

1958 REMEMBERED RIOT REMINISCENCE

EDDIE ADAMS former communist Red Ted, community activist and local historian, born in North Kensington in 1936, interviewed by Sue McAlpine for the Historytalk Carnival history project:

“I was a bit of a rough neck, there was a lot of small gangs and fighting among kids, never anything too serious but it was a bit heavy at times. The gang I was in was the Moorhouse Boys, which were mainly from the days when I had been at the Catholic school. Our gang philosophy was to have the latest suits. We were basically Teddy boys with drainpipe trousers and four button suits, once we started to get work and money in the period after the war. I left school in 1951. It was a good period for most people. There was a shortage of labour so wages were going up and as young men we were quite well off. Jobs were paying better. There was a tendency to dress up and have suits made.

“I used to go to Manny Marks in Praed Street to have my suits made. You could have any design but generally speaking it was like a Teddy boy with long jacket, four buttons, narrow trousers. I can remember having a dark blue one with herring bone material. Some people had a bit of velvet on the collars. Suits cost between 30 and 40 pounds, they were quite expensive and it used to take about six weeks before you got the suit. We used to wear the bootlace ties, suede shoes with crepe soles – my blue suede shoes, quite a lot of hair and we used to bring it round the back in a DA. We used to wear a lot of Brylcreem and had quaffs.

“We used to go to the British Oak pub in Westbourne Park Road, at that time very much an Irish pub, all types of drinking clubs and later coffee bars. The Two Bare Feet in Westbourne Grove, place to go and have a coffee and chat. There were dances at Hammersmith Palais and Porchester Hall – jiving. It was a loose-knit thing. There was an off-shoot from Teddy boys take off of Edwardian clothes called the Victorian boys. If you went out of your area into another area, such as the Harrow Road, you were likely to bump into the Harrow Road Boys and they were likely to chase you off their turf, so to speak. If there was a fight it would mainly be fists, later on somebody might pull a knife or something like that – generally speaking there was a lot of threatening rather than action. I got involved a few times.

“I remember getting into a fight in Bayswater Road. We were coming along there and there was a group of people clustered all around and we went to see what was happening and the next thing we know we were being attacked by these fellows. This fellow was having a go at me and I sort of hit him and he went down. He just attacked me and I didn't know why and anyway I hit him and he went down and then he came up with a knife and tried to stab me so I knocked him down again and eventually we were on a corner of Queensway and Bayswater Road, the fighting had stopped and this woman came across and they were Hungarians and it was the time of the Hungarian uprising and this fellow who tried to stab me hid the knife in the gutter and the Hungarian woman who spoke English and we told her what happened and she told them off. We didn't call the police and it was just smoothed over... Some people had flick knives, I didn't...

“There was the Powis and Colville tenants association which we supported and were involved in and they were mainly organised against Rachman and other slum landlords in the area and we had meetings, etc. When we first organised a meeting (Michael) de Freitas came along and joined and he was our treasurer, only to find out later that he was a Rachman henchman – he'd been sent to join us and what he done was he spent all the money we had. Actions against slum landlords and stopping illegal evictions. Rachman owned most of the Powis Terrace houses and put in hundreds of West Indian families, pushed in, overcrowding, and he used to send blokes around with dogs to collect the rent and if you didn't pay you were out then and there.”

At the time of the riots – from Eddie's interview for Mike and Trevor Phillips' *Windrush* book: “I was staying in Ledbury Road, just watching. This was what lots of people were doing. They just came out of their houses, stood on their doorsteps, waiting to see what was going to happen, because it had been in the press. And there were groups of white youths going round at that time, looking for black people to beat up. But the thing I noticed most: there were these characters in the crowd who were stirring things up, wandering round saying 'Let's get the black bastards.' They weren't working class. They seemed to be a bit from somewhere else – not from the area.”

BEN BOUSQUET 1959 Carnival organiser, community activist, Labour councillor in Notting Dale and candidate for North Kensington MP, born 1939 in St Lucia, arrived in London in 1957, interviewed by Shaaron Whetlor and Sue McAlpine:

"We added colour. I remember everybody dressed very dully, we came with our bright colours and we wore colourful things. I remember wearing a pair of dungarees, you called them then, you call them jeans now, I was wearing a pair of dungarees and yellow shirt in Oxford Street that must have been about 1959 and I turned everybody's head, everyone was looking, they had never seen anything like this... Because of our music even the musical tastes in England began to change and I would see people like the Beatles, and people like that who say they were influenced by North American music but it was people like us who brought this North American music from the West Indies with us over here and were playing it, we were the first to play it. We listened to music in each other's homes. The first music that was really popular was calypso and things like that and reggae came in about ten years later.

"I remember pre riots of '58 and people keep forgetting that Mosley used to speak at the bottom of Tavistock Road, he had his meetings there. He was very powerful in Avondale ward where I eventually became a councillor. I saw the riots and I saw what the riots were. What I saw after the riots was probably more fascinating in that for a while a lot of people felt ashamed and people who had been friends with each other found it very difficult to remake these friendships. You know if you were walking down the road and you knew some white people like I did, some white boys, white guys around my own age and because you were fearful of the situation at that time what I found you did was when you saw them afterwards when the thing had abated, was you said hello but you said hello and that's it, whereas before you might have said hello and stopped and had a long conversation, now you said hello and in embarrassment you both walked away, so it did in a way focus our attention on what we had almost done to each other as a community, that's what I think. And people I know around here who were very much involved but who have since become friends because I would not hold that against them because as far as I was concerned it was a learning curve.

"It was only the beginning, it happened, and the first thing you must understand after you have finished beating each other up you still have to live in the same area and you have no other alternative other than starting in some way to readdress that imbalance which you've created or to carry on fighting, if you carry on fighting then you'll kill each other off and if you don't kill each other off the enmity which you have created will last forever anyway, check what is happening in Bosnia and so on, that enmity is a thousand years old and it erupted and what has happened is the people round here found eventually that they had to live together and love each other and in this area there are some really wonderful people, there are some real heroes and in that period there were some white women who were going out with black men... and those white women I always tell people as far as I'm concerned they are my heroes because it must have been as tough as hell for them because they were going out with black guys and they themselves were under attack.

"It's a process that people knew should happen and I think maybe it happened easier for the younger generation because children or young people have a capacity to forgive much quicker and much easier than the older people, maybe the younger generation sorted it out and the older people just followed through. The local churches didn't want us for God's sake and when I say that I get angry, it's the truth they didn't want black people, you don't have to see me out of your door more than once to know you don't want me back. Once I got elected in 1978 I created the first Council place, a surgery in Kensington where people where people who had problems could come and see their councillor. Before that the Labour party used to have a surgery at their headquarters once a month and nobody used to come... since the riots kids have got there act together and they don't see each other as black kids or white kids and more often in this area they are cousins now anyway. The Afro-Caribbean community had fallen down tremendously, this is the area where most of the Afro-Caribbean people came to when they came to England. On the Henry Dickens estate they had been asking the Council for years for somewhere to meet, one day I saw this portacabin."

LOFTUS BURTON Carnival organiser, community activist and actor, born in 1950 in Dominica, arrived in London in 1958 in the middle of a bitter winter and experienced the riots first hand, interviewed by Sue McAlpine:

First impression? "Completely confusing, had never seen fog, snow, trains, buses, coldness of the people apparent. I was coming from home to the local shops and a car passed me and one of the occupants wound down the window and spat at me. They said the usual words, you're a black bastard go back to your country. You just built a barrier because it does hurt, but you are aware of it, at that time we were building up to the Notting Hill riot and so forth. Ladbroke Grove of course being the deprived area that it was you were aware that you were different. I went to the local catholic school St Francis primary school and even there you were aware that you are one of the small number of black kids. The housing conditions for black people generally we had a two bedroom flat, my parents had their room which was partitioned, bedroom and sort of living room, sitting room and my cousin was staying with us, he had the

other room which he shared with me. The kitchen was two landings down, the toilet was on the next landing we would share with a doctor's surgery. We had the bathroom on the same landing, small bathroom, but at that time most people didn't actually use the baths, they tended to go to public baths."

