

Transcript of interview conducted October 26 2017

Interviewee: CAROLYN SMYTH (CS)

Interviewer: JAREK ZABA (JZ)

Kingston upon Thames, England

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[00:00] JZ: Okay, this is Jarek Zaba for the Kingston RPM project. We're here at Creative Youth office in Kingston upon Thames. I'm here for an oral testimony interview with:

CS: Carolyn Smyth. Born on 2 April 1946 in Chiswick Maternity Hospital.

[00:18] JZ: Lovely. Could you just spell your surname for the benefit of the tape?

CS: Yes. S for Sugar, M for Mother, Y, T for Tommy, H. Smyth.

[00:26] JZ: Lovely. Right, let's get going, Carolyn. I guess we should just start at the start.

CS: Yes.

[00:33] JZ: ... of your life. You were born in Chiswick, you say, when did your connection to this locality sort of first begin.

CS: Um, probably when I was about seven months old, my father had bad shellshock from his experiences during the war and I was born – as I said – in 1946 and the address on my birth certificate is 81 Winchendon Road which is in Twickenham, which is where my father's sister lived. But we were effectively homeless when they sold their house because they were going to Australia. So I have no recollection because I was only seven or eight months old as to the process of being housed in Bushy Park, but I do remember the place very well. We lived at number 24 Chestnut Avenue, which ran parallel to the road where Diana fountain is, so it was at the Teddington end and I have memories of that house. But we were homeless, that's why we were there, and somebody said on a website that it was squatters but we were definitely not squatters. I also know beyond doubt (and I have a photograph) is that I went to St – I think it was called St Peter and St Paul Church School in Teddington while we were living in Bushy Park so I would've gone there when I was five. So I think we're probably looking... lived there for roundabout five years.

[02:25] JZ: Mhmm.

CS: Or maybe, maybe a little bit more.

[02:29] JZ: Okay, and we'll definitely get back to Bushy Park. But first, I mean, you mentioned your father being in the war. How much do you know about your parents' wartime experiences?

CS: Well, I know a lot about my Dad's because he – as I said – suffered shellshock had treatment for severe depression and also amnesia. They got married in Lancashire, which was where my mother was from, in a registry office. They were then coming down to London, to meet up with my father's family and the story was that he had lost his memory on the way down, having never left Lancashire she then had to find her way to their house in Hampton Hill, which is crucial, because one of my strong memories is I know my Dad had a job at Bentalls, he worked as a storeman, he also worked at

the National Physical Laboratory, which is part of the Bushy Park area, again, as a storeman, and I have a very vivid memory of being taken to a Christmas party at the NPL and just a huge building and standing there clutching my Dad's leg because I was so scared. So that happened when we were living in Bushy Park. I had friends – Carol Ann Nash was a friend – when I was in that first few years before I went to infant school. I remember we both ran round the corner of a building and she said she still had the scar on her forehead and I've still got crooked front teeth because all my baby teeth fell out.

[04:33] JZ: What age would you have been?

CS: Oh, I would've been, four, probably three, four.

[04:38] JZ: Right.

CS: Roundabout, so however... I haven't got kids, so sometimes my timelines are wobbly because what age to children's baby teeth fall out?

[04:47] JZ: You're asking the wrong man [laughter].

CS: So, whenever it was, that was when it happened. I also have very strong memories of play, we had the whole park – we didn't venture that far – but one of the things we used to do was the embankments on either side of Chestnut Avenue that leads to Diana fountain and we used to roll down them. I remember spending hours just rolling down them as again, that kind of age, and just you know, I was probably a bit older then, five or six, or something like that.

[5:39] JZ: Absolutely. Did you say that your parents met in Lancashire?

CS: They met in Lancashire. My mum, on their wedding certificate, was a mental nurse and they seem to marry very quickly, and I've – they both died a very long time ago – really difficult circumstances, my Dad was very ill, and I've often asked myself because I never asked my mum, why did you marry him when he was clearly so very mentally sick?

[06:08] JZ: Right, okay.

CS: Which is... my only explanation that I can come up with is that she came from a mill-working family in Lancaster – Lancashire – and generations of mill-workers, my father was Irish, born in Dublin, and his father had been a very well-known actor and singer in Dublin. He made ten silent films, he acted under the name of Brian McGowan, I actually have copies of three of his films which have been digitised with new scores and I see my grandfather up on a big white horse. He was very famous, I've got news cuts saying that he had one of the best voices in Ireland, which is not ironic, it's hereditary, but I spent a great deal of my life as a singer, having no knowledge of this kind of background. So, my take on the marriage is that she lived this humdrum, very, very working class poor life, he came from this exotic sounding background, and I suspect – they lived in London, they lived in Hampton Hill – so I suspect that she saw it as a ticket out of that humdrumness. However, when I was about, it would've been about 1954, my Dad permanently went into hospital, it would've been Springfield Mental Hospital in Tooting and never came out. He was not certified but his problems were so huge that the doctors told my mother that he wouldn't recover from them. And there's a crucial bit of my story tied up in this, in that she left him there, she abandoned him and I remember the day she told him that she wasn't coming back. I was there, I would've been about maybe six or seven, six-ish, and I remember that they sent me away to play while she told him that

she wasn't coming back, because she'd met somebody else and that caused a rift with my Irish side of my family...

[08:20] JZ: Sure.

CS: ...my dad's siblings, etc. etc. etc., which only got started to get mended in 2007 when I retired I put something on a genealogy website and I discovered this big family that I didn't know I had up until that point.

[08:37] JZ: Oh wow, okay.

CS: So that's their marriage, that's – you know – the sequence of things. But certainly I remember my Dad living with us in Bushy Park.

[08:49] JZ: Yeah, you know, you only have to go into as much detail as you are comfortable with, but his mental issues, they originate with the war do they, or do they precede?

CS: Well, that's an interesting question, because I was always told that it was his war experiences, however, and I had to sign lots of bits of paper, his army records are archived with the military and after a lot of saying 'I only want to know what happened to my Dad, really' they allowed me to see them and for me to take copies of a six inch pile of... and it seems to me that there they may have been some underlying genetic problem because two of his siblings also spent some time in Springfield Hospital, so I suspect there may have been. I know my grandmother came from a very rich, wealthy family in Dublin – excuse me – and Granddad, this handsome vagabond of a singer, actor, strolling around loving himself, but there was never any money. It's such a long story. My grandfather's patron was an Irish American called James Mark Sullivan, who set up the Film Company of Ireland, who made all these films, and he encouraged my granddad to go to... the Irish acting fraternity were going en masse to America, because that's where all the big film-making... you know, it was the Chaplin, Buster Keaton era. But Mary Ellen, my grandmother, they got as far as London, as far as Hampton Hill, and she said 'no, I don't want to go to America'. So he got stuck here. So, he had this amazing, talented life, and then, nothing. So, it all came to naught, so I suspect that maybe this, as a background for the children, might have exacerbated any problems that they might have been...

[11:10] JZ: Sure. And your father's wartime service was situated, where?

CS: He was in the Middle East. That was where... he was only out there for a few months before he was Y-listed – ie. medically unfit. He was... first of all it was diagnosed as schizophrenia, but that seemed to go away, and then bipolar, and that would explain the progression, and why he ended up permanently in hospital. And he died on New Year's Eve 1963.

[11:42] JZ: Okay, and was he involved in a combat role, or..?

