



**JAZZ
IN THE
STICKS**

**Dave
Corsby**

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DAVE CORSBY

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SYNOPSIS

Jazz In the Sticks recounts the exploits and encounters of saxophonist Dave Corsby during an era when the live music scene prospered outside of London. It relates how all in one day this one time auditor of the British Antarctic Territory masquerading as a pretend immigration officer won top prize in a coconut shy at a village fete in France.

He was a member of the Art Pepper Society (run by Tabasco Pete the self-styled Arch Bebop of Canterbury) and was attacked on stage in Germany for quoting the Dam Busters March during his jazz solos. There is a plausible and logical explanation as to why he was playing baritone saxophone in the pouring rain in a field at one o'clock in the morning. Commissions to compose jazz suites based on Samuel Pepys, The Tale of Two Cities, The Cinque Ports and Chaucer's 600th Centenary helped subsidise his uncompromising sixteen piece big-band called Mission Impossible. Playing in and leading bands and jazz groups in various styles provided opportunities to experience a musical scene that will never be the same.



Cave Club

INTRODUCTION

In the 1950's and much of the rest of the century the Kent Coast holiday resorts had their own thriving music scene with orchestras, dance bands, jazz bands, pop groups and vocalists providing live music in theatres, dance halls, bandstands, hotels, pubs, clubs and coffee bars. At the time I realised that in later life I might not believe or remember all our scrapes and exploits so I got into the occasional habit of writing down what happened soon after the event. These random and haphazard notes are the basis for much of what follows.

At the outset I should warn that this is not a tale packed with sex and violence. As a bachelor who did not get married until he turned fifty, discretion and chivalry ruled out any details of former alliances apart from mentioning an early nervous first date with a young lady called Wendy who agreed that I could take her to the cinema. It was a cold and wet winter night and she was as nervous as I was. We arrived late and the film had already started. Dripping and encountering a hostile reception we edged along the row in the dark to a couple of vacant seats. Gallantly I tried to help her take off her wet raincoat. Somewhat cramped, her arm got stuck in the sleeve and in freeing it she managed to knock my glasses off so that they landed somewhere in the dark three or four rows away. At this point both of us would have said that the date was not going well.

Despite pressures and distractions of earning a living a series of lucky coincidences and opportunities allowed me to discover jazz, learn to play saxophone, clarinet and flute and in time to have the good fortune to play with some top ranking musicians and encounter some great characters whose journeys through life crossed paths with mine. I hope the story provides a glimpse of the parallel universe inhabited by the jazz playing fraternity during an exciting era.

CHAPTER ONE

The Age of Innocence

It was the age of innocence, 1952. The sixteen piece Ted Heath Big Band was playing on Saturday night at the Coronation Ballroom in Ramsgate. It was the first time I had heard a live big band, and I stood open-mouthed at the rich sound of the brass and mesmerised by the saxophone section. I carried the sound around with me for the next few days. I was hooked. The trumpet players sweated on the high notes. The trombone players were concerned about their slides on the cramped stage. But the sax players were having a ball. I got a holiday job crop picking and started saving. In 1954 I bought a heavy old silver-plated Conn alto saxophone for £20.

In 1955 I joined a jazz band that was looking for somewhere to play. Harmonica player Peter Darby found a cellar under the Granville Hotel in Ramsgate. The Granville Hotel was unoccupied apart from the ground floor bars and the ballroom which were run by Billy and Florrie Hamilton. They were ballroom dancing instructors and held dancing classes during the week and put on dances and functions at the weekends. When I was about fifteen my pal John Brett's older brother Ken suggested that the two of us should join one of the Granville ballroom dancing classes. He said we would be outnumbered probably by five females to every male but that big strong early developers like us could not fail to make out and this proved to be the case.

Peter Darby persuaded the Hamiltons to let out a couple of rooms in the cellars under the hotel for ten bob (50 pence) a week and an undertaking that we would buy bottles of Coca Cola from them for sale in the club. Of course they knew that we would also be buying drinks in the upstairs bars. We called the club the Cave. The teenage band and their friends who were students from local art colleges and secondary schools set about clearing out the rubble, putting in a cement floor, and opening up the space by putting in a lintel and knocking out the wall between the two rooms. Chianti bottles in wicker baskets with candles were hung on the walls to supplement the lighting. The Cave Band had a couple of rehearsals and the club opened in February 1955. The Cave Band in the Cave Club surroundings was an instant success.

The original Cave Jazz Band comprised Steve Knight (cornet) Arthur Robinson (soprano sax) Dave Corsby (clarinet) Dave Dagley (trombone) Dave Brunwin (guitar) Mike Oliver (piano)

Mike Shrubsole (tea-chest) bass John Dadds (drums) and Pete Darby (washboard and harmonica).

One sunny afternoon Dave Dagley and I climbed over the school wall and drove to the North Foreland in his Austin Seven motor car with the sunshine roof. I had my saxophone and Dave had his trombone. We practised "Saint James Infirmary" in the open air on the cliff top with one eye out for the convent school girls.....



The Cavemen Jazz Band

In the candle lit Cave Club Dave Dagley had spent most of the evening in close conversation with two foreign students. He was spoilt for choice between a willowy long-legged Swedish blonde or a dark-eyed noisy French girl. He returned to the stage for the finale and, to wild acclaim, trotted out his rehearsed solo jazz choruses on "St James Infirmary" and the "Saints". Soon a better player replaced him. In the ruthless march of progress tea chest bass gave way to double bass, and banjo to guitar and in turn to piano. I had some clarinet lessons from



Cave Jazz Club

an ex army band master Bob Driscoll. I started to fathom out the meaning of a Charlie Parker jazz record of "Embraceable You" where no one actually played the tune.

In 1956 the Cave Band made mono recordings of "The Saints" and "Saint James Infirmary" on a 78 r.p.m. direct cut master disc. The equipment was pretty ancient, using only one microphone. The balance was determined by distance from the microphone. Each tune had to be recorded in one take with no opportunity for any editing. In the resultant recording rhythm-guitar, piano and bass are pretty much lost but the balance between trumpet ,clarinet, trombone, sax and drums is surprisingly good. My copy of the session is a shellac 78 r.p.m. record pressed from the master. When played it emits blue powder and has loads of hiss and rumble. On "Saint James ilnfirmary" my chorus is unambitious mainly sticking to the tune ,but on "The Saints" I am much more creative. Band leader Arthur Robinson's jazz solos on soprano saxophone showed that at this stage he was much more advanced than the rest of us.

The Cave Band played early jazz and Sidney Bechet tunes like "The Onions" and "The Fish Seller", but the first records I bought for personal listening were "Flamingo" by the alto sax

player Earl Bostic and "Walking Shoes" with Gerry Mulligan on baritone sax and Chet Baker on trumpet. Soon the Cave Band started to tackle swing tunes such as "Take the A Train". I traded in my alto saxophone as part payment for a second hand Selmer baritone sax. The front line now comprised Al Smith on trumpet, Dave Brunwin trombone, Arthur Robinson alto Sax, Mick (Ned) Bray tenor sax, and Dave Corsby baritone saxophone. With five horn players the band needed arrangements. This opened up a new world deciding which notes each instrument should play. Giving the trumpet player the melody was pretty obvious. But then came a number of decisions. Is the next instrument under the trumpet the alto saxophone because it has higher notes than the others or is it the trombone to make the band sound like a brass section? How do you fit five instruments into a four note chord? I wrote an arrangement of "How High the Moon" in close harmony that worked and planted the idea in my mind that sometime in the future I would like to arrange and compose for a big band.

It was the age of discovery, 1957. The band now called the Chianti Jazzmen, were signed up to play on Wednesdays and Saturdays at the Coronation Ballroom in Ramsgate. On alternate Saturdays we either played the whole evening or played the first set and an interval set to a name big band. Bass player Norman Brooks remembers the band playing as second band to Ken Mackintosh, Chris Barber, Oscar Rabin, The Squadronnaires, Eric Delaney and Joe Loss. At a time when it is difficult to get work for more than a duo it is hard to grasp that it was not unusual to have an eight or nine piece interval band in addition to a sixteen piece big-band plus three vocalists. We were pretty nervous about playing opposite top professional bands like the Squadronnaires and the Kirchins. The Coronation Ballroom served a drink in little bottles called a Red Robin which apparently was based on the spirit used to wash out sherry casks. Either way it was strong, cheap and highly dangerous. Before we went on for the first gig we had a few as a source of Dutch Courage. After a few weeks we finally had the opportunity to play opposite the Ted Heath Band which was the leading big band of the day. The wall of noise and heat from the crowd was a new experience. After our second set Ted Heath told the audience how lucky they were to have such a good young local band. As a tribute to us, eight of his band came out front and played a couple of tunes using the same instrumentation as ourselves. Several of The Chianti Jazzmen became fully professional musicians with trumpeter Al Smith joining the Sid Phillips Band, pianist Mike Oliver joining the Clyde Valley Stompers and guitarist Eric Flynn embarking on a prolific TV and film career.

The Cave Jazz Club Reunion - The Cave Club and The Chianti Jazzmen must have made a lasting impression because in 2005 surviving members and musicians organised an

all day reunion to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the opening in 1955 of the Cave Club. The Cave Reunion was held at the Westgate Pavilion and attracted a full house including some who had travelled from Australia, Canada, Thailand and the USA. Original band members performing during the evening were founder member Peter Darby (harmonica), Arthur Robinson (band leader), Ned Bray (tenor sax), Dave Corsby (baritone sax) and Al Smith (originally on trumpet but on piccolo for this occasion). The John Critchinson Trio, Tony Coe and Eric Greengrass were among the performers.

CHAPTER TWO

The Age of Foolishness

It was the age of foolishness, and in November 1957 I was called up for two years National Service in the army. The initial training in Aldershot consisted of drill, guard duty, inspections and weapon training. On the ranges we fired rifles and sten guns. We were told that sten guns were unreliable and if one jammed to point it at the ground. We waited our turn as six of us at a time aimed the sten guns at paper targets of infantrymen. One of the recruits suddenly turned round and faced us all calling out that his sten gun had jammed. At this point the jam cleared and he sprayed us all with bullets. We dived to the ground. The sergeant leapt at him and knocked it out of his hand. Fortunately he had aimed slightly upwards and no-one was hit. We did trade training as company clerks and learnt to touch-type very slowly with blankets over our hands to prevent cheating.

At the end of the course we were told that most of us would be going to Cyprus which was not an attractive proposition at the time as the Greek and Turkish Cypriots were at war. British troops were stationed in tented camps where dysentery was rife and snipers were inflicting casualties which was bad enough for enlisted soldiers, but seemed a bit unfair on reluctant conscripts.

There was to be a trade examination and the top twenty out of the two hundred in the intake were to be given UK postings, presumably because they would be the least expendable. There was a question paper and a farcical test of wartime conditions where everyone had to repair his typewriter and type a short letter, but the key part of the examination was a touch-typing test with blankets over our hands. The winners would be those who could type the most in two minutes with no more than two mistakes. Everyone was allowed two attempts - the best version to count for the examination.

The night before the examination I had been put on guard duty which meant alternate "stags" of two hours on duty and two hours fully dressed laying on beds in the guard room waiting to be called out and inspected by the duty officer. There was a customary inspection before the guard was mounted. The best dressed man was allowed to stand down and sleep in his bed. There was also a stick man selected who ran errands until about eleven at night and also was allowed to stand down. The inspection took place and the best dressed man was duly selected. At this point the rest of the guards vied with each other to get the best pattern of two hour shifts. I kept quiet. When the guard roster had been decided the guard sergeant realised that he had forgotten to pick the stick man so he chose me. I am convinced that this was a key turning point in my life as the resultant good night's sleep gave me an

edge for the examination. For the touch-typing test I decided to go for broke and ended up in the top twenty with a UK posting.

My reward was a posting to Cavalry Barracks Hounslow - a far flung outpost of the British Empire at the end of the Piccadilly line not far from where I was born. There were two barrack blocks, one containing about eighty healthy young national servicemen and the other about three hundred drivers and clerks, all regulars in the Women's Royal Army Corps. It had been a long hot summer and the number of pregnancies was alarming. It was army policy that any serviceman who did time at the Colchester detention centre should not be posted back to his original Unit. The camp at Hounslow was a command headquarters and a favourite posting for the ex-convicts. Because I worked for a major I was made an acting corporal and given charge of a dormitory room of a dozen national servicemen, many of whom were experienced criminals on their first postings after a stint at Colchester.

Unusually for the army the camp operated on a five day week, but to compensate for lack of active service there was a heavy roster of night duties, guards and fire pickets. These could be bought, sold or exchanged. I took all the mid-week night duties I could get so that I could buy my freedom at weekends and keep my Saturday night gig going. Two mid-week duties were worth one at the weekend and what with my own rostered duties on, most nights I was existing on barely two or three hours' sleep.

The camp commandant, a Grenadier Guards Colonel, held a weekly drill parade. The motley assembly of national servicemen from various corps and regiments had been taught different drill at different paces. The order quick march often resulted in chaos as Dental Corps and Light Infantry set off at varying speeds with various intentions. Wednesday afternoons were sports afternoons and a convenient means of getting a half-day off if you could come up with an approved form of sport. I used to take a rowing boat out on the Thames for a couple of hours, producing blisters to prove the point. I would then go up to Wardour Street for an early evening lesson with Cyril Reubens, a sax player with the Squadronnaires.

Cyril was complimentary about my jazz phrasing when I played without music but not about my music reading ability. He wrote out a number of standards changing the accepted phrasing to try and break me of the habit of playing what I heard in my head rather than what the arranger intended. Most of the Chianti Band that I played with had day jobs in London and we would meet up at the Humphrey Lyttleton Club (later the 100 Club) in Oxford Street and listen to Humph with our local hero Tony Coe on alto sax, Jimmy Skidmore on tenor saxophone and John Picard on trombone. Later Tony switched to tenor sax and Joe

Temperley came in on baritone saxophone. Afterwards we would call in at the Soho coffee bars and I would get a late night tube back to the barracks at Hounslow.

Soldiers who worked in the offices of the Command Headquarters did not have to wear uniform if they were not on duty. National servicemen who lived in London often had a night at home and at the weekend the camp was often deserted apart from those who had to be on duty. The result was that quite a few national servicemen who had finished their two years conscription and had officially left the army continued to live on the camp and take meals. Some of my roommates went on regular housebreaking expeditions. When there was a surprise barrack inspection, the Regimental Sergeant Major, on inspecting the loft above our room, discovered a cache of cameras, televisions, cigarettes, jewellery and watches.

Despite being permanently broke on the low pay given to national servicemen we always managed to have a demob (demobilisation) party if one of our roommates was leaving. We came from all walks of life and we knew we were unlikely to meet again. Our favourite location was a pub crawl in Richmond. After one such evening we returned to our second floor barrack room in the early hours of the morning to find it completely stripped - no beds, no lockers, and no light bulbs. Practical jokes relieved the monotony. Someone would wake you up in the middle of the night and ask would you like to buy a battleship. When he fell asleep you would return the compliment and ask what colour it was. Later on he would say you can have brown or grey. It went on for hours until someone in the room lost his temper or until we all fell asleep. We had one lad who was a really deep sleeper especially after a heavy night out. One night we carried him asleep in his bed down two flights of stairs and out to the flagpole which stood in the middle of a huge grass square in front of the former cavalry barracks. The Square was flanked on two sides by stable blocks now converted into offices. He slept until early morning when he woke up suffering with a hangover. We did give him some help getting his bed back to the barrack room.

CHAPTER THREE

The Age of Discovery

After my national service had ended I branched out and formed a quartet with drummer Les Feast. Les had spent his national service in Cyprus during the Greek Turkish conflict. As opposed to my soft stint in Hounslow he had spent most of his two years in the dust bowl of Akrotiri living in tents with the boredom relieved by dysentery, guard duties and the hazard of the odd sniper bullet. I actually met Les in October 1959 on our first rehearsal. In addition to myself playing saxophone and Les Feast playing drums John Parker joined us on bass and Tony Jackson on guitar. The baritone sax became my preferred instrument. In March 1960 We got a resident Friday night gig in the Dolphin club Westgate. The Dolphin provided an opportunity for late drinking after the the pubs had closed and we drew a crowd. There was an admission charge on the door but many of the customers avoided this by climbing in via a window at the back of the building. We played arrangements of standards and I gave Les a set of parts so that the drums could phrase the melody line with me. It made the band sound bigger than it was. Les went on to become accomplished at sight reading.

The Eastcoasters - Tony the guitarist landed a summer season job in Jersey and left. We could not find a regular pianist so we brought in Charlie Banyard on trombone and John Harrison on tenor sax with me playing baritone sax. Brian Askew joined on bass with Les Feast on drums. The line up of trombone and two saxes produced a big fat sound. We called the band the East Coasters. Gerry Mulligans piano-less quartet with trumpeter Chet Baker was still in vogue and our similar approach made us popular at a resident weekly gig at the Orchid Rooms in Cliftonville.

John Harrison - John Harrison had joined us when we formed The East Coasters. He had a good sound on tenor saxophone playing very acceptable jazz in a laid-back cool West Coast style. He worked on his instrument and contributed arrangements. The American tenor saxophone player Stan Getz was his idol. John decided to spend a year in the USA to listen to jazz, particularly to Stan Getz. He found it easy to get work as a printer and he followed Getz around. If Getz had a month in a club in Chicago John would find work locally and go along to listen two or three times a week. Wherever Getz had a jazz club residency John would change jobs and follow. When John returned to England he decided he would

never be anywhere good enough as a jazz player and gave up the saxophone, switching to oboe and joining a local amateur orchestra.

I started to get asked to play with other jazz bands and dance bands. There was a duo that had a residency playing piano and drums at a Margate Working Men's Club. Their big musical event of the year was the club's annual dinner dance at the Winter Gardens, Margate where they augmented to a big band. I was asked to play second tenor sax. The drummer leader Harry Richardson said that he knew I played jazz and that they were very happy to have me in the band but they hoped I would keep the volume down - they wanted quiet saxes and muted trumpets. The library consisted of stock orchestrations and I thought it was going well when I heard a shshsh from the drummer who was immediately behind me. So I carried on but a bit quieter than before. But in the next number there was another shshsh and another. I was now playing really quietly. In the third number I turned round and finally realised that the shshsh was a miniature cymbal which the drummer hit at random! I was at least ten years younger than most of the band. For the record the line-up was Jack Ody, Harry Segal, Sid Gould, Pete Blacker, and Dave Corsby (saxes) Terry Freestone, Taffy Davies (trumpets), Sid Rawbone (trombone), Alec Inman (piano) Jock Mortimer (bass) . Harry Richardson (drums).

Joe Blake and The Westenders - Joe Blake was the most popular bandleader in the area but not with his musicians. He paid strict union rate in pay packet envelopes, usually accompanied by a note apologising for it being slightly short because he had not got the correct change. We were at the bar in an interval and Joe was dishing out the envelopes when he dropped a banknote. Bert Huxley the long-suffering lead tenor sax whispered "put your foot on it". At the end of the evening we shared it out to make up for some of the short changing. I took the opportunity to write an arrangement for Joe's line up of Harold Lands tune Lands End which was the Westenders one and only venture into modern jazz. Joe and I fell out when I refused to put on a soaking wet band jacket which had been in the boot of his car. Joe had a house on the main road into Margate and an indication of how much he was disliked was that musicians returning home in the early hours of the morning used to sound their horns as they passed by.

Apart from jazz gigs there was a lot of commercial work in hotels in the summer and for functions in the winter months. There were Mayors' balls, Police balls, Hospital dances, Masonic nights, Roundtable events, sports club dances and Christmas dances for local factories and businesses. Many of these events used big bands playing Glen Miller arrangements or the dreaded Jimmy Lally published orchestrations which in theory could be

played by any combination of instruments and sounded equally dire whatever the lineup. The local bandleaders mostly used the same pool of musicians and very much the same published music. Only the bandleaders and the generosity of their payments were different. The challenge of sight reading the music did me good. At worst I was being paid to practise. It was not all bad. It was a joy to play in some of the saxophone sections. Despite trotting out "In the Mood" ad nauseam playing in a big band with a swinging rhythm section was a pleasurable and sometimes lucrative way to gain experience.

