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Clangers, Bagpuss & Co

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By Mark Taha



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Recently, Mark Taha visited the *Clangers, Bagpuss & Co* exhibition at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, part of the world famous Victoria & Albert Museum. This is what he found.

This is a chance to either revive happy childhood memories or find out what you missed by not being born early enough. I was delighted to see young children enjoying these old classics made without massive special effects or a mega-budget.

Oliver Postgate and Peter Firmin met in 1958 and began producing TV programmes on a shoestring budget, making up their own drawings and cut-outs. Mrs Firmin was later to knit the Clangers. Ironically, Firmin didn't own a TV at the time, regarding what he'd seen of it as rubbish. Postgate's application to the BBC in 1950 had been rejected but he'd been presciently described as an *odd but valuable person*. The programmes involved stop motion animation, with the puppets or cut-outs being moved by hand between shooting single frames, laborious but worth the effort.



We are reintroduced, on TV as well as in models, to Noggin the Nog, inspired by the famous **Lewis Chessmen** at the British Museum. Postgate's Ivor the Engine saw Wales as a "magic place full of glorious eccentrics and unlikely logic" – like a singing steam engine and dragons! We're also introduced (in my case) to the Pogles and Pogles Wood, the first seen as too frightening for children, both with the gruff trouble-prone Amos Pogle who'd be "respectable when I'm dead... until then I'll shout and sing as I like!" The 1970s classic *Bagpuss* featured Emily, Firmin's youngest daughter, while the *Clangers* series was described by Postgate as the "most challenging, absorbing and difficult work I had ever undertaken."

You can also find the Clangers 1974 Election special at the NFT Mediatheque. And woe to any cultural vandal who even thinks of remaking any of these classics on a mega-budget!

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