

## Derek Jones INTERVIEW MARCH/APRIL 2006

I was born in 1937 in the part of Walmer Road that is now called Crowthorne Road. At one end you had Bramley Road crossing, at the other end Latimer Road, so it was a small section of the street. The sidestreets, on the right, going towards Latimer Road, were all dead ends. They were Aldermaston Street, Pamber Street and one near to the Latimer pub whose name I can't remember (Manchester Road). On the other side, at the Bramley Road end, you had a place we used to call the Half Mews where horses were kept, further down you had a place we used to call the Ambulance Mews (Silchester Mews) – and there was an ambulance station there, you go along and next on the left was Calverly Street...

Where I lived was number 44 (Walmer Road), it was the same as all the other houses along there, a 3 storey tenement, 3 rooms to each floor, 2 outside lavatories, no hot and cold running water. We lived on the middle floor of number 44 and we didn't have electricity, the place was lit by gas, the street lights were also gas. The roof of the lavatories we used to call the flats, and I can remember for years we had either a bomb or a shell on the flats that my older brother John had found somewhere. To this day, I don't know whether it was alive or not, so we could have blown ourselves up. But, that was the thing, kids then were much freer, they were street rakers. Not very much traffic, so kids used to play games in the streets. They played cricket against the lampposts, football along the middle of one of the sidestreets with 2 bricks or 2 coats as a goal. You got the present problem of obesity in kids, that didn't exist so much then, because we were always having races round the block. Maybe this was after the war or towards the end, for instance, when Wimbledon came on they played tennis with their hands in place of a racket. Football was played with a tennis ball and I would guess in some ways that football was more skilled because it's more difficult to manage a tennis ball than a full size football...

Means of entertainment, before television, was obviously radio. We had British Relay Radio, British Relay Wireless, which gave us 4 stations, the light programme, Home Service, the third programme, and Radio Luxembourg 208. Other people used to have radios and I can remember it was battery run, it was called an accumulator and every so often they used to go and get it filled with distilled water. On the radio people used to listen to a programme called 'ITMA', which was short for 'It's That Man Again' and the bloke in charge, the star of the show all through the war was a fellow called Tommy Handley. Characters in the show were 'Mrs Mop', a charlady, 'Moanalot', 'Colonel Chinstrap', and when Tommy Handley died after the war it was as though a famous showbiz star had died, and yet you only ever heard him on the radio, because radio was the big thing. You had a thing called 'Up the Pole' with Jimmy Jewell and Ben Warris. Years later Jimmy Jewell became a bit part actor on television and, when he was at his lowest, he appeared at the Pavilion pub in North Pole Road. I saw him and he wasn't very good, you know.

We had the Metropolitan Edgware Road, which was a variety theatre, the Shepherd's Bush Empire, where they did variety and pantomimes. There was the Royalty Cinema on the corner of Lancaster Road and Ladbrooke Grove, seats there were a shilling and one and nine pence to go up in the balcony. Then there was the Electric Cinema which was then called the Imperial, the Imperial Playhouse, or 'the bug hole' and it cost ten pence to get in there, and the bloke who ran it I think was a Jewish fella. He had the index finger missing off one of his hands and he was always in the box office. It was a very run-down cinema with hard wooden seats. The biggest crowd that I can remember was when a film came out called 'The Jolson Story' (1946), and the actor who played the lead part was somebody called Larry Parks, he got blacklisted during the McCarthy purge in America, accused of having communist connections. And they made another one called 'Jolson Sings Again' (1949), Jolson he made the very first talky film and it's a biopic, it was very popular at the time.

The Metropolitan, that had a bar where you could get drinks, the Bush Empire didn't, that was more of a family theatre and, of course, this is just before television became very popular. I can remember a fella called Dave King, he's doing this act where he plays a kid who's hanging on to his mother's arm while she's out shopping and she stops for a gossip and he's playing this kid and this kid's pissing himself and pulling faces. You couldn't see the mother, he's got his hand held up as though he's holding her hand and this routine went on for maybe 5 or 6 minutes, and it was very funny. Years later he appeared on television and again, like Jimmy Jewell, he became a bit part actor on TV, exactly the same act but of course then instead of a few hundred people about 3 or 4 million people saw him do it, so he could never do it again. You had these variety acts that carried the same act around for years and years but once they did the thing on television that was it. So what they're doing is they're using material up very quickly, but that's not really a Notting Hill thing, it's a sign of the times thing, it's a television thing. What you got when people stayed indoors to watch their televisions, you got less street life, you got couch potatoes, which prior to that you never got. A famous turn at the Metropolitan was an ex Dublin policeman, a singer called

Joseph Lock, the great Irish tenor, he used to perform at the Metropolitan Edgware Road, and he often got the words wrong, a real corny performer but people loved him, very popular at the Metropolitan.

In Portobello Road, couple of doors along from the Electric light cinema, you had a store called Bernard's, Bernard's cut-price store, I worked there just after I left school. I was about 15 and rationing was in force then still, 1952, '53, and that shop used to sell cut-price gear. I mean, some of the tins they had were relics from the first world war. It used to be one and tuppence for 2 pounds of sugar, 2 bob for a tin of stewed steak, and that shop was taken over by Tesco's, it became the first Tesco's and the first self-service shop in Notting Hill. I think they brought self-service in about 1954. They had a shop-front where we sold cut-price stuff but when you went in the shop they had the self-service shelves, one aisle down the middle. It was only a small shop but you used to have to tell people to take a wire basket, because people weren't used to self-service you know. And this shop, Tesco's as it became, was there for a few years before it moved to where it is now. That was the first Tesco's in Notting Hill, might have been one of the first in London for all I know, and that was the first time self-service was introduced and it took people a little bit of time to get used to it, because prior to then you had personal service from counter assistants. Now, if you came from Notting Dale, the other side of Ladbroke Grove, when you were going out to Portobello Road, you always said you were going down the lane, you didn't say you were going to Portobello, that was the expression you know, going down the lane...