CS: No, he was storeman, he was with the RAOC – Royal Army Ordinance Core – which is called something else now, Pioneers I think, so yes, was a Private, and his job would've been to back up the fighting troops with whatever it was they needed. I don't know much about what he did, I've got his training records, you know, he trained from storeman mark 1 to mark 2, so went through a progression, and also not knowing my father, other than these flashes of memory, and then reading... the records are harrowing, it's almost a day-to-day record of what happened to him, and psychiatry, the doctors' comments about him, but then scribbled over the very front page in all of this the commanding officer had written 'this is a very good man'. So, there was some solace in

having read all this, having known nothing about it, he died when I wasn't there, my mum took me away, I didn't see him, and he died when I was seventeen, just at the point when we were starting to get a bit more of an idea about what was going on in life, so I always had a very – it was a very sad tale. His was a very, very sad tale.

[13:30] JZ: Yeah, of course. How about your mother, I mean, was she a nurse her whole life?

CS: Erm, no. She nursed... she certainly didn't nurse when she came down south, when they got married, she cleaned houses, she did whatever job she could get, in between Dad was at home sometimes, but not at others, so I think life for her was pretty grim as well. It was really difficult. And certainly living in Bushy Park, I can draw you a picture of where we lived, it was ex-army accommodation, or ex-RAF accommodation. Our front door was along a very dark corridor, and it opened up into a kitchen with a range, that she used to use black lead and then there was a sitting room behind that. But interestingly partitions had been put up that didn't reach the ceiling. So, yeah, there was a sitting room at the back and a brick fireplace – that redbrick fireplace – and one of my strong memories, because my Dad sung and played guitar, was my Dad singing 'Oh My Darling, Clementine', sitting on that fireplace. And then the bedroom, there was that one large bedroom, and my little bit was curtained off, a little curtained off alcove. And then outside you've got Bushy Park, but also a little area that was for us to play or for whatever. One of my most picturesque memories is that, if you left washing out on the line over Christmas... winter... the dear would come and eat it, it was kind of ice lollies.

[15:30] JZ: Right.

CS: So you had to make sure that you brought the washing in.

[15:35] JZ: What was it? So you said... you referred to your mum using black lead on something. What?

CS: On a range.

[15:41] JZ: What's a range, sorry?

CS: A range is a fire.

[15:48] JZ: Oh, okay.

CS: And it's got, you know, an oven on one end. I suppose it's like what an Aga would be now? But it was very primitive, and it certainly had a chimney that went through the roof, which would... some heat. So, I remember my mum...cleaned houses for people in Sandy Lane, which was at the Teddington Gate end of things, and I remember somebody... one of her – I was going to say clients, but that sounds kind of posh – invited me to their daughter's birthday party, but I didn't have anything to wear, so she leant me a dress to wear. I remember to this day, I had to give it back afterwards and I remember bawling my eyes out to give this dress back. So yeah, that's kind of... I'll tell you something that you might be interested in. I did discover, after I'd met the cousins, that my grandad – the actor – had been a ferryman at the ferry on Eel Pie Island.

[17:09] JZ: Oh wow, well, we'll definitely return to that. Yes, absolutely.

CS: Yes, well I couldn't find any records. But they were pretty certain that that was one of the jobs he did. Because his basic job when he was over here was brick-laying, but they said no, he was definitely a ferryman.

[17:29] JZ: Yeah, we're definitely interested in that sort of thing. We'll return to things like Eel Pie shortly. Just going back to your mother, what is your main sort of memories of her as a woman, her character, her personality?

CS: That touches a nerve.

[17:42] JZ: Oh, okay.

CS: Because once she'd – and I don't mind talking about it – I think she felt guilty about leaving Dad. I think I did try to talk to her about it once when I was in my twenties and she just absolutely shut me down. I think she made a mistake marrying him, I think I was a mistake, and I think I – it's funny, because I'm actually writing a story because of my grandad's side of stuff, there's a lot of really, really interesting facts about him, because he was also involved in the early days of the Republican movement in Dublin, which is a whole new story, because I've got... his army records tell me that he was a spy for General Michael Collins.

[18:25] JZ: Oh, wow.

CS: So he had two bits of his life. But she, um, I wrote a piece about her life, and my first line is, 'I remember almost nothing about my mother', I don't ever really remember having conversations with her, and I think – looking back on it – I'm probably the toughie that I am now because I had to grow up very quickly, look after myself. I used to, well, when my Dad was in hospital, before she'd gone off with the other man, I used to come home at lunchtime from junior school, which is when we moved to Twickenham, and I used to prepare all the vegetables for lunch – for dinner – from when I was about eight. I had to learn very quickly. But I just don't have any feelings about her, which is really sad. And she died in 1983, but I hadn't seen her for a very long time. So, yeah, it's a painful, painful bit of my life, but I kind of see it from her view; there's two versions of why she did what she did. One is positive, and the other is negative, and I swing between the two.

[19:54] JZ: Yeah, of course.

CS: But the old Nietzsche thing about the blow that doesn't kill you strengthens you, and I think I'm one of those.

[20:01] JZ: Absolutely, absolutely. So let's talk about Bushy Park and your life there. I mean, before you talk about when you guys were there, how much do you know about what happened with the base after the war, and in terms of people living there as accommodation and this sort of thing?

CS: Erm, because I was young, between the age of seven months and five, they are just pictures in my head. I do know that it was a community. I remember one very strong definite memory is the women – and again, I was never aware of more than four or five families, but maybe that was just the circle we moved in – I remember them, oh, going with my mother, hanging onto the pram, with others, going,...taking our prams from Bushy Park to Kingston Power Station, where the nutty slack that was discarded from the coal, etc. etc., they all filled their prams up with it for nothing I think, I don't know whether they paid money, filled up the prams, took it back, and that was what kept the range working. And I think, you know, that was pretty standard in those days. We had electricity, we

definitely had electricity, but it would've been that nutty slack that powered any heating that we had in the house.

[21:40] JZ: Amazing, so you talk about the five families, were they all on one street? How did the locality of the park work?

CS: There was a row of houses, a row of accommodation, I can't call them houses because they were army barracks basically that had been segmented into temporary accommodation.

[22:10] JZ: Of course, yeah.

CS: So, I don't have a picture in my head of who lived next door, who lived next door, but we would've all have been in close proximity to each other. I was never aware either of there being loads of people, I was aware of there being – again, it's just a child's view, maybe it's just the people I was involved with, or went to the school I went to, played with me in the garden or something – but I only, I think I remember a little bit more from school days, I went to – excuse me – to the school in Teddington and had to walk to school, I went with a few others. But in terms of... I did go back there and look about five years ago and I recognised exactly where it was, where we had been, but of course there's nothing left now except if you really delve into the undergrowth the foundations of some of those houses are still there. There's lots of memorials to Camp Griffiss, to Eisenhower, to, you know, various points of historical interest, but of those huts where we lived, there's just a few bricks.

[23:24] JZ: Right.

CS: I can't, it's a blur, like I said with Carol Ann Nash bumping, you know, running round the corner, and rolling down the thing. Oh, that was another thing, did I say that the earliest memory I have was of a swan attacking my pushchair. No? Right. Okay.

[23:47] JZ: No, you did not mention that. Go for it.