His father came in 1957, he came with his mother and first lived on Great Western Road, always lived in Ladbroke Grove area. His father first shared with friends, when his brother was born in 1960 they moved to Colville Terrace another top floor flat for a year and then moved round the corner to a better flat on Ledbury Road, eventually his family had the whole house and he had the top flat. In '58 there were certain places he wouldn't go as a black person. "Golborne Road area and Kensal New Town was very sort of off limits in that sort of sense. Powis Square and Colville Terrace was very concentrated black community exposed to Rachmanism." They were quite fortunate, the landlord they had on Ledbury Road was Polish, a very nice man, they lived there for 20 years. He went to school in the morning and came home, he didn't go out in the evenings unless with his parents. His father had encountered racist incidents coming home from work at night. "Black people looked out for each other and you knew there were certain places you didn't walk, you didn't go out without friends. The whole thing exploded in '58. It just became part of your life. I don't think it was a case of you try to forget it, blank it out of your mind, in a way you became immune to it, immune is the wrong word, it just became part and parcel of life, if you were to target all the incidents, racism that you encountered one could go on for weeks."

FRANK BYNOE indoor Carnival promoter and journalist arrived in London from Trinidad in the mid to late 50s, interviewed by Sue McAlpine:

"I didn't go through the horrors... I had pretty nice beginnings... I knew about the situation but I wasn't involved in any of the hustles that were going on at the time and there were quite a lot. I knew all about Kelso Cochrane and all that had happened there. I knew about the riots, I had a younger brother who came and joined me and he was at Hammersmith. And when it all happened I had to get a train and see what was happening to him... Came with Victor and Frank Crichlow, Scrubs (Phillip Allscrub), 43 Debating Society, the West Indian World, Aubrey Baines, and Victor and myself and Scrubs we started promotion of all his shows in London, contract with Mecca, Hammersmith Palais, Empire, Lyceum, the first major record shop in London. We started off with 5 and 7 Great Western Road in the basement and another one on the corner, originally jazz, calypso, Blue Beat which eventually became reggae, 9 Great Western Road and we had another one lower down at 21 Great Western Road, it's just at the corner, everybody came there, we imported records from Trinidad, promotion of Jackie Edwards and Millie, Chris Blackwell and Island Records, Claudia Jones and the West Indian Gazette, Calypsonians, Terror, Tiger, Sparrow, Beginner."

FRANK CRICHLLOW community activist owner of the celebrated El Rio and the Mangrove cafes, born in 1943 in Trinidad, arrived in London in 1953, first lived in Paddington, interviewed by Eric Huntley and Colin Prescod:

"Could take a week before you saw another black person. Guys used to hang out on Sutherland Avenue where there was a club called Johnson's, owned by an African, run by a Jamaican. People used to look forward to going to that club and everything started mushrooming from there." Worked on the railways with his cousin as a plumber's mate, used to maintain gas lamps on the stations, trying to learn all the time, English guys he was working with did not know how to relate to black people. Formed the Starlight Four band in 1956, played at a club run by Dr Mooksang from Guyana in Craven Park Road, the band appeared on TV and in a cinema advert. Founded El Rio café at 127 Westbourne Park Road in 1959, went to Southend to steal fishing nets and brought them back to decorate the interior. "Got a guy from Jamaica to paint and decorate. It was the in place. They had a place in Carnaby Street called the Roaring Twenties and when people left there they came to the Rio to eat chicken and rice, fried the chicken, salt, pepper and garlic powder and sprinkle it on while it's hot. Vincent Bute played a big part in it, helped with the music, Blue Note, background music and Bohemian setting. Jamaicans and Trinidadians used to meet and play cards and gamble, Colin MacInnes, Stephen Ward, Lucky Gordon, Christine Keeler used to call me Dad, they were slumming and it's okay, no problem." There was also the Count Suckle club, Bagy/Bayjee from Barbados hence his name had a club on Talbot Road and Fullerton the tailor's used to have dances, 9 Blenheim Crescent owned by Totobag (café attacked in the riot) and blues dances.

MICHAEL DE FREITAS aka Michael X and Michael Abdul Malik, hustler, Rachman associate landlord, community activist and Black Power leader, born in Trinidad in 1933, came to Britain as a merchant seaman in the mid 50s, arrived in Notting Hill in 1956. In his autobiography *From Michael de Freitas To Michael X* by Michael Abdul Malik, he recalled actively taking part in the riot; freeing arrested hustlers from a Black Maria, and organising petrol-bomb attacks on a white drinking club and fascist HQ.

But, rather than the police, the locals, Teds or fascists, he blamed the press for 'the irresponsible journalism which exaggerated a few isolated incidents into large scale racial disturbances.' In Michael's anatomy of the riot, 'there's a large section of any population which is attracted to riots for kicks and to relieve the boredom of dull lives. With a few wild ones throwing bottles, everyone tends to get involved. And white people don't run to the blacks for protection, nor the blacks to whites. They separate into their own colour groups. And then you have it, created out of nothing – a race riot. Or, at least, the atmosphere of a race riot. In actual fact, there still wasn't much real action.'

Michael was largely dismissive of the threat the Teds posed to the West Indian community, and the riots in general, when he recalled in his autobiography: 'The thing about the so called Notting Hill race riots is that they were not real race riots at all. People are always fighting in an area like the ghetto; clubs are always being invaded and broken up... the general opinion was that a few Teddy boys had simply been making a nuisance of themselves...' MacInnes expressed his annoyance with this 'race riot', not race riot debate. But it wasn't far off a real one; as Ruth Glass concluded in *Newcomers: West Indians in London*, 'the actual violence, and even the cumulative threats of violence, produced an atmosphere of menace and fear which closely resembled that of a text-book race riot.'

In the gambling clubs, Michael remembered it was business as usual soon after: 'Amongst the legion of hustlers no colour is recognised... the white criminals would filter back into the black clubs saying 'It wasn't us man. All these people came from outside.' This was true to some extent, as the charge sheets of those arrested showed... But deep down, we felt that everyone had been involved. It was just that the whites in the ghetto knew better how to evade the police.' Another West Indian, quoted in *Notting Hill In the 60s*, shrugged off the race riot with: "A lot of black men live off prostitutes and a lot of Teddy boys would like to." The recollection of 'Parachute', of the Crazy Clothes shop on Lancaster Road, is the riot largely consisted of him and his Jamaican mates beating up Teds and fascists.

MO FOSTER Mo Foster's *A Blues for Shindig* novel and *Teddy Boys' Picnic* shortstory take place in 1956/57, acting as a prequel to Colin MacInnes's *Absolute Beginners* as they set the scene in Notting Hill in the run up to the riots. *A Blues for Shindig* features the proto-beatnik drugs scene underworld that revolved around the Notting Hill Gate Joe Lyons cornerhouse café, Harry Wragg's café on All Saints Road, and the greasy spoon caff on the corner of Ladbroke Grove and Lancaster Road.

Mo introduces herself and the area at the time saying she was 'around that scene where Teds beat up on blacks regularly. As I lived by Latimer Road station I had to brave Ted territory to get to the taxi rank on Ladbroke Grove. Hairy!' Of the 50s, she recalls: 'It is largely forgotten and can induce yawning but it was important in marking out the 60s. Naturally it fascinates me as it was if not my finest hour then one of the most fun times. But the racism was profound then, a lot of it unthinking and all the worse for that. The Teds would probably have directed their malice at any target that happened along but the general acceptance of racism was what allowed the riot to happen. The police in particular for the most part were racist, did little to defuse things and gave tacit support to the Teds.'

Teddy Boys' Picnic by Mo Foster – 'The Teds move in packs round our way in west London. Flocks might be a better word, they are very birdlike. They strut with skinny drainpipe legs, big chicken feet crepes, chests thrown out and hair a coxcomb. They chirp out insults from the sides of their beaks. Where I live, in Latimer Road, they are even brave in twos. Ten minutes down the road in Ladbroke Grove they become moorhens as they scuttle into the tube station. There is a sort of low key war that reaches a crescendo on a Friday or Saturday night after the pubs shut and they are brave. Then it is perilous for any black to be out. They find mixed couples a particular affront. Marauding army of disaffected young males of indefinite species looking for a focus for their frustration or a shower of bastards? Matter of opinion, don't matter a lot really. Just means it is ultra dodgy to venture abroad on the streets at night. Our house is the only one in the road owned by a black geezer, some of the neighbours find our presence an aggravation, most don't care. The house leans on the bridge by Latimer Road station. When a train goes over the bridge the entire house spasms, if you spill a drink on my floor it runs down gently to the bridge side. The house appears to be melting softly into the ground, the basement has saturated walls but nobody lives in the basement so who cares?

'Our landlord is a lawyer from West Africa, he is finishing his studies. A tolerant fellow, his wife is a formidably serious white woman. I live in the front room downstairs and my mate has the top floor with her two kids. In between are a whole group of small island men who speak a weird French dialect. For some reason which I never knew or have forgotten we have a feud going strong with all these fellows. It makes life interesting and does no harm. We shriek in our different languages with vast energy at each other, mostly over the sink in the basement, or the stove. We point vigorously at the gas meter, the coal hole, the back lavatory and we accuse them of thieving – gas, coal, bog roll – not sure what they are saying and as

neither group admits to understanding the other it is an exercise in futility that we all enjoy. One tiny guy will put his face right up to mine and we yell merrily for moments, then we stalk away cursing. These guys love my mate's kids and talk to them and give them sweets, when we show up they scowl and leave.