Roy Capel - There was work for musicians in seaside hotels during the summer and at Christmas between Christmas Eve and New Year. I joined drummer Roy Capel's trio with pianist Peter Wenman. We played in Margate at the Walpole Bay Hotel as well as the Norfolk and Windsor Hall hotels. There was not much opportunity to play jazz but I looked on it as being paid to practice and my technique and repertoire steadily improved

Roy Capel also had a Saturday residency at the Dreamland ballroom Margate. He used the name Roy Grant and mixed up the Palais band repertoire with some rock, jazz and jive numbers. But dance bands were on the way out. We played opposite the Eric Delaney Band and Johnny Dankworth's big band which drew a crowd of jazz and big-band fans but did not please the dancers. Earlier in the day the stage at Dreamland had been extended to accommodate Dankworth's band. The floor of the extension was given a hasty coat of black gloss paint. When we played our first set the paint was still wet and the bass player became glued to the stage. Some of the Dankworth band were very complimentary about our playing and our commitment to playing jazz.

One name band we played opposite was Sounds Incorporated with two saxes, organ, guitar, bass guitar, drums and a massive speaker system. Just before they started their set I dashed onstage to retrieve a sax stand and bent down in front of the speakers just as the band opened up. The unexpected volume nearly bowled me over. It was the sign of things to come. Big speakers and smaller bands meant more noise with less musicians to pay. The writing was on the wall. Roy Grant's Band was replaced by Tommy Martin, a guitar player with a rock and roll band. Tommy asked me if I would like to join him on sax. I declined. I knew I would get bored with the monotony of playing cover versions of pop tunes and backing a singer. At least I had discovered what I did not want to do.

Kiss Me Kate - The first musical I played for was Kiss Me Kate for the local amateur operatic society. I was on baritone sax and clarinet. After the first night Leslie Wheeler the

Musical Director mentioned that he had substituted hand written parts for one of the pieces because the singer felt the band was too loud. He explained that apart from altering a few notes at the start the changes were mainly giving the saxes and brass less to play. When we came to the piece I played the altered notes followed by two lower register F notes which I hit with confidence only to discover that the two notes were actually a figure eleven for eleven bars rest. The singer was not amused. During one matinee when we had a small unenthusiastic audience we had played the last chord at the end of the first half when Sid Rawbone the trombone player suddenly took off on a lengthy virtuoso impromptu cadenza which he made up on the spot. He explained afterwards that he thought the afternoon needed cheering up.

The Eric Greengrass Quartet - While I was learning to play with the Cave jazz Band and the Chianti Jazzmen the local jazz group which we all admired was a quartet led by vibraphone player Eric Greengrass. Eric, who also played drums and trombone had worked with Norman Burns Nearing Shearing Quintet which had broadcast regularly and worked the one night dance hall circuit. Eric's quartet included a talented pianist, Mo Hinson who gave me some great alternative chord sequences for songs like "There's a Small Hotel" and "Blue Moon". They were a lesson in the possibilities of substitute harmonies and to this day I prefer them to the originals. The bass player was Douggie Bartlett whose musical ambitions were confined to playing the best possible walking bass lines harmonically and rhythmically. The drummer Ian Stevens (Steve) had been given a drum kit when quite young as physiotherapy to help rebuild his wrists after a car accident. He was a great time player.

The quartet successfully auditioned for BBC Radio and after several broadcasts on the BBC Jazz Club programme were offered a lucrative contract in Switzerland. Eric had family business commitments and turned down the offer to the dismay of the other three. Pianist Mo Hinson moved to London, auditioned for Johnny Dankworth and looked like getting the job which actually went to Dudley Moore. Mo was replaced by John Gould whose engaging individual jazz solo style was built on single note runs in the lower registers of the piano. When John left to go to South Africa he was replaced by Roger Embury, a giant tenor saxophonist whose size seemed to make the instrument look and sound effortless. When Roger left to work in London Eric re-wrote his pad of arrangements for baritone saxophone and I took over.

The experience was invaluable having to tackle new tunes which were technically and harmonically more difficult to play. I learnt about chord sequences. We recorded an album of standards. The unusual baritone saxophone and vibraphone line up has remained a

fascination as an alternative to the classic modern jazz quartet line up of tenor saxophone, piano, bass and drums. Eric acquired a new Deagan vibraphone and his style changed. Instead of driving exciting playing with two mallets the emphasis switched to playing chords with four mallets and with a gentler touch. The band replaced excitement with a gentler sophistication. Eric continually glared round at Steve and hissed "brushes" when Steve was using sticks. Tempos became either slow or very slow. Steve reacted by playing quietly and tastefully but suddenly and unexpectedly dropping a bomb releasing a loud crash on cymbal or a giant thud of bass drum but all the time keeping a straight face. Steve emigrated to Australia where he joined trumpeter Art Farmer on a tour of the Far East when the original drummer was sick.

I just loved playing with Dougie Bartlett's double bass behind me with its big tone and sure notes. Dougie was one of those people everyone likes; friendly, chatty with a booming voice and posh accent. I often gave him a lift to gigs. Afterwards I would drop him off at various addresses. One of these was a lighthouse keeper's wife whose husband was away for periods working on a light ship. An ornament on the window ledge was a signal that the coast was clear. If not we would go on to another address. Some years later I learned that Dougie had died around the same time as actor and jazz lover John le Mesurier. The two of them regularly met in the morning at the Vale Tavern in Ramsgate.

Ladders To Climb - The more I got involved in the local music scene the more I realised that I had big gaps in my musical knowledge. In 1965 I added flute to my instrumental armoury and managed to get some lessons from Jean Rumbold who, frustrated by the lack of job opportunities for classical flautists, had taken a summer season in the pit orchestra at the Winter Gardens in Margate which allowed her to enjoy the abundance of east Kent golf courses. I also received some clarinet lessons from Malcolm MacMillan a member of the Sadlers Wells Orchestra. I joined various amateur light orchestras and military bands. Between leaving school and getting a full time day job I had worked my way through a book on Fugue, elements of which remained with me in later years when I was composing and arranging for big band.

Already in possession of a grand piano and electric keyboard and mikes, amps and speakers I was well on the way to setting up a home recording studio. I was working with vocalist and bass guitarist Jake Jackson in a duo under the name Double Vision. Jake undertook most of the formidable task of wiring up the studio. We were playing at Mick Squirrels Hare and Hounds pub when Mick offered us a drum kit if we played one night for free. He said that the drum kit had a high hat missing. I said it was no problem we would just start half an hour

later. Jake proved to be a talented recording engineer and we produced an album where on one track Jake sang all the parts on a selection of Beach Boys songs. I recorded a big band track playing all the parts on piano, flute, clarinet, soprano, alto, tenor and baritone sax.

Out of my depth - My piano playing was built on the shaky foundation of a few months' lessons at the age of ten cut short by the competing call of football and rugby. At fifteen I bought a few copies of popular songs and by seventeen I was using the piano to work out voicings in arrangements for the Cave Band with its trumpet, trombone and three saxes front line. From time to time I performed gigs on piano - persuaded by desperate band leaders who found their usual contacts unavailable.

Incidents stick in the mind. In 1967 having been roped into playing piano during one Christmas at the White Cliffs Hotel in Dover I was getting by until the cabaret arrived - a singer with piano parts that were frankly beyond me. As usual there was no rehearsal but we survived the first two numbers quite successfully. At this point the singer decided the accompaniment was competent enough for him to march off down the room at which point we lost contact. I could not hear him and did not know where he was or what he was singing.

Similar mishaps followed. At the Cresidor restaurant I was booked to deputise for Eric Bing the usual sax player. The pianist Pat O'Neil was very competent but he was having eyesight problems. He asked me to cover the cabaret who as usual arrived too late for a rehearsal. At the Cresidor the band played on a little stage which was fenced off from the dance floor with a wrought iron railing. The cabaret were on the dance floor. The music for the act started off with one arrangement that was six pages long, taped together concertina fashion. The Fender Rhodes piano has an almost flat top so I spread the music out and we set off with some success until the music slid off the piano onto the dance floor and I ended up trying to busk an accompaniment.

One of the cross channel ferry companies put on an all night jazz cruise on a ship called the Vortigen. The plan was for the passengers to leave Dover, have a meal, cruise in the Channel, listen to three jazz groups, take advantage of the duty free bars and shop and return to Dover. For some reason our regular pianist could not make the gig and we ended up as a trio with me playing piano. To say that the sea was rough that night is an understatement. One of the bands was a traditional jazz band led by trombonist Bod Bowles. Bod stamped his foot to count the start of his first number. With every step he lurched sideways and ended up in a heap on a nearby sofa with his trombone held aloft to avoid damage. When it came to our turn the ship was moving so much that I was missing the intended chords even more than usual. The third band was led by trumpeter Brian Jenner who I had not met before. His

pianist became severely sea sick and I helped out on piano. Some months later he asked me to play at a dinner dance in Wrotham some sixty miles away. I duly arrived with saxes and woodwinds only to find that he had booked me to play piano. There was no keyboard at the venue and it was too far to go home for mine. He had a young girl singer in the band who played a few tunes on guitar and we struggled through.

I did a few Saturday nights on piano for drummer John Mankovitch who had a residency at the Malta Inn near Maidstone. It was memorable for having a slowly revolving dance floor - I never could understand the point of this - and for the amazing meals we had in the interval. John was one of those band leaders whose outstanding skill was as a supreme organiser in extracting maximum fees for gigs and obtaining food and drinks for the band. Coming home after a gig at the Malta the hospitality got to me and I often struggled to stay awake despite having the windows open and slapping and pinching myself.

Jazz Meets Latin - Somehow I ended up playing piano on a recording session for the singer Dorita - one time half of the Dorita y Pepe South American vocal act. One of the tracks was the Coffee Song. The album was called Jazz meets Latin. I remember that Ian Shawcross played trumpet and that we recorded the whole album in one session.

Crosby Feast and Jury - In adverts posters and newspaper articles my name was repeatedly being spelt as Crosby instead of Corsby so instead of fighting it we decided to use it for a trio that we had formed. This comprised pianist Paul Jury, drummer Les Feast and myself on saxes. Crosby Stills and Nash were popular at the time so we decided to use the title Crosby Feast and Jury. We were quite ambitious, playing pieces with unusual time signatures like John Sermon's Sixes and Sevens which comprised eight bars with six beats to the bar alternating with eight bars with seven beats to the bar. On a recommendation we got booked by telephone to play at the Royal Engineer in Twydal near Gillingham. When we arrived a large poster outside billed us as Crowbar Fist and Fury.

The Debs Delight - The London Royal Naval Reserve headquarters were on HMS President which was moored on the Thames near Blackfriars Bridge. We were recommended to play for their summer ball. The main band was Tommy Kinsman nick-named "the debs delight" because he had largely sewn up all the major London debutante coming out balls and functions. We were a younger band playing a livelier mixture of jazz and music for

dancing and we were successful enough to be booked back for the next HMS President function. This was an era when well known band leaders might have several bands out under their name on the same night. Tommy Kinsman would usually make an appearance but the band that played might be his second or third team. The hospitality on HMS President was formidable. Drinks for the band for our quintet came up as bottles of scotch with five glasses repeated as often as we wanted. One or two of Kinsman's band took full advantage. Their pianist played a request and was sent up an enormous brandy which he drank down too quickly with unfortunate consequences. He was subsequently helped out. We must have been better at pacing ourselves because for the next winter and summer balls our quintet was booked as the main band and I had to fix a second band. We started to get other functions for the Mayfair Young Conservatives, The Baltic Exchange Sailing Association and the Stock Exchange Sailing Association. We played on an evening cruise on the Thames for an end of term celebration for the Guildhall School of Music.

We were approached about playing the final night of Wimbledon Week and we started to have visions of the band becoming the new "Debs Delight". Unfortunately the secretary of the London Royal Naval Reserve moved away and we lost contact.

CHAPTER FOUR

Heroes and Villains

Tubby Hayes -The first time I saw Tubby Hayes was at the Coronation Ballroom in Ramsgate with the Ronnie Scott Band. The clear memory is of the young Tubby Hayes – stocky, perhaps portly but not really tubby – blowing his heart out with arrogant, cocky cockney confidence and a greedy desire to play and to stretch out with extended cascading jazz solos. Not many of the critics liked him but he stood out among his British contemporaries.

The next time I saw Tubby was during 1959 in a series of Thursday nights at the Ace of Clubs in Hounslow. He was with the Jazz Couriers which he co-led with Ronnie Scott. Sparse audiences meant that I became on nodding terms with the band but they were too pre-occupied and I was too shy to get into long conversations. In March 1961 I went to see “The Connection”, a play about drug addiction. It was rather avant-garde in that the cast ad libbed their lines and chatted to the audience. The attraction was that the play featured a jazz quartet on stage with American alto saxophonist Jackie McClean. By sheer coincidence a couple of seats away was Tubby Hayes who half recognised me – ‘What, you again?’- and then proceeded during the play to exchange banter with the musicians on stage.

Then there was the Duke Ellington concert where Paul Gonsalves was sick and the concert started late with Tubby as a last minute stand in struggling with the non-existent music. Much of the library parts had fallen apart or got lost during forty odd years of touring. Tubby was very popular and Duke featured him to the delight of the crowd.

But on this occasion it was Johnny Hodges who brought tears to my eyes playing alto saxophone so sadly and lyrically. How could I have thought that he sounded sickly sweet on record? Jimmy Hamilton solved for me how I wanted to sound on clarinet.

After the Jazz Couriers broke up Tubby formed a quintet with trumpeter Jimmy Deuchar. Their opening venue was my local ballroom in Dreamland, Margate. The jazz fans gathered round the stage and the would be dancers stood on the floor embarrassed and aghast as the first number was chorus after chorus of driving jazz at breakneck speed. Jazz had lost the dancers and the door was open for the discos and the rock groups to move in. But this new Tubby Hayes band was fresh, enthusiastic, eager to prove itself and with a mission. Blow the management! Blow the dancers! Forget the absurd venue! They had the technique and the ear and were preaching a new gospel even if half the audience were heathens. Tubby recognised me and beaming down into the crowd beckoned me over, thrust some cash at

me, grinned and said hello again and asked me to get a round for the band and myself. It was great for street cred but I missed a couple of numbers queuing at the bar.

The last time I saw Tubby Hayes was at a student union jazz concert at Canterbury University where I was playing in the support band. We played our first set, with a piano-less line up of trumpet baritone sax bass and drums. The concert was in the Great Hall. On the dais was a large Steinway Grand Piano, locked and covered and not to be used by jazz bands. The student union had produced an electric piano not much more than a toy which had to suffice. Tubby, clearly peeved, commenced a long tirade against the education authorities describing the insults inflicted on jazz musicians by the world in general. Having worked himself up into a state of some anger he then proceeded to let off steam during a multi chorus work out on "I'm Old Fashioned" giving an object lesson in building a jazz solo. When it came to our turn to play our second set I felt there was nothing more to say. It was the only time in my life where I really did not want to play. It seemed pointless after Tubby had said it all.

Andre Rico - George Davies who played bass and timbales used the name André Rico to run a Latin American big band. His brother also ran a Latin big band under the name Chico Arnez. The Andre Rico Band had a Sunday night residency at the Ronnie Scott Club and used a library that included a series of terrific arrangements by Kenny Graham whose Afro Cuban Jazz Band had a big reputation. In addition the band played some authentic Latin big band arrangements published in Mexico and Havana.

The chances of running a jazz club or a big band as a financial success are always remote. Despite some broadcasts and great reviews George got deeply in debt and was declared bankrupt. He arrived in Margate with his wife and daughter, a few clothes, double bass, timbales, dress suite and big band library - the only possessions - tools of his trade which as a bankrupt he was allowed to keep. He picked up some local work on bass and set up a rehearsal band using his Latin American library. I joined some of the rehearsals.

George managed to hustle up a few small group gigs and we had a situation where he and drummer Les Feast were playing in a band in a bar in Dreamland, Margate which finished at the same time as a late night gig started in the Artistes Club in Cliftonville. We solved this by starting the gig with pianist Paul Jury playing drums and me playing piano. When the others arrived Paul switched to piano and I played sax resulting in a huge improvement.

George ran into trouble with the local branch of the Musicians Union who banned him when he refused to give up a job as a disc jockey in Dreamland. The Union claimed that the disc

jockey job had replaced a whole band and put musicians out of work. George said that he would give up if the Union found him alternative work on bass but otherwise his priority was to feed his family. George continued with the DJ work for the summer season and then moved away.

Art Baxter - Art Baxter sang with the Ronnie Scott Big Band. He sounded like Billy Eckstine. But his exploits and erratic behaviour made him unreliable and after missing or being late for several gigs Ronnie Scott threatened to fire him the next time he missed the band coach. The next gig was in Cardiff. Art missed the bus again but made it to the gig just before the band was due on stage. Art apologised for missing the coach and then asked Ronnie if he could pay the taxi driver who was waiting outside and wanted to get back to London

About this time Jeff Kruger owner of the Flamingo Jazz Club in Soho asked Art to form a rock 'n roll band. While in New York Kruger had seen a preview of Bill Hayley's film Rock Around the Clock. Straight after, he bought a portable recorder and returned to the cinema to record the sound track. On his return to London he asked drummer Tony Crombie to form a six piece band and learn the Bill Haley songs. Tony Crombie's Rockets were Britain's first rock 'n roll band and an immediate huge success. Kruger invited Art to form a rock 'n roll band. Art Baxter's Rock 'n Roll Sinners were almost as successful as Crombie's Rockets. Both bands appeared in the movie "Rock You Sinners". It all went wrong on the night of a Palladium show when Art failed to make it on stage and was found still in the dressing room trying to tie his bow tie.

Art drifted down to Margate and sat in with us a few times. Whatever state he was in his singing was always impressive. One night he asked me if I would play piano for him in a club on Margate seafront for a couple of midweek sessions from eleven to two after the pubs closed. I was reluctant partly because my piano playing was not up to it and partly because I was commuting to London for my day job catching a train from Broadstairs at just after seven in the morning. On some days I grabbed an instant coffee using the hot water tap and finished buttoning my shirt and putting on my tie on the train, then on arrival at work I often drank a pint of milk with sugar and a raw egg stirred in to start the day. I agreed to play for Art until he found someone else so we devised some sort of repertoire I could get away with. At frequent intervals two double brandies arrived. I could not cope with the brandies and an early start the next day, but Art had no problem helping me out. He never did find another pianist to take over. I do not think he tried much. The gig finished not long after at the end of the summer season. Some time later I met him in the street in Ramsgate and he asked me for

some money to "get his suit out of the cleaners" which was code for being broke. He asked me where we were playing that night and turned up and sat in for a few numbers - his way of paying me back.

Good Grief - Ken Grieff played trumpet and was a jolly entertainer. He had a marathon Boxing Day gig at the Winter Gardens in Margate where we played from three to six in the afternoon and eight to one-thirty in the evening. He had agreed to provide non-stop music with the band taking it in turns to take a break. I remember at one point in the afternoon playing an interminable Gay Gordon's with just tenor sax, baritone sax and drums. The cabaret was a lavish floor show. They were playing several venues in the area that evening and they arrived at the last minute with a pianist/music director who handed the music round and counted us in. Despite no rehearsal and no chance to see the music beforehand we were coping with it quite well until Maurice Black one of the saxophone players turned over two pages at once and steamed off into a vigorous up tempo Russian dance while the dancers and the rest of the band were playing a stately Scottish sword dance. Our efforts to break through his concentration and stop him were in vain, partly because we were convulsed in laughter. There was a very impressive strong arm act who in the afternoon spot seemed to defy gravity with a one arm hand stand balanced on a precarious assortment of table and chairs. Having had a few drinks during the day when he came back for the evening spot he told us he did not dare do the handstand and his act was relatively tame as he bent a few iron bars and tore up some telephone directories. During the evening Ken said he would leave it to us to make sure that there were always some of the band playing. He disappeared to the bar where gradually most of the band joined him. He suddenly panicked with the fear that there was no one left playing and rushed to the door. On stage instead of an eight piece band there was the drummer and the veteran sax player Arthur Wood playing barn dances on violin. When we got back on stage Ken was asked if we could play some heavy metal. Yes he replied and shouted "key of F - Any Old Iron; One, two, one two three four."