Notting Hill, more accurately Notting Dale I suppose I'm talking about, it's two different areas. If you go to Oxford Gardens, Cambridge Gardens, St Mark's Road, it's kind of like leafy suburbs and the people there even now they're probably what you call professional people and the housing is a lot better and they got gardens. Whereas if you go from shall we say Latimer Road, you're walking straight down Walmer Road, straight past Notting Wood House and to the right hand side of that, Silchester Road, Oldham (?) Road, they're all kind of working class areas. As you go towards Holland Park they become prosperous again...

Now, what you had then in Oxford Gardens primary school, when school was finished they used to keep the school open and they had a kind of kids club. It was called the Play Centre, school used to finish at half past 4 and then the play centre would open about an hour later. You'd go home, have your tea then come back to the play centre and that would stay open from about half past 5 to 7 O'clock and you could do various things there. We didn't have table-tennis but you could play in the playground, you had art classes, and I think it might have been run on a kind of alternate basis by teachers who stayed behind. And when you were 11 and you went to secondary school you could join the youth club, and during the war and just after the war the youth club was the Harrow and Rugby Clubs Combined, a few years after that they separated. The Rugby Club was in Walmer Road and the Harrow Club was in Latimer (now Freston) Road. The men in charge of these clubs were all ex public schoolboys, ex Harrow School boys and ex Rugby School boys, who were now grown men. These men they looked upon themselves as Christian missionaries, and I think this goes back to the turn of the century when they sent boys from public school into the working class districts to do good amongst the working classes, which sounds a bit patronising now, and it's a peculiar thing because none of them were ever married...

There was the Dale Club, which was, I think it was Sirdar Road school, that's where the club met for table-tennis and stuff like that. In Walmer Road you got the recreation ground, the Rec they called it, you had a few swings and roundabouts but also what you had there, there was a building that used to be a police morgue, you know a police mortuary, and we used to use that as a gym. The two people who run the club were a nice old couple, well they seemed old to me at the time, Jack and Ella, Ella was a big woman who looked like Joyce Grenfell and Jack he was a big balding man with glasses, kind of upper-middle class you know. The Dale had a boxing club, I attended it, we had a gymnasium, and I remember they got a fella in there one time his name was Ossie. I think he might have been an ex paratrooper and he was a Judo expert. And he was a liberty taking bastard because he was about 5 foot 6, not a big man, and he used to throw us teenagers about and he never taught us break falls. So he threw one of the boys who landed on the base of his spine, the boy got up and hit him on the chin. So Ossie left the club, and he accused us of coming round trying to beat him up.

So they got Freddie Bloomfield in (father of footballer Jimmy Bloomfield?), who was an ex professional boxer, and he had a daughter who was a swimmer, might have been Patsy and she swum for Britain. Freddie, he must have been about late 40s or 50 years old at the time, he was a light heavyweight, about 12 and half, 13 stone, a very nice man. Also he was an attendant at Lancaster Road swimming baths, and the old man paid him to give me swimming lessons. He'd have a belt on the end of a long rope and he'd put it round your waist and kind of pull it to get you supported in the water and he'd walk you the length of the swimming baths, and you would try and do the crawl and that. I remember my mate, he wasn't a bad boxer Fred, talking about my mate Fred now, he was about 19, and so we go in there and Freddie Bloomfield says come on boys you can spar up. And I tell you this man of 50, up on the balls of his feet,

skipping around, not out of breath at all, and you got the young teenager chasing him, couldn't land a glove on him. And you know my mate being a smoker, within 3 or 4 minutes he's gasping for breath, and this was what these old time fighters were like. You got Freddie Bloomfield saying alright son, take it easy, and you'd expect somebody in his teens or 20s to overwhelm a man in his 50s but it didn't occur.

I remember walking down the road with me brother and a geezer called Reggie Short, who was a very good amateur light heavyweight and he saw old Fred Bloomfield come towards him and he ducked round the corner. He was terrified because what you got amongst fighters, I seen it happen in the pub, you get two fighters meet each other and one of 'em would say come on then shoot me down. There's a phrase in a book about Muhammad Ali, it's called 'dinosaurs in the park' and it's like when two alpha males meet, it's a challenge and Reggie Short, a good amateur boxer, he was terrified of Freddie Bloomfield and there was no trouble, but he might have got this come on boy, do you fancy your chances kind of thing. But as Reggie Short ducked round the corner that never occurred. I don't know if that can go in the book you're writing but it's a kind of sign of the way things are or the way things were...

Alf Mancini was a welter-weight, which is 10 stone 7, and he was a local hero, bit like in the 'Rocky' films you know, he was idolised in Notting Hill. I only saw the man once, he had a pub in Fulham Palace Road which is still there. When I used it it was called the Rifle, last time I heard of it it was called the Golden Gloves (then the Suffolk Punch), so the boxing tradition kind of carried on. I was maybe 20, early 20s, and me and a few of the boys used to go over there and Mancini was this titchy little fella, still had dark hair, used to serve behind the bar. I never spoke to him but if he'd known that I was Johnny Jones's boy, because apparently Mancini and my dad they were very good friends, but I never spoke to him. There was a Mancini (Henry) who played football for QPR, there was another Mancini who boxed (Tony?), a very clever boxer but he couldn't punch. So, therefore, he either won his bouts on points or got himself knocked out. He couldn't knock anyone else out because he didn't punch hard enough. But Alf Mancini, the great thing about him is he went to America to fight. I don't know how many fights he had but he never got beaten in America, apparently he had a wicked left hook, he could dig a bit you know. Also I'm told the old mum when she was young she was quite a good looking woman and Mancini was a bit of a Casanova, and the old man said to him, Alf, I don't care who you are, that's my bird, so leave her alone, which he did.

