



Newsletter – June 2020

Virtual AGM

You will be aware that we had scheduled a Special Meeting in April to approve our new Constitution. Obviously, this could not take place due to the Coronavirus Lockdown that has disrupted all our lives. Since there is no guarantee that we will be back at the Grosvenor by October, the Committee has decided to conduct a Virtual AGM to adopt the new Constitution at the end of August, 2020. We will be contacting you shortly to explain the process - but it won't be a Zoom meeting or similar.

Heathers Story

It was 1955 and I was 4 yrs old, my brothers were five and six (that happened a lot in the post war years...!). There was an outbreak of Scarlet Fever, in the 1950s it was an extremely infectious and deadly disease, a bit like CV is now. The remedy was complete isolation in a fever hospital for three weeks, no family visits allowed. My eldest brother, Stuart, caught it first and he was carted off although I don't remember that. After two weeks in the isolation hospital in Mill Lane Wallasey, my second brother, Roderick, caught it (can you see a Scottish theme emerging here?) and joined my eldest brother. Two weeks later Stuart was home and I caught it, I was sent into hospital to join Rod....! My mum was tearing her hair out.

I recall the white ambulance outside the front door and an ambulance man, in a navy blue military style uniform with a peaked cap. He wrapped me up in a red blanket (a sign of infection apparently), he picked me up and carried me out in his arms. I didn't see anyone for 3 weeks, except other kids in hospital and the nurses who were quite scary. We were in a long Nightingale ward, we were only allowed out of bed for certain times to play, as I recall, but if the nurses weren't there we got out anyway. One time the word went out "the nurses are coming" and everyone jumped back into bed but I was too small and couldn't climb back into the high bed. I got told off. Another time I was in trouble was when we all were brought cups of tea, in thick white cups (you wouldn't give a sick 4yr old tea nowadays...!) It had huge tea leaves floating on top, I took one look and threw it on the floor. A cleaner in a green uniform came to mop it up, she shouted at me and shook the mop in my face.....

child centred care???



My home-made knitted teddy, that my mum had made when I was a baby, was the only thing I took in with me, I wasn't allowed to bring it home when I left. But at least I survived into adulthood with my tonsils intact.... not many baby boomers can say that!

Mike's Story 2 - Travellin` On 1959.

Ron and I had acquired some musical instruments. I had a very old battered Spanish guitar picked up from a charity shop and Ron had acquired an old snare drum from the boy scouts or the sea cadets and a twisted Hi-Hat & stand. I remember my dad repairing the hi-hat and stand, applying heat with a welding torch and a panel hammer taken from the car repair garage that my dad owned in Leasowe Road, Wallasey, almost on the corner of Cross Lane. Ron and I would practice in the front room of the bungalow which was in front of the garage a few yards from the Twenty Row Pub on Leasowe Road. We would drive the neighbours mad with the noise we made but Mrs Parry who owned the corner shop next to the garage was very good about things and so was the lady who lived in the bungalow on the other side of us. The only thing I could play on that old guitar was Duane Eddy's theme from Peter Gunn played over and over again and Ron played along on the snare drum and hi-hat.

By this time we were old enough to go to the Majestic Ballroom and Kubick Club both on Conway Street Birkenhead where we saw lots of the groups who became famous later on. Going to these clubs etc, Ron and I did the usual thing, just stood and watched the bands and learnt what we could from them, guitar chords & shapes for me and drum beats and patterns for Ron as we were so focused and passionate about music. We also went to the Tower Ballroom where Sam Leach had started to do big promotions with the likes of Little Richard and Bruce Chandel of Hey Baby fame. These promotions with the big American stars were pulled off the main nation wide tours by Sam Leach. He would also fill the rest of the concerts with Liverpool and Wirral groups, it was a great learning curve and an exciting time. Ron and I started to hang out at Strothers in Wallasey Road in the middle of Liscard which is now the Halifax. Strothers sold musical instruments, white goods, radios and televisions. I always remember a red Fender Stratocaster in the window and priced at £164gns, they're about £1600 for starters today. This guitar was the guitar of my dreams as my hero Hank Marvin of the Shadows played one, the first one that came into this country and Cliff Richard bought it for him. I had my eye on a red Futurama guitar that was a copy of the Stratocaster and Ron had his eye on a drum kit. It was coming up to Christmas time and my 15th birthday and my dad asked me what I wanted for my Christmas/Birthday present. Guess what? I got the Futurama guitar and a small amp. Ron's parents bought him a drum kit and boy did we make a lot of noise rehearsing in that front room in the bungalow.



One Saturday afternoon I went to Strothers to buy some guitar strings (Cathedrals I am sure guitarist's of a certain age remember them, they were all you could get) and I got talking to another guitarist who was looking for a group. He told me he had a Hofner guitar and an amp so I told him about Ron and I and he asked could he come and rehearse with us? I said yes and he also told me that he lived on Leasowe Road so things started to fall into place.

The guy's name was Billy Knaggs. We were a three piece for a little while with no bass player until one evening Ron brought along another mate of his, Tony McDonagh. Tony wanted to play bass but he didn't have one but he brought along his brother's guitar, it was a big thing with huge body and Tony played bass on that. We liked Tony and he was in. Ron, Tony and I were still at school and Billy had his job as a milkman and so the "Travellers" were born.