'So that's the background here's the story: Me and the feller, after an evening of carousing with some wine and Bourbon and a little dope, decide to take a chance on a wander down the Grove for a taxi at about half eleven. It's a Saturday night and we are for the Mapleton up west. Slightly drunk and a touch stoned we slide round the corner giggling, nervous. Berry is the feller of the moment, a pleasant black Yank with whom I am temporarily engaged in a dalliance, and very nice too. We get half way down the road and are beginning to feel safe when we hear "Fucking niggers" and three white geezers of the Ted persuasion appear from round a corner. I've got a mouth on me, so I bellow back and we carry on shouting for a moment or two. I realise that Berry is not saying a lot but I can't stop and I continue with the verbals. They suddenly make a rush for us and I get carried away with my own verbosity and hear my foolish voice saying "You'll have to get through me first." My fear of cowardice drowns out my terror. Another, simultaneous voice in my head says "Do leave off! You silly cow!"

'These lads have absolutely no trouble in getting through me, indeed it is a pleasure. One knocks me down flat with the merest side blow. I get up speedily, to give them my thoughts on racism. He comes back and gives me a resounding kick in the crotch, I bend over and vomit. This appears to repel him and he backs away, afraid of getting his shoes spotted perhaps? I can't stop staring at him. His whole face seems to be hurrying forward towards his nose, all the features trying to be at the very front. His beady eyes rush to each other in their effort to outpace the other parts, the whole effect is incredibly foxlike, I find it surprising that his nose is not black and shiny. The other two come back declaring that the "nigger" has disappeared. They stand and wave their shoulder pads about a bit and tell me that if they ever see that coon again etc. I just sit on the pavement in my brand new pink and grey pure cotton-by-Horrockses frock that is going to be ruined by the blood and vomit and I see that my gunmetal slash – toed high heeled pumps have lost a heel and I cry. The Teds look exceedingly pissed off at having their sport cut short but they leave. Home to mum?

'I stagger up inelegantly and with murderous thoughts I go in search of Berry. He emerges from a basement with cobwebs in his hair and a grin on his face. I hardly know what to say but I make an effort to share my feelings on being deserted, can't think where I got my immaculate taste in men. We discuss and decide to continue up west, I remove my shoes and Berry carries them. I borrow his handkerchief and remove the evidence of vomit from my skirt. The lights are so dim in the club, nobody will notice, and what the fuck anyway. I have become a little delirious and now feel like a heroine: My painful groin? A badge of honour. See me? I'm a strutter, a stalker a very fast walker. I struggle along hanging on to Berry's arm moving like an old woman. I wonder if a fractured groin is a feasibility. Berry is being all consummate caring creature, I find it marginally more repulsive than his late desertion. A car drives along beside us, I stiffen until I hear Cody's voice and see his big old face hanging out the window grinning at me: "Hello darling, still with your Yankee man him?" Disparaging directed at Berry, who doesn't realise. The car has in it Sonny and Sports, a Jamaican contingent of ruffians of the finest kind. I begin to tell them what happened with the Teds and Berry joins in. Too ashamed to say he lit out I listen to his edited version, this guy has a future in fiction!

"Come now!" and we jump in and off we go in search, a tiny marauding army of the opposition. Round the back doubles, not a Ted to be seen. Certainly not our three, in fact nary a one, a Ted free zone. My own enthusiasm ebbs as the other's grows, Berry is avid for blood, Cody hums gently to himself, I sing along: "Feel so fine know that I'm on your mind, come let me hug ya, come let me kiss ya come let me see what been missin' feels so good now that you come back home." "There they are!" Hear Berry. Three types emerging from an alley doing up their pants. The motor has stopped, the four of them out and the Teds moving – fast in the opposite direction – all before I've closed my mouth from singing. Clever of Berry to have recognised them, surprised he even saw them the first time around. The scene is one of pure mayhem. Limbs whirling, nasty sounds of fists thumping on flesh, gasps and roars, swearing and general nastiness. They all appear to be having a wonderful time and I feel no inclination to join in. Feel I've done my bit for the year.

'Finally, back to the car with them, the three Teds totalled on the deck. Or if not totalled then definitely going nowhere for a long time. The boys are so pleased with themselves, delighted with their prowess as human beings. Berry shows me his split knuckles with pride, tells me he got one of them on the snout. I conjecture was it old foxy face? Don't care a lot either way. We are all for the club now. Up Lancaster Road and past the greasy spoon on the corner. The guys are still discussing their battle in glowing terms, like being with four returning crusaders. Those mothers won't mess with blacks from now on, we kicked their arse good, see his face when, did you hear him when? Stuff like that, never seen Berry so animated.

Cody hates Yanks, now he's buddy buddy with Berry. They appear to have forgotten me entirely. Up Westbourne Park Road and on the corner by the convent stand Foxy face and his two mates, they wave their fists and yell abuse as we pass. Ah well, one Ted's much like another.'

A Blues For Shindig extracts – 'Tonight it's the Sunset Club in Carnaby Street. The only place to be. Half the black population of London fetches up here weekends, along with hookers and hustlers of every kind you've ever seen, and some you haven't. The singer performs with lewd and languid energy. Slow, but emphatic... Inside, this club (The Mapleton) is seriously devoted to jazz, among other things. In the centre of the floor are many chairs set out in totally straight lines and occupied by the jazz cognoscenti: serious characters who make not a sound neither do they move. They sit and they watch. Every move of every musician is given attention, and they give silent small nods of approval and quiet applause at a spectacular achievement of finesse. Bass solos are greeted with a degree of concentration that could split the atom, drum solos accompanied by tiny movements of parts of bodies in synch... I walk softly past them, stand at the back. I am a woman of little discrimination and less expertise about jazz, an obvious person. Love it all: sexy sax, strident trumpet, cool clarinet. But the blues are my thing. Along with a million other birds I want to *be* Billie. Meanwhile at the edges of the dance floor quiet hubbub rules as the crew waits for between sets music so they can dance along, show off, feel up and make out. Knocking shop meets salon here at the Mapleton...

'Junkie Blues – Hip is not the word that would come to mind when you go to Joe Lyons at the Gate; meeting and gathering spot for serious junk heads. Characters I don't know or want to know are now my eager mates. Junkies give friendship on the end of a needle, share a spoon with a nodding acquaintance, welcome you into their midst like no other group in the world. They clasp you to their foetid bosom with joy. The more the merrier, leave nobody outside their circle. Colette has appeared among us and stayed on when the studs got a pad round Pembridge Gardens. First week I watch the other three as they crank up, vomit, gouch out. Next week I try it for myself and I can see the fascination. But not as my only love, eh? As a part time amour maybe. Besides, I am busy with the fringe benefits that Berry brought along. More booze and fags appear so I am working harder, making more bread. More wraps of dope and fifths of liquor are buzzing into and out of the base...

'But I'm only dabbling to be cool, aren't I? In Joe Lyons on a very ordinary morning, Tony the dealer comes back to speak on his way out. An honour for me. He squats on the edge of a chair like a buzzard, his hands filthy claws. I've been buying stuff for all of us from him. He must see a future in me. "Bell me." Gives me the number on a fag packet. Looks at me out of his rheumy young eyes, no interest, no expression at all... Must be the worst Joe Lyons in the universe this one. Hell's waiting room. You got all the junkies hanging out, tight packed bowels giving out unique farts. Throats retching gently, waiting to score. Keeping the tone consistent, the whiskery bevy merchants looking like seven kinds of bone shaking death waiting for the boozier to open. One or two rancid scrubbers left over from the night before, tea leaves and wannabe ponces dotted among the legit housewives with scruffy pushchairs and smelly brats noising up the place. Trudy back at the table chucks the matches down, scratches her nose with the back of her hand. Rummages on the table. "Got a snout?"...

'Angelo scratches her as he brings up the handbag again. Lyn whacks me one so I bring my knee up, then it's all over and we three are out in Linden Gardens. We run as quickly as the high heels and sheaths allow and don't stop laughing until we get to the all night café in Notting Hill... "You're a bit tasty in a bundle, Angelo." BB looks proud and gives him a kiss on his chops. "We'll have none of that in here, thank you!" From the filthy git who runs the joint and regularly panders birds, flogs drugs and grasses people up... On the pavement we reflect. "I'm hungry. Thought they'd have had some food at Lyn's."... "Better not lig about in the street too long or we'll get nicked for impersonation." We stop the first taxi, go down to Westbourne Grove. "Malibu, cabby." "Right you are, gels." He gives the regulation lewd wink. Then: "Never guess who I had in here earlier on." BB wrecks his night by naming the cabinet minister at the party... The club is jumping, the music meets us half way, slips into our bones and we start to gyrate to Elvis. Girls and boys in drag, femmes, butches, everything in between, some like me who don't know if we're Arthur or Martha...