Also in Bramley Road, a couple of doors up from the York pub, you had Mancini's ice cream shop and the woman in charge there was one of the Mancini sisters, her name was Carrie. Occasionally the old man would take me into Carrie Mancini's, I remember she had a little bit of Italian about her but she had a broad cockney accent, dark hair, big beaky nose she had. There was another fella, the brother of Carrie and Alf Junior? I don't know what his name was but he was a massive man, big man with a bald head and he used to ride around on a bike and on the front of the bike was something like a fridge where he kept the lolly ices and the ice cream, and he'd cycle this thing, it was before ice cream vans came in. So he had his own ice cream bike and I think he was a little bit mentally defective and there was a story once about kids throwing stuff at him, but he was a Mancini. But, as I say, Alf Mancini he was a kind of a local hero.

Another famous fighter was Digger Stanley, I think it must be his great-grandson, I think he's dead now, Jimmy Stanley, bit younger than me, couldn't read and write, but a very well built fellow. Jimmy later became a good friend of my mate George the Hat. His sister Sylvie was married to a cousin of mine, Peter. Then we had Derek Burfor and Johnny Jenkins, they fought in the Golden Gloves in America and I think they both won as well, they were 9 and a half stone, something like that. You had Tommy Tanswell – I don't know if he's still alive, Tommy, he'd be knocking on a bit, but you used to be able to see him going down the road on a horse and cart up until a few years ago. He used to wear a tartan cap, and he once fought Randolph Turpin. He had loads of kids, Tommy, all good looking kids, all looked alike, and you talk about Tommy fighting Randolph Turpin because he didn't beat him, I think Turpin knocked him out in about 2 rounds. Both old man Burfor, Derek Burfor's father, and Tommy Tanswell were the gentlest men you could wish to meet, very quiet and very polite, and old school. I think they must have been born in the early 1900s, early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I used to have these run-ins with a fella about my age who was called Harry Cooper, not Henry Cooper but he boxed a bit, a Federation of Boys Clubs quarter finalist or something like that. He'd always be talking about his uncle Pat. I asked the old man about him and the old man laughed, and he said oh you mean 6-round Pat – lay down flat. Apparently the old man never had much regard for him, but he was kind of a low-grade specialist boxer. I never actually saw any but I think occasionally you got street fights, when people paid to fight. The other thing was you had amateur boxing and where it was staged was the old Lancaster Road swimming baths. They boarded over the pool and they called it the Argyll Hall. Me own brother, he fought there in the ABAs or the Federation of Boys Clubs championships. There was a fellow called Joey Lant, he lost in the ABAs at the Albert Hall to a very good lightweight called Joe Lucy, and everyone reckoned Joey had won it. Joe Lucy later became British champion, Joey Lant's boy became a

scientist, so I'm told. There's another couple of boxers, the Perrys, you had Jackie and Nat Perry, they were ABA finalists, they were superb boxers.

You'll find there's quite a lot of boxing in this, because it was kind of a local thing you know. You had a fighter who I never met, he must have been light heavyweight, a fella called Georgie Davis. Apparently Georgie Davis was a bit of a bully, but he was a good fighter, apparently he beat Freddie Mills twice, and he went in the army, must have been during the war I suppose. He went in the army and what they used to do in the army, you'd have what they called milling sessions where you'd put two blokes in the ring and they'd punch fuck out of each other for a minute. It was to kind of toughen them up. My old man, he brought back a group photo, the whole platoon or company all sitting down, and there's this big tall skinny fella with 3 stripes and if you look closely you can see he's got a black eye. And the old man laughed about that, he said Sergeant so and so took me in the ring for a milling session – because the old man was useful. But apparently Georgie Davis, they put him in with the Sergeant and of course Georgie Davis is a professional fighter, he murdered him, and what this Sergeant did afterwards, he shot Georgie Davis in the arm which of course finished his boxing career. These are stories that go around the district, I never met Georgie Davis, he must be dead now, but if he beat Freddie Mills he could've been a world champion. Also there used to be a top grade referee, he refereed Henry Cooper and Joe Bugner in the famous fight that Cooper lost. People will always say that Cooper was robbed you know. Bugner was somebody who had come over as a kid during the Hungarian revolution. He was a Hungarian who lived in Norfolk and he fought Henry Cooper for the British title. And the referee was a fella called Tommy Little, but he was a big man, I think he ran a newsagents somewhere in Notting Hill, he was a top class referee, but he gave the decision to Bugner and I don't think Henry Cooper ever spoke to him again.

Nu-lines, the builders' merchants in Portobello Road, that came from bookmaking money. The people who run the shop their father was Ernie Wickham and he was a dustman and what he did after the war, I think he saved some money, he became a street bookmaker and my old man used to work for him, used to run bets, take bets in the York. And from the street bookmakers you've now got the Nu-line chain because the sons inherited the money, and I think one of the young Wickhams had a betting shop in All Saints Road for a while. My old man ran for Ernie Wickham for a good few years, when I say ran, he was a bookie's runner and that's what they call it. When the old man died at 43, which would've been 1952, brother John could have taken over his pitch or took the bets in the York, and maybe I'd have been part of the Nu-line empire, but me mum, the old lady, she didn't want anything to do with it so John never took it up.