Les Herbert - Deputising with Les Herberts Jazz Band gave me the opportunity to make some great trips to Lyons (where we played at the Hot Club) and to St Malo Les Bains near Dunkirk as part of the Jazzopale Festival. Les Herberts were a mixture of eccentrics and players of varying standards with a common love for the music. The name evolved from a chance remark "When are the Herberts meeting next?" The Herberts became the name for the band and the French version Les Herberts was adopted because it sounded better. The

press got it wrong and decided Les Herbert was a person. In time people would tell you they had actually met Les Herbert and what a fine player he had been. The trumpeter Bill Bowden was the force that held the band together. He had a quick ear and often we would hit the same phrase together through some sort of meeting of minds rather than musical telepathy. His solos had Bix Beiderbeck phrases and the other members of the band would admit he was in a class apart from the rest of them. I have about 65 hours of cassette tapes of Duke Ellington, Adrian Rollini and Bix Beiderbeck which Bill recorded for me from the original 78s. I have a memory of a rather formal mayor's reception in France where Bill dressed in enormous khaki shorts and big game hunter's hat broke off from the cassis appetisers and small talk to chase a rare butterfly with an enormous net. One day when Bill had stopped at some traffic lights a motorist in an open top sports car shouted across to him "Leatherhead?" Bill shouted back "Fish Face" and drove off. At a gig someone asked, "Can your clarinet player play the Old Rugged Cross?" Bill's response was "I don't know about that but I know he can't play the clarinet".

Vernon Kennard was the bass player. He also played sousaphone, trumpet, made violins, repaired instruments, drank malt whiskies and owned three music shops which he sold at the right time and retired to a Scottish Island where he tuned pianos. I asked Vernon if he would act as a referee for me. He was asked if I had a drinking problem and replied that I always finished the evening standing up.

I was not present when Les Herberts appeared as an act in an Ice Show. The Granville Theatre in Ramsgate had a Christmas Ice Show - not quite a pantomime nor exclusively an ice show as it involved non skating acts as well as skaters. An apron had been built in front of the stage to increase the skating surface which was still rather tight. At the dress rehearsal the leading lady fell and cut herself badly on a skate blade. The Les Herberts band were brought in at the last minute as an extra act to pad out the show. A carpet was put on to cover part of the ice and provide an area for the band to stand on. But the carpet was not quite big enough and an upright piano was put directly on the ice with the idea of wheeling it off after the band had finished. During the day the compressors were turned off and the ice partly melted so that the piano sank into the mush at a crazy angle. When the compressors were turned on for the evening show the piano was frozen into place. The next day was worse. The compressors were left on with the piano now perched on top of the ice. However, the stage was raked slightly so that the audience could see. Left to its own devices the upright piano slid off the stage and toppled into the theatre pit landing on a grand piano which sadly was damaged beyond repair.

Kenny Pyrke -I first met Kenny Pyrke when I joined Jack Long's rehearsal big band. Kenny was the lead trombone player. Before I met him he had played with Bob Miller, Joe Daniels and Roy Castle as well as on the QE2 run to New York. In the nineteen eighties he played in my seven piece band at The Ship in Margate on Sunday nights. We used that band at the Dunkirk Jazzopale and for Thames Television where we recorded a comedy arrangement of a song called "Britain For Ever What Ever The Weather." This was used for the Judith Chalmers "Wish You Were Here" programme. As members of the Pete Rose Band we played in Rheda in Germany and with trumpeter Dave Link we played for prestige corporate functions for ICI, P&O, Euro Tunnel, and the Duke of Westminster's Estate. (Incidentally Dave Link's formidable lip on trumpet was partly due to a job he took with a local farmer as a bird scarer).

On some of the gigs in northern France the ability to cope with the generous hospitality was as important as playing ability. On one function in Calais we were suddenly called on to play The Marseillaise. Kenny volunteered to take the lead. The audience stood and sang with some fervour. After we had played it through five times it became clear that Kenny knew how to start the tune but not how to finish it. What had begun with the audience on their feet singing lustily deteriorated into an embarrassing silence as we finally brought the piece to a stuttering unconvincing halt.

In the nineties we joined the John Burch Octet playing alongside our heroes Hank Shaw and Dick Morrissey. The band had a couple of broadcasts on the BBC Jazz Notes programme and an Arts Council sponsored tour. We were often featured in a small group line up of trombone , baritone sax, bass and drums playing Gerry Mulligan's Apple Core and Bernie's Tune. We subsequently formed our own quartet to play the Gerry Mulligan repertoire.

After one busy period of playing Kenny went to the doctor complaining of stomach pains. The doctor asked him whether he drank very much. Kenny said he did not drink much at all except when he was playing. The doctor asked him how many times a week he played. Kenny said six. The doctor asked whether he drank when he was not playing. Kenny said they usually had a bottle of wine with their Sunday lunch and that he often met a few friends for a drink on a Saturday lunch time. The doctor told him to come back to see him when he was not playing as much. Kenny forgot to mention the optics in the kitchen which were often used to lace the early morning mug of tea. He also failed to mention the perks of the job he got as the maintenance electrician in a bonded warehouse.

Barry's Chauffeur - On the strength of royalty cheques from a music publishing business Barry Cole opened a music shop in Herne Bay. The premises were also used by music teachers to give lessons. Together with organist Jack Mattin as a partner they were initially very successful especially selling electric organs. Barry acquired a white Rolls Royce which he made available for weddings so that it could be charged against tax. He also used it for frequent outings to Wheelers for champagne oysters and vintage port or day trips to France to eat in expensive restaurants. We enjoyed a great day and meal at the Grenouiller near Montreuil in France. Barry employed a chauffeur to drive the Rolls Royce for weddings and also for gigs, business or pleasure trips whenever there was the likelihood of drink driving problems. But Barry was often too soft hearted to leave the chauffeur outside in the motor. The result was that on several occasions the evening ended with the chauffeur incapable and Barry having to drive him home. Inevitably the chauffeur succumbed to the breathalyser test. In time the music shop appeared to have exhausted the catchment area for selling organs and was close to insolvency. Jack was somewhat touchy about the situation because his house was surety for the business. To get away from it all Barry had arranged a holiday abroad over the Christmas period and had agreed to lend the Rolls to a publican for Christmas day.

The chauffeur was to deliver the Rolls on Christmas Eve as his last duty, but he decided to use it on the Christmas Eve to take all his friends on a pub crawl. Late on the Christmas Eve driving the Rolls through the back lanes, he managed to hit another car head on which fate would have it was driven by Barry's partner Jack Mattin. Jack damaged his wrist quite badly and rang me because he was desperately trying to find a keyboard player to deputise for his Boxing Day and New Years Eve gigs.

Titanic Steve - Steve Cameron was the organist with a nine piece rock band called Maize. The band had two singers, Colin whose beard gave him a biblical appearance and Jo a beautiful singer and dancer who on stage wore a provocative long string vest. They were backed by Hammond organ, guitar, bass guitar, drums and a brass section originally consisting of trumpet trombone and tenor saxophone. When the trombone player left I replaced him on baritone sax. There were also two roadies to drive and assemble the massive sound system. The band had a small antique furniture van and a transit van. We played at colleges, discos and functions. The band was very loud and the brass section had some good arrangements for My Girl, The Letter, River Deep and Mountain High. We dragged around Steve's Hammond organ mounted on a base board which was a four man carrying job. There was a Leslie Speaker cabinet to go with it. Steve Cameron was a dazzling

player who had a bad habit of lining up three pints of lager for the last number of the evening after which he was incapable of packing up or carrying his gear.

A few years later Steve and I were both members of the Feasty band. It would have been financially very successful if we had not had to keep buying replacement transit vans. We often travelled long distances and to keep awake on the return trips we often mimed or acted place names. I still have an urge to shout "sted" every time I pass the turning for Yelsted on the Maidstone Sittingbourne road. We performed a cabaret act based on the Muppets which included an explosion on stage. The singer and bass player Jake said we could save a lot of money by buying the stage explosion chemical in bulk rather than use the tame packeted versions. We used a couple of metal ash traps heaped with chemical for the two "explosions" which were ignited by Jake dropping a lit cigarette into the powder at the same time as I pressed a pretend plunger. It took a few attempts to get it right. I had quite a few burn marks on my band shirt. At a function in Maidstone they had to clear the room for ten minutes until the smoke cleared. The usual routine was to set up the metal ashtrays with the explosive during the interval and do the cabaret spot straight after the break. Unfortunately on one occasion a punter stubbed his cigarette out in one of the ashtrays. The resultant flash singed his hair and eyebrows but I think he was too embarrassed to make a fuss.

We were playing at a function where we had a request for "Feelings" which Steve said he did not know. The punter returned and persisted that it was his wife's favourite song. Steve still denied knowing it. A little later the punter returned again and put a banknote on the organ. Steve immediately broke into the tune.

Long before the Leonardo Di Capri and Kate Blanchett film Titanic was made Steve composed his own Titanic Suite. We had about fourteen rehearsals as Steve continually changed the music and added new pieces. It ended up in five movements. Steve took out a big advert in the Melody Maker and hired a massive gong from the London Symphony Orchestra for its debut performance to a full house at the old Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. Poet Paul Burra wrote and spoke the narration. Steve was surrounded by organ, grand piano, electric keyboard and various synthesisers. Jake Jackson played bass guitar and was the vocalist. Sean Murphy was the guitarist and Les Feast the drummer. I played flute, clarinet and saxes. Most of the afternoon before the performance was spent in setting up and doing a sound check. Directly we started Steve turned up all his keyboards and largely nullified the planned sound balance. I played the whole concert hardly hearing anything I played on flute or clarinet and not much of anything on saxes. There were flashing lights, dry ice, sound effects and on stage explosions. The audience loved it. It was great fun and when I finally got to hear a recording of what I had played I was agreeably surprised.

After all the bills were paid we got a couple of pounds each. But good on you Steve for having the dream and the determination to see it through. Steve later joined Hot Chocolate.

Fame and Fortune - During my commuting days I sometimes travelled up on an early train with footballer John O'Mara who played for Brentford and trained there during the week. I mentioned that I was involved with a big band that was rehearsing with Georgie Fame on a Monday night in the Royal Engineer in Gillingham. At the time Georgie Fame was living in Holland and coming over for the rehearsals but otherwise staying out of the country. Georgie had just completed a tour in the States singing with the Count Basie Orchestra and had brought back the arrangements with him. "Bonnie and Clyde" and other Georgie Fame hits had been arranged in Basie big band style and were exciting to play. Georgie Fame was musically impressive at rehearsals singing the parts to the sections and explaining what he wanted. The bandleader Jack Long had created an arrangement of the Mose Allison song "the Seventh Son of a Seventh Son" with seven beats in the bar rather than the original four. All this whetted John O'Mara's appetite. Brentford were due to play at Gillingham on a Monday night and after the match John came along to the rehearsal with some of the players from both teams.

Tabasco Pete - I first came across Pete Webb when he came to listen to us and booked us for some jazz concerts which he promoted. He often lost money on these ventures because in his enthusiasm he usually booked too many musicians or too many groups. He distributed a monthly newsletter giving details of local musicians and jazz venues. As a non musician he wanted to be more than just a jazz record collector and sought for a way to contribute and be part of the jazz scene. Pete believed that the American alto saxophonist Art Pepper had been underrated as a jazz soloist and was in danger of being quickly forgotten after his death. So Pete organised the Art Pepper Appreciation Society. He produced a "Newspepper" which he signed as Tabasco Pete. The Society held an annual Art Pepper Day when Pete would book a rhythm section and a name guest saxophonist. He would then invite, press or cajole other musicians to sit in during a concert and jam session which would take place from noon lasting through the evening. It became a national event with saxophone players travelling from all over Britain. Several musicians contributed arrangements of Art Pepper compositions to be played on the day. I remember sending Pete a transcription of an Art Pepper tune based on Tea for Two which was a bit ambitious to play unrehearsed. Laurie, Art Peppers wife got involved with the club and contributed to the "Newspepper".

Pete asked me if I could do anything with a recording he had received from Australia. It was a cassette recording of an Art Pepper session at Mr Ward's Club, St Kilda Melbourne on 25 August 1981. Art Pepper was accompanied by pianist George Cables, a bass player with the improbable name Dave Willipans and drummer Carle Burnett. The recording had been made by a member of the audience using a cheap portable cassette recorder. The playing content was great but the balance was terrible with the bass far too prominent. The pianist was in the distance, but happily the drummer was not too overwhelming. In addition to the limitations of the recording which was mono not stereo, the mike had picked up some mains hum and there was some unwanted microphone feed back and other noises. As a labour of love I had a go at re-mixing it. I produced a quasi stereo effect by assigning the mono recording to two channels and then emphasised the bass frequencies on the left channel and reduced them on the right. The hum was tackled by identifying the frequency of the drone and using a pair of graphic equalisers to reduce it. Using an enhancer it was possible to add back some of the overtones and high frequencies. A touch of reverb on the right hand channel added some life and sparkle. Less reverb on the left hand channel where I was trying to emphasis the bass perhaps added to the stereo effect. After lots of listening comparing the original recording and the doctored version I finally decided on the remix. To be honest the result was hopeless. There was a small improvement but the original recording was so distorted that it was impossible to cure or rectify. But Pete seemed happy with this memento for posterity.

Pete became a little dismissive of local musicians. Familiarity with the style and repertoire of local players meant that new faces from out of town sounded better on first hearing. Like many jazz promoters he was star struck by big names. It is a fact of life that the first time you play at a venue you can be the greatest thing they have ever heard but the second time the reaction is to say the least less enthusiastic. But one morning Pete telephoned to tell me that he had got home late the previous evening and turned on the radio to catch the BBC Jazz Notes programme. He had switched on in the middle of a baritone sax solo and he had been knocked out with the sound and the playing. He waited to hear the announcer list the personnel in the band. When he found out that I was the baritone sax player he was big enough to telephone me and own up that he had been guilty of underrating local musicians. I explained that it makes quite a difference if you are playing with a decent rhythm section (the John Burch Octet) and that a sympathetic sound engineer had given me an AKG 414 microphone all to myself and added a touch of reverb having got my agreement that the sax sound he had got for me was to my taste.

Pete started sending cassettes to local musicians of things he thought they should hear. These were accompanied by a note signed Tabasco Pete, Arch Bebop of Canterbury. It was

just enthusiasm and wanting to share the pleasure he had got from hearing say Michael Brecker or the Cuban band Irakere. He started coming again to our local jazz sessions but was clearly not well. I was part of the band that played at his funeral - playing a list of tunes that he had requested including Duke Ellington's "Don't Get Around Much Any More".

CHAPTER FIVE

Clubs and Pubs

During the Cold War of the 1950's the United States Air Force used RAF Manston as a Strategic Air Command Base for its fighter and fighter bomber units. While the Americans were in residence there was a thriving night club scene particularly in Margate. The first live jazz I heard as a young teenager was at the Silver Grill Artistes Club in Cliftonville. The band was a trio of American servicemen and the line up was tenor saxophone, piano and drums. But the main night club scene was on Margate sea front in Marine Terrace between the clock tower and the entrance to Dreamland amusement park. Several clubs were situated in the basements below the amusement arcades. When the USAF withdrew from Manston in 1960 the night clubs carried on. At weekends we often played a pub gig until 11 p.m. then rushed to set up in a club and play until 2 a.m.

The Tower Club -One of the Margate clubs we played at was the Tower Club near the clock tower. Saxophonist Red Price who was playing at the Margate Winter Gardens sat in with us after his show had finished. The Tower Club was often lively and especially so during Scot's fortnight. This was a fortnight in August when many of the Scottish factories closed for their annual holidays resulting in an influx of heavy drinking Scots in Margate. One night when we were playing at the Tower Club there was trouble simmering between two factions which suddenly erupted into a fight like a bar brawl in a Western movie. In best show business tradition the band played on which seemed to guarantee us immunity from the chairs and tables being hurled and smashed around us. We did not hesitate for a moment until the police arrived.

Generally the clubs were reasonably peaceful but I remember at the Dumpton Club in Ramsgate a full Guinness bottle hitting the wall behind me, hurled by a customer who was clearly not a jazz lover. At the Regency Hotel in Ramsgate a fight broke out which we mostly avoided by playing on, but in one violent skirmish the upright piano went over. Pianist Mike Oliver grabbed a harmonica and started blowing it for dear life with little relation to the tune we were playing.

The Riviera Club - At the Dreamland cinema end of Marine Terrace was the Riviera Club which had a late licence until two in the morning because it was a members only club, although the membership requirement was largely ignored. The club was run by Vernon Jones, a former sailor who had a scar down one side of his face. On one occasion Vernon shut the club for a couple of days while he was involved in a bet on the result of a drinking duel. One Friday night when we were playing, the police raided the club and started to take names and addresses of anyone who did not have a membership card (which meant nearly everybody). Most of our audience escaped out of a back door. The police came back the next week and this time stationed a policeman on the back door. We carried on playing but the stage got more and more crowded with people claiming to be members of the band. Some grabbed shakers cabanas and maracas to prove the point. The police found half a dozen members and about fifty non-members. Vernon was warned that his licence would not be renewed. He opened a restaurant at Upstreet on the A28 between Margate and Canterbury, but subsequently sold up and moved to Australia where he made his fortune with a fleet of vans selling hamburgers at racecourses and sporting events. He returned to the UK, bought a hotel and stood for election as a local councillor. The restaurant at Upstreet was bought by a Greek couple Chris and Dora, who named it The Cresidor. They put on live music and cabaret at the weekends providing a lot of work for local musicians (me included) until it was sold and converted into an old peoples home.

The Pink Shell - Imagine Maris, a large but proportioned blonde built like a German opera singer. She had a beautiful face, an innocent smile and a gentle, slow speaking voice. I knew her years before when as a schoolgirl she was notorious for wild parties. Since then she had married an American, lived in the United States, got divorced and returned home with three children and a large vicious Alsatian dog. Completely unchanged with the same classic features and innocent smile she opened the Pink Shell Club in a terraced house on the seafront in Deal. The clientele comprised actors, stage people and various wealthy city dwellers who owned nearby seafront holiday homes, together with local miners, marines and soldiers stationed in and around Deal - a potentially explosive mixture, aggravated by the vicious Alsatian dog who whenever he could get loose attacked the customers. There was illegal roulette and a band. It must have been the year modern jazz was popular. The trumpet player Ian Shawcross, who weighed about eight stone and for a time was Maris' boyfriend, was a reluctant marine bandsman. The pianist Freddie was seven eighths Nigerian and one eighth Spanish. He had degrees in music in Paris and London and was on secondment from the Nigerian Navy and based at the local Marines School of Music to study military music. He played piano like a percussion instrument. When Freddie was not

available Kay played piano. A one-time singer with the big bands in the nineteen thirties and forties she was now a gentle, quiet, middle-aged housewife but with bright purple hair twenty years before the punk craze made it popular. She played beautiful accompanying chords and brought along her knitting for any gaps between numbers. I played baritone sax. Mike Filano, a pigmy sized Nigerian trumpeter was a frequent visitor. In the sixties the midweek drinking licence was only to 10.30 p.m. but we usually played to the early hours. There was an arrangement whereby the police telephoned if they were going to make a visit.

Driving Home From Deal - Driving home from Deal after a night at the Pink Shell was often a hazard. Although this was in the pre-breathalyser era you could still be charged with drink driving. On one occasion I was flagged down by two policemen. A new one-way system had been introduced and I had missed it. Then another car appeared making the same mistake. He was not only driving up a one way street the wrong way but doing it at some speed. The police tried to flag it down but instead the driver put his foot down and one policeman had to leap out of the way. They immediately jumped into their patrol car and gave chase. Within seconds the road was silent and deserted and I got back into my car, turned it round and drove very carefully and slowly away.

The road from Deal to Sandwich was a nightmare. One winter a man whose car had halted by the snow actually died of cold and exposure. During the same weekend I had a flat tyre near the same spot which took me an age to change because the jack would not stand up on the icy road. Late one filthy wet night when the road was flooded my car failed to grip on the first bend out of Deal. The car climbed the bank and rolled down the other side into a muddy field. The car was on its side and I climbed out through the passenger door. It was pelting with rain. My immediate concern was for the baritone saxophone. I had a local radio session the next day. A driver who had seen me leave the road came down to find me in pitch dark in the early hours of the morning in a muddy field in pouring rain blowing the baritone sax to see if it still worked.

Nobby Clark - Nobby was a marine bandsman who played tenor saxophone. Recently posted back to the UK, Nobby had left his saxophone in Hong Kong but had brought the case home, loaded with narcotics which he surrendered to the authorities. He wanted to be taken off the habit. He also wanted to be discharged. Nobby was about twenty-one, a brilliant player and was co-opted for our band. The club flourished. There was a great atmosphere and no trouble. The police always telephoned beforehand to give prior warning

of a raid, but one night Maris was out and the message did not get through. The police arrived, took lots of names and addresses and confiscated the roulette table. Rumour had it that charges were delayed because the police were using the roulette table for themselves at the police station.