'We arrive at Lyons at the Gate. The usually near moribund crowd is buzzing like so many bluebottles, the excitement is palpable. Soon as we get through the door it all goes quiet. A hundred distorted pupils peer at us in various stages of dilation. Some from behind shades. Some in full, wincing, daylight. Trudy lifts her skeletal frame and jerks towards us. "So, you been up the nick to see him have you?" Freda joins her; the old guard united for once. Both scrutinize our faces intently. I can feel Angelo tremble. "They don't know, dolly," says Freda. They look at each other like they're deciding who should have the joy of enlightening us. Trudy wins the toss. "They've topped Victoria."... The flat in Pembridge Gardens seems to have got damper in the few days we haven't been there. Grey mould crawls up the walls near the ceiling... Round

the corner past Lyons to the boozier I was last in with Angelo and BB... I feel sentimental over Notting Hill, even Joe Lyons' unique miasma is getting a favourable review...

'Cell Bound Blues – I get a bus to the Grove and as I pass the greasy spoon on the corner of Lancaster Road I see Henry, he yells across to me, something about Rooster so I go over to him. He walks towards me, though walk is never accurate when you speak of Henry, he cavorts, grimaces in a fair imitation of a performer in 'The Black and White Minstrel Show'. He Uncle Toms it up, skinning his teeth, jive talking. High giggling. He moves to silent music, an invisible audience. He is the exception that proves the rule and the whites all love him. His is the acceptable face of the immigrant. This is the guy they are thinking of when they say: "Some of my best friends are black you know." He's crazy but I'm not sure how crazy. He's also a grass. "Hear your good fren him was arrested." And he sort of sniggers. "Them have warrant for him in Jamaica you know, them remove him already." He makes like a plane taking off with his hands and laughs. "I haven't got any friends, me. Or none that you'd know anyway." I sweep past him into the café. I don't believe that Rooster has been sent back, I don't want to believe it. But I want to know the word on the street, I also want twenty fags and this is the place for both...

'A youth comes in with full Ted regalia, shuffles his shoulders sideways, then lifts each one in turn. He does a turn and they all cheer. Looking good, Vince, they say and laugh when he tells them he's going to give the coons what for tonight. He relates how he chased a couple of them last night. "Yeah, we'll get them out, those bastards." He looks round the admiring faces. "Nobody asked them to come down here did they? Dirty bastards," says a young boy. Auntie hushes them up, looking at me. "We got a mate of Frances staying a few days," she says brightly and Vince looks keenly at me. I feel queasy. I know the face, he's one of the geezers took the piss out of me and Berry on our way to the Mapleton one night and I am sure he must remember me. I smile at him but my heart's not in it. "All right, Vince," I say. Look him straight in the eye, not a glimmer. Expect we all look the same to him, us nigger lovers. Teds all look similar to me, but then they wear a kind of uniform for that purpose I guess. Don't often find myself this close to a Ted and now I look at the velvet collar and cuffs; he preens, does that thing where he grins at his public, head to one side then up straight, looks me in the eye: "You'll have to come out with us one night, darling." The family all grin, that's our boy, said without words. "Yeah, you never know your luck, Vince," I say. Auntie laughs... On the corner by the station, several Teds are preening and stretching like so many deformed swans. Vince is among them, he separates himself from the rest, pushing himself away from the wall until he stands in front of me. "Changed yer mind have yer, gal? Going to come out with me are yer?" He puts his fag out and flicks it past me with his thumb to the kerb. "In a hurry, in't she? Got to meet our Frances hasn't she?" Tel ushers me into the station. He's gone before I can say goodbye, leaving the case beside me...'

PEPE FRANCIS Ebony steel band leader and Carnival organiser, born in 1943 in Trinidad, arrived in London after the riots in the early 60s, interviewed by Sue McAlpine:

"My first stop was Ladbroke Grove, always been in Ladbroke Grove. I used to hang out in the Rio with Frank Crichlow, that association was getting me into trouble – it was because of island politics, Jamaicans and Trinidadians, Grenadians, always had some rivalries among them, caused some problems, and then there was the Teddy boys situation. I got badly beaten up one night in Notting Hill Gate. I used to work in a restaurant in Gloucester Road and I used to come home at nights, take the train and then I would walk from Notting Hill Gate to Ladbroke Grove. Those days you didn't have night buses and I came out of Notting Hill Gate and walked down Kensington Park Road and they came and attacked me, about 5 or 6. I got a good beating that night, I was laid up for a couple of weeks. I was living in Bassett Road, I was in a house there. But eventually we got our own back. We went out and looked for them and found them. One Saturday morning we found some of them on Ladbroke Grove and they paid for it." You beat them up? "A few of us did yeah." Same gang? "Yeah a couple of them I recognised on that night. I would imagine it was the same." Were they wearing all that Teddy boy gear? "Yeah, winklepickers. Teddy boys were kind of people who did not like foreigners or black people, I think they did not like foreigners per se."

RUSSELL HENDERSON Notting Hill Carnival founder steel band leader, born in 1924, arrived in London in the early 50s, interviewed by Eric Huntley:

"I met Claudia Jones through Edric Connor, she used to put on a lot of functions and I played for one in St Pancras Town Hall (the first indoor Carnival in January 1959). I was living in Bassett Road just off the Grove and at that time I was the only one with a steel band. I used to go to the Sunset club for a man called Leslie and that was a famous club that any black artist coming to London they had to go to the Sunset club and it's funny that is the Carnaby Street where the Beatles and all these people went out but that was a famous, that is a history people should know, that was really a black meeting place, a black club and it was Leslie from Jamaica who ran that club. And every artist who got a break, they got it

through his club. If you were cabaret and I did cabaret there with the steel band first you know. I was working at La Ronde and used to go over and do cabaret with the steel band after we've finished, and Mrs Laslett (the first 1966 Notting Hill Carnival organiser), knowing I was in the area, she got on to me and asked me if I could come and play for some kids."

DARCUS HOWE 70s Carnival organiser, community activist, media commentator, born in 1943 in Trinidad, arrived in London after the riots as a trainee barrister, lived in rooming houses between Earl's Court and Kilburn, interviewed by Sue McAlpine:

"Once you live a huge moment of history, you know exactly how history is made. Once you live in a big moment, otherwise you think somebody orchestrated it or somebody started it. If you want to look for somebody who started Carnival you'll never find an individual – that's out of the question, there is no entrepreneur or impresario who called it into being. It looked like we needed it and the road was there and some guys had some instruments in a pub and that was it. That was it! I think what was important was the place because the first Notting Hill riots took place on August bank holiday, so I don't think it's a coincidence that we had it in Notting Hill. I think Notting Hill has always been, even before the Carnival started, explained to me as liberated territory, a place where you stood up for your rights and where Kelso Cochrane lost his life. That I can accept quite easily because the coincidence is too bizarre. It just developed... Basement rooms, dark, sweaty, unhealthy, uncomfortable but that was preferred to the pub. I used to go every Friday or Saturday you would go to a club – 28 or 31 bus. That was my terrain as a teenager."

BASIL JARVIS Rachman tenant, Mangrove, Metro youth club and Tabernacle community activist, born in 1946 in Antigua, arrived in London after the riots in 1959, interviewed by Sue McAlpine:

Where did you live? "In this area, you could say the heart of Rachmanism, in St Stephen's Gardens, one of those houses that you can still see in Ledbury Road. That's all knocked away. I used to live where that school is now on Westbourne Park Road. That school used to be houses, because in those days St Stephen's Gardens used to run into Ledbury Road, you've got all flats there now. My mother and myself was on the ground floor, a family of 7 in the basement, another family of 6 on the first floor, a family of 4 on the second and a family of 8 in the top. Over 20 people from different parts of the Caribbean, Trinidad, Grenada, Guyana, Antigua. Apart from living in houses owned by Rachman being a nightmare I found this country to be a nightmare. It was not what I was told it would be like when I left Antigua. Everyone who was leaving various parts of the Caribbean was given a brochure. You are coming to England, the mother country, the doors of opportunity are open to you and arriving here and seeing notice-boards outside paper-shops with 'Room to let, sorry no coloureds, no wogs, no coons, no Irish, no dogs' as we were known in those days. In those days I didn't know it was racism only later in life because we never knew of racism back in the Caribbean till we arrived here. In the Caribbean you had what you might call class distinction, where the lighter complexioned person might get the better job.