CS: The earliest... my earliest any memory is that we were at Diana Fountain. I was in a pushchair and, it was certainly my – I think it was my mum and dad – it was certainly, I'm certain it must've been my mum and dad, and we drove and they pushed me up to the fountain and a swan came towards us with its arms and I – what would I've been, two or three? – and I have a really strong memory... and I've been terrified of them ever since. There was also a paddling pool on the other side of Diana's fountain, maybe a little bit further along towards the Hampton Court end, where we used to go splashing about in summer. And I do remember that polio, somebody went down with polio, and that little paddling pool was shut down. I'm not sure if anybody died, but I know that the fifties, the late forties, early fifties, was before kids were getting immunised for polio, so I remember that one of the people that used to go there, one of the girls, I think it was girl, wasn't somebody I knew, but I know that we stopped going there because somebody got polio.

[25:17] JZ: Yeah. What, what is this Diana Fountain, sorry?

CS: Diana fountain is an iconic piece, statue, it's a fountain raised up. Okay, let me start by telling you that Chestnut Avenue runs between Teddington Gate and Hampton Court Gate. Diana fountain bisects it, right in the middle is this big fountain, probably about twenty five times my height, with a golden Diana on the top of it, and it's an iconic piece and I wish I knew who the sculptor was, I'm sure it will be someone famous, it's an iconic piece of work.

[26:03] JZ: Sure.

CS: And it still exists, in fact when I came today we drove past it and my heart went ****boom boom****

[26:10] JZ: Wow, yeah. And presumably it predates the war base and all that?

CS: Absolutely. It would've been there for a very, very long time.

[26:19] JZ: You may not know because you were very young, but were the army completely gone from Bushy Park when you were there?

CS: I have no memories of ever seeing anybody.

[26:29] JZ: Right, because my understanding is that there was still an army presence knocking around well into the sixties.

CS: There could well have been.

[26:47] JZ: But it may well have been that they were on the other side of the park or...?

CS: It could've been. But also, don't forget, that the National Physical Laboratory were there. There was a lot of scientific experiments, I know the World Clock lives there, whether it still lives there, but it lived there, every single time zone is measured from a nuclear-powered timepiece that was invented there. So, that and also Eisenhower lived in the big house, it could well be that they were, but certainly didn't impact on us. Another lovely story, just remembered, my grandparents, my Dad's parents, lived on the other side of Bushy Park at the Hampton Hill end, I remember numerous occasions on the back of my Dad's bike, with my mum on another bike, going across Bushy Park in the dark to go and see my grandparents who had a television. And in 1953, me and probably the whole street where they lived came to watch the coronation.

[28:00] JZ: Oh wow. Okay.

CS: There are other little memories of it. But basically it couldn't have been more convenient in terms of going backwards and forwards on bikes. But I remember being terrified in the dark because you could see the trees, the skeletal trees, against the sky. I used to close my eyes, I remember so clearly hanging onto my dad and closing my eyes as we went through the park.

[28:40] JZ: That's interesting, because you mention the coronation there. Obviously, you've talked about your father coming from Irish family, do you know what... do you know anything about your parents' attitudes towards Britain, were they patriots or?

CS: It's an interesting question, and there is an unanswered question in it, given my grandad's involvement in the Republican movement. And I know he was here during the treaty negotiations, when Ireland became what it became.

[29:10] JZ: Independent.

CS: Independent.

[29:12] JZ: He was here in the UK.

CS: Semi-independent. He was actually here at the same time, I've got a note written again, the Irish Film Archive have given me a lot of material, there's a note written to my grandmother saying Jim'll be back in London soon, and it was during that period, back in Dublin soon, you'll be pleased to know, and I'm pretty certain that he was here during the treaty negotiations. Yeah, so what was the question? I've got lost in the question in my head.

[29:41] JZ: Just towards your parents' sort of perspectives of Britain and the United Kingdom.

CS: To be honest, I think they were so locked up in their maelstrom of whatever it was, Mum, the army wouldn't give him a pension because they said he had a pre-existing condition, she was cleaning houses, he was in and out of hospital, grandparents were hand-to-mouth as well, and I think they were probably too busy on the everyday kind of minutiae, this was just after the war, there was nothing.

[30:12] JZ: They weren't concerning themselves with politics too much.

CS: They weren't concerning themselves with politics. But the interesting thing is why my grandad chose... they came in 29/30.

[30:12] JZ: Yes.

So the establishment of the free state had already happened, Eamon de Valera, Michael Collins had been assassinated. Why he chose to come here at that time is a question because you would think, given his involvement, although he was pro-treaty, and the anti-treaty people, that was what caused the civil war, of course, so maybe there was... well, I don't know, I've often wondered, 'why did you come over here, then?' Yes, James Mark Sullivan had said that we want you in America because you can start making your films with Maureen O'Hara and you know, many of the others that had gone straight over... but, no, no, hand-to-mouth, I think.

[31:12] JZ: He was a Dubliner, though, your grandfather?

CS: Well, again [laughter], he, before he died, one of my Dad's brothers sat down with him and asked him to tell him everything and he said he was born on Christmas Day 1888 in Belfast. However, his army records are full of discrepancies about his children's birthdates, where they lived, where he lived, schools he went to, years of... years that he did certain things, and I came to the conclusion in the end that because of his involvement, this other life he had within the Republican Movement, he lied a lot. So, and the reason I think he lied a lot, apart from that, is that he.. I cannot find, I'm now a mini expert in genealogy research, I've become very good at it, and I do it for other people, just on a friendship basis, and I cannot find a birth record for him. Anywhere. I've even employed a researcher to go around churches in Belfast, given a rough area. Can't find him anywhere. So, his origins are, which is frustrating if you're interested in family history, because I can't go back on his side any farther than his parents.

[32:29] JZ: That's fascinating, yeah. And how, how long was your grandfather around for?

CS: He died in... Dad died on New Year's Eve 63, grandmother died six months before him, and grandad died in 62, I think, 61.

[33:18] JZ: Okay, so you would've got to know, you have memories of him?

CS: I have memories of him.

[33:22] JZ: And was he charismatic in a way you might expect a singer and an actor to be?

CS: He was depressed.

[33:30] JZ: Right, okay.

CS: Because he'd come over, and if he had come over here as a stopover to going to America and pick up acting and nothing happened, you can see why he probably was.

[33:41] JZ: Absolutely.

CS: He also had a very good voice, and he took part in talent competitions, so he was... he did the Carol Levis, which you won't know, but Carol Levis was a kind of talent show that used to go round the country, it wasn't on telly or anything, round the country, and I remember going to see him in, I think it might've been Richmond Odeon, and he was singing 'Bless this House'.

[34:06] JZ: Okay.

CS: And he made a record of it, so I've got a record of Uncle Kev singing that. So, yes, the family, the more I think about it, the more I've researched it, I think there was big issues in terms of how their lives had gone and I think the onset of depression and any other mental health issues probably all came from that.

[34:30] JZ: Of course, yeah, yeah. So, we're gonna talk about music in a little bit I think, but just before we go there, I mean, what happened to the family post-Bushy Park? 1951 was it, that you moved out?

CS: Um, no. 53, how old was I then? 46, 50... I was probably... 52/53. We were rehoused in a council flat, the address of which was Number 2 Birdwalk, and it was on the borders of Twickenham and Hounslow. And it was just me and my mum, and after where we'd come from it was amazing, I had my own bedroom, and we had a little garden at the back, and my bedroom overlooked the cemetery. Overlooked a cemetery. It was literally there, I used to love watching what went on in the cemetery, people getting buried and things. So, my mum had already got involved, my Dad was never in that flat, and my mum was already involved with this other man, and I think we must've lived in Birdwalk for a couple of years before she moved in with the other man, in a house, in a bungalow his father had built, and we all moved, literally, half a mile down the road. So I wasn't in Birdwalk that long, but...

[36:04] JZ: And where was that house that was built, sorry?