The old man he had to take bets standing outside the pub, so he'd pop in for a drink and I mean that's what killed him, standing around outside the pub, he died at 43. Standing outside the pub, after he's had a few drinks, his pores are open and he succumbed to pneumonia. But say on Derby day, I don't know what wages would've been then, I suppose a grown man if he's earning 10 quid a week he was doing well, and the ambition was for people to earn £20 a week, that was a lot of money, nothing nowadays, I mean people earn that in an hour. But the old man on Derby day or big race days he'd come home half pissed, always in a good mood, his pockets bulging with coins, and say right kids, I'm going to have a lay down, count that lot for me. There'd be about 200, 250 quid, worth thousands today, and us kids we'd pile up all the 2 bobs, half-crowns, pennies, and count it all out for him in nice neat little stacks. And I'll tell you something, never, I mean it never even occurred to me but the old man was a bit pissed and I could have nicked a couple of quid, which was a lot of money and he'd never have noticed, well he might have done if he'd compared the betting slips to the money he'd taken, but there was never any question of any of that money going missing. And, as I said, that all went back to Ernie Wickham.

Also you'd have gambling schools on the corners of streets. People would play a game called 'Pieman', where you'd toss two pennies up and I think it was heads, tails, or which ever way they landed, or one and one, and you'd bet on it. I think the Australians play it, it's called pitch and toss when they play it over there. And they'd play cards on the corners of the streets, you know they'd have card schools and they'd play a game called 'Banker', where you'd cut out, depending upon how many players, 4 or 5 wads of cards face down on the pavement, and you had a fella who was the banker. So, if you had 4 players, you'd have 5 stacks of cards and you'd put your money on the piles and the one left over would be the banker. The banker would turn his card up, say it was a king, then you'd turn the next card up, if that was a queen the banker won, if it was an ace the punter won. And if the police came along, I don't remember anyone ever getting nicked but it was illegal so the whole gambling school packed up. Us kids used to play the same game, but of course we never had any money so what we used to do we used to get bottle-tops – chippers – you know the metal tops you get on top of half-pint bottles. I used to go and see the old man in the pub and say dad can you get us some chippers. He'd go and ask the governor of the pub and get me a bag full of chippers and we'd play Banker on the corner, imitating the adults, but they're playing for money, we're playing for bottle-tops.

Another thing that occurs to me is that old people were looked after better, they were more in the community you know. It's in the news about people going into care and having to sell their houses to pay for care. Well, I can remember the old lady, she was going through the old man's suit pocket and she found a box of snuff. Occasionally people used to take it, as a particularly disgusting habit, and she gave the old man some grief about it, and he didn't say a lot about it. And, anyway, a few days later she caught him sitting in the York pub at the same table as three old ladies passing the snuff tin round. And what he did, he didn't take snuff himself but he bought it for the old dears and gave them a little bit of a treat. You wouldn't see people doing that sort of thing nowadays, or at least not to the same extent. It proves that there was more of a community. I can go back to the days just when you'd see old ladies sitting on the doorstep or in the front of the house smoking pipes, old ladies with flat caps on and they were real working class biddies you know.

Rillington Place, a friend of mine's sister lived next door to Christie in Rillington Place, her name was Edie Porter. That's the last you're going to hear about Edie Porter but I'll tell you about her mother. My old lady, me mum, she died when I was 43 years old, I think she was 71, but she had 3 very bad years when she was very ill and things kind of turned around. I became like the father and I was looking after her, and I got then to talk to me mum about things that you never normally talk about, you know going back over the old times. But my old lady told me that she'd had 3 abortions. I mean she had 5 kids, 8 kids would have been too many kids to look after, especially as we were in 3 rooms. But it's an interesting social thing I'm going to tell you about, 10 years after the old lady died I'm talking to Eileen, my oldest sister, and said did you know the old lady had had 3 abortions? And she said oh yeah, of course I did, Rosie Porter used to do it. Now Rose Porter, who's Edie Porter's mother, she lived in Pamber Street, had a Chinese look about her and she wasn't as rough and ready as most of the women along the street. Before she got married she was a nurse, so I doubt she many bad experiences, you know apparently she knew what she was doing. She was a lovely woman, she had 5 kids that I can remember, Edie, Chrissie, Eddie, Alan and Sophie, she might have had more, and she used to take some of us kids, especially me because her son Eddie was a mate of mine, she used to take us kids to the zoo, and Wimbledon Common.

Another thing about Mrs Porter is her old man used to knock her about, in those days there was quite a lot of domestic violence you know. It was more open and one of the reasons for it, I would guess, apart from drinking – because something you never see now, you see people coming out of the pubs singing – but another reason was it's like the 'Vera Drake' story. Under cover Mrs Porter used to do all your abortions in the district, and it was due to lack of knowledge and availability of contraception, and I suppose women used to get beaten up by their husbands because they weren't getting any sex. The woman was afraid, because every time you had sex, the old man wouldn't take precautions and you'd probably get pregnant. When I think back now my old man and me mum they were rowing a lot of the time. The old man never hit her, I think the old lady used to hit him occasionally, but she was a bit of a prima donna the old lady, bit of an actress. But you did hear, I mean you saw women with black eyes and thinking about it from a mature point of view now, you know I'm 68 years old, a lot of the domestic violence must have been about sex, women were afraid to have sex in case they got pregnant, men didn't like using French letters. Now women take the pill, this is part of your sexual revolution, and I'm prepared to bet if anybody ever came up with the figures which they couldn't do, you get less domestic violence...