"It was different but it reminded you of back home because it was all people from the Caribbean in the house, so in many ways you identified. But apart from that, coming out on the street was a different scenario. I arrived on the Sunday and started school the Wednesday – Holland Park School, the first comprehensive school in England. It was a very good school with very good standards. But leaving school and encountering Teddy boys was a different scenario altogether. You encountered Teddy boys every day. The walk from Holland Park School to St Stephen's Gardens was a 10-minute walk. I used to take half an hour because I would walk all the way down Bayswater and come up at the back of Whiteley's around Porchester Hall and Westbourne Gardens. I would not dare come down Latimer Road or Ladbrooke Grove to avoid attacks. You had to run because they were normally in gangs and I walked on my own and the gangs were a minimum of 6 upwards and bearing in mind that I arrived here in this country just after a fellow countryman of mine, I think the only one that set that record, the only person who was killed in the race riots was Kelso Cochrane, who happened to come from Antigua like myself. I wasn't here at the time but I was told by my parents and family friends at the age of 12 going on 13. I was scared, it was very frightening.

"I got hit by a bottle once on my shin and I had to run for my life, it was one of the most frightening experiences. I was lucky in comparison to lots of other guys who were attacked and got stabbed." What did the Teddy boys look like? "They all wore winkle picker shoes, leather jackets, and I remember that one of Britain's most famous boxers who became world champion, who also had a chain of betting shops, was one of them in the early days, that would be Terry Downs and they used to control the whole Paddington area. He is a Paddington boy. There are two boxers in that Teddy boy Paddington gang, Terry Downs and Terry Spinks and they were both from between Royal Oak and Paddington/Harrow Road. I wasn't one to be in fights and if that was the case my mother would kill me. Yes it was a shock to me and to a lot of

other Caribbean folk who came the time I came and even a few years after because they still existed in the early 60s." On Rachmanism: "It didn't effect me because I wasn't working I was still at school. My mother was in a decent enough job at the time, but looking around at the street and neighbouring street of Rachman houses I'd seen some of the things that people went through, it was horrific, Alsatian dogs set upon them.

"One of the key members of the Rachman gang was someone who I personally wouldn't have called a leader for black people in this country but as far as I was concerned was built up by the system or people in positions in this country and called him the representative for blacks in this country, which was Michael X, Michael de Freitas originally. When I met him at first he wasn't no black activist so to speak, he was one of Rachman's boys, setting dogs upon tenants. So I have really no high regard for him years after, although he would still say hello. I have no liking for people like that. You could say it all boils down to probably a quick buck or two or illiteracy or ignorance. But you get those sort of people in all walks of life all over the world, they will always be around, they are sad anyway. Even in the market you encountered racism. You would find that there was a little supermarket I can recall called Spencer's on the corner of Portobello and Lancaster Road, that's where a lot of Caribbean people used to shop because they used to sell a lot of Caribbean products, foodstuff. I suppose they would choose butchers, or fishmongers they would go to but most Caribbean people would shop at Spencer's. Well you get a lot of snide remarks like 'Sunshine', things like 'are you going to climb any trees today?' You used to get the whole jungle charging. You just forgive people who don't know any better.

"To me the police were better in those old days when I first came here. I didn't really know many blacks who were in trouble with the police in those early days. But what I could recall the people who did get into trouble and it did come on television, those days it was black and white TV only, wherever that person came from, first they would say and there was a robbery took place, it involved three black men, or three coloured men, and they were Jamaican, in those days everyone was Jamaicans, which was a very bad stigma because you had other people from other islands who did crime. But they just thought everyone was from Jamaica, like the other islands didn't exist. Obviously people in positions would know some of the other islands existed, of all the islands the high influx of people who were recruited to this country, whether London Transport, Underground or buses or in the RAF came from Barbados and Jamaica and also Trinidad, also British Guyana." At school? "Fine, you had the odd few who you could say were racist or bully boys so to speak. But when I went to that school (Holland Park) there were only three of us who were black. I was on the second intake. The school was built in the late 50s. I came in '59, a mix yes, people like Hilary Benn went to that school, one of the Kennedys' daughter. I was surprised how a lot of the kids younger than my self behave, smoking cigarettes."

AUDREY JONES teacher and local historian, born 1934 in North Kensington, interviewed by Sue Snyder:

"I left college in 1954 and took up teaching, so by 1958 I was in London, living at home, working in London. A memorable year for the race riots in North Kensington. I saw a mob I suppose of Teddy boys coming down Lancaster Road. I was terrified and got home as quickly as possible. 1958 was also the year my sister got married and my cousin, so it was a busy time at the church (the Methodist church on Lancaster Road). The church was right in the centre of all this (the riots). The mob I saw were coming past the church. By that time we had a few West Indians coming to the church. They were very frightened of coming out in the evenings so the main service would be on Sunday morning when they were happy to come out as most of the troubles began after dark or later in the day. It was a time when a lot of immigrants were coming in particularly from the West Indies. A whole family would be living in one room. I visited a number of their rooms, wash basin on the landing, a family with four children all in one room."

DEREK JONES Notting Dale local pub and boxing historian, born in 1937, lived on Walmer Road and Clarendon Road, interviewed by Tom Vague:

"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. 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). Where I lived 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.

"At the back of Walmer Road there was a bomb site. I don't remember a bomb falling on it but it was a whole site, a block square with rubble and bricks and all sorts of stuff on it, and the kids from Walmer Road used to play war games with kids from Oldham Road and Silchester Road... There were loads of

derelict buildings or bomb-damaged buildings, or neglected buildings at that time... 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 two bricks or two coats as a goal. Football was played with a tennis ball... So, to give you a picture of the streets, you had kids playing out in the streets, you had dogs running loose, the atmosphere was good, there was no trouble, you had quarrels between neighbours.

"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.

"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... 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. There was quite a lot of ducking and diving... You had people from over Kensal Road, they were spoken of as being from 'over the town', and before my time you had Notting Hill boys and fellas from over the town there was a lot of conflict there, I think there were a few gang fights.

"I think the main factors that contributed to what I think was a close community is lack of television and lack of cars – the fact the streets weren't crowded and people were more public, more open and not so exclusive. The first time I ever saw television was in another pub, off Bramley Road, a pub that's no longer there which was called the Feathers, and I remember seeing a little 9 inch screen television, must have been just after the war. So what you did in those days you either amused yourself in the pub, dogs, White City, Thursday and Saturday, or you listened to the radio. 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 Ladbroke 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, 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.

"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.

"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 two 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, so he probably didn't know any better.

"In some areas, 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.

"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 Darky 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. After they started closing down the villains' clubs, Darky Warren and Ginger Randall and people like that's clubs, me and the people I knocked around with, we kind of gave the clubbing up. You had the villains' clubs first, they were open before the Windrush. 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 mentioned a pub called the Black Boy, Victorian pub on Walmer Road, there was a pub called the Black Bull on the corner of Oldham 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 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.

"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 recalled 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 a film came out called 'The Blackboard Jungle' (in 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 his 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 (on Ladbrooke Grove), 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. 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.

"Up until then the two most popular pop singers were Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby, and they seemed to spread across generations, 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 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'. 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. 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 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.

"What you had in the pubs, entertainment in pubs, it would not be guitars, it would be piano and drums, 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 people who used pubs were of an older generation, rock'n'roll hadn't kicked in yet. 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 (Arms on the corner of Latimer and Walmer Road) they couldn't afford drums so they had Danny McDermott playing on a hard-seated chair with a couple of beerbottles. The other pub, as I mentioned before, was the Elgin, as in the Elgin marbles, or as we called it the El Gin, and old Reggie Jones used to do his Jolson act there and they occasionally had talent competitions and you'd get a £5 prize. 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 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, Tommy Steele, he was round about the same time as Cliff Richard. It was the British pop revolution before the Beatles. Tommy Steele he was quite a talented man, he was a 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 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. 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, it was kind of pre-wartime music. Another one in the Larry Parnes stable was 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.

"Larry Parnes 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.

"About the race riots, I think it's your mate Colin MacInnes, in his book, about the black man coming out of Latimer Road station. 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. 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, 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 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. During the time of the riots all the streets 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. 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 Baths 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.

"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 that bad."

