

Transcript of interview conducted May 25 2017

Interviewee: KEN HOWE (KH)
Interviewer: JAREK ZABA (JZ)
Also present: LAURA APPLEBY-BOWES (LAB)
Kingston-upon-Thames, England

Transcription: REBECCA DOGGWILER and JAREK ZABA

[00:00] JZ: Okay, so this is Jarek Zaba at Creative Youth HQ in Kingston upon Thames with Laura-Appleby Bowes, is it?

LA: Bowes.

JZ: Ah, there you go. With Laura Appleby-Bowes who is joining me, and our interviewee today is?

KH: Ken Howe.

[00:19] JZ: Yes, your place and date of birth if that's okay?

KH: I was actually born in Chiswick, but I was only there for two days and I've been in Teddington for the rest of my life.

JZ: Right.

KH: Now, that was 1945, February the 2nd.

[00:36] JZ: Excellent. Great, I'm going to start the way that I've always started these things with all my interviewees and just get you to run me through your history with Kingston upon Thames specifically. What is your relationship with the town?

KH: It's always been the place to go shopping. I can't honestly say that I've had a huge affinity to Kingston, because I've always had to cross the bridge to get there. I've been more leaning into Twickenham, but certainly there have been some good music venues in Kingston. The Grey Horse, I don't know if you've come across that one before, but up until, well, a couple of months ago that was probably one of the best ones locally. But it's funny you mentioning the old Folk Barge, I think I did actually get on that once, and... how on earth they ever got a certificate for it, well, I think things were a bit easier in those days.

[01:48] JZ: Do you know what year that would've been, when you were got on the Folk Barge?

KH: Early sixties.

[01:59] JZ: Yeah, we'll definitely get back on to all those specific venues, surely. By the way, just as a note on the interview, if you're looking at me and I'm not saying anything and just nodding like an idiot, that's just for the audio, it's better for us not to make too much noise. So, if it seems a bit like we're not responding that much, that's the only reason. Well, we'll get on to history and Kingston's history in a bit, but just to-

KH: The Hawker-Siddeley Social Club had a lot of music activity going on there, although it seems incredible looking at the site of it now, just all housing. I don't know how many thousands of people were working there, but, the sports and social club was a very big leisure activity for Kingston.

[02:57] JZ: Where's that exactly? The Hawker-Siddeley, is that what you said?

KH: Yeah, Hawker-Siddeley, the aircraft company.

[03:04] JZ: Where physically, where geographically was that?

KH: Sort of Canbury Gardens going further back towards Hamlin, you know, just bordering onto Richmond.

[03:18] JZ: Okay, yeah, so that's interesting. How about your music tastes yourself, are you... do you have any particular favourites?

KH: Well, I always used to follow the Stones, but they were mainly Twickenham-based. My brother was a Who fan, he used to drag me out to Kingston a couple of times when they were performing. We actually probably saw the best of the bands at that time, at one time or another. It was one of those spots that everyone seemed to get to and you did have the big impresarios like Larry Parns, who had his own stable of British rock artists [4:08] the... Billy Fury, Joe Brown, era. And they were all packaged together and come on and do twenty minute stints each, and as a result of that, I think, the overseas bands started to come in and work on the same format. So you'd get a couple of American stars backed up by some of the lesser British bands and that would create a package. Invariably, that was in the cinemas, the old ABC that was closed, and was a bingo hall, and Granada which, I don't know if it's still a cinema or not, but was a nightclub for a while and I think they've still got one cinema screen there but, you know, for a week, they'd close them down from the cinema and it'd be, you know, performing artists.

[05:13] JZ: And do yourself have any strong personal memories about specific gigs, any standouts for you?

KH: Well, I remember Roy Orbison, actually, he came on stage and it was just him and his guitar, he must've had a backing band somewhere but they were concealed behind the curtains or in the pit or something, but he just had an incredible voice and he just filled the whole of the theatre as he was, just singing, and he was quite incredible. And the other guy was Phil Everly, the Everly brothers were supposed to be doing a tour but Don Everly OD'd on something and had to bail out at the last minute, I think he got hospitalised back to the States, and Phil Everly went alone and, you know, what he sort of lacked with his brother, he certainly made up for with his energy and gave quite a performance.

[06:25] JZ: The Everly Brothers came up this morning, actually, because the guy I was interviewing was saying he tried to copy the style of the Everly Brothers.

KH: Many have tried [laughs].

[06:37] JZ: Yeah, absolutely. In terms of these big names, in Kingston, was there a sense that Kingston was a kind of stop off on a wider tour, like Kingston was one of THE places to visit, kind of thing?

KH: Yeah, that's right, most of these things started in London, so came... Kingston was an early part of the touring venues. Then go up north and probably come back south through Wales and the West Country.