You know you had this working class attitude, the people who lived in Oxford Gardens and Cambridge Gardens had respect for authority but amongst the rough and ready it was, you know, fuck you Jack. There was a lot of that, there wasn't respect for the law as such, more fear of the law, you know what a copper could do you for. As you can see there was quite a lot of ducking and diving... Now George Rogers, Labour MP before they changed the boundaries, and his Conservative opponent (Captain) Duncan (in 1945) and there used to be a song, 'Vote, vote, vote for Georgie Rogers, kick old Duncan out the door', silly lyrics, 'Rogers is the man who likes his bread and jam, and we won't vote for Duncan anymore.' I don't remember George Rogers ever doing anything for anybody, but he was quite a nice looking man, he had curly hair, and I think he had a moustache, that's all I've got to say about George Rogers.

When I was 11 there was 11 plus and there were 3 grades of school, the secondary modern, the grammar school and in between was the secondary central school which doesn't exist anymore. The school I went to was North Kensington Central which was, which is because the building's still there, one entrance is in Lancaster Road and the other is in Portobello Road. Now, at that school, I went there in 1948 I think, there were 2 black kids there, they were twins; their names were Joseph and Daniel Odoyu? They came from what was then called the Gold Coast, now it's called Ghana, and you know god bless 'em, I'm glad they were together because they kind of supported each other. But nobody ever picked on them you know, apart from a teacher, there was a teacher who used to call them black witch doctors and his name was Mr Jones. There was no animosity, it was kind of a bad joke I suppose, especially in today's terms. I

remember in the classroom there was a strong shaft of sunlight coming through the window and Mr Jones standing behind one of the Odoyus? with a magnifying glass, training the heat on to the boy's hair until a little wisp of smoke came up and he thought that was funny. He wouldn't have done it to anybody else in the classroom but you know the older generation, he was part of the days of empire, and black men were the white man's burden and all that kind of shit, you know. So he probably didn't know any better.

In some areas, or so I've been told, we're going back to before 1950, if you saw a black person you'd run out and touch them for luck, they were very rare, you'd very rarely see a black person. There was another famous black person, he was a racing tipster, his name was Prince Monalulu, or at least that's what he used to call himself. He was probably a West Indian, maybe not, but he used to dress up as a kind of African prince and Derby day he used to say 'I got a horse, I got a horse', that was his cry and he used to speak at Speakers' Corner, I saw him once, from what I remember it was a load of nonsense but there you go.

I think West Indian immigration was about 1954, but at the same time there were a load of clubs that were run by white villains, and you never saw black people in them. There was one on the corner of Bramley Road and Walmer Road, there was one near Latimer Road station, there was about 5 or 6 of them. I'm in about my 20s now, so I'm kind of skipping about round town. There was one in Clarendon Road and that was run by a fella called Tom Priestley, previously he'd been running a pie and mash shop, then he turned it into a club, after hours drinking club. And what occurred here might be something to do with Jack Spot, or a mob from south London called the Nashs. It might have been a turf war or to do with protection money or whatever, but the Nashs were going to come down. I think maybe they were demanding protection money from Tom Priestley, but the word got out that they were going to come down and smash the club up, and all the local boys were in the club that night and the Nashs never turned up, fortunately. After a while everybody breathes a sigh of relief, or disappointment, these fellas unloaded all their iron ware, you know knuckle-dusters, bicycle chains, one or two hammers. If the Nashs had come down they'd have been murdered, they'd have been slaughtered.

Tom, eventually, when he gave up the club, he took over the Britannia which was opposite Notting Wood House in Clarendon Road, and that was quite a rough pub. I lived opposite there and that was probably the roughest corner in Notting Hill, because all the people who had been moved out of Bangor Street (on the site of Henry Dickens Court) they moved into Notting Wood House, there were some very tough families there I tell you. As for the clubs, there was one run by a fella called Ginger Randall, who was reputed to carry a gun about, one run by a fella called Darcy Warren who was kind of a quarter coloured I suppose, wasn't all that dark but he was one of the old school before immigration, and old man Bell he run a club, there was another club called the Little Londoner. You mention a pub called the Black Boy, Victorian pub on Walmer Road, there was a pub called the Black Bull on the corner of Oldham (Aldermaston?) Road and Silchester Road, a very grotty old pub.

Billy Smith went to Lancaster Road School, he was a few months older than me, he was shot by Ernie Bell. The Bells lived in Talbot Road (Talbot Grove?), there were the 2 families, the Bakers and the Bells, they were like the Hillies and the Billies. You can understand what I'm saying, they were a bit rough and ready you know. Old man Baker, who was a little fella, about 5 foot 2, he once emptied the Ladbroke pub, just off Ladbroke Grove, when he ate a live mouse between 2 slices of bread. Apparently he spat all the innards and gizzards back into his beer glass to wash it down, and I think a few people run out of the bar and spewed their ring up. The Bakers, there was Georgie Baker, he's still knocking about George, he's a bit older than me, he was a car breaker, Billy Baker, and I think little Bertie Baker. Billy, he's dead now, he died young, he once had a fight with me brother. Johnny saw a couple of fellas beating somebody up outside Notting Wood House, and John's a few years older than Billy, he stepped in and John hit him, he could stick a bit John and that became a kind of no result.

The Bells, there was Peter Bell who I went to school with, Marky Bell, Ernie Bell, he did the shooting, and a daughter Vi. Now they had a quarrel with Billy Smith and the headline when they were trying Ernie Bell was 'Billy Smith, a very truculent man'. Well, Billy Smith, I don't know what they were quarrelling about but he wanted to be the hardest man on the turf I think. Apparently, I wasn't there that night but he went into the Latimer Arms with a knife and he cleared the bar out, you know, people ran. I think he was after the Bells from what I can gather but people were scared you know. And after that the Bells were kind of riding around Notting Hill looking for him with a couple of shotguns. So, of course, obviously they found him. The Bakers and the Bells they were the Hillies and the Billies, they were both kind of rough, not very well educated, aggressive families. Billy Smith, on his own, he was an aggressive man and he paid the price.