Nobby appeared to be clear of drugs and was setting a pace with his saxophone playing. He was still determined to leave the services and according to unsubstantiated rumours he tried various ploys to convince the military that he was mad. He climbed on the barrack roof. They told him to jump. He cut his wrists. They ignored him. He took an overdose of tablets. They thought he had a hangover. Then he threatened to march the wrong way in the Cup Final. This was serious. Within minutes he was shipped to the service mental hospital for tests and observation and was soon discharged from the hospital and the services. Nobby was advised that he needed stability and a family. He married Maris thus obtaining wife, three children, vicious Alsatian and home in one swoop. His gratuity came in handy because the club was missing the income from the roulette. Things started to go wrong. When it rained the lights went out and water came through four floors. An upstairs toilet was hanging through the ceiling. As the illegal roulette table court case approached the 10.30 licensing hour had to be enforced. The band took a cut in wages and in the number of performances. The barman turned away a drunk who was trying to get admission after hours. The drunk did not understand the new curfew, took the refusal personally and stabbed the barman with a six inch stiletto. The barman managed to telephone the police before collapsing. He was lucky. The wound was a neat hole in the stomach. It healed quickly and he left hospital after a week. But it was a deathblow for the club. The clientele evaporated and the large and beautiful Maris and the talented young Nobby, the three children and the vicious Alsatian piled into a large van and drove off into the sunset.

Jazz at the Astor - A series of monthly jazz concerts at the Astor Theatre, Deal were very successful. Instead of an audience sitting in rows we had a relaxed jazz club atmosphere where the audience sat at tables and could have a drink. Under the billing Modern Jazz on Sundays the format was a six piece band fronted by trumpeter Ian Shawcross with Barry Cole on tenor saxophone, and Dave Corsby on baritone saxophone. The rhythm section was Paul Jury playing piano, Dougie Bartlett and subsequently John Dixon on bass, and Les Feast on drums. For some of the concerts we wore kaftans. I have forgotten why but I suspect it was Ian's idea. We had a guest artist for each concert.

George Chisholm who had become quite famous for his roles in The Goon Show quoted two prices for an appearance. One price was for doing his comedy act and one much lower

was if he was booked as a jazz player. We booked him as a jazz player but he did much of his comedy routine anyway. Bill Le-Sage played vibraphone and without any music or rehearsal



Ian Shawcross Combo, Astor Theatre, Deal

joined in on everything we played including some original compositions which he would not have heard before. Elkie Brooks, not yet famous, did a slick set but disappointingly when we booked her back performed exactly the same set. We were joined by some of the better jazz names of the day - vocalists Sandra King, Sybil Talbot, and Bobby Breen and saxophonists Tony Coe and Joe Harriot. Joe stayed on at Ian's house for a few days and did not seem to have anywhere else to go.

Singer Norma Winstone was later to win recognition as best British jazz vocalist in various annual awards. Norma came with the added bonus of pianist husband John Taylor who accompanied her.

Although it is more than a generation ago I still remember her singing Noel Coward's "London Pride" - part of a selection of London songs - and "When The World Was Young". Norma subsequently moved house to Kingsdown near Deal.

The Astor Theatre came with a jobsworth (caretaker) whose main purpose in life was to inconvenience performers with unhelpful rules and restrictions involving parking, access, dressing rooms etc. You can imagine the scene when he arrived to unlock the stage door to find that drummer Les Feast was already in the theatre, had set up his drums, and was in the process of solving the problem of his bass drum and the rest of his kit sliding on the stage which sloped quite steeply down to the front. Les was hammering six inch nails through a length of four by two inch timber into the stage floor.

Jazz at Dawsons - Darrel was not a local lad. Rumour suggested that he had arrived on a motor yacht which he had been chartering out in the Mediterranean. Somehow or other he acquired Dawsons Hotel in Ramsgate which comprised three terraced houses. At different times these had been converted into some sort of factory, a nursing home, finally finishing up as a commercial hotel. It was hardly a convenient site - nowhere near the sea and not very handy for the town centre.

Darrel decided that it should become a jazz club steak bar. For the opening night he booked the Pedlars who were a name group at the time and followed this up with local groups providing live music six nights a week. He engaged a chef and hoped to pay for the bands out of the bar and restaurant profits. It was an impossible dream. Even if the place had been full every night he would have barely covered the costs. He soon ran out of money but not out of enthusiasm. By advertising the hotel rooms in Dalton's Weekly he raked in deposit money for summer holiday bookings. The hotel was not big enough for all the bookings that he accepted but he was confident that this could be taken care of when the time came by boarding people out. He failed to pay the electricity bill and the power was cut off. He got hold of a petrol generator probably from his boat. Every now and again the jukebox the band and the chef were left powerless and the customers were in semi-darkness apart from a few candles until he had topped up the generator.

It may have been mad and hopeless to carry on but it was quite exciting. Now and again he would have a really good night which rekindled his enthusiasm. He was determined to make it work. He stole the lead off his own roof, sold it, claimed and spent the insurance money and covered the roof with a tarpaulin.

In the last few days he paid the bands out partly in steak meals. He owed money to the bank, to the chef, to the brewery and the off-licence as well as for the mortgage and for the Council rates. On the last night he emptied the jukebox and divided out the takings between the band, the chef, the one remaining waitress and himself and sailed away just abandoning the whole enterprise.

The Bier Keller - Harry played piano and Alan played drums. They often switched instruments, the audience settling for the original line up as the lesser of two evils. But this is being a little unfair because Harry had a good natural singing voice, knew the words to lots of songs and worked hard as an entertainer to ensure that he and the audience had a good time. The jazz scene was going through a difficult period, and desperate to play, I occasionally sat in for a few numbers. They occasionally booked me - the combination of jazz saxophone bringing another factor to confuse the audience or at least cause some doubt whether the music was really as bad as it sounded. They were always fun gigs often with some scam attached - playing spoof with the Governor of one pub to make up the wages to a reasonable level or continuing to ensure that one of the band always won a raffle prize. On one gig a raffle prize of liqueur chocolates contained mainly wrapping papers by the time it was presented.

After one particularly successful pub gig Harry asked for a return booking which the publican refused. Harry asked whether it had been a good night. The publican agreed but still declined to book them back. Harry asked what was wrong. The publican said if they put back his lifeboat collection box he might consider it.

They sometimes had a bass player whose name I forget. Alan did not like him very much. In the interval on one gig the bass player ordered a large round of drinks and then asked the barmaid for credit until the end of the evening. She said she was not allowed to and he started making life difficult for her. Alan punched him in the nose and paid for the round. We played the second set with the two of them glaring at each other and the bass player mopping up blood. The bass player's career as a musician ended shortly afterwards when Vernon the owner of a local music shop marched on stage during a gig and repossessed the bass which had not been paid for.

Alan called round one day and said that the pair of them were playing at a Bier Keller in Margate but that Harry had run off with one of the barmaids. Would I play piano until and if he came back? It was seven nights a week with plenty of free lager and German sausages. Harry had got involved with the barmaid who was working part time but who also had a good job working in a bank. Apparently she was besotted (besozzled) by him. They decided

to run away. She gave in her notice and packed her suitcase but on the appointed day Harry did not turn up. He went without her to somewhere in Norfolk that Alan had sorted out. Alan collected the barmaid, drove to Norfolk and surprised Harry along the lines of "I think you have forgotten something". The romance lasted just over a week in which time I had put on a stone and had had enough of the gig.

Jazz at the Ivyside - One Sunday I was booked for a lunch time jazz session at the Ivyside Hotel in Westgate. It was a trio where I was accompanied by pianist Francis Knight and bass player Mike Porter-Ward. This particular session coincided with the air show day at RAF Manston which drew thousands and caused traffic tailbacks. Most of the guests at the hotel had gone to the air show and our audience was sparse, but there were two Russian pilots who had completed their spot at Manston during the morning. They were due to fly out late afternoon. They both loved jazz and one of them was a Gerry Mulligan fan. I was playing baritone saxophone and they were over the moon when we played Mulligan favourites - Walking Shoes, Lullaby of the Leaves and Line for Lyons. They said that when they left Russia the previous day they had never imagined that they would be sitting in a hotel lounge overlooking the sea drinking English bitter and listening to live jazz. When they left they thanked us and handed over the remainder of their sterling allowance which was not much use for them for their next stop in the Middle East. They had a car booked to take them back to Manston. I doubt whether either of them was in a fit state to fly a multi million pound fighter plane.

The Louis Armstrong - In the early 1960's trombone player Bod Bowles and his wife Jackie helped jazz players with the ever present problem of finding somewhere to play. They took over "The Grapes" pub in Dover. They renamed it "The Louis Armstrong" and put on traditional jazz each Sunday night. Initially the Louis featured the Bod Bowles Jazz Band and later featured various trad jazz bands, including bands going for short tours to Germany or Scandinavia. These bands would often play at the Louis then catch a cheap late night ferry to Calais. Over a period of more than sixty years the Louis provided somewhere to play, including a Wednesday night jam session which certainly helped my jazz development and introduced me to other jazz players.

Places to Play - Obviously one of the essentials for successfully playing jazz is having a regular booking to keep the band and the audience together. Trumpeter Ian Shawcross had



Dave Corsby Quartet

a twenty year residency on Monday nights at The Tiger Inn, Stowting (near Hythe) and a ten year engagement on Sunday lunch times at Eastwell Manor near Ashford. Ian's success owed much to never forgetting that he was in the entertainment business. He mixed up jazz with other popular styles of music and limited the length of individual jazz solos recognising that self indulgent displays of technique could drive audiences away.

Burtie Butler's Jazz Pilgrims played on Friday lunch times in Whitstable at the Duke of Cumberland before moving to the Two Brewers. A faithful audience of trad jazz lovers supported the band. The line up varied from week to week . The emphasis was on providing jazz players whatever their standard with somewhere to play.

Bass player Dave Hall had a Tuesday night residency at the Gate Inn, Marshside (between Canterbury and Herne Bay). I played saxes with pianist Alan Daniels and drummer Rod Brown completing the rhythm section. Somehow the blend of live jazz and real ale worked well in a country pub where the occasional duck wandered in.

When times were difficult we used a more affordable two piece line up playing a compromise program of jazz and entertainment. The duo Double Vision featured the talented bass player and vocalist Jake Jackson and myself. We played the local circuit

including The Blue Dolphin Club at Reculver. Dave Robinson and I had lucrative gigs playing at craft fairs at Henley and Penschurst. We played from 11 a.m. til 5 p.m alternating with a folk duo called Crooked Style. We recorded three CD albums which we sold successfully during the gigs although Crooked Style probably sold five times more than us. Our Albums were - Just the Two of Us; Second Thoughts; and Satin and Latin.

I formed a quartet with Jim Reid on piano Andy Wall on bass and Les Feast on drums. We recorded an album in one session by turning up rehearsed, organised and prepared.

Robert Wigham the publican of the Red Lion at Stodmarsh was a jazz lover who regularly put on jazz nights with a meal. On one such occasion we turned up to play and found that he had accepted so many bookings, there was nowhere for the band. Somehow we managed to fit in with a very disgruntled drummer Les Feast set up in a doorway half in and half out of the pub.

The Dave Corsby Quartet had regular bookings at Ballards Bar in The Albion Hotel, Broadstairs and at the Westgate Pavilion. The rhythm section depended on who was available. This resulted in a pool of musicians who were familiar with our pad of arrangements.

By coincidence we discovered that pianist Alan Daniels and I had both completed the same jazz harmony correspondence course, and maybe this explains our similar approach to the sort of jazz we love. For instance, our version of "The Way You Looked Tonight" was turned into a jazz waltz called "The Night You Looked Away". In contrast pianist Jim Reid came with an individual style and the technique necessary to execute it. Vibraphone player Dave Robinson's background was as a theatre drummer in Sheffield and as a brass band percussionist. Double bass player John Richards' musical career included playing with such disparate artists as Frankie Vaughn, Howard Keel and Edmundo Ross. Neil Francis (bass guitar) and Phil Haslett (drums) had worked together as two thirds of the Dave Rees-Williams Trio. Drummer Les Feast had played with the quartet on and off since 1959. Steve King played six string bass guitar sometimes playing melody and chords on the top four strings and the bass line on the bottom two.

One six week summer period I was booked to play with 15 different bands - Richards Rascals, Burtie Butler's Jazz Pilgrims, Jake Hill, Chris Rumsey, Mick Morris, Pete Abbot, Andy Maclean, Ian Shawcross, Dave Barnet, Bill Robinson, Richard Elmes, Tony Hudd, Dick Smith, Paul Alabaster and Derek Hawkes, I realised that I could get more work as a freelance instrumentalist without the hassle of running a band. Tony Richards had sold his pub and achieved his lifetime dream to become a dedicated jazz trumpeter and vocalist. He formed Richards Rascals with myself on saxes and woodwinds, Martyn Rawbone on keyboard, John

Richards on bass and Jimmy Tagford on drums. He sorted out a regular monthly gig at the New Inn, Minster (near Ramsgate). We also had successful bookings at the Ambrette Restaurants in Canterbury, Rye and Margate. We had a memorable day in London when we took Tony to Parkers to buy a proper trumpet, and finishing at Ronnie Scotts where trumpeter Arturo Sandaval was playing. Tony somehow spent the interval between sets in Sandaval's dressing room where they swapped email addresses.

CHAPTER SIX

France and Germany

One feature of short trips to play in France or Germany was the almost obscene amounts of alcohol that were consumed. This was partly due to the generous hospitality of our hosts but there was also a sense of being on holiday without any responsibility. Much of the drinking was spaced out during the day and generally did not affect the standard of playing. But I do recall one late night occasion where I could hear a dreadful saxophone in the distance and suddenly realised it was me.

A Night in St Omer - The train bringing our trombone player Kenny Pyrke from Chatham was forty minutes late so we reached the Eastern Docks at Dover in time to watch the 11 o'clock morning boat leave without us. There was nothing to do but relax and have a drink in the Louis Armstrong pub in Dover until the next boat at three in the afternoon. Three of the band had managed to catch the morning boat. Our drummer bandleader and organiser guessed what had happened and where we were likely to be and rang the Louis from Calais with our instructions to follow.

When we got on board the three o'clock ferry we bought a bottle of scotch to last the crossing but this disappeared before we left the port. The captain, an old school friend, invited us to his cabin (this was before crews were teetotal) and treated us to more hospitality until we reached Calais.

A young Frenchman named Christien met us. The story of the four musicians who had missed the boat had circulated. Someone with influence had arranged for us to be waived through the customs formalities so that Christien could rush us in his old beat up Ford Anglia some thirty miles to St Omer.

We broke down first of all in Calais on a zebra crossing conveniently outside a bar where we adjourned for coffee and cognac. The vehicle lasted out to St Omer despite Christien's wild driving. He drove very fast with apparent disregard for any other traffic. We celebrated our safe arrival in St Omer with several cognacs in the Hotel Renaissance where we joined up with the rest of the band. We then waded through a large meal with bottles of red wine too delicious to refuse and were escorted to the Town hall to play for the dance. St Omer were having a week's festivities entertaining 500 guests from their German twin town. Booking an

English group made it into something of an international festival. The whole town seemed to have squeezed into the Town Hall for the evening. We alternated with a German pop group and to show the flag we had to deal with the hospitality which meant downing a steady flow of German beers during the evening stiffened by brandies with the Mayor in the café across the square during our intervals.

With great forethought the Mayor had arranged a supper for us at the hotel after we had finished. We returned to the Hotel Renaissance at around 2 a.m. and by this time we had got our second or third wind. The hotelier who had gone to bed got up to reopen the bar and encouraged us to have a drink since the Mayor was footing the bill. After several cognacs fatigue overtook him and hanging on the bar he beseeched us to go to bed. It was only after each of us had bought just one more round of cognacs the party finally broke up. I was sharing a room with sax player Barry Cole. I got to bed just before Barry who was downing yet another final, final drink. I heard Barry groping along the corridor. There was a groan as he passed the powerful smell of the French toilet. He found the room but he could not find the light. There was a slight pause and then an almighty crash as he walked into the wardrobe, which toppled over on top of him leaving him pinned inside convulsed in helpless giggles.

Joining the Party in Cologne - One summer it seemed unlikely that I was going to get a holiday. I had moved house and was short of cash. I was also doing a lot of travelling with my auditing job and further time away would have put a strain on the gig commitments. We had done several gigs in Calais with a drummer who who was also an Immigration Officer. In the days before the Channel Tunnel Immigration Officers would go across to Calais on the last ferry at night and stay in a flat in Calais. In this way they could be on the first ferry back and check all the passports on board so as not to hold up the boat train. So at the drummer's suggestion instead of a holiday I went across for a night out in Calais as a pretend Immigration Officer. My instructions were to wear a suit, bring a briefcase and keep out of the way. I would be introduced to the French captain as our colleague from London. The plan was to have a meal in Calais. On the trip across there was nothing to do for either of the real Immigration Officers or myself so we drank a few glasses of pernod with the purser and bar staff. On reaching Calais we went to a quayside bar and had more drinks with crew members and other French officials. Someone invited us to go with him for the party in Cologne. The immigration officers said that they were usually marooned in Calais for the night and that if I did not mind, the opportunity to be driven to Cologne for a party was too good to miss. When we got to Cologne we found that the party was in fact the French Communist Party who were holding a village fete. We had to have membership cards before

they would let us in, so in effect we joined the local French Communist Party. The drummer's colleague, a handsome Scotsman, quickly made out with two French girls and disappeared. To join in the spirit of the evening I had a go at the coconut shy which involved throwing three wet dusters at a pyramid of tins. I decided on a Freddy Trueman fast bowling technique charging across the field and hurling the dusters overarm at the tins. This drew a big crowd who cheered the mad Englishman especially when he knocked all the tins over. The prize was a bottle of red wine. "Tirez le bouchon" (pull the cork) I demanded in my best schoolboy French. The next gesture was a mistake as I tried to drink it down like a bottle of milk. By this time a couple of Frenchmen had got upset with our Scottish colleague who had his arms round the two French girls. We agreed it was time to go. I do not remember much more about the rest of the evening.

Altstadtfest Rheda - Among my souvenir programmes is a poster of the seven piece Pete Rose Band appearing at the Altstadtfest Rheda in Germany on Saturday and Sunday in September 1987. Rheda was near the reservoirs which had been breached by the dambusters bouncing bombs during the second world war. Rheda itself had been severely damaged and a modern new town had been built after the war. The old town had then been restored with traditional style buildings looking like Christmas card pictures. The Altstadtfest was a weekend festival to celebrate its completion.

We caught a midnight ferry from Dover and drove through the night in a minibus. In Rheda they had set up a stage with amplification on a huge lorry trailer to one side of the rebuilt old town square. There was a crowd of thousands packed into the square. After each tune we played a tray of beers was sent up accompanied by miniature tumblers of local schnapps. A barman seemed to be fully employed in serving us. By the time the beers had been poured the froth combed off, the glasses topped up and the glasses of schnapps added we had finished another tune. The problem was that one of the band members was teetotal, one hardly drank at all and a third was on antibiotics and not drinking. Despite our protestations full rounds kept appearing and to avoid offence Pete Rose the leader and clarinettist, Kenny Pyrke the trombone player, Dave Bashford the guitarist and myself made a good attempt at coping with the hospitality. The stage was soon littered with glasses. It was a great night with the band on form and the crowd dancing in the square.

There is a story about pianist Fats Waller who was the worse for wear while performing in a concert in London. In the second half nearly every tune he played turned into "Summertime." I seemed to suffer a similar hang up. I was playing baritone saxophone and my solos kept turning into quotations from "The Dambusters March". Someone must have

noticed. A man with a shaved head dressed in black leather tried to climb on the stage and attack me. I was still playing baritone and fending him off with my foot when some of the audience grabbed him and hauled him away. The rest of the weekend is pretty hazy. As far as I could tell the evening went off well and afterwards we went for a pizza with the organisers. The lunchtime concert on the next day was relatively subdued and I resisted talking about the war or the temptation to shout "Who came second?". I slept for most of the return journey.

Dunkirk Jazzopale - The Les Herberts Band were invited to take part in the Dunkirk Jazzopale - an international jazz festival organised by the Pichelour Jazz Band who were based in Dunkirk. The festival took place in St Malo-les-Bains which is a seaside resort suburb of Dunkirk. With their regular drummer and trombone player unavailable the Herberts co-opted Calais drummer Francis Balloy and I was asked to cover the trombone parts on baritone saxophone. The rest of the band comprised Bill Bowden on trumpet; Dick Smith, clarinet; John Walters, piano; Vernon Kennard, bass; and Bob Hilditch, guitar.