[07:12] JZ: Were venues defined by genres? I guess we've got the Folk Barge because that is, I guess, but others differ perhaps, I don't know?

KH: Well, I suppose the Folk Barge was definitely a genre. There wasn't anywhere else quite like that. But the other places were just picked as being venues that could hold fifteen hundred people, they would hope to sell out every night to cover their costs. And make a huge profit as well, no doubt. But it seems incredible that you could go and see a package with half a dozen acts on it for about ten shillings, or something like that. God knows what they'd want for that these days. Doesn't bear thinking about.

[08:18] JZ: Absolutely. Do you remember much about this night that you had on the Folk Barge? Do you remember what it was like, what the atmosphere was like, what you saw?

KH: I was pretty pissed at the time, so I can't honestly claim to remember. I was sort of making sure I didn't go over the sides, so, bit of a sobering sort of thing. I wondered what the hell I was doing there and how on earth I'd got on in the first place, but there we are.

[08:50] LA: Were you, as my Dad would put it, strutting your stuff?

KH: [laughs]

[08:58] JZ: I mean, in terms of the culture of these places, were they quite rowdy and alcohol-fuelled?

KH: They weren't as alcohol-fuelled as the press would've had you believe [9:12] but certainly alcohol was available there, they were more hippie than rowdy I think. I think people used to go down there for a quiet smoke more than anything else, they generally never had any major stars there, it was always local groups, players, can't think of anybody that was actually there when I was there. It was, you know, a bit more low key than others, it was just, as it was an unusual venue it sort of went up at the headlines rather than because of its actual performers and status.

[10:08] JZ: I think I partly asked because I'm reading a book currently about Eel Pie Island in Twickenham.

KH: Not Michele?

[10:18] JZ: Michele Whitby is a chapter within it. It's essentially a series of edited... different contributors with a different chapter – I forget what you call those kind of books – but yes, Michele Whitby is a chapter within it. But essentially, within that, they do talk about Eel Pie as being this really wild kind of party atmosphere.

KH: Well, that was completely different. But there again, you could have a dozen folk barges, the size of it there. But they had this incredible, sprung dance floor and when everybody was going on that, the thing used to go up two or three feet, it was quite an incredible sensation.

[11:10] JZ: So you went to Eel Pie yourself.

KH: Oh, yeah. That was almost a residency, there.

[11:16] JZ: What period of time would you have been visiting Eel Pie?

KH: That would've been... sixty to sixty-six, I think.

[11:30] JZ: And how regularly would you have ended up there?

KH: At least every other week.

[11:38] JZ: Wow. So you must surely have seen some incredible performers at that time.

KH: It was the cream of... We didn't think that there was that much difference to rhythm and blues to rock and roll, actually. Except the rhythm and blues was something that American negroes sang. Over here, it was all pretty much the same sort of thing. So, it was more of a heavy rock influence.

[12:13] JZ: Yeah, because Eel Pie itself was formed on-

KH: A jazz club, to start.

[12:18] JZ: Yes, I was going to say, a jazz club. I mean, this period of time, sixty to sixty-six, did the music change over that period or was it mostly..?

KH: No, it did. The jazz bit finished, and it was the bands taking over, then.

[12:34] JZ: And did you see the Rolling Stones?

KH: Oh, yeah.

[12:37] JZ: I imagine you must've done. I mean, they essentially had a residency there.

KH: That's right, they did.

[12:42] JZ: Every month or so, right?

KH: Let me see, they did eight months, I think? And they took off very quickly after starting that, so there was no way they were going to extend on the kind of deal that they'd been given there.

[13:00] JZ: I mean, you know, obviously we are focusing on Kingston but we can't really talk about the music scene without talking about Eel Pie, because of its significance in the wider region. Was there any sense that south west London at this time was kind of, you know, a bit of a hub of something exciting and new and revolutionary musically?

KH: Yeah I think that the south was looking for something to really have as their own, to rival the Beatles, I think they were getting a bit pissed off with the northern sound and, you know, you had to talk with a Liverpool accent to get anywhere, so when good old cockney boys the Rolling Stones came along that was a breath of fresh air and course they sort of spun off on their own... Trying to think who else we had there then... suppose it wasn't that long after the Small Faces came along and then of course we had Rod Stewart – oh, I left out Long John Baldry – who was... I'm probably contradicting myself now, but he used to play... well, used to sing with... the Cyril Davies Rhythm and Blues All Stars and that was actual rhythm and blues and Cyril Davies was probably the greatest harmonica player that's ever lived, I mean, he was absolutely incredible, it was a panel beater in Hounslow who SOMETHING he could still knock a harp out. When he died, Long John Baldry just took the band over and rechristened it Long John Baldry and the Hoochie Coochie Men [15:00] and then – I suppose you've heard the story of him discovering Rod Stewart at Twickenham Station, just saw this nose appear from a pile of clothes on the platform and he yanked him out.