CS: It was all on the borders, it was Hanworth, all on the borders of Twickenham. I changed schools, then, went to Heathfield Junior, which is... I'm starting to remember a bit more then, and also made some proper friends that I still know. I had a seventieth birthday party last year and some of the friends I knew from those days, a couple, came to the party who I knew. We'd kind of played on the swings together and gone fishing in the Crane, River Crane, etc.

[36:34] JZ: And in terms of this area, Kingston, did you end up having links to around here, did you?

CS: Only in as much as... my Dad worked as a storeman at Bentalls, as I told you, and I went... I was brought here to do shopping, mum did the coal thing here, but other than that, more to Hampton Court, I remember being taken, when we were living in Bushy Park, I remember being taken to a fair at Hampton Court, and I was in my Dad's arms, so I must've been only two or three maybe, and again, just those kind of snapshots that you keep in your head. I remember going into this big tent, and seeing this lady in a bikini, in a block of ice, it was part of this fair that was on at Hampton Court. So, Kingston specifically not, other than coming here to do shopping, we were more focused, or our lives were more focused, on the Twickenham end.

[37:50] JZ: And what did you know about your father's work at Bentalls?

CS: Only that he was a storeman, so that...

[37:55] JZ: Right.

CS: storeman seemed to be what he did, I know he did a bit of brick laying as well, after he came out of the army, because my grandad had also, my grandad... so, my greatgrandfather, the family say that he was a stonemason or – being Irish – he could've been a bricklayer [laughter]. So I think that was something he picked up through his father.

[38:30] JZ: Okay, now, your grandfather was this singer, and you also mentioned your father playing guitar and singing in the home, I mean, how important was music in general to your family? Is it something that you just have fond memories of?

CS: Hugely. Very, very, very, central. I remember sitting under my grandmother's dining table, she had a chenille cloth that went all the way down to the ground, I used to go under there and sing 'Old King Cole was a Merry Old Soul' when I was really young. At Christmas, when everyone got together, Uncle Kevin sang, Uncle Desmond played the piano, there was an upright piano in their tiny little house in Hampton Hill, music was... I remember after... I remember pulling the chair up to the fireplace where there was a mirror above it and singing along with **La Ganna Mobele** by Gili, we had an old record, and I would sing along to it and perform to the... so whatever the genes are, it was there. It was central to what went on.

[39:44] JZ: So you had a record player growing up?

CS: Must've done.

[39:47] JZ: Yeah, yeah.

CS: Must've done.

[39:47] JZ: And were your parents particularly devotees of any sort of brand of music?

CS: My mother was a huge Nat King Cole fan, and I remember actually... that was still when we lived in Bushy Park, I remember Mum and Dad meeting me from school and going to see Calamity Jane at the cinema in Teddington. And, yeah, I think that was around 53/54 that that came out. So, yes, musicals were always my thing when I was growing up.

[40:39] JZ: Right.

CS: Ah, interestingly, and again it comes back to this strange relationship I had with my mother, when I was fourteen I went to Nella Secondary Modern School in Twickenham, and I had a fabulous music teacher who took me under her wing and told me years after I'd left school, I met her in Richmond High Street, she said you had the best voice in twenty years of teaching, I said why didn't you tell me at the time? [laughter] She said, oh, it would've made you big headed, but I, on our school speech day, I was in the choir and I had to walk from the back of the hall where the choir was to the front of the hall and I had to get up on the stage and I sang 'How Beautiful are the Feet' from Handel's Messiah, which is one heck of a feat for a fourteen year old and I remember Miss Davis played the piano for me, and my mum very rarely came to school but she was there for this performance, and I remember after everything broke up I went over to her and it just so fits with what I know of my mother, I went over to her and, you know fourteen year old 'what did you think? What did you think?' and she said 'I thought you were very nervous'. And she probably did.

[41:54] JZ: Oh dear.

But then, off the back of that, one of the school governors, or somebody associated with the school, was also involved in the Royal Academy of Music and they asked my mother if I could... if it would be feasible for me to do an audition when I was sixteen because I should be studying music and she wouldn't let me do it. I think in a way her unfulfilled ambitions in life, she was very pretty, I think her unfulfilled ambitions in life made her resent my possible potential. And she also told me once I had ideas above my station.

[42:30] JZ: Oh dear, yeah, yeah.

So you can see how this relationship. It's a long time ago, and I came... you know I went through the whole thing of trying to rationalise it, I thought why was my mother like that to me, but sometimes there are no answers. So it's not anything that bothers me now, you know, if I could talk to her, and she could talk to me back, I'd still like to know why she felt that way about me. But I suspect also she'd come down with all this hope of a bit of a better life after Lancashire and it had all gone so pear-shaped and wrong, Dad ends up permanently in a mental hospital, the man she went off with wasn't a great guy, and then I'm showing signs of wanting to get up on stage and sing, and she probably just resented it.

[43:09] JZ: And do you remember having those ambitions yourself, was it something that you wanted to do?

CS: I never saw myself doing anything else. It was my thing, it was what I could do, and after I'd done the family research after 2007, the only remaining person from my... my... their generation, so my Uncle Kevin's wife, so she wasn't a blood relationship, but she was married to Uncle Kev who sang in the talent show, she said, she said, you won't remember it, she said, but you used to stand by Nanny's fireplace, she said, and you used to shout at everybody 'please be quiet', she said, you were this big, please be quiet, I'm going to sing, please be quiet' she said, you used to shout until everybody stopped talking and then you'd sing. So, and my... performing, performing, gene has been absolutely intrinsic to my whole life.

[44:13] JZ: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

CS: And that comes from grandad.

[44:21] JZ: Yeah, yeah, of course, no doubt.

CS: It's fascinating.

[44:31] JZ: Yeah. And these were show tunes, was it, that captured your interest?

CS: Yeah, yes. There's no 50s musical. Okay, the reason I got my BBC producer job was, there were 250 applicants for one, um, two jobs. Music producers. I originally went in to produce live music. And, um, there were so many applicants that they had to whittle it down. So, I did an initial pre-lim interview, before it went to a full BBC board, and the man that interviewed me was passionate about 50s musicals, luck or what? So, we spent the hour we were supposed to be talking about why I thought I could do this, actually swapping show tunes. And he said 'I bet you don't know this one from Annie Got Your Gun', I was like [sings]. And had I gone to study, I would've done musicals. I was never gonna be Maria Callas, I was gonna be Julie Andrews.

[44:49] JZ: Do you have a particular favourite musical?

CS: Um, I loved the two – I always put them together – Oklahoma and Carousel. I always see those in the same bag. Romantic, beautiful songs, latterly, you know, there's some... I lament the fact that now there are so many musicals that are basically just made up of old tunes and bands that used to be there. The days of these kind of new, I think it must be really hard for writers now, to come up with new stuff, because all this stuff. And obviously earn dosh. So, musicals is what I would've liked to have done.

[45:30] JZ: And how about more broadly popular music. I mean, you grew up at a time when trends shifted continuously.

CS: Hugely.

[45:42] JZ: And hugely and significantly and, you know, it's such a fascinating period to look at from various genres' point of view.

CS: It is.

[45:49] JZ: And, I mean, what were your memories of your interaction with what was being played on the radio and what your peers were listening to?

CS: First record I bought, or somebody bought for me, was Here Comes Summer by Jerry Keller which was [sings], a typical American Beach Boys-y 50s kind of thing.

[46:10] JZ: Do you know what year that would've been?