WILLIAM LAMBE Notting Hill policeman in the 60s from Northern Ireland, interviewed by Julia Drake:

"When I first went out in Notting Hill, because in the late 50s of course there had been the race riots, there were certain parts of Notting Hill subdivision and Harrow Road subdivision, which was the adjoining subdivision, where there was still a lot of tenseness. And police officers always used to patrol in pairs. I can remember quite clearly, first week I done on my own, I went up Portobello Road and up Golborne Road. We always used to think when you're with a new boy you've got the two furthest beats away from the police station. And I had seven and eight beats which were right up from Golborne Road on the east side of Ladbrooke Grove, to I think it was Chesterton Road on the west side right up on to Harrow Road. And that's a massive area. I was detailed to go there and I was up Golborne Road and this elderly lady came up and said, 'Are you all right?' I said, 'Yeah I'm OK', I thought I'd left my helmet behind or something. And she said 'since the 50s you're the first police officer that I've seen walking up here on his own.' I thought well, that's always a good start isn't it, I thought to myself here I am stranded probably, even a fast walk, a good almost three quarters of an hour, maybe an hour from the police station. I'm stuck up here, so I thought you just have to get on with it."

"Another thing that was quite amusing when I look back on it, you know there was a lot of people talking about how the West Indian immigrants to this country weren't accepted. I can remember going up off Portobello Road where there was a lot of I suppose fairly cheap accommodation, boarding houses where labourers would have just had a bed for the night, and they would have been out working on the roads or on the building sites or whatever. And there was a notice up in one of the windows in a shop it was round the Tavistock area, Tavistock Road or Tavistock Crescent. And they were very succinct, and it said on this particular boarding house, 'no blacks, no dogs, and no Irish', and that made me feel really at home you know, and I thought to myself, well even the dogs are getting put before the Irish. So, when I look back on it afterwards it's quite amusing to think how people think, and how with the Race Relations Act and everything else it has really changed things. You couldn't say 'no blacks', you might get away with 'no dogs' just about."

COLIN PRESCOD Carnival organiser, community activist, historian, actor, born in 1944 in Trinidad, arrived in London in 1958 before the riots to join his mother, the actress/singer Pearl Prescod, and was one of the first pupils at Holland Park School, interviewed by Sue McAlpine:

"I am 10 when my mother left the Caribbean, I am 13 when I come here, so when I came to England I was excited because I was going to see my mother. I travelled on my own, I was placed on a boat and some adults were asked to look after me. I arrived here to meet my mother. I came on a boat to Liverpool and travelled to Euston by train, picked up by aunts, not by my mother because she was busy. It turned out she was shooting a film at Pinewood Studios. I saw my mother the first time the evening I arrived. I saw her in a theatre. She was shooting a film during the day at Pinewood and she was on stage in the evening at the Royal Court Theatre, in a big black production, in a play written by Records starring all sorts of interesting people among them Cleo Laine. So my first night in England was back stage at the Royal Court Theatre in the dressing rooms and my first real day, following that evening in the theatre, was spent on a film set at Pinewood in a film starring Virginia McKenna."

"She did all that, but she couldn't find work singing in opera, which is what she had been trained for, because to be direct about it one would scream racism, the point was that the theatre in those days did not cast black people. So she used the next trade she had, which was acting, performing, so she became an actor. Got eventually I suppose reasonably good parts in the theatre, usually in the sticks. Not anything singing. She began to be successful two or three years before she died, much too young. Before that, the TV work she got in the main was little bits and pieces of servant type people, almost literally the broom and tying the hair. TV work is very well paid even if you get small parts. You are more likely to get interesting parts as an actor in theatre and rep that are not wonderfully well paid work. She wasn't

successful and so she had a second trade, she trained in the Caribbean, she had actually been schooled, she had a certificate in hairdressing for straightening African hair with hot combs and grease and all that kind of stuff. She was a hairdresser, she did that back home. She did that as a second line, she did hair of Caribbeans and African people in England as a way of making ends meet.

“Claudia Jones, Amy Ashwood Garvey, these were people who were in my mother’s circle when I arrived here, with whom she moved around with and made cultural and political activity in this country. Everybody who was black found themselves having to be ‘political’, because racism was so crude. To get your rights to be on the street, to have the rights to sit in the pub and have a drink, to have the right to use the hairdressers, to have the right to dance with who you wanted to dance with at the local bop, the Palais. All these things, you could not take them for granted, people simply did. That happened, being a professional, an actor for example, you were fighting for rights on those grounds too, getting properly paid. Not to have American black people be invited to do parts over the top of British black people, it was quite usual in amongst the actors in those early days. People like Pearl Connor can tell you about those struggles too. Then, maybe because the company she kept, but remember I arrived here in 1958, a few weeks literally ahead of the riots in Notting Hill Gate and I come to live in Notting Hill Gate. All that stuff was going on and my mother was keeping the company of two women who turned out to be absolute giants of the political scene at that time, in fact for all time.

“Namely Claudia Jones who started the West Indian Gazette and the other was Amy Ashwood Garvey, who was the other wife so to speak of Marcus Garvey and who was somebody who made massive contributions to pan-African struggles and conferences in this country. I guess I wouldn’t have talked to her a lot. I was smiled at by her, patted on the shoulder or the head when I was a little boy. As I got a little bit older I suppose I remember Claudia Jones as being the person who marched next to my mother, I am talking 1963, whenever it was they had the Martin Luther King march in Washington and there was a sympathy march here to the American embassy, organised by Claudia Jones and her crew, my mother was part of it. I had that in my head, a video running, my mother next to Claudia, my mother with the megaphone, singing and leading the singing of the ‘We Shall Overcome’. My sense of Claudia Jones was a big woman who was organising community politics as I would call it. Activist, always very busy, always with people wanting to talk to her and so on, that is my sense of her. But I was not adult enough to be engaged directly in any discussion with her.

“At the start I may have been too innocent to have felt any menace from it. Two things, at the start I am too innocent to be menaced by it. I can’t understand all that kind of stuff. It grows on me that there is a sense of anxiety around the community as my mother’s friends are leaving in groups from my house after they’d had their rehearsals of play readings and there’s talk about being careful and one man famously carrying the bible after one day of being in our house, saying that the bible would protect him, and we would see him a couple of days later with a bandage around his head. Sounds like an apocryphal story but I believe it to be true. I guess potentially it grows on you because you see people running and people not going out in the streets. Still my comprehension of what was going on only begins to be absolutely clear to me when I go to school. We are talking summer holidays when these things arise – August and September. Eventually, the first school I really go to was Holland Park School when it opens in 1958, the first time it’s opened. It’s a huge school with two and half thousand children. That was the school my mother, having spoken to the education authorities in London is advised she should send her child to, because many other actors were sending their kids there, so I would get a good education. So I go to that school. In that school I come across, because it’s a comprehensive school, working class and middle class kids, I come across lots of school playground aggro, people posturing around, yes, it’s Teddy boy time, so that’s the style, that’s the attitude of white working class boys.

How many black kids in your class? “Two. The people who are coming are young adults, coming to work, and many in the first instance don’t bring their kids, they come to settle before they send for their kids. The kids start arriving later, kids start being reproduced here later. By the time I get to the sixth form, even in the fifth form there were only a few kids who were African descendant black. There were some Greek kids around, Italian type.” Aggro in the playground? “Sometimes fights, sometimes just glaring. My best friend, the only other black boy in class with me for a long time, a guy called Ian Kelly whose parents were Seventh Day Adventists, and still today; he was the headmaster of schools in Jamaica and north America. But Ian was a real tough little fast boy who stood up for his rights as all Jamaicans were supposed to and they were the majority of the Caribbean population at that time. All these fights we are talking about are fights for rights for being on the street, rights for going to the hairdressers, rights to dance where you wanted, rights for being in the pubs, tended to be protests about the future of events, tended to be led by Jamaican working class people, they got a reputation but all they were doing is standing up for rights. Ian Kelly was a fighter, he’d been here much longer than I had.

So you used to get into fights? “Yes, but fights to stop people abusing you or humiliating you. The other thing that happened of course was that my friend Ian, because he was the guy who did all the running, he had friends who were white working class boys and who I remember famously would at least on one occasion at Holland Park School, what threatened to be a very nasty confrontation at the school gates after school, you know the word would come in: tell Ian Kelly they were waiting for him outside. I am calling this, because the context, it sounds like I’m talking racism but I am not saying these guys were racist in that call that blackie out. This was the opposition because of the context of what was happening was wound up by the Mosley thing and the riots that had just happened. This felt like it rolled on for a bit, years after ’58. This was the social context in which these things were happening. There was one famous event where word would come in from a little boy, a younger boy, I am two years older in school, I am not in the third year I am in the fifth at this point and word comes in from outside the school that so and so will see you at the back school gate at the end of the school day. And Ian would say fine, ‘okay Cod.’ I was called Cod at school. His name was Ian Kelly and he was called Kell, my name was Prescod and I was called Cod. ‘Okay Cod’ – and we tried to get some of our friends, white, to back us up, because of course, this was the form, you get called out and your posse, as they would be called today, came out too, they weren’t frightened, and I remember very clearly going out to the back gate with Ian. I can’t say I felt particularly frightened, just going out to see what these guys wanted.