*The Met CID Assistant Commissioner Gilbert Kelland recalls in 'Crime In London'; 'There were odd occasions when we had some anxiety about the possibility of violence when clubs were raided, though in*

*the main good humour prevailed. One such was a notorious club at Notting Dale run by a local criminal named Bell, where it was not thought safe to attempt an inside observation by our under cover officers. During outside observation a man was seen to be thrown out of the house early one morning badly beaten up, and our watchers reported that they thought the doorman might have a gun. When a warrant had been obtained entry was secured by playing the old schoolboy game of 'knock down ginger', that is to knock on the door and run away. This worked because after 2 or 3 knockings the doorman, the proprietor's teenage son, Sydney Bell, came outside and walked to the corner of the street to see who the prankster was. He was held and searched while the raiding party quickly entered the house and the drinking club, an adapted living room. At this point young Sydney Bell came back into the club in a temper and with venom in his voice shouted at us, 'If I had a gun, I'd shoot the fucking lot of you.' I believe he meant it.*

*Some time later, in May 1960, as a result of a long-standing feud between the Bells and another local family named Smith, James David Smith was shot dead in the street. Ernest Bell, the former proprietor of the club, his 3 sons, Ernest, Sydney and Peter, and a neighbour, George Baker, were arrested and charged with the murder. Ernest Bell junior and George Baker were eventually convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 7 years and 5 years' imprisonment respectively. The others were acquitted.'*

There was another man that we were knocking about with at that time, I must have been in my 20s, a fellow who came down from Glasgow, went under 2 names, Doogie Johnson and Doogie McGuinness and he was a lightweight professional boxer. At that time there was Dave Charndley, who was a world champion, there was a fellow called Dave Stone, also a lightweight, I think he came from Shepherd's Bush, and Doogie, who I knew very well, he was the third best lightweight in Great Britain. I can remember Doogie going in the KPH (Kensington Park Hotel) and the lavatories upstairs, they had a little platform there where they had a band and people would sing. And you know your Belfast wars, your Protestants and your Catholics, and all the Irish Catholics in the KP, Doogie got up on the stairs and he sang some song like 'Go fuck the Pope' and all these big Paddies, they came at him 2 at a time, only 2 of 'em could reach him at a time, and as they came up the stairs towards him he knocked 'em out, he knocked out about 5 geezers. So Doogie reckoned he was a hard man but he must have upset somebody. He was living up by St Stephen's Gardens and he looked out of the window one time and there was a car outside with 4 fellas in it, all with guns poking out the window, and they more or less told Doogie to go back to Glasgow, which he did. He said to me I have not been so frightened in my life and this was a man who was probably frightened of very little. So, if you were in those circles it could be dangerous.

Now I remember there was a film come out, it was called 'The Blackboard Jungle' (1955) and it starred Sidney Poitier and Glenn Ford. It was about a rough school in America, and the soundtrack song was called 'Rock Around the Clock' by Bill Haley and the Comets and apparently this sent all these teenagers mad, and there was a big riot in the Prince of Wales Cinema on Harrow Road, where it was showing. And also around this time you had the Teddy boy thing going, it was all kind of mixed up. If you were a Teddy boy what you aspired to was a 40 guinea suit. It sounds a bit poofy now, when you come to think of it, but you'd see fellas in pubs – the favourite pub where it used to occur was the Elgin, because you had a fella used to sing on the stage there, Welshman called Johnny Fredericks, had a very fine tenor voice but he'd sing pop songs. But they'd all be lounging around the Elgin, which was a smart place to go then and all be kind of weighing up each others' sartorial elegance. You know, how much did that suit cost? That's a 25 guinea one, I've got a 45 guinea one, but I never quite got into that. I was never a Teddy boy you know.

Up until then the two most popular pop singers were Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby, and they seemed to spread across generations you know, young kids and older people liked Sinatra and Crosby. What you got with 'Rock Around the Clock', I suppose you got the birth of youth culture. Another thing you had then, you had British Relay Wireless with the light programme, Home Service, the third programme and Radio Luxembourg 208, and what they introduced, at least I think they introduced it, was the top 20 and that became youth culture, kids' culture. With Sinatra you had the bobby socks thing, you know hero worship, Sinatra was the swooner crooner. I don't know if that was before the war or just after, probably just after the war, and that was the first symptom of it. But Sinatra eventually became old hat as he kind of moved towards middle age. So what you got then, the first one, an American singer with a big hooter, a fella called Frankie Laine. His hit song was a thing called 'Jezebel'. There's a fella I know, Ian, he's about the same age as me, maybe a bit older, and he's a Frankie Laine fan to this day, you know some people never change, and he describes him as a fine untrained baritone. I can remember him but vaguely, Frankie Laine, doing a tour of London streets, standing in the back of an open-top car. And I tell you he was an ugly man, big beaky nose. He's the first teenage idol I remember you know. If I can find the record, it's something that you may not be familiar with and it'll show what excruciating taste people had.

