



## Newsletter – August 2020

### Some more stories from three of our members

#### Haydn's Story : A Childhood in India

I was born in, what was then British India in December, 1945, in the Welsh Mission Hospital, in the hill town of Shillong, which now boasts as the “Rock & Roll Capital” of India. My parents were Welsh Presbyterian missionaries based in Sylhet in the Assam District of East Bengal. This was on the plains and very hot in the summer, followed by monsoons in the autumn. Shillong was in the hills and far more hospitable and cooler, being closer to the Himalayas. So, pregnant mothers of the British Raj headed for the hills to give birth in the better equipped Welsh Mission Hospital and kinder weather conditions.

Missionaries did five year stretches abroad and then came home for their furlough. We came home in 1947 in the middle of the terrible winter of that year. When we returned in 1948 India had gained Independence, creating two separate countries India and Pakistan. Pakistan was further divided into East and West Pakistan with India in between. So we were now living in East Pakistan.

Looking back, despite the desperate shortages of European food and comforts post war, I led a pretty idyllic childhood with my older brother, Arthur. We had an Ayah (nanny) until I was about three, together with cook and bearer. As they couldn't speak English, we soon picked up Bengali, which was the local dialect.



Our bungalow, which was thatched, was situated in the large undulating mission compound on the outskirts of the town of Sylhet. There was one occasion when I was not much more than three years old, when the thatched roof was being repaired. A ladder was left against the roof by the workmen when they disappeared for their meal break. My brother, ever on the lookout to get me into mischief, persuaded me to climb up a rung at a time until, before I realised it, I was sitting on the ridge enjoying the view and chuckling, wondering when my brother was going to join me. As if! He ran indoors and reported to our mum that I was on the roof. My mother, not known for keeping too calm in a crisis, was frantically rushing about wringing her hands and her distress was soon taken up by me and I started to howl with fright, whereas before I'd been as cool as a cucumber! Fortunately the workmen returned in the nick of time and one came up to lead me down.

Next time we meet a couple of tiger cubs and move to a new mission compound and bungalow in Maulvi Bazaar.

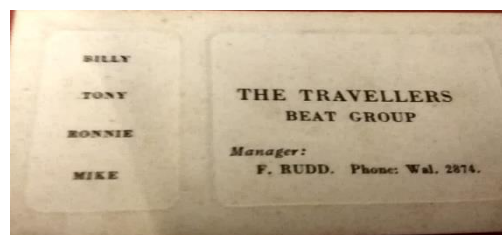
*Haydn Morgan*

## Mike`s Story : Part 4

Before I begin this part of the story I must apologise for saying that the bungalow in Leasowe Road was opposite Saltburn Road, it was actually opposite Greenleas Road, Saltburn Road is first on the right off Greenleas Road. Senior moment, I expect there will be a few of those as I am going back 55/58 years. The Travellers accepted the gig at QUINNY`S in Clayton Sq Liverpool, but we had a problem -

we had no transport. To get round this we took the back seat out of Billy`s Standard 8 car, emptied the boot and piled all the drums, guitars and amps etc into the space at the back of the car. Billy would pick up Tony from his home in Birkenhead and get off to Liverpool. Ron and I would meet up at the Park View pub in Grange Road, Birkenhead, have a quick pint, then get the train from Central Station, Birkenhead. When we got to QUINNY`S we were told to set up at the far end of the café/dining area with a huge opening window behind us. We were all nervous but excited at the same time. Just before we were ready to play, Mr Quinn came over to us to give us a warning. He only had a license for two people to play and if the police came in (he would warn us), two of us had to disappear through the window behind us and go up the Fire Escape as he could be fined or lose his license. But more of that in the next episode.

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## Ruth Harrison: My lockdown walks