On the Friday night Les Herberts played at the Bon Coin Restaurant with another British band - The Royal Garden Jazzmen - playing at the Celedon. The Aalsburgs Stompers from Holland played at the Belle Vue; the Pichelours at the Dunes; and the Golden River City Band from Belgium played at the Fendon. The audience wandered from venue to venue but it did seem crazy to have five bands playing in different places at the same time. On the Saturday there were drinks with the Mayor and a street parade featuring all the bands. In the evening there was a concert in the ballroom of La Mairee (the town hall) where all the bands performed a spot. The Les Herberts Band were top of the bill for the town hall concert. After this there was a jam session which the french called "un incident confiture." Wearing distinctive black bowler hats a surprise party of fans travelled over on the Sally ferry to provide support for the Les Herberts Band throughout the weekend. On our return journey on the Sunday we fitted in a lunchtime concert in Courghain to celebrate a newly opened community centre. I must have impressed the right people at the Jazzopale because the organisers asked me if I would provide my band for the festival next year.

So the following year my seven piece band were duly booked to play at the Jazzopale. Mick Squirrel drove for us. Mick was the publican of the Hare and Hounds in Ramsgate where we played on Sunday nights. We had negotiated with the Sally Line to travel for free on the ferry between Dover and Calais. In return we played on board each way during the crossings. Mick played bass because Jake Jackson was meeting up with us in France. We arrived in St Malo-les-Bains on the Friday in time for drinks with the Mayor. There were five bands

involved - The Superior Dance Band from Belgium, The Circus Square Band from The Netherlands, The Les Herbert Jazz Band and The Dave Corsby Band representing Great Britain plus the host French band The Pichelour's Jazz Band. On the first evening the bands were assigned to different bars in St Malo-les-Bains. The hospitality was such that in the morning on the Saturday Barry Cole and I had a rehearsal to see if we could still walk. On the Saturday afternoon there was a massed band parade throughout the town to publicise the evening concert in the town hall. Barry and I got to the back of the parade and I am ashamed to say when the parade turned right we marched straight on into a convenient bar where we spent the afternoon occasionally hearing the band in the distance. We rejoined the band on their return - our unpopularity being assuaged by a demi-john of white wine which we passed round.

For the evening concert band members had tickets for free drinks. Each band was supposed to do a twenty minute spot. At around midnight we were about two bands away from going on and hardly at our best. We decided to have nothing more to drink until we were due on and then just one large brandy. I have a copy recording of our set. The sound quality is poor but the band sounds great. Barry sounds inspired and trumpeter Lindsay Bennett hit a magnificent final note at the end of our last tune. After coming off stage Lindsay packed his trumpet up, made sure it was loaded on our band wagon and then passed out, taking no further part in the proceedings. The Pichelour's Jazz Band (Pichelour translates as Brewers Droop) played the final set after which everyone was invited to join in a jam session. The first number Bill Bailey lasted best part of an hour with duelling Sidney Bechet like soprano saxophones trying to outdo each other with soaring gallic intensity. We were urged to join in. Some of the French musicians got our instruments out of the van. We spent the next morning trying to trace Lindsay's trumpet which had been repacked into a different motor and taken to Belgium. There was a happy ending as one of the Belgian musicians returned it as we sat down for Sunday lunch at the Bon Coin restaurant. Mick Squirrel who had played tambourine during the Saturday parade had gone back to the hotel afterwards and had fallen asleep, missing the Saturday evening concert completely.

Le Touquet and Lyons -The Les Herbert Band booked me for other engagements in France. One was for a function in the Casino de La Foret in Le Touquet which was closed to the general public that night. By the time we finished it was about five in the morning and hardly worth going to bed in the hotel that had been booked for us. I also played with the Herberts for two separate weeks in Lyons. We stayed and played at barbecues and concerts in Saint Maurice-de-Benoit and had gigs in Lyons at Ryans Club , The Shamrock and The Irish Boat (all Irish pubs) and at the Hot Club de Lyon. At the time The Hot Club put on bands five

nights a week covering trad jazz, New Orleans, Swing, modern and gypsy jazz styles. On my first visit I played alto sax which really sang out with the natural echo of the stone cellar and clearly impressed the proprietor who was a Johnny Hodges fan. On the second visit I thought as a special treat that I would take baritone sax instead of the alto. But the reaction was disappointment that I had not brought the alto sax. When we first arrived to unload at the Hot Club we were welcomed by two attractive young ladies who were standing in a doorway on the other side of the street dressed in fur coats. Their enthusiasm for an English jazz band was accompanied by a quick flash of the fur coats to confirm that was all they were wearing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Film, Television and Recording Sessions

Larry the Lamb -Sax player Barry Cole was asked to provide some music for two short puppet films which were being made for demonstration and promotional purposes. It was the usual no fee but promise of jam tomorrow if they were successful. The first film involved a juggler who added more and more plates to his act and could not stop. The second film involved a mechanical cow that ate grass and tin tacks and produced tinned milk. We recorded the music on my old Ferrograph recorder using two saxophones. Barry had written a theme tune for one film. For the second film we just played free form reacting off whatever the other played.

The upshot was that the puppet firm were asked to do a pilot episode for TV of a remake of the Larry the Lamb in Toytown stories. Many years previously these had been a favourite on the BBC radio programme Children's Hour. Barry was asked to provide the music and he asked me to play on the recording session. We recorded a new signature tune which Barry had written and the music for the story of "The Arkville Dragon". It was before the days of digital recording and editing and I had three attempts at playing an exaggerated tango on alto saxophone while watching a rev counter and the film of Ernest the Policeman fighting the dragon. On the third attempt we managed to gradually speed up the music and synchronise the last note with the final coup de grace as Ernest knocked out the dragon with his truncheon. Later we did a further three hour session which was used for the music for the rest of the thirteen week series.

A TV Session with Bobby Breen - The regional TV station had an evening local news programme and every month or so the producer used to feature a jazz spot. Their small studio in Dover only had two cameras so one was used for close ups and the other moved around taking long shots from different angles. West Indian singer Bobby Breen was the guest. Bobby who had a lisp chose to sing "Route Thixty Thix" and "Like Thomeone in Luth". After a talk through in the pub which lasted from eleven to three we returned to record the two songs and interview in one continuous take ready for unedited transmission at six. The first take was too long. The second take was fine but unusable because in the interview Bobby was asked to what he owned his success and answered "drafth Guinneth". The next take was great. Everyone played well and in my four bar solo break everything came off better than intended. Unfortunately the distance cameraman slipped on a cable

and came up with a shot of Bobby Breen's boots. By this time we were running short of film and time. The final take was relatively tame as everybody played safe. But an enduring memory is Bobby singing "Lately I find myselth gathing at thtarth, hearing guitarth like thomone in luth".

Three films for Warner Brothers - The individual tone and technique that jazz players develop places them in demand for all sorts of recording work. Their improvising skills and ability to play without music can be advantageous. Often instrumental passages or solos are added days after the rest of the piece has been recorded. I have made quite a few recordings where I have never met the other musicians or vocalists.

Trumpeter Lindsay Bennett and I were booked for a day to play on the soundtracks of three short Warner Brother films - Bitter Cherry with Roger Daltry; Superstitious Man with Susan Danielle and the Cure. Most of the rhythm section parts had been recorded the previous day but we had to add the brass and sax parts and there was some multi-tracking to do. I had worked before with the composer arranger Jack Long and I arrived early hoping to have a look at the music particularly the flute parts. Jack pointed to a pile of manuscript which had titles and timings but no music. As we carried out a sound check for microphone levels Jack wrote out the music for the first piece, then as we recorded the it he wrote out the second. He had the whole music for the three films in his head. Having that skill was daunting enough, but the nerve and confidence to bring it off was impressive bearing in mind the cost of a day's recording. Early in the afternoon Lindsay and I were sent off to the pub and told we had a good hour or so for lunch while they tried to record a vocal track from Susan Danielle who was embarking on a pop star film career. Her song was over the titles and credits of Superstitious Man. When we returned I recorded a sax solo passage for her vocal track. At the end of the session Jack had thirty seconds of street scene background music to cover but had run out of ideas. He suggested we play something based on the Coronation Street theme without actually playing the tune. We all got invitations to the film previews which took place a couple of months later. I went along particularly interested in how my sax solo had turned out. The vocal sounded fine but the sax solo was faded into the background behind a VoiceOver.

Wish You Were Here - On Sunday nights we had a seven piece band which we squeezed into one end of Mick Squirrel's First and Last pub in Margate. I had an approach from George Main who had written a holiday song "Thanet Forever Whatever the Weather".

He asked me to do an arrangement using the seven-piece line up and we recorded it together with a second track in a morning at Barry Gibbon's studio in Deal. In the afternoon we recorded the four pieces of my Samuel Pepy's Suite. George plugged his single relentlessly and got a response from Thames TV and the producer of the Judith Chalmers series "Wish You Were Here". He wanted us to re-record the song as "Britain Forever Whatever the weather" and use it for the finale of the series with shots of British holiday resorts, particularly Broadstairs. We decided to go up to the Studios in Teddington together in a hired minibus. Mick Squirrel was not on the session but wanted to come along for the ride and offered to drive for us. He had to work on the minibus which when we picked it up declined to start. At the time Mick had a Jaguar and Barry Cole who played tenor sax a Rolls Royce. So I had a Rolls and a Jag parked in my drive as we set off in the suspect hired minibus.

At two o'clock we had already set up, tuned up, and run the piece for balance. At two fifteen we had two acceptable takes recorded. Before two-thirty Jake Jackson had added the vocals. The producer said that he had booked the studio for the whole afternoon because he had not expected the recording to be that straightforward. He had thought about shots of the band in boaters and striped blazers playing in Broadstairs band stand but I suspect one look at us changed his mind. We spent a pleasant afternoon as he took us on a tour of the studios and we set off back to home with the idea of having a drink in every attractive pub we passed. I have memories of Barry eating the flowers on the table of a Chinese Restaurant in Canterbury in the early hours of the morning because the service was a bit slow. The TV programme was great with shots of the Red Arrows flying over Broadstairs with the song in the background.

No Bananas - Why in the middle of a summer heatwave was I standing for two hours in the afternoon in the grounds of Greenwich Naval College wearing a trilby, scarf, gloves and heavy overcoat? An agency had booked me as an extra for an episode of the BBC television series 'No Bananas'. I was supposed to mime a clarinet player in a 1940's ballroom scene. Having arrived on location at a sports ground in Dulwich at seven in the morning and received the customary haircut they discovered that the authentic forties dress suits had not arrived for two of the band. Instead of miming clarinet I spent the morning playing one of the crowd sipping drinks in a ballroom. They asked if I would like to stay on for the afternoon for a part in a winter scene. Dressed to face the winter, we stood around in the heat while they piled sandbanks up against the college buildings, put some wartime vehicles in place, sprayed artificial frost and dry ice about and laid track for the camera. All this was so that I could stroll past the main actors in conversation with a colleague. In the end they kept the

ballroom scene that I had done in the morning, but they did not use any of the winter scene at Greenwich Naval College.

The Endeavour Experience - Out of the blue on a recommendation I was approached to provide some music for a film about the history of the FA Cup. At the time my day job and playing commitments would have made it difficult to undertake. To tell the truth I did not think it was serious and recommended someone else only to learn that it was real. If and when another opportunity came up I was determined not to miss it.

The Endeavour Experience was a promotional film for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. It was being filmed locally using school children from Sandwich and showed their experiences learning to man, run and sail the Sally Endeavour, a sailing ship based at Ramsgate. The company making the film were experienced in producing training films for which they usually used off the shelf programme music. But on this occasion they wanted to use original music with real instruments because the opening of the film needed musical impact. They were not happy with the music produced by the composer they had engaged for the film because it was synthesiser based and by mutual consent he was paid off. A schoolmaster at the Sandwich school taking part in the film recommended me and the production team came round to see me and tell me what they wanted.

They brought some video clips from early shooting and explained that the opening minute and a half of the film comprised only shots of the sailing ship taken from a helicopter approaching and circulating the ship. There would be no dialogue just music in the background and that was why the music was so important. At the end of the opening sequence the music would fade and the dialogue would start. Apart from the opening theme music the rest of the music would be incidental background to activities on board with the theme repeated at the end.

I played a few ideas on the piano for them and they signed me up for the whole package to write and arrange the music, to play and record the instruments and to mix and produce the master tape. I used alto saxophone over a piano background - the idea being a haunting saxophone sound to give an idea of distance over an accompaniment giving the idea of consistently rippling water. The tempo and length of the piece had to be arranged so that it finished with a long note fading away after one minute 29 seconds. I added flute, clarinet and other saxophones to the music for the other scenes. After several discussions with the production team I was able to mix down the master tape. The film was circulated widely to schools, colleges, youth clubs, educational establishments and job centres, none of which

needed Performing Right Society licences so although I was paid handsomely for my multi roles in producing the master tape I did not receive any royalties for public performance.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Compositions and Commissions

The Samuel Pepys Suite - For a local band to survive it needed an added attraction such as a guest musician or singer or a theme to turn a performance into a special occasion. I wrote a suite of tunes based on the life of Samuel Pepys. The idea was to use a narrator to introduce each of the pieces. We used my seven piece line up which became known as Brass Tacks. The instrumentation was trumpet, trombone, alto and tenor saxes, piano, bass and drums. The Suite comprised four pieces each supported by a Pepys' diary entry: Sam, "Music and women I cannot but give way to" 9 March 1666; Caught in the Act, "My wife coming up suddenly did find me embracing the girl" 25 October 1668; Cooking the Books, "To Thames Street and there enquired the price of tarre and oyle and hope to save the King money" 25 June 1662; Back Tracks, "Spent the evening mighty well in good music to my great content" 10 May 1667. After a couple of curtain raisers the Suite took up the first half of a concert. We played it at various Jazz venues in Kent and the BBC recorded and broadcast it on a local radio jazz programme.



Sextet

A Tale of Two Cities - A performance of the Pepys Suite in Tunbridge Wells led to an Arts Council funded commission to write The Tale of Two Cities Jazz Suite which was performed at a series of Arts Council backed concerts including the Rochester and Broadstairs Dickens Festivals.

The Cinque Ports Suite - The Sandwich Festival asked me for suggestions for a jazz suite with a local theme. This resulted in a commission from the festival to write the Cinque

Ports Suite for a six piece band plus narrator. Pieces included "The Brasen Horn of Saylence" which is the name of a horn still kept at New Romney Town Hall and was originally used to summon the Cinque Ports Court.

Time and Tide - Canterbury Council invited application for grants for Passing Tales, a series of events in celebration of the Millennium and the 600th anniversary of the death of Geoffrey Chaucer. The events had to relate in some way to the overall themes of time, pilgrimage or journeys. "Time and Tide waits for no man" first appears in Chaucer's The Clerks Tale. I came up with the Time and Tide Suite written for big band comprising three pieces:- Footprints in the Sand; Floodtide; and Time and Tide. The Suite was performed at Whitstable Playhouse by the Mission Impossible Big Band supported by a grant from Canterbury Council.

The Medway Jazz Suite - When Medway Council split off from Kent County Council the trumpeter John Peel who organised the annual Medway Jazz Festival persuaded the new Council to mark the occasion by making a grant to the festival, part of which was used as a commission for me to write the Medway Jazz Suite. This was performed during the Festival by the 16 piece Mission Impossible Big Band. The Suite comprised three pieces:- Medway Mambo; Medway Blues; and The Medway River Song. We played the Suite during a jazz concert at Chatham Town Hall. Money from the commission helped subsidise the big band.

Spirits By Night - In addition to performances supported by commissions and grants I wrote Spirits By Night loosely based on the stories of Kent smugglers and ghosts. This was inspired by a Margate smuggler who during the day provided donkey rides on the beach for ladies and used the donkeys to transport barrels of brandy by night. He cheekily advertised with a sign which stated "Angels by Day and Spirits by Night". Somehow we got talked into using the Spirits by Night suite for an outside broadcast from Dover for Proms in the Park, a series of concerts around the country to coincide with the Last Night of the Proms. The BBC wanted to promote big screen televisions for outside broadcasts. Someone thought it a good idea to use some professional dancers to perform in front of the band. I sent the dancers a recording of the suite to practise against. The BBC turned up with two cameras ready to record from seven o'clock in the evening. The TV crew plugged into the street mains electricity and overloaded the system. They got some power connected but not all the

necessary lighting. It was alright for the dancers, the Dover audience and the band but no use for TV.

CHAPTER NINE

The Bizarre and The Unexpected

Bob Simmonds - As a compromise big band I formed a seven piece band - the Dave Corsby Band which played on Sunday nights at The Ship in Margate. The pub was later demolished and replaced by the Turner Centre Art Gallery. The line up included some of the marine bandsmen stationed in Deal - John Yates or Jan Zawada on trumpet, George Sketcher or Ken Peers on tenor saxophone and Bob Simmonds on piano. Other musicians who appeared with the band included Bill Robinson on trumpet, Kenny Pyrke or Steve Parkin on Trombone, Jake Jackson bass and vocals, Phil Laslett on drums and Barry Cole and myself on saxes.

Pianist Bob Simmonds would not play any jazz on clarinet which as a marine bandsman was his main instrument. But he was a glorious jazz pianist. It was a shock to learn that Bob was one of the eleven marines killed in 1989 by the IRA bombing of the Royal Marines School of Music in Deal. Trumpeter John Yates was also in the room when the bomb exploded but he survived. A few months later we were on a gig together and John showed me the splinters of glass in his hands that were slowly making their way to the surface. To choose unarmed bandsmen as a target for a bomb attack seems cowardly and bizarre and was an unexpected shock. I cannot think that it achieved anything for the bombers other than bad publicity. Apart from the exceptional piano playing my memory of Bob will be a day trip to Boulogne with Bob, Jake Jackson and myself to have a meal in the old town. The evening finished up at the Louis Armstrong pub in Dover with the three of us getting the giggles listening to Max Collie's wild but enthusiastic trombone playing.

Prague Spirit - Dixieland cornettist Bill Barnacle was in his sixties when he signed up for the Open University. As part of the art foundation course Bill spent a weekend on a coach trip to Prague visiting art galleries. Bill took his cornet with him and found a jazz club where he sat in with a local band. He was staying in a reasonably priced hotel where the staff and other guests were friendly and on the last night a lady with whom he had exchanged pleasantries a couple of times knocked on his door holding two drinks. Too churlish to refuse Bill accepted the drink and raised his glass to wish her health. The next thing he knew was coming round with a blinding headache and the discovery of a lost wallet. His immediate reaction was to smash a hotel room window, poke his cornet into the street and blow a few

bugle calls and cadenzas. The duty manager appeared on the scene and there was a scuffle. The police arrived soon after. Bill had some difficulty in standing up and his explanation ran into some translation problems. One of the policemen who could speak some English and saw the funny side of the situation asked whether Bill had blown his trumpet to summon the cavalry. The lady's room was searched. There was no trace of Bill's wallet or contents but the police did find a Dover library ticket. Bill made a statement at the local police station and took a blood test which proved that he had been given a Mickey Finn. The outcome was that the lady was charged. Bill agreed to pay for the broken window and turned up at our next gig with scars and bruises.

Herne Bay Station - The year 2011 was the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the railway line to Herne Bay. The original opening day in 1861 boasted boat races, duck races, donkey races, foot races, a greasy pole and a band. Organisers of the 150th Anniversary booked a jazz band to play for commuters. We were required to play from six-thirty in the morning for about an hour and a half with the local MP in attendance, but he did not arrive until the commuters had gone. Many of the commuters, arriving with barely enough time to catch their trains, seemed puzzled as to what was going on. I think we played as a trio with Tony Richards on trumpet, Mick Durrel on bass and myself on clarinet. Playing jolly jazz at that time in the morning felt unnatural. At the end of our stint we were free to choose a late breakfast of whatever we wanted from the station buffet.

A Stick Up - This is the story of a drummer who decided to rob his local bank. I cannot vouch for the details which vary in different versions of the tale but the story is true. I do not know what pressures caused him to embark on this venture, but leaving the drummer's name out of the story allows the focus to be on the funny side of the escapade. Like many musicians the drummer used to call in regularly to his local music shop. On this occasion he turned up in a smart suit and tie carrying a neatly folded copy of the Times. He said he was just slipping across the road to the bank and asked if he could leave his bicycle in the shop.