Then you had the 'Cry Baby' singer Johnny Ray, his hit record was a thing called 'Cry' and the other one was 'Little White Cloud'. He had a deaf aid, but he was very popular you know. I went to a pub years later,

I'll tell you this story, me, Fred and George the Hat, we used to drive over to Wandsworth and Battersea and on one occasion we got pulled up, so a driving license had to be delivered to Ladbroke Grove police station. So we dropped Fred off near Ladbroke Grove, and he bumped into this tall grey haired fella who's walking a pair of poodles, and they got chatting and the bloke said I'm the manager of a bar upstairs in the Chepstow pub, why don't you come along one time. So Fred told me about it and straight away I twigged that the geezer was bent as a 9 bob note, just by his description. In any case we decided to go along to this Chepstow pub and we got in there and the pub's empty, and there's this sound coming from upstairs, Bobby's Bar I think it was called. The Johnny Ray connection is you look around and there's photos of showbusiness stars, Judy Garland, Johnny Ray. So we got up the stairs to Bobby's Bar and there's about a hundred and fifty geezers all dancing with each other, and this grey haired fella at the bar went coo-ee to Fred, come over here, so Fred went red as a beetroot and bolted, I pissed myself laughing. But the thing is, unbeknown to teenagers, Johnny Ray was also a gay icon, that is the point of the story.

As I say you had Radio Luxembourg 208, the birth of teenage culture, prior to that you were a boy until you were 18, you'd leave school at 14 or 15, you weren't considered to be a man until you were 21 actually, because the voting age was 21, and you went from being a boy to a man and there was no such thing as a teenager. I don't think the term was even used then, this all kind of changed after the war, around about the 50s, and it's to do with commercialism, because you've got the gramophone now, the electric gramophone, people can sell records. I remember my old man going out totting and he went to this rich person's house and they gave him a wind-up gramophone, I must have been about 9 years old. We had a couple of George Formby records, some Gracie Fields and Al Jolson records, we had about 6 records that were 78s, it might have been about 10 records, and this was such a novelty to actually have a gramophone. The Jolson record I used to play, used to drive the old man mad, it's the nearest he ever come to clipping me round the earhole, and eventually, the fact that I used to play these records over and over again I think that's why we got rid of the wind-up gramophone. I suppose in the 1930s, up till the early 40s, you had to be fairly rich to have one. Same as after the war, going back to watching the cricket match round at this woman's house, you had to be rich to have a television. So that kind of pinned you down to being a certain class you know, you had to have so much money before you had these things.

What you had in the pubs, entertainment in pubs, it would not be guitars, it would be piano and drums. And there are two pubs I want to talk about mainly, one is the El Gin, actually the correct pronunciation is Elgin, as in the Elgin marbles, but we always call it the El Gin, and the other pub is the Latimer. What you had in the Latimer was a pianist and you had a fella called Danny McDermott who was a drummer, but he never had any drums. So, what he used to do, he'd get a hard-backed chair, the type of thing you sit on in school I suppose, a very uncomfortable hard seat, and he'd put that in front of him and he would get two half-pint beerbottles and drum away on this hard seat, and that would be the kind of rhythm section. And the pianist was a fella called George, not a bad pianist, and you'd get people doing turns. People would do Nat King Cole turns, a few of them, and the main one was a Jolson turn because Al Jolson, a pre-war entertainer, was still popular and well people used pubs, kind of an old generation, rock'n'roll had not kicked in. There was a fella I knew quite well, he's dead now, poor old sod, Reggie Jones, and his great turn was a Jolson imitation. He'd get up on the mike and this was the high point of Reggie Jones's life, he'd get up and he'd sing 'Rockabye My Baby', 'Nothing could be finer than to be in Carolina'.

Reggie Jones would go from pub to pub, I think there was a couple of pubs in Southam Street, the Derby and I can't remember the other one, where they used to have this thing, it would be piano and drums, but in the case of the Latimer they couldn't afford drums so they had Danny McDermott playing on a hard-seated chair with a couple of beerbottles. In any case the stage where Danny McDermott played was near to the lavatory and he was a very funny man Danny but he was kind of a cruel pisstaker. And what he would do is, a stranger went in for a piss, Danny would come off the stage with a big long mike lead, walk into the karsey and interview the man while he was having a piss. But I remember once there was a one-armed man and I can't remember what Danny said but he made a crack and the man threw a chair at him and he was going to kill him. You know, with attention seekers, sometimes in their pursuit of attention they're not very sensitive. The other pub, as I mentioned before, was the Elgin, or as we called it the El Gin, and old Reggie Jones he used to do his Jolson act there and they occasionally had talent competitions and you'd get a £5 prize. There was a lot of talent knocking around but it was old style singing, no guitars, it was jazz orientated, jazz-based or popular song based, more like Sinatra and Nat King Cole, going back a bit further, Al Jolson, and as I said you had the Welshman Johnny Fredericks, what's the song? 'I'll give my hand to those that cannot see', it was a kind of semi-religious song, I think maybe a Tony Bennett number, but you know slightly different styles of singing, slightly older people.

The Teddy boys were still going to coffeebars or maybe going to the west end. Around that time you had a place in Soho called the Two 'I's coffeebar and you had the first British post-war pop star there, a fella called Tommy Steele, he was round about the same time as Cliff Richard you know. It was the British pop

revolution before the Beatles. Tommy Steele he was quite a talented man, he was a very good dancer, appeared in one or two west end shows. His real name was Tommy Hicks but they called him Tommy Steele. You had a group of singers, you had somebody called Duffy Power, Marty Wilde and you had a fella called Larry Parnes, he run this stable of teenage pop idols, and it was a new phenomenon, a new cultural phenomenon. Tommy Steele eventually became a sculptor and I think he did a group statue of the Beatles. But the Teddy boys they'd go down to the Two 'I's coffeabar and the older generation, the more mature generation would go in the pubs and they'd see Jolson imitators, Nat King Cole imitators, Sinatra imitators, and it was kind of pre-wartime music. Another one in the Larry Parnes stable was a fella called Billy Fury, I can't remember what his real name was, another one was Adam Faith, he came from Acton, his real name was Terry Nelhams, and his famous song was 'What do you want if you don't want money?', which was very popular. He was a little geezer, quite a good looking man, bit pimply as I remember.