[15:18] JZ: It's amazing, if you go to the Eel Pie site now, you go to the other side of the river and, you know, it's... I think this Michele is opening an Eel Pie museum is my understanding.

KH: She is. It's late actually.

[15:30] JZ: Right, right. But up until that opens, there's very little to recognise this incredible history, except there's this one plaque that sits on the river.

KH: Got opened two years ago.

[15:40] JZ: Is that right? That's great, because on it, there's a picture of five musicians – I don't know, it might even be Long John's band, or whatever – but Rod Stewart is one of the members, but he just stands out so much from the other four because of how he's dressed. Even back then, Rod Stewart was such... But yeah, Rod Stewart is a name that comes up, David Bowie used to hang out there-

KH: Yes, he did. He was big mates with Jagger for a long, long time, well, up to his death I would guess. They didn't perform very much publicly together that I know of, apart from Live Aid, but apparently it's not unusual to see the pair of them... would turn up pissed for a party or something and blag their way in.

[16:36] JZ: And would you have come across the Yardbirds at this stage?

KH: Yes, very much so. They were a local, Hampton Grammar School band, I think.

[16:50] JZ: Well, we interviewed Top Topham, who is one of the founding members-

KH: Oh, did you? Right.

[16:57] JZ: And it was actually Hollyfield School in Surbiton. He went there, Clapton went there, one or two of the others, Chris Dreja went there. That's one institution I know they have a link to in Kingston, but further beyond I think, yeah, there are links with-

KH: Well, Paul Samuel-Smith was at Hampton.

[17:13] JZ: Yeah, there you go.

KH: And the drummer, Jim McCarty, as well. Well, Top Topham is in the reformed band, isn't he?

[17:26] JZ: Yeah.

KH: I was away when they played here last year, but apparently they were pretty good.

[17:35] JZ: I can tell you lots of interesting things. When the tape's up, I'll tell you a bit more, but [laughs]. Was there any sense though, that when you were seeing these people, because presumably when you were seeing the Rolling Stones, they weren't the mega stars that the Rolling Stones became, as we know now. Were they on their way to fame, or were they..?

KH: Oh, they were certainly, [18:00] everybody knew that they were on the way up. That was so obvious, because they were head and shoulders above everybody else that was around. And they had a really raw sound in those days. Jagger was a tremendous rock vocalist, and Keith Richards is just a legend in his own right. Yeah, they were clearly destined for stardom.

[18:38] JZ: Sorry, lost my trail there. So, Eel Pie was kind of a hugely-

KH: It was huge, yeah. It got closed down on the pretext of failing an electrical wiring test, and then it burnt down, and that was said to have been because of the faulty wiring but... Everyone thinks that the council paid somebody to just torch it, to end the problem.

[19:22] JZ: You mentioned earlier how these other kind of venues that we were talking, the more Kingston-based venues, you said they weren't as alcohol-fuelled as the media or press might have you believe. So was there disapproval from media and authorities and parents, I guess, towards things like Eel Pie and the music associated with them. Or was it more about culture?

KH: Well, it was the age of rebellion. I mean until you started to get the sort of band music coming out, previously you'd had basically Perry Como, Frank Sinatra, How Much Is That Doggie in the Window and all that. And suddenly the teenagers had their own music. And they wanted to enjoy it and it was loud. So it wasn't exactly alcohol fuelled, but if alcohol was available it was certainly consumed in pretty vast quantities I would say.

[20:47] JZ: But the overall ethos was one of rebellion.

KH: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[20:53] JZ: And how did your parents feel about it all?

KH: Erm. I didn't always tell them where I was going so... [laughs] That was easier than have a row.

[21:07] JZ: But they would have disapproved had they have known that you were...

KH: They weren't very keen on the idea, no. I had a couple of school friends that were playing with the Downminers [CHECK] Set and I used to say I was going up to see them. [Laughs] That sort of conveniently got round it without lying because I was seeing them, but they didn't know they were performing somewhere...

[21:36] JZ: And one of the things I'm trying to figure out is – the people who were listening to this kind of music and really getting into the scenes, was there like a distinction or compartmentalisation or people who like jazz people, and people who were rock n roll music, and people who were blues music.

KH: Yeah, yeah. Not so much between rock n roll and blues. But certainly jazz – they were considered pretty much outsiders.

[22:06] JZ: It's so interesting because obviously you know the Eel Pie stuff came from the jazz, you know it's interesting that there was this perception that they're so different and yet Arthur Chisnall who was the guy doing Eel Pie, he didn't seem fussed, he was just like bring them all in.

KH: First of the social workers.

[22:28] JZ: Yeah. Yeah.

KH: Incredible man.