CS: It was – we were living in the flat, so, oh God no, I don't, I can't begin. Were we living in the flat? Or were we living in a house by then? I would've said it was... I was still at school. I left school in 62, so, I would've thought that it would be roundabout, somewhere between 58 and 62, roundabout there. Um, but, it's funny because I've always had a really wide, very wide, I love classical music, I sing in a big choir, I've done most of the big choral works, which I only started doing after I stopped work, I love it passionately. I understand it in a way I didn't understand it when I was younger. But, at the same time, I just absolutely love Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin. The Beatles, I doubt whether there's many songs of the Beatles that I couldn't sing to you, I also made a programme with Paul McCartney.

[47:17] JZ: Really.

CS: When he had, when he had 'Give My Regards to Broad Street'. Fell in my lap, presenter I'd worked with said McCartney, well, knew McCartney, will give me an hour, do you want it? Yes. Grab it. So, we did mostly, because you did what McCartney wanted to do, so mostly [inaudible]. But we did really really well, until, I've got this great story. I don't think it's out there, I've never heard anyone else say it, was that Hey Jude, when they were recording Hey Jude, Ringo was in the loo when they started the take, what's his face, the producer...

[47:56] JZ: George Martin?

CS: George Martin. Hadn't realised he wasn't there, he wasn't in the booth, so he was, he wasn't there when they started, so if you remember it starts with the piano and voice 'hey Jude', and then the drums come in with a rat-a-tat-tat-tat, and apparently that was the point at which he managed to get back in to the drums, just in time, before it got to the next chorus. And I remember saying to him, 'is that true, or are you just winding me up?' and he said, 'God's honest truth, it's absolutely the case'.

[48:25] JZ: Amazing.

CS: And then I was invited to a gig with – yes, this was when I was at Radio 2 – I was invited to a gig, he invited me, or invited a gang of Radio 2 producers to a gig. And got up, and performed a load of stuff, and then Johnny Kidd – Johnny Kidd from the Pirates, which was a late 50s, early 60s, band [sings], just an absolute iconic guitar sound, he was there, and he came up, and Paul and Johnny Kidd just did a set of rock and roll.

[49:37] JZ: Amazing.

CS: And you, it was one of those moments when you think, I'll remember this forever. It was just so fabulous.

[49:40] JZ: Absolutely. So, just going back to your earlier experience, sorry, what was that record, that you said you got?

CS: Here Comes Summer.

[49:43] JZ: Yes.

CS: Jerry Keller. What I would say, you know, is that one of the most... my musical... the reason I started to say that my music tastes were so loud, I was never really – other than the fact that our rounders teams at school were Cliff or Elvis, Beatles didn't figure at that point – and which kind of, that was my growing up era, I had a really wide taste in music. So I was never as in thrall to the zeitgeist at that time as, you look back on it and go 'oh, God, that must've been a really fantastic being around at that time. However, I did have some amazing musical experiences. My friend Sally went down to Eel Pie Island a lot, she was the year above me, and I went down there a few times. And, the other thing is, I was into jazz, and jazz and rhythm and blues were very much seen as part of all the same thing, so Eel Pie at that point had people like John Mayall and the Blues Breakers, and who I subsequently, many years later, went on and did a session with, actually worked with him.

[50:53] JZ: Oh, amazing.

CS: And, um, and my best story from it was John Baldry and the Hoochie Coochie Men. Just fabulous blues, just brilliant blues, and Rod Stewart guesting with them. As Rod Stewart came off the stage, me and Sally were kind of like this, he took his chewing gum out of his mouth and threw it on the floor, and I picked it up. And I promise you, for what must've been twenty or thirty years, in an old piece of paper, because they didn't have tissues in those days, I kept this... I kept Rod Stewart's DNA.

[51:31] JZ: That's incredible.

CS: In my... in a box of just stuff really. So, and I... So, I was really into things like Ken Colyer's Jazz Band, Acker Bilk, there was a jazz club near Hampton Court, it was a hotel, the something hotel, I used to go there a lot, as well, as I said, jazz, rock and roll, blues, were all kind of mixed up. I went to America in 1966, just because I wanted to go away.

[51:42] JZ: Right.

CS: And I went to work as a nanny for an incredibly rich family, so coming from a really poor background, I went to this house that had five car garage, and this massive... they were the Quaker Oats family basically. They just had millions and millions, and had works of art on the wall that were just astonishing.

[52:12] JZ: What part of the States are we talking?

CS: Um, Lake Forest, Illinois, which is just past... about thirty miles north of Chicago. Now when I was there, I went to see music bands, went to a club regularly and saw, not bands that you would particularly know, I think, I saw, where did I see the Troggs? I think I saw the Troggs there, and I saw the Righteous Brothers there. And, so, leisure at that time, when I got the night off from looking after the horrible kids, was often spent, that 60s era, and of course the Beatles were massive, then.

[52:43] JZ: Of course.

CS: I was there, I went from '66 to '68. So I was there for 67, for Woodstock and the Summer of Love.

[50:49] JZ: Summer of Love.

CS: And did I go? No, of course I didn't. So, sometimes people say, 'you were there for the Summer of Love' and I say, 'yeah' [laughter]. So Hendrix, I have to say that I went to Radio 2 and I had to produce an incredible variety of stuff, so anything from brass band to dance music to jazz to just anything that was chucked at you, your presenter usually was the knowledge, you were there to make sure that the timings worked, and, you know, and the links worked, etc. And that was when my musical knowledge and the extension and the broadness of my passion for music, that's when it really, I was just given a sweetie box to play with, it was utterly fantastic.

[53:36] JZ: I can imagine, I can imagine.

CS: But I remember Eel Pie really well, I remember, you know, going in, and I remember where the stage was, it wasn't a very tall stage, it was probably no more than a foot off the ground, and there would've been with the Hoochie Coochie Men, there must've been four or five, because I think they had a brass... they had brass with them, and anyway, fantastic.

[54:53] JZ: And the bouncing floor, as well?

CS: A bouncing floor. The bouncing floor more at the Crawdaddy, and I did go to the Crawdaddy, and I don't know who I saw, but it was the era of the Stones. I've certainly seen Mick Jagger in a small venue, I don't whether it would've fully have been the Stones, but I was a huge fan, I remain a huge fan, of the Yardbirds. And that was their era as well, then at – they were at the Station Hotel – and at some point they moved over to the athletic ground in Richmond. I don't think I went there that often, I don't think I liked the venue as much from memory, and again that was probably before I went to America. So after I left school at '62, between then and going to America, I did get out and about quite a lot.

[55:27] JZ: I mean, just some of the names that have already been mentioned, I mean, Rod Stewart, Rolling Stones, Eel Pie Island itself, the Yardbirds, I mean, these are all people that have links to this area.

CS: Of course.

[55:42] JZ: And this music sort of evolved so strongly in this area. I mean, did you ever get the sense that you were in a locality that was exceptional, doing something exceptional?

CS: No, because those things only happen in retrospect. It's when historians look back and say, 'God, that was happening there, that was happening there, God, that's amazing', but at the time, no, you don't, you're living it, you're going to see gigs, you're working, you're... so you know, not at all.

[56:04] JZ: Absolutely. And that's precisely why this project exists, is because we look at it and we see all these bands, and we see all this movement and happening here, and we go, 'wow, this was something special'. You know, it's not just Kingston, it's the stretch of the Thames.

CS: Yes, absolutely, it's the stretch of the Thames. Yeah.

[56:23] JZ: Down to Epsom.

