More specifically, after Ben Fogle. Ben is a big, blond, lolloping bloke of such preternatural niceness that he is indistinguishable on a grouse moor from a labrador. He was talent-spotted being extraordinarily nice while marooned on a Scottish island.

Griff continued: “And I’m sitting in this dreary little thing . . . I’ve been sitting here for hours and hours and hours . . . and *Ben Fogle* is going to be on before me. How dare they! And I sit there and I watched the television and I said, ‘Ben Fucking Fogle! FUCK YOU!’ . . . And Ben walks in.” “Did he,” asked the sports psychotherapist, mildly, “have his dog with him?”

If I can join in, what infuriated me about this entertaining series was some American woman called Lorelei, dishing out unsolicited self-help. She nearly scuppered the whole thing at the start by warning us not to expect entertainment. I rather hesitate to offer any criticism, as Griff said, “Don’t you dare tell me what you think about me! I don’t give a fuck!” Oh, all right then, I’ll fuck off.

Which brings me to Jamie Oliver and his new pioneering series, **Jamie’s Ministry of Food** (Channel 4). It is

missionary work. This is Rotherham, where Julie Critchlow sabotaged Jamie’s healthy school meals by shoving burgers through the playground bars. By appearing between *The Sex Education Show* and *Dawn Porter: Free Lover*, he may be hoping to appeal to an audience that the BBC cannot reach.

There may be someone in Papua New Guinea who dislikes Jamie Oliver. Even Julie, whom he called “a big, old scrubber”, liked him when she met him, though her mother thought his hair wanted cutting. He’s a good lad but I wish he would stop saying fucking every second word, as in: “Fucking ’ell we’ve just lost a meatball! Don’t wet yourself! Fucking ’ell! Christ! These people can’t even turn a fucking ’ob on!” It is relentless and it sizzles in your ears like static. There is no shortage of cookery programmes but there isn’t one, as Professor Higgins remarked, to teach our children how to speak.

Well and away the most wonderful thing last night, easily the equal of John Freeman’s classic *Face to Face* series, was **Chosen** (More4). Three brave men, Alastair, Tom and Mark, talked about their childhood and the rampant sexual abuse they received from masters at a private school in the 1970s. I started watching reluctantly at 10pm and was still riveted at midnight. It is not a film I would advise you watch before trying to sleep.

The slow, clammy realisation of what was happening crept up on you like a hole in your sole. It was a story of darkness and secrecy punctuated with sunlit snaps of schooldays. The men just talked, their faces filling the screen, emotions bubbling up from fissures in their memories like lava. Sometimes a

memory came as they were speaking and then their faces worked as if they had swallowed something acrid like ashes. Tom, a big, forceful, squarely built man began to weep and dashed away the tears saying: “I don’t want to give him any satisfaction whatsoever.” Him was Peter Wright, the headmaster of Caldicott, whose sardonic leaving speech went: “I have been asked what I shall miss most in retirement. Without hesitation, the boys.”

The camera lingered on his photograph, the wide grin, the loud jacket. He has always denied the allegations, and was never successfully prosecuted. Boys invariably waited until their parents died to take action – by then, it was judged too late to try Wright. So ashamed, so frightened were the children, that Alistair, raped by the science master, did not know that his elder brother had also been abused. “They taught me secrecy,” said Mark. It could have been listed in the curriculum.

I do not recall hearing truth so stripped and shivering before. They described unsparingly the grooming, the abuse, the guilty sense of being complicit in their own destruction. Caldicott has cleaned up its act now but private schools have no obligation to report abuse to the police. Tom said: “What do paedophiles need to thrive? Opportunity, power and secrecy. They’ve got it in spades. If you don’t sit down with the headmaster and ask them very direct questions, you are risking your child’s welfare.”

This painful confession was to protect other children.



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... Losing It: Griff  
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