### Exploring Ordnance Map: The Unknown Rectangle of Water

Continuing with my plan of discovering new walks, and doing a different one each day, I scroll around an online Ordnance map of Wallasey and Birkenhead. Most of the open spaces have already been part of my walks, and I need inspiration. A tidy rectangle of water catches my eye. It is near the Tennis Centre, where we played table tennis every week. I can see there are at least three ways of getting there on foot. I start my walk, taking the direct route rather than the complete circuit of the Nature Reserve. I can return by the footpaths if time and energy permit. I set off along Breck Rd to Penny Bridge, and continue towards the North End, turning right along Gautby Rd. As the road veers left, the little houses give way to parkland on both sides, on the left a deserted children`s play area, and on the right industrial units and a fenced and turnstiled walkway with parking and gardens. Checking with my elbow that the turnstile will admit me AND let me out if necessary, I walk through a short way and then catch a flash of sunlight glinting on water to my left – Hooray, I found my rectangle of water! Peering through the high railings, I see a magical oasis in this forgotten urban wasteland. There is access from the roadside, so I retrace my steps, escaping the clutches of the turnstile and enter the small area of garden approaching the lake. The sunshine on the water is dazzling, and I regret leaving my phone behind on charge. I will return and take photos! This place is popular with the Canada geese and a few mallards, but totally void of people. Every other piece of parkland I have walked these last few weeks has been bursting with activity – dog walkers, cyclists, kids on bikes, scooters and skateboards, pram pushers, families with bats and balls, joggers and runners, and a few like me just observing. This is different. It is clear this is a man-made lake. It seems too far from Wallasey docks to be once linked to the waterway. My guess is that it was constructed at the same time as the estate of houses perhaps, or when the industrial estate was developed. I see later, in my 1995 edition of Wirral AtoZ, that it is labelled `Model Yacht Lake`.

The boss goose has decided to have a go at me for invading his kingdom, so I decide against a pointless circuit of the lake in favour of the scenic part of my walk. I need to head for the Tennis Centre, but am wondering if the turnstile path leads only to business premises, so take the next road along, which has rows of small terraced properties which have an open view at the rear over my lake.

As I reach the Tennis Centre, I am delayed by a group filling the whole pavement and walking slowly. I follow them for a bit, hoping I can overtake them before the footpath leading to Tesco's. To pass the time, I imagine a theoretical household of these three very young women and their collection of infants and buggies. Do they live with parents or partners? Are they sisters or mates? If they were not social distancing because they all belong to one household, what a madhouse it would be! Could they be nursery staff and caring for the young children of 'essential workers'? No uniforms were in evidence. As expected, they turn into my footpath and there is no way for me to overtake. I am considering going the long way round the road when I see a MUCH better option – a grassy path leading up above the Tesco path and disappearing into woodland. Triumphant I jog up it and follow it in the general direction of the huge Tesco roundabout. I am pretty sure I know this track well from the other end, but have never walked it. Another new discovery! Sure enough it emerges at the Tesco roundabout, where I am shocked by the volume and speed of passing traffic.

I have this horrible stretch of main road to cover before the B&Q car park. The worst thing about this heavy traffic is that I am unable to hop onto the road on meeting any other intrepid pedestrian. I see one approaching and dive off to the right where there is a way into the retail park. Can't believe my eyes! Someone has considered it 'essential work' to erect a stretch of tall galvanised fencing effectively blocking off completely my retreat from the traffic. Returning to the pavement in disbelief, the approaching pedestrian comments on my detour, and I confirm his idea that there used to be a way in there. We manage maybe a metre and a half apart, but the mutual moan did me good. Crossing the car park was no less hazardous, however, than the roadway route, as Saturday afternoon had brought out hundreds of people to Click and Collect, or stand in depressing lines outside all the shops. Even Halfords had a long winding queue. Eventually I made it to the relative safety of the B&Q back gate and my footpath homewards.

On the familiar footpath all I have to contend with is rather more cyclists than usual and a couple of runners. Cyclists get a bad name, but this Lockdown seems to bring out the best in all of us. I invariably step into the long grass, or even nettles if wearing jeans, to let them pass at a safer distance (and turn away if they wear Lycra and look keen enough to SPIT!) and I am finding it refreshing that they acknowledge and thank me. Best of all, looking over the Zig Zag bridge crossing the railway line, I scan the water for my solitary duck friend, and spot a PAIR of mallards with FIVE fluffy ducklings. I am absolutely thrilled! My little duck has found a mate and is rearing a family against all odds. Raising a family in the North End must be a similar struggle for humans. This backwater is polluted and stagnant, yet duck friend is doing his very best. As I watch and count the ducklings, one bold little chap swims through a small gap in the galvanised fencing. I worry that he will get lost. Mum and dad are much too big to follow him. Will they miss him and call him back? Then on the other side of the bridge, I see a sole female with one larger duckling. She probably had five or six to begin with. Life is hard for most at the moment, but it is so good to see Nature recovering and new life all around us.