CS: Yeah, because Richmond used to be my stomping ground, you know, the Castle Hotel in Richmond, used to get bands on there, there used to be a coffee bar we all used to get together called The Burge, which was just at the other side of the bridge on the Richmond side of it. You know, my whole... my whole teenagerdom, and even when I got back from America in 68, it was still the centre of where I did things. Zombies I went to see, and my memory is that I went to see The Zombies somewhere, a big Rod Argent fan, it was somewhere like Southall, and Sally – my partner in crime at that time – I said, 'oh, let's go'. So, I'm sure it wasn't local, but they were amazing. They were amazing, as well. And to be honest, you listen to the music – I'm hooked on all of the documentaries, these classic album things you get on Sky Arts and BBC 4 do a lot of it. Where it enables me to travel back in time, in terms of where I was and what I was doing. So many memories, so many, you know, because music provokes emotions that provokes feelings of where you were at particular times. Interestingly, and it has nothing to do with this, but I met Brian, my – subsequently we lived together for twenty years – he advertised for a girl singer in Melody Week, and I've still got the advert, and it cost him five shillings. He was just leaving college and we formed a band, and we did a lot of Latin-y, kind of Sergio Mendes type of stuff,

[58:13] JZ: Oh, I've just been getting into Sergio Mendes.

CS: Have you noticed they sampled it, I don't know who's done it, but they're doing breakdancing.

[58:24] JZ: Oh, right, I didn't know that.

CS: And it's been sampled and, you know, a rap been put round it, and it's absolutely brilliant. So, Brian did film music and television music, and I was very involved in that, did a lot of vocals for him, a lot of backing vocals for various, this would be from '69 onwards, and so during that time, that was what gave me the grounding to end up being a music producer, because I picked up what you did and how you did it, and I did it in a little, tiny – Aluman Stanley was the guy Brian worked with, who was Langman Stanley who did all the Stranglers, and Madness, and they did all of that. So, my entire life has been swallowed up by... which is why I have no particular taste.

[59:22] JZ: Sure, sure, sure. Well, I'm much the same. I can empathise. Let's go back, you mentioned the Yardbirds, are you familiar with them as a Kingston band?

CS: Not as a Kingston band particularly, just as a bloody good band.

[59:34] JZ: Just as a good band, yeah.

CS: Yeah, and again, and I've always kind of – maybe it's false snobbery or something – but I've always liked music that's [not?] absolutely mainstream. Which is maybe why I didn't immediately latch on to the Beatles to start off with, because the Beatles it was straight up and down, you know, two verses, chorus, two verses, chorus. Great songs, but I didn't realise that at the time.

[59:57] JZ: Yeah. There's just so much to talk about on this topic.

CS: There is, there is.

[1:00:04] JZ: Let's go back to Eel Pie. When you were going there, was it a ferry or would you have gone across the bridge?

CS: I don't remember a ferry, so it must've been a bridge.

[1:00:14] JZ: And did you have one of those Eel Pie passport things?

CS: You definitely had to have an Eel Pie passport and I remember having one, don't know what happened to it.

[1:00:14] JZ: Do you know what years your grandfather would've been a ferryman there?

CS: Well, he came over in 29/30, so it would've been 30s I'd have thought.

[1:00:14] JZ: So it would've been pre it being a music venue or a hotel.

CS: So, certainly a ferry existed, because I went to the Twickenham History website and had an email conversation with somebody, and yes, there were ferrymen doing it. But I don't have any definitive proof, because they didn't keep names of ferrymen, they just said, yes, there's a ferry and these are the times and such and such.

[1:00:19] JZ: Yep, so just talking about venues, you mentioned Eel Pie, you mentioned Craw Daddy. I mean, did you, do you recall ever coming to Kingston for any venues, because there were a lot of these bands played, you know, these big cinema gigs.

CS: You know, I might well've done, I might well've done, but again it's snapshots in my mind of places, and it was probably gigs that absolutely blew me away. So, I remember coming to the pictures here, um, I definitely remembering coming here to the pictures.

[1:00:59] JZ: I'll try and dig it out after we've done this, but there's a timeline of gigs that happened in Kingston, and it's just the biggest list of names you could imagine.

CS: Well, Kingston was, you know, Kingston – after Richmond – was the next kind of place where it was all happening, where it was. But I suppose because Richmond was so close, that that was the default. So if there was a band going to be, if the Yardbirds were gonna be in Richmond and they're were gonna be in Kingston, I would've gone to Richmond to see them, probably. That's the, I think that's why, Kingston – Kingston I think played, I suppose it played the part of always being present, and I certainly came here to shop a lot, even years later.

[1:01:46] JZ: Well, yeah, yeah, it's still known for its shopping today. Yeah, so then you talk about Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin, do you recall when the music started going down that slightly more psychedelic route?

CS: I don't, because I... again, I didn't go and see them, never saw them live, again, it's a genre of music that I picked up later. And again, again, it was probably when I was with Brian's band, because everybody in the world plays [sings a few bars] and pretend, even if it's just to themselves, it's one of those things. So, I think I probably became aware of it then. I'm a magpie. When I was working with the big bands, which I worked at the Hammersmith Pally with Ken Mackintosh for eighteen months, when – before disco, you used to get up there, you used to get your dots on Thursday, and you'd get on and do your new stuff on Friday, and it was, it was pops, it was whatever. So, I sang Karen Carpenter songs, and I sang Suzi Quatro songs, I sang ballads and, you know, it was a dance hall, so – at that era, at that time – I was taking in all the big band stuff, lot of the pops that I knew we'd be doing, when I went to Radio 2, I was taking in the music, so I did a folk programme for a year called the something Islands, and I started to become a... so I started getting my head into folk music. So it's almost like every bit of my life has had a musical theme to it, but they've all been different and, in a way, they've been forced on me because of where I've been at the time. But one of my presenters who is quite famous and once said to me, 'you know what your best talent is?', I said, 'what?', and he said 'bluffing'. So I know a little bit about a lot of things.

[1:04:07] JZ: Yeah, yeah.

CS: And that applies to music. But nowadays, the things that... I don't think that I know enough about anything, and that era of psychedelic music, was something that I knew of, I knew it was out there, but I have latterly become so much more interested in it. And kind of understood the importance of it.

[1:04:29] JZ: And you mentioned the one genre that I was gonna bring up next which is folk. Because we've mentioned jazz, RnB, rock n roll. And again was folk was something again you became into after the event as it were?

CS: [Pause] Yes.

[1:04:45] JZ: I mean do you recall sort of Bob Dylan first springing up?

CS: Yes. I do. Just let me rewind here. Because Bryan and I used to go to a folk club in - Ronnie Scott's in Wardour Street, and we used to go to a folk club in Wardour Street as well. But yeah, Dylan, Joan

Baez, Judy whatsherface. They tend to be - just thinking - they tend to be artists that were recording. And also being a singer it was voices for me. So Dylan - I loved Dylan's songs but he sounded like a foghorn. So I would prefer to hear Dylan's beautiful songs sung by somebody who could really sing.

[1:05:36] JZ: Yeah that's quite a common position I believe. [Laughs] Actually that prompts an interesting question which is how would you have discovered music? I mean would it have been first through the radio, would it have been through television, would it have been -

CS: Radio. Always.

[1:05:53] JZ: Any particular radio stations that would have-

CS: We're talking about Light Programme in the old days. I used to listen to Saturday Club with Brian Matthew on the Old Light Programme when I was a kid. With Nellie the Elephant and - look it up, it's there.

[1:06:08] JZ: I'm not familiar with this.