He crossed the road to the bank and waited until it was quiet, pulled on a balaclava and produced a music stand that was covered in wrapping paper. He shouted out that it was a shot gun, that he had a bomb tied to his leg and demanded that the cashier hand over the money. The cashier gave him around £1000. The alarm went off and he rushed out and jumped into a car that was waiting in a queue of traffic. He shouted to the driver to drive off.

The driver pointed out that he was in a row of cars waiting for the temporary traffic lights to change. He suggested not very politely that the drummer should get out.

The drummer got out of the car, dashed across the road back into the music shop, grabbed his bicycle and made his escape. At this point a Community Constable also on a bicycle arrived on the scene and gave chase, so the drummer abandoned his bicycle and ran off on foot. He was arrested later. That evening one local group had to play without their talented drummer who had been unavoidably detained.

Blazing Cymbals - A drummer band leader got a gig at the Dixieland Show Bar in Ramsgate. It is now an enormous Wetherspoons pub. He persuaded the management to book his show band which would play cabaret spots in between the disco. The climax to the performance was to be his drum solo with the drums on fire or appearing to be. He had bowls of fuel with wicks strategically placed around the kit which were duly lit at the beginning of the tour de force. Unfortunately the fires set off the fire alarms and the sprinklers and filled the place with smoke. The premises were cleared and the fire brigade arrived thus curtailing what should have been a lucrative Saturday night. The band leader apologised profusely to the management but also had the temerity to ask if there was any likelihood of another gig.

Baker Street - I sometimes got recording work where I was asked if I could play a solo like the sax player on Gerry Rafferty's "Baker Street". The sax player on the original recording was Raphael Ravenscroft. All he got paid was the session fee of £27 and the cheque bounced. But the recording did establish his reputation and as a result he did pick up a lot of work.

New Years Eve - Mike Slowey worked as an estate agent. He also played trombone and ran an occasional trad jazz band. Slowey did not have much of a reputation as a player or organiser but like many salesmen he exuded optimism and enthusiasm. It was with some reservation that I accepted a New Years Eve gig at a pub in Wingham, which is a village near Canterbury. Slowey assured me that the landlord was happy about booking a jazz band for New Years Eve. Slowey had booked Bill Bowden on trumpet whose playing showed that he was a Bix Beiderbecke fan, but he was cagey and secretive about the rhythm section. When I got there I found that he had exhausted any possibilities of local musicians being available

but had gone through the Musicians Union directory for London and booked three top professionals of the British jazz scene - pianist John Taylor, the bass player Peter Ind and Humphrey Lyttleton's drummer Adrian Macintosh. We played the first number and Slowey said that he thought we would be better off without him. He disappeared to the bar. The rest of us had an enjoyable evening. I got paid six months later.

The Romance of The Orient Express - The Orient Express made day trips from Victoria Station in London to Folkestone for which Ian Shawcross provided a jazz quartet of trumpet, clarinet, banjo and snare drum. We played on the platform while the passengers boarded the train, then once the train set off we wandered through the carriages playing one or two tunes in each compartment. Waiters dashing past serving lunches did not help. With two hands on an instrument it was hard to keep a balance especially when the train took a bend. Each trip ended up with bruised knees and elbows.

One elderly couple who were in a small compartment asked for "Stranger on the Shore" which having already played it several times that week I started to play without much enthusiasm. But I looked up and saw tears running down his wife's cheeks. At the end of the piece the husband pushed some money into my top pocket and thanked us. There was a lesson to be learnt here.

The Perfumed Garden - Trumpeter Ian Shawcross booked me for an unusual daytime gig at Margate Hospital. The Hospital Friends wanted a jazz band to play at the opening of a newly installed aroma therapy garden. The comedian Ken Dodd was to provide a speech and declare the garden open. The band was to provide background music. There was a buffet for invited guests, selected hospital staff and patients. We were set up ready to play when Ken Dodd arrived and immediately started telling jokes. He continued cracking jokes non-stop before, during and after his opening speech. There was a short break when he joined the band to attack the buffet. There seemed to be little connection between aroma therapy an eccentric comedian and a jazz band.

Spike Milligan's 80th Birthday - Spike Milligan celebrated his 80th birthday in 1999 at the Delaware Pavilion, Bexhill. His guests included members of his World War Two Royal Artillery Regiment. There were some films of his gun battery in action. At the end of the war Spike was posted to a rehabilitation unit in Italy. He played trumpet and took jazz

choruses in a service dance band and also played guitar and sang in a popular and successful comedy trio that loosely resembled the Stephane Grappelli/Django Reinhardt Hot Club band.

For his 80th birthday Spike booked pianist Danny Kelly. Danny who was by this time in his late eighties was to provide a quartet with Clive Fletcher on bass and Les Feast on drums. Danny asked me to play sax. Spike was in a bad mood when we arrived and said no sax or drums during the meal just piano. He mellowed as the evening went on.

Danny Kelly - Danny Kelly had eyesight problems and on gigs was usually accompanied by his partner, former nurse, Dorothy. Danny drove and Dorothy directed him. She also helped him carry in and set up a heavyweight German electric piano. During the gigs she would bring her knitting. Trumpeter Dave Link was concerned that the band did not look right with an elderly lady sitting with the band knitting brightly coloured socks and scarves. For a wedding reception at Eastwell Manor we were set up outside on the terrace. Dave suggested that Dorothy should go and sit on a garden seat on the grass some way from the band. The bride and groom arrived by helicopter which landed quite near to Dorothy and some of the wedding pictures showed the bride and groom descending from the helicopter with Dorothy knitting away nearby.

Dennis Walton - Bert Hayes was booked to provide a band to back the acts on a big charity show event at the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. One of the acts was Leslie Crowther who worked with Bert Hayes on the Crackerjack TV show. Bert brought down some of the session players that he used on Crackerjack including Dennis Walton who played lead alto saxophone. In rehearsal Leslie Crowther sang an up tempo version of Figaro Here Figaro There. Denis Walton's music had a quick page turnover and an immediate switch to piccolo which he missed in the rehearsal. Running short of rehearsal time Denis assured Crowther that it would be alright on the night. The rehearsal finished as it was time to let the audience in, giving us about twenty minutes to grab a drink at the pub across the road. Dennis insisted on buying the sax section a drink. After about a dozen acts we got to Crowther's spot. Dennis took a long look at the first page of the music, turned it over and played it from memory thus avoiding the quick page turn. For the quick instrument switch he whipped the piccolo out of his top pocket and played the part without a qualm. If this was the standard of sight reading for session players it was going to be well beyond me.

Tower Bridge - Tony Richard's band Richard's Rascals with Martyn Rawbone on keyboards, Jimmy Tagford on drums, Tony on trumpet and myself on saxes were booked for a birthday party held on Tower Bridge. To keep the travel and parking costs down we managed to squeeze five of us into a car plus keyboard, drums, instruments, amps and speakers. We set up in a straight line on the walk way above the road bridge. We played well enough but it seemed an awful lot of fuss for a birthday.

Boat Race Day - The chemical company ICI own a house on the Thames Embankment near Hammersmith Bridge. It is used for functions, seminars and also as a backdrop for adverts for Dulux paint. These feature an old english sheep dog which is known as the Dulux dog. Trumpeter Dave Link provided a band to play for a couple of functions. One of these was on the day of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, when ICI staff and their families were invited to use the vantage point overlooking the river to see the race. A buffet and jazz band were included to make it an occasion. We played our spot, saw the race, coped with the buffet, met the dog and adjourned to the Fullers pub next door. It was my idea of a perfect gig.

CHAPTER TEN

Jazz Festivals

Nearly every music pub or venue had a jazz festival. The following are examples of festivals I was involved in either as a performer or as an organiser. I have limited the the number of festivals mentioned to avoid the entries becoming just a long list of participating performers.

Seaside Shuffle -The Canterbury Festival and the Deal Music Festival were not exclusively jazz festivals but included jazz in their programmes. They were mainly concerned with attracting big names to put their festival on the map. We took advantage of any grants or opportunities that arose. The Seaside Shuffle in Ramsgate was exclusively a trad jazz festival. The first time I played for them was with Richard's Rascals and they loved Adrian Brown's banjo playing which was not surprising since he had previously played in the London Theatre production of Jolsen. However, because of commitments with Gene Pitney and Michael Barrymore, Adrian was not available to play for the Shuffle in the following year and we turned up with vibraphone instead of banjo and electric bass instead of double bass. We thought this was a big improvement but the Shuffle organisers thought the band was unsuitable without a banjo.

White Horse, Finglesham - In 1981 clarinetist Pete Rose organised an eight day Jazz & Country Festival at the White Horse, Finglesham. The idea was to hold the Festival during the Sandwich Open Golf Championship and establish it as an annual event. Featured were The Pete Rose Jazz Band with Humphrey Lyttleton as guest; The Hot Club Quintet; The Alan Elsdon Band plus the Seven Aces; Kenny Ball & His Jazzmen; The Dave Corsby Band with Tony Coe as guest; The Transatlantic Blues Band; The Pete Allen Jazz Band; The Invicta Jazz Band; The Ned Porridge Country Band.

The Finglesham Jazz & Country Festival was a musical and financial success. The pub took more money in eight days than in several previous months. After the Festival was over the publican booked my band for a jazz night and there was an awful lot of free beer. When we packed up to go George Sketcher and Jan Zawada managed to back their cars into each other. Jake Jackson drove out of the pub into the field opposite and limped home on a bent wheel. I drove home very carefully but backing into my drive I knocked over my front wall.

The publican rang to ask if we could do another booking. I replied that I did not think we could afford to. Soon after, the pub burnt down and the publican disappeared.

Thanet Jazz Festivals 1982/84 - David Bill who was the assistant entertainments manager at the Winter Gardens, Margate, invited John Walters (pianist with the Les Herberts Band) and myself to discuss staging a Thanet Jazz Festival. David Bill would provide advice and assistance from Thanet Council with John Walters and myself organising the programme. The first Thanet Jazz Festival ran from 4th to the 12th September 1982. The programme included The John Yates Big band with Tommy Martyn, the Pichelour Jazz Band from France, The Les Herberts Band and The Dave Corsby Band with guests Barry Cole, Geoff Miller and Bill Robinson.

The Kokomo Wine Bar put on Ian Shawcross, Loot and the City Blues Band but apart from the Pichelour Band which gave the event an international flavour all the bands were local to Kent. The festival was successful enough for a second festival to be organised for the 3rd to 11th September 1983. The plan was for Thanet Council to organise a big name to head the festival with contrasting acts to be booked in different venues in Thanet on the same week. Initially David Bill had lined up trumpeter Chuck Mangione as the big name act. Unfortunately he cried off but Chuck Berry came in as a replacement. Barry Cole's 17 Piece Big Band was booked at the Granville Theatre, Ramsgate. Other bands included Ian Shawcross, Moving Target, Pete Rose, Steve Cameron, and Enquiries. A concert at the Pavilion Broadstairs featured Les Herberts and the Pichelour Jazz bands. My seven piece did a concert at the Hilderstone Theatre in Broadstairs and a couple of pub gigs at the First and Last in Margate. The Festival also included a showing of the film Jazz on a Summers Day and an exhibition of jazz faces - portraits of jazz musicians by artist John White.

A third festival sponsored by Thanet Council ran from 28 October to 4 November 1984. Featured were Acker Bilk and his Paramount Jazz Band at the Granville Theatre Ramsgate and Level 42 at the Winter Gardens Margate. Also included were the Pichelour Jazz Band from France, the Dave Corsby Band, Bill Barnacle Jazz Band and Les Herberts Band. Top of the bill was The Buddy Rich Orchestra which was a financial success for Thanet Council.

During the Buddy Rich Band's opening number a couple who had arrived late were making their way to their seats. Buddy Rich stopped the band and then gave a rickety tick drum accompaniment to their long walk. He then pointed out that his band had flown into Heathrow from the States arriving just after 4 o'clock that afternoon and managed to be on stage on time in Margate at 8 p.m. Without further comment the band resumed their opening piece.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Rally Driving

In the music business you can spend up to ninety per cent of your time travelling to obscure destinations and sitting around waiting to play. Often only a fraction of your time is actually playing. The following are a few examples of dashes between engagements. Between one Thursday in June and the following Sunday I had eight gigs with various bands. The Thursday gig was a weekly jazz spot at the Albion Hotel in Broadstairs. The band was fronted by Ian Shawcross and comprised guitarist Adrian Brown, John Richards on bass and myself. As usual Ian confounded the pundits by being equally at home with jazz classics by Miles Davis and Horace Silver as he was with the music from *The Jungle Book* - resulting in an evening which pleased the majority of the audience and annoyed the purists.

On the Friday guitarist Adrian Brown picked me up at 2.30 p.m. and we set off for Wye College where Ian's band was playing for the College end of term graduation ball. This was along American college lines with amusement park rides and side shows as well as a massive marquee, all night disco and a name group I had never heard of called the Five O's.

This time Ian had a seven piece band. We were booked for two spots to play after the dinner at 9.45 p.m. for an hour and a quarter and then for an hour at midnight. However, Ian had taken another gig which was for a reception at Woking Station where we were to play when the Orient Express arrived. We were due to play in Woking from 7.45 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. Ian used his banjo band line up - trumpet, clarinet, banjo and side drum. Friday evening on the M25 motorway is notorious for traffic delays. We dropped off much of our gear at Wye College and four of us set off in Ian's car at about 4.30 p.m. arriving via M20, M26, M25 and A247 in time to find a parking space near Woking station. The train was late arriving but we played on the platform and posed for press photographs with the local mayoress, representatives from British Midland Airways, and stewards from the train. The train pulled out at 8.37, seven crucial minutes late. We played the train off, jumped in the car, negotiated the one way system at the second attempt and started back for the now impossible task of making Wye in time to start at a quarter to ten. We made it soon after ten. The rest of the band were set up on the floor in front of the stage. There was supposed to be a hired sound system for us to use but this was all set up on stage for the main group. The sound crew unenthusiastically moved a few microphones down on the floor for us and we started our set shortly after ten fifteen. After only twenty minutes everyone in the audience trooped outside for a massive firework display which brought our first set to an end. The main group went on but after half an hour they were scuppered by a power failure in the main marquee. Some

emergency lighting was rigged up but without mains power they could not continue. Come midnight, when we were due to play our second set Ian rescued the evening by using an acoustic line up of trumpet, clarinet, trombone, banjo and drums. He used a battery powered megaphone for solos and singing and we played for a solid twenty minutes after which the power came back on and Ian handed over to the main group. Ian had chanced his arm and got away with it again. He had started over half an hour late and played for two twenty minute spots rather than for two and a quarter hours. We had finished half an hour early and ended up the heroes of the evening.

On the next day (Saturday) I was booked for three separate weddings with three different bands. The first one was at noon at Whitstable Castle; the next at four o'clock near Ashford and the third at seven-thirty in Dover. For the first wedding we were to play outside the castle while the guests arrived and had drinks and the wedding photographs were taken. They had rigged up a gazebo in case of rain. In fact it was dry but very windy. The gig was uneventful except that near the end of our set the wind got up and the gazebo took off like a kite.

We set off for Ashford. The original engagement was five o'clock to six-thirty but the agent was asked to change it to a four-thirty start and then to a seven o'clock finish. Then a few days before the wedding the bride's mother said could we be ready for four o'clock. I explained we had another wedding before hand which finished at two-thirty. She said that would give us plenty of time to be ready for four o'clock. The agent had specified that there was to be cover for the band if we were to be outside and that refreshments should be provided. When we arrived the weather had turned to drizzle. We were to set up at the back of the house where a power line was provided but no cover. We borrowed a couple of parasols from the garden and were set up by three-thirty. They had haggled about the cost of the band with the agent and there was no question of extra money for the extra time. Why they were concerned about the cost of the band was a mystery. The marquee, flower decorations, portable toilets, caterers, barbecue chefs, magician, cabaret guitarist group and disco for the evening must have cost thousands and the Tudor mansion and extensive back garden did not suggest poverty. The bride and groom arrived by helicopter and the guests soon after so we started just after four. The bride's mother smiled a thank you to us for starting early and at an early opportunity I asked as we had started so much earlier than originally intended whether we could leave half an hour earlier as we had another engagement. This was clearly not welcome. She had planned that we play up to the speeches scheduled for seven. She was almost hysterical that her timetable might be upset. If we must we could go fifteen minutes earlier. The agent had specified refreshments for the band and after an hour and a half we got a round of drinks at the instigation of the magician who took pity on us. We finished promptly at six forty-five by which time we were playing to

no-one as all the guests had disappeared into the marquee. I hurriedly packed up and set off to the next wedding in Dover which was with the Ian Shawcross band. With some excellent rally driving and luck with parking I arrived by the starting time of seven thirty. What a difference. The bridegroom welcomed us by asking what we would like to drink. The bride said play anything you like and that she liked mellow music. Pianist Mike Bishop was already set up but there was no Ian. Apparently Ian was playing at yet another wedding. He had arranged with the bride that he would be coming later (but without telling us). We played for just over an hour and were taking a break when Ian arrived. We had a great evening with everyone joining in. Apparently the bride used to have saxophone lessons with my old mate Pete Stacey. She surprised us all by asking for a jazz standard - Take Five as a final number.

On the Sunday I drove to Folkestone West Station where Ian's banjo band played for the arrival of the Orient Express. We played on the platform for the train's arrival at one thirty. The passengers were transferred to buses. Some travelled via Eurotunnel to the French terminal to pick up the train to Venice. The rest who were on a day excursion went by bus to the Metropole Hotel where they had half an hour to explore the cliff tops. We posed for pictures with the passengers, played Happy Birthday several times and the Anniversary Waltz for a fiftieth wedding anniversary. After half an hour we all got back into coaches and returned to Folkestone West Station where we should have met up with passengers on the return trip from Venice. They had transferred on to four coaches at Sangatte in France and were returning via Eurotunnel. Two coaches had arrived but two were delayed because of a power failure in the tunnel. We entertained several hundred well dressed passengers on the dry dirty and dusty platform for nearly an hour until the missing coaches turned up and the train departed. We coped with requests for Ricky Martin, the Beatles and Status Quo using trumpet, clarinet, banjo and snare drum. I escaped just before four o'clock ready to undertake a Sunday evening jazz concert at the Westgate Pavilion near Margate.

Eurostar Emergency - One morning an agent rang and asked if I could get down immediately to Eurotunnel and play some solo saxophone. Apparently a band booked to entertain Eurostar passengers while they queued to book in, was too loud and had been pulled out. It is 30 miles to Folkestone so it was well over an hour before I had reached EuroTunnel cleared their security check and was ready to play. I did wonder what this gig had to do with my efforts to be a jazz player.

Whatever The Weather -Vibraphone player Dave Robinson and myself were booked to play background music from three in the afternoon until six at a wedding reception at Ham, a village near Sandwich. Ham had a famous signpost which said Ham Sandwich. The sign was stolen so many times that it was removed. I got a call from drummer Andy Maclean to play with his band at a village hall in Petham near Canterbury starting at eight o'clock. The gigs were about thirty miles apart and even allowing for the usual wedding delays there should not have been a problem. Andy did stress the importance of the band starting on time at eight o'clock.

It was an exceptionally warm sunny afternoon for late October. After the service the bride decided that she wanted the wedding photographs taken miles away on the beach at Deal. The consequence was that the reception and wedding breakfast started over an hour and a half late. The landlord who had booked us told me to leave when I wanted. I packed up the woodwinds but kept playing on saxophone until ten past seven, then made a dash for the car.

I had driven a couple of hundred yards when the skies opened up with a deluge that flooded the road and overwhelmed the windscreen wipers. I soldiered on through the storm. It was eight o'clock when the village church and village hall came in sight a few hundred yards ahead, but a car pulled up in front of me blocking the road. The driver turned on the hazard lights and got out. So did I. I explained that I needed to get a few hundred yards down the road by eight o'clock. He said he was just walking granny to her door. He took granny across the road, disappeared inside the house, then must have made her coffee and put her to bed before he re-emerged. When I got to the venue the band had already started.

Harlexton Manor - Harlexton Manor is a Jacobean styled manor house located near Grantham. I can only describe it as a huge fairy tale stately home packed with massive marble statues. The House was featured in *The Haunting* and many other films requiring an eerie, spooky look with big marble statues. We were booked to play for a wedding, the bride having decided that Harlexton was the perfect setting and that the Ian Shawcross band was the one she wanted. We used a quartet of Ian on trumpet, myself on clarinet, Jacko Jackson on trombone and Adrian Brown on banjo. I drove the band on a 400 mile round trip to play at Harlexton at lunchtime followed by a dash back to Princes Golf Club in Sandwich to play saxes for a birthday party.

