

## A Buckinghamshire Poet: Vernon Scannell

Vernon Scannell was one of Buckinghamshire's most versatile and prolific writers of the last century. He was born in Lincolnshire in 1922, and raised in an atmosphere of contempt and anger by a harsh and brutal father and a mother giving little affection.

The family moved to Aylesbury in 1931 where the father James Bain set up as a photographer in Market Square where the Skipton Building Society now is. Later, Bain moved his business to 10 Kingsbury Square in Aylesbury, which today is the site of the Buon Amici coffee bar. Vernon attended the Queen's Park Boys County School, now the Queen's Park Arts Centre, where a plaque commemorates his attendance. At school, he was introduced to poetry by one of his teachers, and soon began trying his hand at writing simple verse.

After school, and through his younger adulthood, he lived a wayward life of promiscuity, brawling, drink, bigamy, wife beating and dishonesty. In the Second World War, he served in Highland regiments, once deserting, yet landing at D-Day where he was wounded. All the while, he was writing some of the finest poetry to come out of the war, and produced a body of work that covered the wider fields of human experience.

His poetry is especially accessible to youngsters. He won the Heinemann Award for poetry, and the Cholmondeley Prize, and was one of the country's leading poets.

Vernon Scannell died in 2007. His life story was recorded in James Andrew Taylor's "Walking Wounded", which Sir Henry Aubrey Fletcher introduced at the book's launch in 2013 at the Queen's Park Centre, Vernon's old school in Aylesbury.

At the Heritage Open Days on 12 and 13 September this year, Vernon Scannell's poetry might be read in his old Aylesbury homes, and perhaps if any of James Bains's portrait photographs can be traced, some could be displayed also.

**Graham Aylett**