

The Extraordinary Story of an Ordinary Life.

by Becky Edmunds

I am an independent artist who works with film and video and I am the director of a project called **To Be Continued**.

I am developing a 'toolkit' of ideas for creative sessions for groups exploring the stories and memories of older people. I hope to reconnect people with the value of journal writing as a regular practice which has proven benefits for health and wellbeing.

There have been many studies that show that privately writing about your day and reflecting on your feelings helps clear your head, promoting better sleep and helping with problem solving. Dr James Pennebaker, author of *Opening Up by Writing It Down*, has found that as well as lowering depression and anxiety, journaling strengthens the immune cells, meaning it is good for physical health as well as mental wellbeing. Research by the University of Lancaster suggests writing down your experiences helps you remember them later, so journals could be a useful tool to keep memory sharp.



To Be Continued is a free-to-access, online art project that delivers a series of short films throughout 2020, which are adapted from the journals of a man called Dick Perceval. I found Dick's journals in a pile of rubbish in Brighton in 1998, and they are an extraordinary record of the life of a self-described 'ordinary' man. From 1925 – 1976, he vividly recorded his life, passions,

adventures and tragedies, through pivotal periods in the 20th century. Heartbreak, war, espionage, the moon-landings and a European referendum punctuate the extraordinary story of his life. Have a look at the project trailer - <https://vimeo.com/297088178>

To Be Continued can be easily accessed by anyone with an internet connection, making it an ideal project for anyone who is housebound or otherwise unable to access the arts. I also hope that it can serve as a useful resource for group activities. We suggest scheduling a regular Watching Party, to catch up on the series as a group, and then try some of the related tasks suggested in the toolkit. Or

perhaps run a Film Club - like a book club, but with the film series! Each member of the group watches the episodes at home, and then the group comes together for a social session in which the group leader leads the discussions and activities.

To Be Continued is also the ideal project to introduce and engage less technically confident people with computer skills. Dick Perceval's life story is very engaging, and subscribers who are currently watching the series tell me that they are 'hooked'. Every aspect of online engagement can be explored using this project – setting up and using email (all episodes are delivered by email), learning how to click on links, exploring blogs and external websites, engaging with social media – all can be done while following Dick's fascinating story.



In 1972, Dick wrote *"These journals are a record, a re-creation, of one person's life, alas only a very ordinary person's life..."* The making of **To Be Continued** has fuelled my fascination in stories, objects, photographs and films made by so called 'ordinary' people. I hope that the project will help dispel the idea that any person has an 'ordinary' life, and we should all remember and celebrate the extraordinary moments that make each life unique. History is inclusive of all of our stories – whether of our individual experiences, or of our collective memories of world events. As we reflect on, and share the stories of our lives, we are all contributing to the record of human history for future generations.

If you would like to subscribe to the **To Be Continued** Newsletter, with its toolkit of ideas for creative sessions, please email me at dickperceval@gmail.com with the subject heading SUBSCRIBE TO PARTICIPATION NEWSLETTER. To find out more, watch the episodes that have been released so far and to subscribe to the series for free, please visit www.tobecontinued.online