Yell STED - The Feasty Band would have been financially very successful if we had not had to buy a succession of replacement transit vans to carry Hammond organ, Leslei Speaker amplification, lights, drums and instruments. Driving home one frozen night the vehicle which already had a worn clutch refused to make it up Detling Hill (near Maidstone). Three of us had to push the vehicle up the hill while the driver struggled to get the vehicle to stop spinning and sliding on the ice.

To keep awake in the middle of the night driving home from a long distance gig the Feasty band often mimed or acted place names.

I still have an urge to shout out "STED" every time I pass the road sign to Yelsted which is near Detling on the Maidstone to Sittingbourne road.

A Morning Funeral in Kent and an Afternoon Wake near Leicester

Square - Ian Shawcross rang with an afternoon gig in London at a club off Leicester Square. It was a wake for a theatrical agent. We were to play traditional jazz through the afternoon and back Paul O'Grady on two songs. One was "Hard Hearted Hannah" and the other a bit more obscure - "It Was the Right Key But the Wrong Keyhole". We had to be there for a run through at one o'clock. I found some music for "Hard Hearted Hannah". Ian had also agreed that before we went we would play at a funeral at Barham near Canterbury at nine in the morning. No fee was involved. The plan was that I would pick up Adrian Brown who would play banjo. Ian would get a lift to the crematorium for the funeral and I would drive the three of us to Ashford to catch a train to Charing Cross, from where we would then walk to the venue in nearby Leicester Square. The agent had booked a drummer and bass player whom we would meet on the gig. We got to the crematorium quite early but were warned that an accident on the A2 was causing some delays. We lined up at the entrance to the crematorium. The hearse drew up later than planned and the funeral director got out. We suggested that we lead the way at our own pace. We marched slowly down to the chapel playing "Just a Closer Walk With Thee" and "Old Rugged Cross". The people filed into the chapel. Some looked puzzled and I began to wonder whether we had played for the right funeral. By now we were running really short of time so we dashed to the car and I drove to Ashford just in time to scramble for the train. We met Paul O'Grady and the rest of the rhythm section and ran through the songs without any problems.

My lasting memory of a successful afternoon is of Cilla Black and Jo Brand applauding Ian singing "Mack the Knife".

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Day Job

Anyone who has seen the TV series Yes Minister knows that civil servants run the country not the government. As a member of the Exchequer and Audit Department later called the National Audit Office, my modest role was not actually as a civil servant but as an officer of the House of Commons. The job was not just checking and putting an audit certificate on Government accounts but producing and publishing value for money reports which exposed extravagance and waste. I ultimately became an Associate Director before an overhaul of the department and a generous offer enabled early retirement and put an end to the enjoyable day job interfering with my musical career.

I am not going into all the adventures and excitements of the audit job - certainly not the audit of defence which is probably still under a security embargo or the visits to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee to hear the MPs grill top civil servants on the findings of our reports. However, the job was demanding at times and the following is the gist of a telephone conversation with my audit manager when my audit responsibilities covered the Agricultural Research Council and the Natural Environmental Research Council. The Research Councils included the Institute of Geological Survey which identified areas for oil prospecting licences and some forty other extraneous research bodies such as the Institute of Hydrology, Nature Conservancy, the Institute of Animal Physiology and the British Antarctic Survey. In addition some miscellaneous audits included Kew Gardens, Chelsea Hospital which houses the Chelsea Pensioners and Greenwich Hospital. This was how the conversation went - a conversation where I did not manage to get a word in edgewise.

Dave, for some years now we have not had any colonies worth talking about and the powers that be have decided to disband the Colonial Audit Office. There are one or two remaining audits like Tristan de Cunha and so on which we are taking over. As you are already undertaking the audit of the British Antarctic Survey as part of your Natural Environment Research Council audit responsibilities we thought it would be appropriate if you took on the audit of the British Antarctic Territory. I am sending you a copy of the Colonial Audit Office manual which shows how they used to audit a country. The approach is a bit antiquated by today's audit standards. There are also one or two problems to be sorted out. Actually the accounts have not been audited for four years and are embarrassingly overdue. There are not very many supporting documents. The country has no permanent population, no income tax and is administered from Stanley in the Falkland Islands. The only revenue

worth talking about is from postage stamps. The stamps are issued to the scientific survey teams who take them out to the territory to stick on first day issue envelopes. If the stamps do not sell very well they are over printed and reissued. From time to time a new set of stamps is printed. The stock of stamps is kept in the Falklands, actually in the Governor's safe in Stanley. Recently when the safe got over full they decided to get rid of some of the obsolete stamps. They rowed out into Stanley Bay and dumped the stamps over the side writing off something around £60,000 or £70,000 pounds worth of stamps. Unfortunately by mistake they dumped some of the new stamps instead of the old. In normal circumstances you would visit the client and inspect the records on site but the cost would probably exhaust the whole audit fee budget. So it is probably best to ask them to send whatever records they have got from Stanley. As you know the scientific teams go out to the British Antarctic Territory on eighteen month tours, spending two Antarctic summers and one winter there. The boat only calls twice a year so that whatever local transaction records exist can be delayed in arriving in Stanley. Our other problem is that we should charge a proper audit fee based on the time we spend on the audit, but there are very limited funds to pay for it. So we should keep the time spent on the audit under control. It would do us no harm if we could put up the last three years accounts for certification and publication in the next six weeks. I know in that time you have scheduled audit visits to the Freshwater Biological Association near Lake Windermere and the John Innes Institute near Norwich which will take you out of the office for three weeks. Anyway, see what you can do and let me know how you are getting on.

Every Brick is Oozing with Fraud - At the beginning of my career I cut my teeth on the audit of the pay of the Armed Services. To assist me I had Alfred who during the Second World War had been given a temporary promotion to Assistant Auditor. Alfred was unhappy that at the end of the war he reverted to his previous grade of Clerical Officer. Under a long standing arrangement the pay of Royal Air Force officers was administered free of charge by Cox and Kings Bank in Piccadilly. The two of us regularly visited the bank to check pay entitlements. Alfred used to find overpayments which were more than enough to cover his salary several times over. He was due to retire in a few months and was in an end of term mood. He often had several pints of Guinness at lunch time and sometimes wore loud multi-coloured ties and socks that he had brought back from a holiday in the States. The bank had a strictly sober dress code for staff likely to be seen by the public. We usually worked in silence alongside the bank staff in a large open plan room. Alfred would be working methodically through a batch of pay entitlements when the silence would get to him and out of the blue he would suddenly announce in a loud voice "Every brick is oozing with fraud." At

this point the bank manager would open his door look round disapprovingly and retire. It became routine for the manager to express his concerns about Alfred. Things came to a head one afternoon when Alfred went over to a prim lady member of the bank staff to select a batch of pay records to check. She did not look very happy about it. Alfred put his arm round her and asked in a loud voice everyone in the room could hear "How would you like to feel old age creep all over you?" The lady had hysterics. We left and did not visit again for several weeks.

Oriental Audit - The public perception of a government auditor is that it is job free of risk and danger. An intrepid auditor was chosen to visit China as part of the audit of the United Nations agency UNESCO. Much of the work of UNESCO was to provide basic education in remote areas where there were no schools. The Americans, who were the major contributors to UNESCO funds suspected that the money was being used to teach communism. To pre-empt possible criticism our man was asked to visit a remote school in China to see how the money was being spent. On arrival in China he was introduced to an interpreter/minder and they set off in a small aircraft to the remote region where the chosen school was located. After they had been flying for some time an excited conversation in Chinese broke out between the pilot and the interpreter. The interpreter explained that there was a problem with the aircraft and that they would have to make an emergency landing. He was not to worry because this sort of thing happened quite often. Our auditor had brought a bottle of whiskey with him for the visit and with great presence of mind downed a fair quantity before the plane landed in a paddy field. He was wearing the best of two suits he had brought with him. He climbed out of the plane into mud approaching his waistline. There were no hotels when he arrived at the village and he slept in the schoolroom which had only cold water. On his return from the visit instead of a direct flight from China he was booked on a cost saving journey which involved several changes of flight. The first flight involved a journey off of the China mainland where there would be a wait of several hours for the next connection. Our auditor duly disembarked and ended up in a waiting area while his bag remained the other side of a fence in a reclamation area. Soon only his bag remained on the luggage roundabout while he debated what to do. At this point a Chinese official commandeered the bag. Our auditor, who had played senior professional football, was still reasonably fit. He vaulted the fence and rugby tackled the official to the ground whereupon they both commenced a tug of war for his bag. When they had both calmed down our auditor began singing the praises of the Chinese communist regime and the hospitality he had received only to realise he was in nationalist China the arch enemies of the Chinese communist state. He arrived home two days after he had started his return journey.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The John Burch Octet

Pianist John Burch wrote "In the Meantime" and "Preach and Teach" for Georgie Fame. "In the Meantime" was the flip side to the hit "Yeh Yeh" and the royalties were enough for John to buy a house in Whitstable. Some years later out of the blue John received a surprise cheque resulting from a resurgence of interest in "Preach and Teach", which he discovered had been used by the Buddy Rich Band as a signature tune on a TV series in the States.

John was often booked at The Ronnie Scott Club to accompany visiting American jazz stars such as Freddy Hubbard. He was booked for a week to accompany Roland Kirk who was a superb and exciting black musician who could play three saxophones at the same time, despite being blind. He could also be touchy. One night John mentioned that there was a blind, coloured guy in the audience that wanted to sit in and play piano. Roland took offence and over the microphone started on about why John Burch needed to say the guy was blind or coloured; and continued his tirade about attitudes to handicaps and racial prejudice. John got up and walked out only to suddenly realise what he had done - he had walked out in the middle of a weeks work for which he had not been paid but also walked out in the middle of a set by a great American jazz star at the top UK jazz club. Somewhat anxious he turned up the next night to find all was forgiven. Roland Kirk asked, "What happened to you last night? The guy that sat in on piano was dreadful and we were stuck with him for the rest of the evening".

A jazz musician's income is often erratic and at one point the Inland Revenue questioned whether John's income was correct when on the face of it he had a holiday home in Lincolnshire, a house boat on the Thames, a yacht at Whitstable and eight motor cars. The holiday home was a derelict signalbox on a disused railway line. It had one room up and one room down with no power and no water. It was boarded up with no windows and had been purchased many years earlier for £500 as an investment. The houseboat was an ancient disused lifeboat moored near Greenwich for a nominal rent and sometimes used by John for staying overnight after London gigs. Seven of the eight cars were wrecks in the back garden. They had been cannibalised and used for spares, having each cost fairly modest sums. The yacht was also a modest affair and laid up waiting for repairs.

Over the years I have had the pleasure of playing with John in small group situations sometimes as bandleader. There were occasions when John was delayed because his latest ageing motor vehicle had broken down or he had forgotten something. Often he had to

borrow reading glasses from the audience. On one occasion he was wearing two pairs of borrowed glasses to read the music. But all was forgiven when he started to play.

The John Burch Octet originally came into existence in 1961 when Jack Bruce Ginger Baker and Graham Bond were in the band. For some time in the sixties John was flavour of the month and the octet had regular radio broadcasts. His arrangements for the octet combined a big sound with plenty of freedom for jazz solos and he used some of the best players around. An Arts Council grant to write the Resurrection Ritual Suite gave John the opportunity to reform the Octet in 1986 and I joined the band on baritone saxophone. The band played on an occasional basis at various jazz clubs and broadcasts. The opportunity to play alongside legendary trumpeter Hank Shaw and marvellous sax players such as Dick Morrissey, Don Rendell, Matt Wates, Martin Dale and Derek Nash was a great experience and sharpened up my playing. One of the pieces in the Resurrection Ritual Suite was "Dr Yobs Cave Tune" which is an anagram of my name. During my time with the band we recorded two radio programmes for BBC Jazz Notes. The first was a live performance at Club 32 in Maidstone in 1986. The second was a recording at the BBC Studios, Pebble Mill, Birmingham in 1995.



John Burch Octet

In 1994 the band got an Arts Council assisted tour for sixteen dates round the country, including six successive nights in January 1995 in the north of England - Tuesday Scarborough; Wednesday Hull; Thursday York; Friday Peterborough; Saturday Derby;

Sunday Middlesbrough. We hired a minibus for seven of us while Mick Durrell took his own car because of concern for his double bass.

Trumpeter Hank Shaw had a reputation for being careful. Over the years Derek Nash had organised some riffs to back Hank's solos. One was based on "We're in the Money", another was "If I were a Rich Man". For the tour Hank took a suitcase containing enough cheese and tomato sandwiches to last the week, also a one ring electric burner and a kettle to brew up. After an enthusiastic reception in Scarborough we stayed at a hotel next to the castle overlooking the bay. It was a windswept January night and miserably cold but I was fortified by some miniature whiskies which, unknown to me, my wife Jill had slipped into my overnight bag.



John Burch Octet

The next day we drove to Hull, arriving at the Piper Club at six o'clock to rehearse an arrangement of a Cedar Walton tune called "Sixth Avenue". From the outset of the gig the band sounded good, with tenor saxist Martin Dale particularly in form. But in the second half Hank fell ill. He looked like death and we suggested he should go back to the hotel. At the prospect of having to pay for a taxi he recovered briefly but agreed to go when one of the organiser's kindly offered him a lift. At one stage I thought his last words were going to be "I cannot afford a taxi". Derek Nash took over the lead trumpet chair playing soprano saxophone. To pad out the programme Kenny Pyrke and I performed our trombone and baritone saxophone feature on "Bernie's Tune". During the first set a Scottish lady reporter in the audience had been writing instant blank verse character sketches of members of the

band. She was invited up to recite them against a blues accompaniment. Although the band arrangements were not the same without the trumpet, we narrowly avoided threatened moments of chaos and I think we got away with it. Back at the hotel I sat with Hank until the doctor arrived at two in the morning. Hank was awake and in some discomfort but mainly concerned about the safety of his trumpet. The doctor could find nothing wrong and advised a liquid diet and a visit to the surgery if there was no change.

The next morning Henry decided to make the trip to York and see if he improved. We arrived at York and called another doctor who prescribed some medicine and recommended forty-eight hours rest and then that Hank should go home. Hank completed the concert obviously in much discomfort and clearly not at the top of his form but it enabled us to play the repertoire. The next day we drove south to Peterborough where we stayed and played in the Great Northern Hotel. The hotel was owned by jazz fan Peter Boisot former owner of the Pizza Express restaurants. The hotel was also the home of Peterborough Jazz Club. Hank was still struggling but lasted the night.

Our next venue was Derby but we took a detour to Spamby in Lincolnshire so that John Burch could visit his cottage. The cottage was a boarded up former signal box on a disused railway line. Drummer Jim Hall took a photograph of the band outside the cottage. From then on Mick Durrell's car sported a sign in the back which read "We've been to Burch's Cottage". The evening performance at "Pyms" for Derby Jazz Club was the best of the week with tight playing clean endings no mistakes and a great reception.

The next day we drove to Middlesbrough arriving at three thirty in the Sunday afternoon to find the venue and much of the town closed. On Derek Nash's suggestion we drove on to Redcar and found a seafront café serving Sunday roast dinners until seven in the evening. Henry managed his third tomato soup in three days but this time with a piece of bread. The gig at the Inn Off the Park was successful and the resourceful Derek bought up all the remaining cheese rolls at the bar ready for our trip back to Kent. It proved a shrewd move because for the whole length of the journey down the A1 on the Sunday night there was nowhere open to get a drink or anything to eat. The tour finished a few weeks later after gigs at jazz clubs in Colchester and Cambridge. Henry was fully recovered and just to prove us all wrong about his meanness suggested that we all go for a curry after the last gig in Cambridge and that we treat John as thanks for organising the tour.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Big Bands

Ironically the Swinging Sixties was the decade when bands stopped swinging in the Count Basie jazz sense. Commercially three singers playing cricket bat guitars plus a drummer was a cheaper option than a skilled sixteen piece big band plus vocalists. With amplification four pop musicians could make as much noise as a sixteen piece big band and in truth could be more entertaining visually than a band playing strict tempo music for ballroom dancing. The age of the full time commercial big band was over although big bands have refused to die out completely. Bands like Buddy Rich and Maynard Ferguson continued to survive by releasing albums and by forming bands for short concentrated tours. So the demise of the big band was not a good time to want to become a big band arranger. The answer to the question will the big bands ever come back is no, not as a commercial proposition but the Kent music scene described here shows that, as far as dedicated musicians are concerned Big Bands never went away.

My early experience of big bands was playing for local functions such as the Mayor's Ball or the Police Ball. Several of these bands were run by non musical band leaders who got hold of a bunch of Glen Miller arrangements, some band jackets and flash music stands. They were pleasant enough as organisers, compères and entertainers but the bands were nothing special. Garry Cooke ran a very successful Glen Miller style band. I remember him asking me (because I was sitting on the end of the front row of saxes) to give him a nod when the tunes were coming to the end so that he could cut the band off with a final flourish. .

More interesting was a rehearsal band formed by trumpeter Graham Salthouse. Made up mainly of his fellow Royal Marine Bandsmen based in Deal he roped in a few local sax players who could cope with the jazz solos including myself on baritone sax. The drummer Norman Taylor really impressed me and it was no surprise that after he left the marines he had a successful career playing along with the Royal Opera House Orchestra and the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble.

I got hold of Reg Owen's book on big band arranging. Reg was one of the arrangers for the Ted Heath band. His book showed the full range and the best playing range for each instrument as well as valuable information on writing and voicing for the different sections - trumpets, trombones and saxes. I sat down with the book and wrote my first big band arrangement of the Quincy Jones tune 'Plenty Plenty Soul'. It was a little bit like your first attempt at making home made wine. If you followed the instructions carefully at each stage

the results could be really good. I must admit to some surprise that the arrangement worked out well and was accepted. I suppose it is a compliment that for many years I came across pirate copies of the arrangement in various big band libraries.

The Jack Long Big Band - Joining the Jack Long Big Band was something else. Based in the Medway, the band rehearsed on a Monday night. After a summer break Jack recruited some jazz orientated players from Thanet and the East Kent coast including Paul Jury piano, Les Feast drums, Eric Greengrass trombone, Barry Cole tenor sax and myself on baritone sax. The saxophone section was unorthodox in that the default line up was one alto sax, two tenors, and two baritones. Nearly all the band library was comprised of original arrangements written specifically for the band, mainly by Jack Long. I contributed 'She's Leaving Home' which was loosely related to the Beatles tune and was supposed to be the fastest thing you would ever play. Jack encouraged me to write more arrangements and I produced two lengthy originals. The 'Subterraneans' was inspired by the book written by beatnik writer Jack Kerouac. It broke off in the middle for an ad lib duet between baritone sax and drums. The idea for 'Rajans Banquet' was prompted by the short lived experiments by Joe Harriot and others into indo-jazz fusion and ragas. The piece started off in 1 1/4 time and featured a waltz time drum duet which Bobby Cleall and Les Feast worked on so that it was impressive both visually and musically. Jack Long produced some formidable arrangements including a lengthy and exciting version of 'MacArthur Park,' also an arrangement of the Mose Allison tune 'The Seventh Son' written with seven beats to the bar. We had fun mastering his arrangement of the Blood Sweat and Tears song 'Sometimes In Winter' with its tricky passages alternating between 7/8 and 8/8 time. All this added up to a band that sounded exciting and refreshingly different.

The lead alto saxophonist was Alan Borman who had played with the Eric Winstone Orchestra on countless "Music While You Work" broadcasts. With his commanding sound and glorious tone he became one of my musical heroes. Trumpeter Roy Snape stood out as a classy jazz soloist. I also first got to meet trumpeter Bill Robinson and trombonists Kenny Pyrke and Steve Parkin who were later to feature in my own bands.

The band did some concerts in Kent theatres and an outside recording for BBC Radio Kent at the Mitre in Maidstone, which was broadcast on several local BBC radio stations. The band got some bookings with Georgie Fame (real name Clive Powell) singing with the band. He had just completed a tour in the USA with the Count Basie band and he brought along Basie style arrangements of Bonnie and Clyde and others of his hits. The band lined up a weekend involving a Friday TV appearance and a Sunday concert in Margate where we were to

accompany Georgie Fame. Zoot Money and Alan Price were also on the bill. Our performance went well although we did not appear until the second half. The local press commented that the audience waited until after the interval for excitement. There were some problems with the box office arrangements with customers being told incorrectly that the concert was sold out. A backer/promotor was also involved. The upshot was that none of the musicians got paid and the band broke up.