But this geezer Larry Parnes he had a stable of teenagers or kids in their 20s and television now has come to the fore, so he had a stage to display them on, and you got the television generation and you had a kind of schism, you know with people who'd grown up with jazz, big band music, and then all of a sudden you had this music that was produced for young people, teenagers and it started a whole cultural thing, whether it's good, bad or indifferent is a matter of opinion, personally I think indifferent is probably the right word to use, before the Beatles. I suppose the Beatles were the pop revolution, they wrote some intelligent music. Billy Fury, Marty Wilde, Tommy Steele, Adam Faith, Duffy Power, these were all names to appeal to I don't know, what do you call it?, the teenage psyche I suppose, and they were taken seriously. But you listen to them now and they sound ridiculous.

Now we'll talk a little bit about the race riots (1958). I think it's your mate Colin MacInnes, in his book, about the black man coming out of Latimer Road station. Well, the incident I saw and maybe it occurred twice, I don't know, but that was coming out of Ladbroke Grove station. I'm with a friend and we saw this little black man come out of Ladbroke Grove station, I think he was African because he was very dark skinned and he was suddenly surrounded and jostled by a mob. He probably didn't know the riots were happening, you could see he was scared and bewildered, his eyes popped out like organ stops, and I didn't like it you know. I was about 18 at the time but if I'd have interfered I'd have been torn to pieces. I don't remember if the man was actually beaten up or just jostled you know, but it was a nasty experience. I don't know what caused the race riots, it might have been a copycat thing because you had race riots in Nottingham and a week later you had the more famous Notting Hill race riots. Where it occurred round Latimer Road station way I never used to get over that way much then because I'd moved to Clarendon Road. But sometimes I'd go for a drink in the Station Hotel (on Bramley Road) or the Flag (on Latimer/Freston Road), and round about that way, on Blechynden Street, you'd see basements boarded up and there were stories of coloured families afraid to go out, it was fucking disgusting. During the time of the riots all the streets they were covered with glass, broken glass, it was kind of a period of madness.

I remember afterwards during the (1959) general election when Oswald Mosley stood. I remember Mosley making a speech, he had a beaky nose, piercing eyes as I remember, and a little moustache, and he spoke in a kind of strangled upper class accent. What he was going to do, this was his promise because there was a housing shortage, everybody was living in cramped conditions, so Mosley was going to build temporary accommodation on Wormwood Scrubs, that was his idea, and move all the deprived families there until their accommodation could be refurbished or rebuilt. And he had a few headers around, you know. In the other part of his speech, I remember he said in this country in a generation's time we're going to see rows and rows of khaki coloured piccaninnys grinning at us, you know what a piccaninny is, a half-cast. So it was overtly racist his policy, and it was opportunism as it came on the back of the race riots and fortunately he never got elected. There was a story that I think he might have lost his deposit. He was a very aristocratic man, and this goes back to the class system, when they had the meeting where all the candidates thank their workers and all that (at the Lancaster Road Argyll Hall), as Mosley came out of the meeting some old cockney said 'Ere Mosley, you cunt', and that summed it up. For one of the older generation that showed a bit of foresight, because you know with the old boys, it was days of empire when Britain ruled, the sun never set on the empire, and they had this attitude that the white man was superior but this old cockney, god bless him, he couldn't stomach what Mosley was saying and knew it was wrong, it's kind of a sliver lining to the whole situation, when you think of it.

What you found when West Indian immigration first started, you never saw many black men in pubs. I mean, the pub thing in a way it's a uniquely British thing, or it was. Maybe that's when black men had their own shebeens. There were never any black men in the Apollo (now studios, on All Saints Road) when I used it, I used it for a few years. You had the Pelican, that was an Irish oasis in that street. The pub where you did have black men was the Colville, which is the Ground Floor bar. What you had there, you had the public bar and almost everybody in there was a black man and you had the saloon bar and the people in

there were predominantly Irish. I used to drink in there occasionally and I'd always drink in the public bar with the black men, for the simple reason that if you went in the Irish side it was more volatile. You never saw fights amongst black people, never. I'd be 20, what 22, they were mostly men in their 30s, they kind of stuck together. If you didn't interfere with them, they didn't interfere with you. But if you went into the saloon bar, where the Paddys hang out, you could quite easily get involved in a fight, even if you didn't choose to, you know. I asked one black geezer why they didn't use pubs and he said well, you English people you drink too much beer, and he said I don't want to get a white man's belly. In other words, he didn't want to get a beer paunch.

Opposite the Pelican, I think she was a Nigerian woman, her name was Gloria, big woman, she had a club that we used to go to, you'd get a few black people there. But I think really after they started closing down the villains' clubs, Darcy Warren and Ginger Randall, and people like that's clubs closed down, me and the people I knocked around with, we kind of gave the clubbing up, you know. You had the villains' clubs first, they were open before the Windrush thing and not many people speak about them now you know. The expression 'mushroom clubs' I haven't heard before but that describes them perfectly because they used to spring up, maybe stay in existence for a few weeks or a few months and then move elsewhere. You know, it surprised me that you'd heard of them and maybe that should be mentioned a bit more, it was an interesting period. Another local boy was Daley Thompson; a mate of mine, a black geezer named Joe, he went to school with him I think, I asked him, I said do you remember Daley Thompson? He said I think so, he said there was a kid at school who was always jumping and running about. He said actually he used to irritate you a bit but Joe's a very quiet fella you know. But apparently I heard Daley Thompson said, I think he was exaggerating but he said if you were black and you were born in Notting Hill you had to be able to run, it was the safest thing to do, but I don't think things were ever that bad. There's a niece of mine, I think she went to school with Daley Thompson.