“The point is one can just as often talk one’s way out of these things with attitude as anything, because most of them didn’t know what they were doing – just threatening, macho-ing up and stuff. So we went out to see what was going on and I remember turning round and looking at that block of Holland Park School and seeing one or two of our friends on the stairways looking out of the glass, looking down, but they were not on the street with us and we found out some things that day. As it happens on this particular occasion we are getting out to the gate, we are walking up to the confrontation and Ian begins the conversation with these guys. Along comes a guy whose name I remember to this day, I haven’t seen in many years, it was Cousins, Frank Cousins comes along, he was somebody who had been at school with us and who had actually left school very early. Comes along and he says, ‘Hello Kell, hello Cod’, he talks to us and he was one of the rather tougher well known boys of the streets and so he says, ‘What are you doing with my mates? What’s this all about?’ and the whole situation was defused. Yes, there were one or two literal fights but more often it was verbal confrontations or hard look confrontations and threat calls out, which would go away if one simply had the courage to stand and to say okay, so what? And it was quite simple for me and my friend Ian Kelly because he was bright and I was bright and we both enjoyed sports and became good sportsmen in the school. I did actually become head boy of Holland Park School. I was championed in school by the teachers and I had all these other things to stand on. I carried my own self, I became I think in the end kind of untouchable.

“Walking from the ghetto in that ’58, ’59 period, and all that tension on the streets and the riots and all the rest of it, at that point it seems to me children wouldn’t have been attacked by grown up mobs, by grown up people. Teddy boys weren’t 14, 15 by the time I was growing up. The creators of Teddy boyhood weren’t kids, it wasn’t a teeny bopper thing, it was teenagers actually forcing their way into adulthood who were being the Teddy boy kind of stuff. Two, three years later, winkle picker shoes were the fashion. That is the fashion the Teddy boys had. I think I would not have felt directly menaced when I went out on the street. More than that, I think I would’ve been shielded and chaperoned by the adults around me. Actually I was not in the street that much, I wouldn’t be allowed to be on the streets. There was no need for me to be on the streets. The streets were places where I would have had a sense that the adults were being menaced, but I was not big enough to be a real target. I was a target for people of my own age and that was in school when that happened, that was an imitation of the streets, an echo and because of the kind of school I went to.

You just used the word ghetto. “Yes, an old fashioned word but I use it deliberately. I am talking about a very poor quarter. I lived in Ladbroke Grove, North Kensington, very, very poor quarter, poor before the new black working class arrived. Poor is a cliché, well known, because there were slum properties with slum landlords who were the only ones prepared to give these people places to live. I say ghetto to contrast very clearly with the sense I had. I went to Holland Park School as I said. I walked to Ladbroke Grove, up the hill towards Holland Park and then Holland Park Avenue, up Campden Hill, all the time going up to Holland Park School and what I walked through, once I crossed Elgin Crescent and began to go up that hill, was a real very sharp and sudden change. I walked out of the ghetto into a place where you could look into and see windows of people who were so confident that their windows weren’t curtained. Open, clean, and you could see into these wonderful clean interiors, beautifully painted walls, solid walls, unlike the wallpaper that fell off and damp and all the rest of it in my own house. You could see bookshelves and books and colour schemed rooms, really clean well lit interiors, unlike the basement that I had come out of. You could imagine that those people had indoor toilets and bathrooms and all the rest of it which I didn’t. I grew up, until quite late in fact, I would be an adult and earning money, living in the

same house that my mother left me, that I'm living in now, before we were able, my wife and I by this time, to say that we have enough money to renovate it.

"So yes, I grew up like that, but it's not unusual for working class people, I'm absolutely certain at the time, all over this country. But because of this ghetto, it was actually dilapidated working class living conditions, which is why I call it the ghetto, as a term. Yes, because there are places like this, there are ghettos in America, in colonial situations. Certainly to use it meant you were contrasting with the other life style that I used to look at through these windows and envy I suppose. I have to say frankly will I ever be able to live in a house of solid walls, clean painted and not falling apart. But it was witnessed I have to say, children very frequently, when I was a child, probably don't experience in any direct form that their lives are depressed or deprived. This is life, and even when you are poor treats come along so you can look back on treats in your life as well as things that weren't quite as comfortable as you would have liked them to have been. The last blow of the '58 riots in a way in 1959 with Kelso Cochrane's death, and it was after Cochrane's death that Claudia decided to have these uplifting celebratory Carnivals indoors, at the very same time that the carnival in Trinidad was taking place – Ash Wednesday."

BILL RICHARDSON Notting Hill People's Association community activist, born in 1920, moved to Notting Hill in 1947, lived in Colville Square, interviewed by Sue McAlpine and Robina Rose:

"There was lots of Irish in the area. It was an Irish immigrant area well before the West Indians came. There were some Welsh in the area; it was an absolute rag tag of people you know, but most of them respectable families. It was only later when employers started going to the West Indies for Caribbean cheap labour to bring over, it was only then the trouble started, there were no troubles before that at all. The trouble started mainly because of ignorance on the part of the whites in the area. Mosley moved into the area for a start, he saw the opportunity to stir up racial trouble. But he was thwarted in the end because we had such a wonderful organisation, both black and white in the area; we thwarted him every time he wanted a public meeting. We had huge tower systems rigged up nearby and we put them on full blast so they could never be heard. He used to come, used to use a forum just off Portobello Road by Kensington Park Road there, which is now the health centre. He used to put up his stand there and had all his thugs around him.

"Of course, there was a murder of one West Indian, Kelso Cochrane; we buried him up in Kensal Green. We walked his body from the church in Ladbroke Grove, on the barrow; we walked ourselves, black and white together up to Kensal Green and buried him. That's what was happening, that was one murder but there were many more blacks that were beaten up just for the fun of it. We discovered the truth about the immigration; what was happening, as every fresh boat of West Indians came in, they were naturally orientating towards Notting Hill because it was already set up as a black ghetto area. Their friends were here. By that time Rachman had done his worst, got many of the white tenants out by various means, they were diabolical, in order to crowd West Indians in. There were as many as 8 and 10 men sleeping in one room. In fact we discovered rooms in the area where there were 10 men sleeping there by day, then night workers, the beds were never empty. I came home from work and my wife would tell me about the family that was out on the pavement with their children, white families now. When I went to investigate I began to find this was happening all over the North Kensington area, certainly in the Colville area where those tenement houses lent themselves to this sort of exploitation.

"But it took us a couple of years to find out what was behind it all. Obviously that was what I wanted to do something about. It wasn't anything to do with the blacks at all. It was the white families with their little bits of furniture, crying their eyes out; it was happening repeatedly. And then, when I began to find the rooms they had vacated were being filled up by black immigrants, I went to interview the blacks and I found the conditions they were living in. In other words, I could begin to understand what the black situation was, as well as the white situation, because I investigated it. I talked to the black fellows and I could see what they were up against. As I say, it took us two years to work out that the mastermind behind it was this Rachman, but even then there were big organisations behind him. He was only a front man, for one the Eagle Star Insurance Company, the Slough group of companies, and also the Church Commissioners. We approached the Church Commissioners to do something about the prostitution that Rachman organised in the area and he used it to get the people out. People called this the concertina movement, they put a prostitute on the top floor, they forced out people on the top floor and the basement and they used to drive out the respectable tenant in between. They emptied houses like quicksilver in the area. It became a red light area, became very dangerous.

"Of course, it lends itself to that red light area because the West Indians that were here were exclusively male, no women among them, no women or children, it was a male army that came across. As in all immigrants, the women did not come across until they could afford to house them. Of course, the

prostitution served not only this army but also literally took over from the West End as a red light area and we were in the middle of it. Can you then imagine what the white prejudice against the blacks was? The blacks came in and prostitution and the bloody houses, the dustbins, because of course they were so overcrowded with black people, the dustbins were over spilling and the place became an absolute shambles. I could see the other side of it, so I could never give in to that sort of prejudice. But in order to answer that prejudice amongst the ordinary whites, that was another matter.”