The first Dave Corsby Big Band - With a number of original arrangements and a desire to develop my arranging skills it was inevitable that I would make a first attempt to run a big band. Pianist Paul Jury, sax player Barry Cole and trombone player Ian Cox and myself contributed original arrangements. The band depended on a core of marine bandsmen who were stationed at Deal. These included John Yates, Mick Hayes and Geoff Miller (trumpets), Mick Eastbrook and Frank Wildboar (trombones) and Mick Murray on lead alto saxophone. Eric Bing, Barry Judge, Dave Bone and myself completed the sax section. On trombone were Paul Godden and Ian Cox. Guitarist Pete Bocking was invaluable playing the Isaac Hayes music from the film Shaft which was popular at the time. Paul Jury (piano), Terry Wood (bass) and Les Feast (drums) provided the rhythm section. The Dave Corsby Big Band rehearsed weekly from 8 to 9 p. m. in the Kings Head in Margate and performed what we had rehearsed from 9.30 to 11 p.m. Original arrangements gave the band its own identity and provided would-be arrangers an outlet for their talents. We were booked for a three band Kent Jazz Scene concert at the Corn Exchange Rochester and at the Dover Stage for Dover Jazz Club. We also squeezed the band into the Louis Armstrong pub in Dover where there was so little room that some of the audience ended up sitting on the bar.

Coleys Ooligan Orchestra - Barry Cole also had the urge to write big band arrangements. Coleys Ooligan Orchestra was interesting because it was built round two front line soloists - Barry on soprano saxophone and Maurice Mehmet on electric violin. Instead of the usual four man trumpet section Barry used two trumpets - Henry Lowther and Laury Brown plus soprano sax and electric violin. There were five trombones, five saxes, two keyboards, two guitars, bass, drums, and percussion. The band featured some terrific original compositions written by Barry. An album recorded live at the Odeon Canterbury captures the excitement generated by the band but sadly it is no longer available.

National Youth Jazz Orchestra - Peter Done who ran the Maidstone Jazz Centre telephoned with a novel idea. The National Youth Jazz Orchestra were performing in Maidstone on a Saturday night and staying in a hotel after the concert. The next morning they were to play at a public rehearsal. Peter asked if I would bring along some original compositions and arrangements which they would not have seen before and take the musicians through them. When I arrived the place was packed and I started to have concerns how the band would cope. I need not have worried. They played the pieces at sight including a piece in 1 1/4 time. It was a good way of showing the standard of the band, who were the pick of the various county youth jazz orchestras. The two flute players thanked me for writing proper flute parts rather than just doubling up existing brass parts.

The Strayhorns and Ian Hamiltons Big Band - There were other rehearsal big bands which managed to get gigs that paid little more than expenses. I played tenor sax with Ian Hamilton's Big Band and with Myles Collins' band The Strayhorns. Both band leaders worked hard to build impressive music libraries and produced rehearsed bands of a very good standard. Ian's band played for a couple of Big Band Weekends at the Burstin Hotel in Folkestone. Myles used The Strayhorns as a vehicle to write arrangements and sell them on line under the label Lush Life Music. I was pleased to get prestige gigs with The Strayhorns at the The Metropole Brighton, the Winter Gardens Eastbourne and Alexander Palace. The Strayhorns recorded an Album entitled Nou's Blue. Nou Nou was Myles' wife and she sang on a couple of tracks. I am not sure what the purpose of the album was. There was supposed to be some tie up with a commercial firm which proved to be another case of possible jam tomorrow. From my viewpoint Ian Hamilton's band and the Strayhorns were largely swing bands steeped in old fashioned four beats to the bar. One night Toby Stewart and myself were both playing tenor saxes in The Strayhorns. Myles had a request for "In The Mood" which we played with competence but not much enthusiasm. Toby and I decided that if we had to play "In the Mood" one more time that evening we would resign. We got through the whole evening without playing it again, but Myles decided to do two encores and inevitably one of them was "In the Mood". I did realise the need to keep the customer satisfied and that the danger of exercising musical integrity could end up with you not playing at all.

Paul Booth's Harbour Jazz Orchestra - Paul Booth, one time young jazz musician of the year and an accomplished sax and flute player, moved to Ramsgate and after a few years formed a rehearsal big band - The Harbour Jazz Orchestra. He used local musicians from East Kent who along with Paul contributed arrangements. Many of the arrangements

were originals that were different and difficult. These included Paul's "Planet Thanet", Steve Waterman's "Call it a Day" and "October Arrival", and Francis Knight's "Sweet Potato". My versions of "Round Midnight" "Eleanor Rigby" and "Picnic" were also in the pad. On some of the more important concerts the band benefited from Kevin Robinson's outstanding lead trumpet. I enjoyed playing baritone sax and soloing with the band. The material was impressive with unusual time signatures and changes of tempo. It also showed how many top rate musicians there were in East Kent. But the band was jazz orientated and pushing at the boundaries of the accepted jazz scene. After about three years audience numbers dropped. Some found the material uncomfortable and too self indulgent without vocalists and enough recognisable tunes. As far as big bands are concerned there seems to be a sixty year gap between what musicians want to play and what most audiences want to hear.

The Goodwin Sounds - The Goodwin Sounds was a rehearsal big band run by former marines bandsman Ken Peers. This band was not bothered about public performance but was formed for the joy and challenge of playing big band arrangements. The name Goodwin Sounds is pretty apt for a band rehearsing on the East Kent coast close to the notorious Goodwin Sands. It was also apt for a band that specialised in playing arrangements by the American composer and arranger Gordon Goodwin. Goodwin came to prominence winning Emmy and Grammy nominations and awards for film scores and albums with his Big Phat Band. Arrangements such as "Count Bubba" and "Hunting Wabbits" are fiendishly difficult but satisfying when they come off. A whole catalogue of his arrangements are published and used by rehearsal bands worldwide.

Saxophonist Arthur Robinson who now lives in Perth, Australia was the leader of the Cave Jazz Band which was the first jazz band I played in. We met up when he was in the UK for a visit. He plays in a rehearsal band in Perth and he asked me whether I knew the Gordon Goodwin arrangement for the cult horror film "The Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes". It turned out that his band were tackling the same difficult Gordon Goodwin material as ourselves. This suggests to me that while big bands may be over as a commercial proposition and most of the public are years behind today's big band sounds, big bands like Goodwin Sounds are proof not only that big bands have refused to die but have continued to evolve..

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Mission Impossible

The stresses and difficulties of running a big band include finding places to rehearse and perform, organising a library of arrangements, finding sixteen musicians who could and would cope with difficult material for scant reward. There would always be the problem of musicians being unavailable and the need to find deputies often at short notice. There was always the prospect of the dreaded phone call from the wife apologising that her husband had been working in the loft, fallen through the ceiling and was not fit enough to play tonight. But in spite of the inevitable setbacks in the back of my mind I had accumulated a mass of ideas for big band compositions and arrangements that if they were to be performed I would have to form a big band. I chose the name Mission Impossible for the band. This reflected the outrageously ambitious aim of running a pioneering big band in a difficult area like East Kent. Lalo Schiffrin's music from the film Mission Impossible was adopted as our theme tune. Written with five beats to the bar rather than the usual swing band four beats, it typified the sort of breakout from conventional swing that we wanted to explore.

To attract and retain the right musicians the policy was that every one in the band should take jazz solos. There would be no vocals and none of the music associated with Glen Miller. We had nothing against Glen Miller. Moonlight Serenade must have had more than nostalgia to last over seventy years, but it lost its magic when you have played it umpteen times. All music loses its freshness with constant repetition. Ronnie Scott said "I wish Glen Miller had lived and the music had died". Classical musicians have the same problem, hence the orchestral player who dreamt last night that he was playing Beethoven's fifth and woke up to find he was!

There are so many exciting things going on in music that it is disappointing to find that the few amateur and professional big bands in operation are swing band clones all sounding roughly the same. So what did we do that was different? Big band music does not have to have four beats in the bar. Three, five, seven or even eleven beats are quite interesting. How about changing key part way through a tune and taking jazz solos on the tune including the key change, producing a whole new effect. The rhythm section can have a more prominent or more equal role. The pianist and bass player no longer need to be anonymous and the drummer can be more than a plodding timekeeper. There is the whole possibility of musical cross-fertilisation as world music has become available and popular. Salsa and bossa, raga and samba, flamenco and calypso have opened up new avenues. There are great

possibilities for big bands that can adapt and absorb blues, funk and jazz and rock influences and the best of the popular music scene. Instead of trotting out ancient arrangements of "String of Pearls" and "Woodchoppers Ball" what about a big band that acknowledges the glorious big bands of the past but challenges some of the tired conventions? Could this be done so that it is entertaining without being too self-indulgent? We went for a programme of contrasting styles and an element of surprise. In fact surprise at how good the band was and how refreshing it was to hear standards played with new exciting arrangements was the most common audience reaction.

We used American imported arrangements from the libraries of the Maynard Ferguson, Buddy Rich, Bob Florence Bands and the like. We also featured original arrangements by members of the band. We had Eleanor Rigby done as a jazz waltz and Take the A Train as a samba. Fats Waller's Honeysuckle Rose incorporated Charlie Parker's variation Scapple from the Apple. We attempted big band versions of Chuck Corea's Spain, Michael Brecker's Nothing Personal and the Miles Davis/Gil Evans version of Gone. Rajan's Banquet had an eleven beat raga theme.

Our first get-together was a live gig at the compact Louis Armstrong pub in Dover. We managed to squeeze the rhythm section and the trombones on the stage with trumpets and saxes on the floor. We sight read the arrangements without too many mishaps. The reception was encouraging and we lined up an Easter Sunday concert at the Theatre Royal in Margate with a top and tail rehearsal in the afternoon. The Theatre Royal became a regular venue. We played for a share of the gate with assistance for a couple of performances from Kent Week and the Canterbury Festival. We had occasional rehearsals usually shortly before a concert. A commission for the Medway Jazz Festival paid for by Medway Council enabled me to write the Medway Jazz Suite and got the band a performance at the Brook Theatre in Chatham. A demo tape got us an appearance at Deal's Astor Theatre as part of Dover's Art and Soul Festival. Tony Dixon who was deputising on lead trumpet left London at five thirty after a matinee of Starlight Express foregoing a lucrative evening performance for a dash down to Deal for an evening performance at half the fee. It was that sort of support and commitment that kept the band going. We even got Tony to take a jazz solo because the aim of the band was that everyone with the band should take jazz solos. Similarly guardsman Steve Botting helped us out, leaving Chelsea early in the evening for a Ramsgate Spring Festival appearance at the San Clu Hotel where he took over lead trombone and sight read a difficult pad.

We put on some Sunday night concerts at the Whitstable Playhouse but successive audiences dropped in numbers. Canterbury Council provided assistance for me to write and stage the Time and Tide Suite as part of their Passing Tales celebrations of Chaucer's six

hundredth centenary. We had a good four year run but I think by then we had exhausted local possibilities. We were not getting enough audience numbers to make it viable. Without Glenn Miller favourites and vocals local audiences found the band too jazzy. But plenty of people asked me when the band would be coming back.



Mission Impossible 16 Piece Big Band

Postscript - Whatever the future outcome, jazz fans have been lucky to have lived through an age when live jazz was available. It is not easy to explain why anyone would want to perform a music that is difficult to play, not properly understood, has little commercial value and is commonly greeted with indifference. So what! Jazz has provided me with the opportunity to play in good company and savour glorious moments when the playing has come together.

APPENDIX

Background Notes

My great, great, great grandfather John born in 1763 was a musical instrument maker of stringed instruments. His son and my great, great grandfather Charles made cellos, double basses and violins. Charles and his brother George (1791-1872) were based in Northampton but moved to London, setting up shop in Princes Street which is now Wardour Street. They were quite prolific and their instruments appear from time to time in the auction catalogues where they attract prices which suggest they are bought by professional musicians. Later generations became shoemakers in Stepney. My father and uncle played self-taught guitar and piano. My mother's predecessors sailed Thames barges from the Stour in Essex. Her father was a guard on the night mail train from Kings Cross to Edinburgh and played euphonium in the local Salvation Army band. I hardly remember my father. I was born a year before the Second World War and when I was three he was sent away from the war zone to South Africa to learn to fly. After several tours flying Halifax bombers he was killed over the Dutch coast during a night raid to Germany. Shortly afterwards Halifaxes or what were left of them were withdrawn from service.

I grew up believing that war with Germany was a normal state of affairs. We lived in Hounslow which was regularly bombed. I was frequently carried to the local air raid shelter which had bunk beds. I remember hearing and occasionally seeing German doodlebugs - pilotless flying bombs designed to run out of fuel over London. When the engine cut out there was a pause followed by a mighty explosion. Later you might find that a house in a nearby road had been hit.

Education at Chatsworth School in Hounslow was patriotic. We celebrated Empire Day and were taught that the Sun never set on the British Empire with maps showing the colonies in pink to prove it. Teachers contributed to the efforts to thwart Hitler by enthusiastic teaching. Before my seventh birthday I had been individually coached and encouraged and I had completed the eleven plus examination syllabus for arithmetic.

We had a one month break from the bombing when we went to Little Milton near Thame in Oxfordshire and stayed in a thatched cottage in the village. We met American servicemen in jeeps who got me to say "Got any gum chum?" and plied me with chewing gum and chocolate. The farmer's daughter was very attractive and drew a big crowd of Americans to a village concert where to great acclaim she sang "Mare's eat oats and does eat oats and little lambs eat ivy".

Food was rationed and I never saw a pineapple or a banana until I was seven. The teacher drew a banana on the blackboard. She said it was yellow with burnt black bits on the outside and that you unzipped it to eat it. I was unconvinced until after the war when I had seen the real thing. We kept chickens and rabbits. I treated the rabbits as pets. It was only after one Sunday lunch I discovered that we had eaten a pet. For a couple of days I refused to talk to anyone.

On VE Day (Victory in Europe Day) 1945 we moved to Broadstairs. After the bomb sites of London the main bay with its harbour, clock tower, bandstand, chalk cliffs, sand and sea was a new world. At the bottom of our garden was The Ranch - a home for old and retired horses. At night the North Foreland lighthouse flashed into my bedroom and you could hear the waves breaking on the shore of Stone Bay. Our favourite beach was Joss Bay - almost deserted in those post war days. It was a twenty minute walk with the golf course and Kingsgate castle on your left and Elmwood Farm and the lighthouse on your right. For a seven year old, streetwise London kid used to collecting shrapnel off of bomb sites it was a picture out of a fairy tale. At that time Joss Bay had no car park, no cars, just a deserted sandy beach with a row of abandoned pre-war beach huts, some as big as bungalows. The next bays had smugglers caves and tunnels to explore.

Schooling was a problem. The local boys' school was a long way from home for a seven year old. It was still on a wartime footing with two classes; one for seven to eleven year olds and one for over elevens. I did a term at a convent school which allowed boys up to the age of eleven but I was asked to leave at the end of the term after two of us climbed a tree in the playground and refused to come down. Holy Trinity Boys' School was a shock. There were now four separate classes for seven, eight, nine and ten year olds. As a seven year old we recited our ten times tables over and over again. Ink wells and nib pens were a new source of terror. We copied from the blackboard. My attempts at joined up writing which everyone else seemed to know were amateur and blots were rewarded with a sharp wrap over the knuckles with a chair leg from Miss Ovenden who demanded and got absolute silence for her classes. It worked. I made very few blots after the first week. We played football on the beach in the summer and in the recreation ground or the bandstand in the winter and we formed a team of ten year olds - Broadstairs United - and we got a fixture against the Shaftesbury Society Home. The boys at the home were all physically deformed. At one time there had been a private school in Broadstairs called Lanthorne Court which had been run by a Major Buckley. He had not re-opened after the second world war and lived on his own in the main building, but there was a playing field with a football pitch and posts, which we asked whether we could use. He agreed but suggested we put up the goal nets and corner flags and mark out the pitch with white lines. Came the great day the pitch was ready

although touch lines and centre circle were a little wobbly. We were told that although the team from the Shaftesbury home had deformities we were to treat them normally - no holding back from shoulder charges or tackles and that they would give as good as they got. They were slightly older than us and their games master who had a hunch back played centre half for them which evened things out. We were a bit concerned about their goalkeeper who was over six foot and whose deformity was his arms which stretched down to his ankles. After the first couple of minutes when we were a bit tentative we soon got the message as they laid into us with enthusiasm. It turned into a cracking game which they won something like nine goals to seven.

In the final year at junior school we should have been preparing for the all important eleven plus examination which decided who would go to grammar school. One of the Broadstairs convalescent homes reopened as a children's home for orphans with problems. Our class grew to over fifty including some backward children from the home. Holy Trinity was a church school and we spent a lot of time in morning assembly singing hymns. We quite often spent a whole morning having religious instruction in the adjoining church. By the time the examinations for grammar school places came we had not covered the syllabus. Only two of us got to grammar school, my success probably due to my education as a six year old in Hounslow.

At Chatham House grammar school I consistently finished in the top ten of the class and over the years I picked up prizes for coming top in English and Geography. But I realised that I had neither the inclination nor the concentration to compete for a place in the top three of the class. We played rugby in the autumn term and hockey in the spring term. I took school boy rugby seriously, going running in the evenings several times a week usually down to Kingsgate Castle and along to the North Foreland. Fitness helped me keep my place in a very good school side. While still at school I played for Thanet Wanderers who now are a prestigious club running several teams. At the time they were sometimes short of players. In my first game for the Wanderers my opposite number in the front row of the scrum had not shaved for a couple of days and rubbed his chin up and down my face at the same time breathing over me brandy fumes and garlic (which he was chewing). My legs went weak. At half time they switched me to my normal position of wing forward (at the edge of the scrum) and I even managed to score. Coming home after away games there was a tradition which involved the numbers of the team being chalked on one of the tyres of the coach. When we stopped at a pub the player whose number was at the bottom had to take a jug into the pub and get it filled. There was a tendency to get home quite late. That and the difficulty of playing clarinet when your hands have been trodden on persuaded me to opt for jazz rather than rugby.

Jobs were scarce for school leavers. I entered a competition for places in the Civil Service. This involved a written examination and an interview. Despite a disastrous interview where the panel were not impressed by a jazz clarinet player who did not know Mozart's clarinet concerto and a misfit who could not explain why he finished near the top of the compulsory arithmetic paper when his chosen subjects were History, French and Latin. Six months later I gained a place in the Exchequer and Audit Department. Those six months proved to be an enjoyable mixture of casual work, sunbathing on the beach at Broadstairs, and some welcome income from playing jazz. I took up post as an assistant auditor stationed in Lansdowne House, Berkeley Square. Four weeks later I was conscripted into the army for two years National Service.

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Tues, 25th - John Arlott Room, Southampton University - Tel 0703 446461

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Tues, 15th - Cheltenham Jazz Society, Town Hall - Tel 0242 675756

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Tues, 17th - The Mermaid, Seaford, Scarborough - Tel 0723 372048
Wed, 18th - The Piper Club, Newland Ave, Hull - Tel 0482 482888
Fri, 20th - The Art Centre, Micklegate, York - Tel 0904 842 582
Fri, 20th - The Great Barnard Hotel, Peterborough - Tel 0733 52331
Sat, 21st - World Jazz, Furness, Farnley, Derby - Tel 0332 33245
Sun, 22nd - Hill Off The Park, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough - Tel 0642 584085
Thurs, 28th - Colchester Arts Centre, Church Street, Colchester - Tel 0206 577301
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Sunday, 21 May 2000 Ramsgate Spring Festival. (Venue to be decided)

Saturday, 3 June 2000 Dover Council's Art & Soul Festival Astor Theatre, Deal - 8.00 p.m. Tickets £7.50 & £5.00 Tourist Information Office, High Street, Deal. Tel: 01304 369576.

Sunday, 25 June 2000 Theatre Royal Margate 8.00 p.m. - Tickets £6. Part of Kent County Council's Kent Week Festival.

Sunday, 15 July 2000 Rochester Jazz Festival Brook Theatre (Old Town Hall) Chatham, featuring first performance of Dave Corsby's Midway Jazz Suite commissioned by Medway Council and Rochester Jazz

A Selection of Posters