CS: No no no, but it was a seminal kind of music - it was like a request show for kids, who'd ring up - oh not ring up, of course they didn't, they didn't email so they'd write in and ask for requests. So that was - but radio - it's funny how I ended up where I was. Cause the last 30 years I was working in radio in the work line, because I have a passion for it. I believe stories belong on radio. Stories don't belong on television because there's too many other things to distract. During the course of my work - working on Drive Show on Radio 2 I met some amazing people who had fantastic command of the English language and they could only do that on radio. So radio always - music as well as speech - but yeah, music. But I've got a massive - I gave away 5000 vinyl CDs when I left Radio 2. I kept about 2 or 3000 CDs. Bit by bit I've whittled them away but I still have a core of probably 5 or 6 hundred, all from that time. I didn't just buy the buy, I sometime got a rack in the hall and sometimes just grab one as I'm going out and I'll just listen to something, I don't know what I'm going to listen to, that was the rack. Put it into the CD player in the car. And the first thing that came out - the first track on it, it was called The Singer and the Song, the first song was Don't Let The Sun Go Down By Me by George Michael where Elton John comes on. And I was there at Wembley that night. And I just sat in the car, listening to it. Cause George Michael goes 'ladies and gentlemen, Mr Elton John'. And he walks on, just like a bloke, gets on the piano and starts singing. And the audience had no idea this was gonna happen. And the eruption of applause that night - and again, Radio 2 just went to everything music-wise because record companies wanted to get you plugging their records.

[1:08:26] JZ: And do you remember sort of at what age you would have started going to see live bands?

CS: Yeah. I would have said pretty much 16. 15, 16.

[1:08:38] JZ: And would your parents have had an attitude towards this? Any concern or-

CS: No. I don't think they would have noticed. The other big thing at that time for me was ice skating. I went to Richmond ice rink at least once a week. So again I had this wide kind of - so no. There was a few of us kind of - few girlfriends - I went to an all girl school so we were a gaggle. We were a gaggle of girls.

[1:09:07] JZ: I was gonna say yeah, what were your - were you in tune with your friends on-

CS: Pretty, yeah. Sometimes, yeah. I mean certainly you compartmentalise so some of my - maybe some of my more esoteric likes might not filter into them. But yeah. Things like Stones, Yardbirds, ultimately the Beatles, although I didn't actually - like I said, I didn't like the Beatles until much-

[1:09:32] JZ: You weren't one of the screaming girls at the front of the Beatles gigs?

CS: I never screamed at anyone. *You're* lucky to have *me* here.

[Laughs] Too right, too right, too right.

CS: What time is it? I've just gotta - I'm fine, I'm fine. Cause Terry was quite happy to wait for me. So I just - I'll just make sure he hasn't texted me. He's a great bloke. I live in a wonderful place now. That's fine.

[1:10:02] JZ: Yeah I don't think we have too much - are you OK for a drink or anything? You don't need a break or? No. I don't think we have too much more to have to go into but yeah I'm just enjoying this sort of exploration of those popular music years. Do you remember television sort of having an impact on music in any real way?

CS: Top of the Pops. Other than that the only music on tele growing up in the 50s - first of all, we didn't have a tele, grandparents as I said had a tele. I don't think we got a tele until probably late 50s I would have thought. So Top of the Pops yes growing up in the 60s. And then it was things like you get the Proms, a bit of Proms, you'd get Come Dancing so you'd get big band stuff. And then - I'm not sure when Old Grey Whistle Test started, when that - I remember that being massive. For me. Because of the music they were covering. And I remember it being - it was so much more influential than anything else on. Old Grey Whistle Test, cause of the type of...

[1:11:30] JZ: What was that, sorry?

CS: Oh, Google it. Bob Harris - whispering Bob. Everything. So you got the New York Dolls. You got everything, from Dylan, New York Dolls, through the whole punk era. Which I never liked because it wasn't musical. Things like Bread. Steely Dan. Playing live, always playing live. Studio setting. Do, and you can download some of it, and they still show some of it on BBC4. Absolutely magnificent in terms of an outlet for music. So my - I'm not sure, that must have been 70s I think.

[1:12:12] JZ: And you mentioned first going to see live gigs around 16, would that have been the same age that you would have started buying vinyls as well?

CS: Probably, yeah.

[1:12:22] JZ: Did you have any - I'm trying to think if this is - the timing - it might have been before your time actually - any knowledge of Decca Records having this plant in New Malden?

CS: No, no. The only thing I know about Decca Records is their A&R man who was called - didn't sign the Beatles.

[1:12:42] JZ: Yes the famous story yeah. The story allegedly goes that they did sign the Stones because John Lennon felt sorry for him and drew his attention to this other band - you missed out on us.

CS: Dick.

[1:12:55] JZ: Dick Roe I think his name was, yeah. Yes the whole Decca story is very very interesting as well. And I'm just trying to get as holistic view of the music scene as possible. And the charts - were they important?

CS: Yeah they were. Yeah. It was important - I remember I used to record - it was Pick of the Pops on radio. That would have been - I think was that on the Light Programme on Radio 1? Because we've just had all these anniversaries of 50 years of Radio 2, Radio 1. I think Pick of the Pops might have been on the Light Programme. And I used to record it. I had a - got hold of an old Grundig which of course if they'd known at the time I'd have been sent to prison for 10 years. And it was very important you knew what was in the charts. There was a band of us in our class at school - our form classroom was an art room and we had our - we didn't have desks, we had long tables. And there was four of us formed a musical group, ala whoever, Supremes. We used to learn the songs and perform them in class. So yes, so music was very very very important. But at the same time at school I was learning classical stuff as well. So - but yes. Pick of the Pops was...

[1:14:30] JZ: One of the things that's always interested me about this era is you hear snippets of sort of rivalries and divisions - you're a rock n roller or you're a trad jazz person. Or you're a Beatles person or you're a Stones person. You mentioned earlier Cliff or Elvis. Did you - do you have any memories of these sort of divided camps or whether you were sort of members of...

CS: Yes - and what you wore depended - or you can tell by what somebody wore which side of the camp they was. But again I'll go into this - my esoteric choices because I didn't ever belong to either camp personally. But yes certainly there was - as I said rounders was Cliff or Elvis. I think I preferred Cliff to Elvis at the time. Because the Young Ones - his film, when he started making films - the Young Ones was one of my - that was a musical - that was one of my favourite films in the entire world.

[1:15:33] JZ: And this would have been the time the Teddy Boys were terrorising the streets as well? Do you recall them? Did you have any interactions with them yourself?

CS: Teddy Boys - yes. No but there was quite - Richmond was quite a hotbed for [pause] or was that mods and rockers? No Richmond has always been - certainly there were Teddy Boys in Richmond when we went to - when I went to the ice rink or went to Castle Ballroom or one of those things but no, Teddy Boys - but Teddy Boys - they tend to be pretty invisible during the week but then they used to surface at the weekend. And very often there would be a gathering, a bit like the in the 90s rave were, there would be gathering and a lot of that happened on the south coast. I do remember that. But I remember things like the Don Lang Five, was it, who were basically a kind of scat rock band and they were a massive - they were Teddy Boys, they were Teddy Boys basically. I was also into a lot of American music - so Ricky Nelson, that era as well.

[1:16:44] JZ: I was just going to come onto the sort of Transatlantic relationship which is obviously hugely important. And going back to the war - part of the reason we focus on the war in this project is because the presence of the army base led to jazz and blues records finding their way over here. The American Forces Network broadcast things. But then you yourself - I mean you later on went on to move to America yourself. Was there - in your head did you divide American music from British music? Or was it all sort of in one big melting pot as it were?