Bill's interview also covers the post-riot Powis and Colville housing survey, the Notting Hill People's Association, law centres and prostitution campaigns in the area, the Open the squares campaigns, an African landlord in Colville Square, 1958 Colville Square Christmas tree dispute with a fascist landlord, the 1959 *Manchester Guardian* reporter Jean Stead, Notting Hill Housing Trust, the 50s Labour MP George Rogers not opposing the fascists, CND marches, a fascist incident on Kensington Park Road, the Kelso Cochrane murder, Michael de Freitas and an almost equally negative reappraisal of the 1966 Notting Hill Carnival founder Rhaune Laslett.

CHARLIE ROWDEN Notting Dale local, born in 1921 on Treadgold Street, later lived in Tobin Street and Thresher's Place, interviewed by Notting Dale Urban Studies:

“The race riots were right opposite me. I lived in Lancaster Road in those days and they started in Blechynden Street which was opposite my windows – a fight broke out over a woman and then families took sides. The pub turned out and everyone was game for a fight as they was in those days and then all the hooligans joined in. I got myself in a bit of a ruck because a woman was coming along Lancaster Road with a child and some kids were throwing stones at her and I said to her, ‘Come in here, mate’, and they got shirty with me but I saw them off.”

ANN SEALS Notting Dale local, born in 1946 on Walmer Road, lived on Sirdar Road in the 50s, interviewed by Notting Dale Urban Studies:

“There was race riots during that time, they were just starting up, there were areas that one wouldn't go in. My mother and father were very keen to keep us away from certain areas to avoid any trouble. At first it was strange to see the black faces really, but you didn't take a lot of notice because it was a fairly white community, but as more came and trouble started to brew one was very aware of it. At times I was frightened, we used to have to go round to a chemist near Blechynden Street, opposite Lancaster Road and I used to be frightened, my mother and I used to grip hands and we'd hurry there and back, it was a very wary time, very wary, and most were conscious of problems around. You did have the Teddy boys and they were out for a fight and they had flick knives. I looked down a street where fighting was going on, there was fighting in the street, but my mother took me away quickly, she didn't want me to see too much. There were no Afro-Caribbeans in St Clement's School when I was there.”

BARBARA SHERVINGTON Rachman tenant, 1966 Carnival founder-organiser, Metro youth club community activist, born in 1938 at Paddington Hospital, lived on Powis Terrace, Bravington Road, Westbourne Park Road, St Stephen's Gardens and Tavistock Crescent, interviewed by Sue McAlpine:

Barbara recalled making friends with 'the townies' from Golborne at youth clubs on Edgware Road, Ladbrooke Grove near the site of Sainsbury's, the Feathers clubs. She met her husband Andre in a jazz club in Soho, used to go to Ronnie Scott's, the 51 Club, both had the same taste in music. “We kind of clicked, kept bumping into each other at jazz clubs.” Problematic going out with a Caribbean man? “Very. It was difficult for both of us. None of my friends had a black boyfriend, I have to put it that way, but I guess when you are in love you don't see colour do you. I was in love and it didn't bother me, I didn't care, all I saw was Andre. I had problems with my parents.”

Problems with Rachman (edited summary by Barbara): ‘Michael de Freitas who became Michael X, he knew that a flat was empty, it was available. Didn't know at the time that Michael was working for an agent who was working for Rachman. Michael was just someone they knew. Barbara was pregnant at the time and they were living in a very small room in Westbourne Park Road and so they needed something bigger. In those days it was always furnished accommodation and usually rooms because you couldn't afford to rent a flat. Michael showed them a big room, a sitting room-cum-kitchen and small bedroom, in St Stephen's Gardens. They moved in, made improvements. She gave birth to a son, Stephen, and then Martin. Then Rachman wanted the property back because of a possible sale. She met Rachman and thought he was pleasant before they moved in. Afterwards they dealt with Michael and the lettings agency. Rachman had managed to get rid of the other tenants. At the time neither Barbara nor Andre were involved with community work in the area. Andre was working, Barbara was busy being a mum and housewife. Therefore they were not aware of what was going on around them until they received a letter

from the agent saying they had to vacate the property. Andre knew what their legal rights were and that they didn't need to vacate the property unless there were certain reasons. They had nowhere to go anyway as it was difficult to find accommodation then.

'They lived on the first floor and everyone else had been got rid of by Rachman. Her son Stephen had just come out of hospital. Rachman had got someone to come to the house and turn on the taps in the empty flats. One evening they had friends round and water started pouring down on them. Andre and his friend Victor went upstairs to the empty flat to see what was the cause. Although they had no proof they suspected Rachman and his henchmen. Barbara and Andre refused to leave. Occasionally she would get so upset that she would take her children and go and stay with her mother in Ealing. Another time Rachman let the flat underneath them to tinkers. They had a shared bathroom and toilet. At times they could not use the bathroom and the toilet was left in a disgusting state by the tinkers – they would use the floor instead of the toilet. When she went out she would carry her children to prevent them using the banisters because the tinkers would put faeces on them. They would light a fire in the middle of the floor underneath her rooms. Barbara said to Andre she couldn't take it anymore. We were hanging on just to say you can't do this to people. One day Rachman sent his henchmen with Alsatians over and knocked on the door. Luckily Barbara was with her mother that week. The henchmen, an ex colonel or brigadier in their 40s, they tried to intimidate Andre. He had a machete that he had brought back from Guyana. He told them if you let those dogs go you'll be taking bits of them home. After Barbara met Rhaune Laslett at her children's group, she moved into her old flat on Tavistock Crescent and became involved in the first 1966 Carnival.'

ROBIN TUCK Liberal community activist and local historian, born in Kensington, moved to Notting Hill in 1955, interviewed by Eric Huntley:

"I happened to move into North Kensington precisely the same moment as the Windrush was landing its first people in this area and they were finding life extremely difficult, and if you lived in this area you couldn't help noticing this. But a lot of my contemporaries, friends and so on didn't notice it. I may say it was quite unbelievable. The immigrants were shortly involved in the 'race riots' of 1958 that hit this part. I think it's very interesting that this was the first open sign to people outside, it got into the media, it got into the papers, got into early television, that all was not well socially in Notting Hill, in North Kensington. In the house next door to us were 4 families of Jamaicans, soon to be pressed to move on. The house was owned by a private landlord. There were few jobs, little to live on, rents increasing. A lot of black people had come because the rooms were cheap, and they were poor, the situation was uneasy, they are just a few of the reasons which led people from the Caribbean. They managed to hang on in the area but they wanted some way to remind them of their identity and of home. Of Carnival which started very small I became aware during the early 70s from Caribbean friends, a number of them came from Trinidad."

WILF WALKER Carnival organiser and reggae promoter, born in Trinidad in 1945, arrived in London in 1959, first lived in Shepherd's Bush, interviewed by Eric Huntley and Sue McAlpine:

"When I lived on Portland Road, to get to Ladbrooke Grove I used to still go down to Shepherd's Bush and come around on the Metropolitan Line, although I could have just walked through Portland Road and got to Ladbrooke Grove in those days it seemed so dark and dangerous." As a black guy, or just anyway? "I suppose as a foreigner, a stranger, someone new to the area, and also being black; because it was dangerous. So I would come around to the Grove, to go to the barber down there and if I'd come down Portobello Road I wouldn't go further than say, Blenheim Crescent or Westbourne Park Road, I wouldn't actually go up to Golborne Road, you know that was like no mans land in those days to me." What were you scared of? "Well, I don't know, this is before it was a smokeless zone and all that, it was always dark and horrible, just dangerous. So I never used to go into the Grove, I would be in Holland Park, I'd be on the High Street, I'd be up there."

"My first problems with the police was coming back from the theatre one night in Portland Road, just a few doors from where I lived, and being attacked by a bunch of Teddy boys, and being kicked to the pavement and my wallet taken, and then managing to get myself up and go to the station to complain, and then being told I suppose you want an ambulance? That was my first experience with the police. And I actually described these guys, they lived on my street, I knew them and described them. And they never did anything about it. And then I remember being in Henekey's (the Earl of Lonsdale on Portobello Road) around the same time, and being refused service in the pub and running off and trying to flag down the police to complain, and they said you're joking aren't you?"

"I knew one person from Trinidad, a guy called Joals, who was very involved in that community, with all the people I subsequently came to know, everybody knows Joals, he would call me his nephew, his young

brother, that kind of thing. But I chose not to go with him, to hang on to him, because he was down to all the clubs in the West End and all the life and the marijuana. A lot of these guys they came to London with a decent trade and then the way that people, the community that they'd moved into, they were accepted in such a way that they all changed their passports to 'entertainment'. Loads of guys that were older than me all changed their passport to entertainer, and they would get bits of extra work and stuff, and they would get girlfriends who looked after them and helped them. I won't say they were ponces, but they were in that kind of bag."