CS: Good question. No I think I've always - it's the piece of music that has won me over rather than its origins I think. I don't care - actually I don't care very often who's written it, or who's sung it, it's the writing and it's the lyrics. So American music - my big - I tell you why the Beatles - I was never that much of a fan of the Beatles at the time. It's because I was a massive Beach Boys fan. And it was

the same era. And I - and again it's music that took me there. And the vocal harmonies they did were just astonishing. Never saw them live. I know the one that's left.

[1:18:06] JZ: Brian Wilson?

CS: Yeah. He did a gig at Wembley. And I'd gone to Steely Dan a few days before and I couldn't do both. And I regretted it hugely but I would love to have seen them in their heyday. It was very clever music. So yeah, so Beach Boys was probably my Beatles.

[1:18:32] JZ: Do you remember Pet Sounds coming out?

CS: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Good Vibrations. I actually sang Good Vibrations as part of a TV show. I was one of the voices in it. Have I told you about Elaine Page? I mean it's not relevant really, but it's interesting.

[1:18:49] JZ: Oh no please go on. [Laughs]

CS: After the big bands I was working with one big band and I got spotted by Johnny Stewart who was the originator of Top of the Pops. Because he was putting together a new music show called One More Time. And it was eight singers, four boys, four girls. And we basically just did segway music for half an hour. And it was pops, it was jazz. Duets. Ensemble pieces. Five part harmony pieces, all of that. And one of the other singers was Elaine Page. And this is 1976. This was before she got Evita. And I always with her the day she got call from Andrew Lloyd Webber to tell her she got the part. So again - the great thing about doing that, I was required to sing just about anything they chucked at me - and I think because of that, in fact I've never thought about it before but the eclectic nature of my love of music, who I went to see, what I was interested in, what records I bought is all - has all come from this kind of [pause] I don't like being - in my whole life I don't like people putting me in boxes. I'm - now I'm 5ft and 71 and if anybody dares tell me I cannot or can't do something because of either my height or my age they'll get a wrap round the knuckles. So I've always hated being part of a group or part of - so music-wise, it also - so I would love that particular Joan Baez song. Joni Mitchell, massive fan, remain - she remains my favourite female singer. Now - never saw her live, regret. But I've always - I just - I have - it's the cliché - I like what I like. But I've never belonged to a group.

[1:20:43] JZ: Do you know the Pete Seeger song Little Boxes?

CS: [Sings] Little Boxes...

JZ: [Laughs] Sounds like you'd like that as well.

CS: [Sings] All made out of ticcy taccy...

JZ: That's the one.

CS: [Sings] Just the same.

[1:20:56] JZ: That's the one. But yeah you said the origins and the history behind a song is not necessarily the important thing to you.

CS: It's the song.

JZ: So when the sort of rhythm and blues explosion would have come about with the Rolling Stones and everything, were you conscious or aware that this had its origins in the sort of bluesmen of the Delta?

CS: Very much. Because I was into Fats Domino. The Ink Spots. All of the kind of doo-wap bands. And that kind of 40s, 50s vocal harmony kind of thing. So yeah, absolutely. And of course a lot of the stuff they covered as well was originally - kind of originated out of the blues bag. I saw an amazing gig at Hammersmith Odeon. And you actually wouldn't believe it now. And it would have been in maybe the early 70s. And it was a motown night. It was Stevie Wonder. Four Tops. Diana Ross. And the Supremes.

[1:21:59] JZ: It's not a bad line up.

CS: And three or four other absolute top names. And I remember it because we - they had stewards down each side. And - no, down one side. And as they started playing one side where the stewards were used to get up and start - and were bopping. And then the stewards would run over that side, and then that side would get up. The amount of live music that was available - through that whole 20 odd year period was just phenomenal. You couldn't ignore it.

[1:22:39] JZ: We could genuinely talk about this for hours and hours. Shall we have a look at some of these photos you've brought in?

CS: That's me at school -

JZ: So just for the tape I'll just say we're looking at a school photo of, what, 30 to 40 children.

CS: That is St Peter and St Paul's in Teddington. That is me. That's me there.

[1:22:57] JZ: So we're pointing to the second to right on the bottom row.

CS: And that - I was living in Bushy Park when I was at that school.

[1:23:07] JZ: So would you have been quite unusual compared to your peers due to where you were living at this point?

CS: I don't remember it being.

JZ: You don't remember it being a deal?

CS: I remember I was madly in love with Adrian. And we had an Indian girl called Radhika Ramachandren. Which was very unusual in those days. Yeah, she was - but we didn't notice.

[1:23:30] JZ: It's a good question actually, how sort of ethnically homogenous was this - was your -

CS: Virtually nothing at all.

JZ: Of other races or ethnicities, yeah.

CS: Virtually nothing at all. When I was probably about 13 my mother and her chap had made friends with a Pakistani family and I remember we all went on holiday to Switzerland together. And I remember - and she used to wear ethnic dress. Now I remember walking through the streets in

Switzerland, people pointing at - so unusual to see it. It's never - no, it was very rare. It was extremely rare. And Radhika certainly was a rare commodity in those days. That you'd have - I just remember her being one of us, I don't think she was any different to us really.

[1:24:23] JZ: I was just gonna say, do you remember anyone treating her any differently?

CS: No, I don't. I really really don't.

JZ: That's good to hear. Right -

CS: That's Camp Griffiss which I've shown you. That's me in the bath in Bushy Park.

[1:24:43] JZ: Yeah, and that was your friend in the -

CS: That's Carol Ann Nash who - my teeth went into her forehead. And that is - that's taken outside our house, that's my dad. My mum and me. And I don't know who they were - they would have been one of the families that were there. You can have these. That's it. These are just a couple of timelines that I've done. Well you can have em. Some of it's just - oh that. [Pause]. That's another one, it's just - as I said I've been writing the story. That's not relevant. Take that one with me.

[1:25:29] JZ: Looking at this time, do you remember the Festival of Britain, is that what it was called? Were they the South Bank was kind of built and all of that stuff.

CS: No. I know of it but no. It was - my world was small. In those days our worlds were small. We didn't travel around, we didn't go - our... That was some notes I did.

[1:25:52] JZ: Well certainly feel free to share these with me electronically.

CS: But I can pass it all onto you. What was this one? Yeah. Oh that's 1950. At my Uncle Tom's wedding. And there's me there. And that's my mother. And that's my dad. That's my grandfather. The actor.

JZ: Oh right there he is. Where is this wedding?

CS: This is in Twickenham. St James's Church, Twickenham.

[1:26:25] JZ: What happened to the chewing gum by the way?

CS: I lost it in a house move. Well all I know is I'd completely forgotten it. It was in a box of naff earrings that I'd brought back from America, stuff, and it wasn't there.

[1:26:42] JZ: I wonder if you still had it whether you could actually sell it for quite a bit. I'm sure you could.

CS: I'm sure. If eBay - you can have those.

JZ: Thank you, yes, yes.

CS: And the rest - in fact the - what's that one? [Pause]. Yeah that's most of the stuff I've told actually. You can have that. No that's great. And they emailed me - so I've been a - you can understand why I love radio. Cause I never stop talking.

[1:27:17] JZ: I could not empathise with you more. There's a reason I have a podcast.

CS: What's the football team by the way?

[1:27:27] JZ: Oh Corinthian-Casuals. I'll turn off the tape unless you feel like you have anything else to say.