[22:30] JZ: Yeah that's what the book says – he was a social worker before social workers ever existed.

KH: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

[22:37] JZ: Yeah, yeah. Incredible stuff. And in terms of the music itself – I mean do you remember when you first heard things like R&B or blues?

KH: Well [Long pause] Well I was still at school. [Pause] Gosh, I suppose I must have been about 15. Something like that. Maybe a bit younger. We used to try and get a Friday night music club going at school after school lessons when everyone could bring 45s in and play them. I suppose the predominant artist was probably Presley at the time. You know for somebody who's supposed to be the great rock n roller, he only did about four rock n roll numbers I think, all the rest were ballads, so... I really don't know how that kind of stuck but he did make the breakthrough from as I say the Perry Como, Frank Sinatra state to more of the rock music. Yeah. It sort of – the school thing then progressed out to going to see the bands live whenever you could. Eel Pie Island was a very cheap venue actually, about 5 bob or 7 and six, something like that.

[24:40] JZ: And my understanding is you paid an old lady on the bridge or something like that.

KH: Oh yeah, that was tuppence. Two old sisters who – I don't know if they had any legal entitlement to do that.

[Laughter]

[24:54] JZ: They were just opportunists.

[Laughter]

KH: Well they certainly latched onto that. We were all pretty high. Christ knows how it got there in the first place. You wouldn't want to do it sober.

[25:15] JZ: The book is full of all sorts of stories about people swimming across.

KH: Yeah. Most of them are true probably.

[25:25] JZ: Oh yeah, absolutely. You just mentioned about your Friday night music club, bringing in the records. It strikes me that there's almost three different ways one could consume music at this stage – it's either through the records, it's through seeing the artists play, or it's through the radio.

KH: Mm. Radio Luxembourg.

[25:44] JZ: Well yeah. We were talking about that this morning. What is the primary way that you would have consumed music growing up through the 60s?

KH: Ooo.. it probably would have started off with the radio I think. Records were – well they were about six shillings, something like that. So they were fairly expensive but then admission the venues was five bob, seven and six, so it's all around about the same time. Of course if you had the record, you had the permanent thing then so you could play that time and time again. You'd bring it with you to a Friday night music club, or record club or whatever you wanted to call it. I think as you sort of got more money you would go out and hear live music whenever you could as often as you could.

[26:50] JZ: And did you buy many records yourself? Are you any kind of collector?

KH: Yeah I probably had quite a good singles collection at one time. Got torn apart by my sister and my brother I think. That's family for you.

[27:08] JZ: And would it have been mostly the R&B and the blues that you'd have been buying or rock n roll or anything?

KH: A good chunk of that, yeah.

[27:21] JZ: And was there a particular store you would go to to obtain records, or were there sort of numerous places?

KH: Erm. Yeah. It was – numerous places actually. I think that the music industry was almost reborn with the new wave of rock n roll and R&B and suddenly people were saying 'well where can we get them?' And you were finding that long established furniture shops were saying 'we can do something here' and they'd open a record department. We had the one in Teddington High Street, that was very much a long standing furniture store. There was another in Hampton Hill. And I can't think of any place then that was a pure record shop. That came a bit later.

[28:25] JZ: Because I know the Bentalls used to have a big record area.

KH: That's right. I think it's gone now?

[28:34] JZ: Yes. Well they don't sell records there anymore. Was there – I mean, I guess it depends on what you were into – but I know that certain record stores were kind of known for being able to obtain these rare imports from the States.

KH: Oh that's true, yeah. There was a guy at school that used to get those for everybody. So he had the contact, and he very rarely let you down. So you know, it was far – if you weren't into, you know, the local furniture shop record department – they would look at you blankly if it wasn't in the top 20 I think – if you were looking an American import of a specialist sort of nature then you could have forget it with them. You had to go to a better outlet and as I say this guy at school, he was able to sort that out.

[29:41] JZ: So in that sense there was definitely an appetite for these American tunes that weren't necessarily mainstream over here.

KH: No, certainly not, not mainstream at all. It's funny that when you read about bands you find that a lot of the bands were doing exactly the same. You know they were really hungry to get hold of the latest imports.

[30:13] JZ: Yes that's exactly what Top Topham said to me was that they would desperately try and seek out all of these blues records that just simply weren't available.

KH: Well if you were the first band to be able to cover them over here, it was a big feather in your cap.

[30:31] JZ: Absolutely. While we're on the topic of imports from America.

[Laughter]

JZ: We'll go over to our friends. So putting on your local historian hat on I guess, what can you tell me about – in very broad terms – about the American army presence at Bushy Park? I mean when was it, why was it? How long did it last?

KH: Well it started of course when America came into the war. And they were having to set up bases all over England and Wales, and probably Scotland as well. And the Bushy Park one – it was supposed to be the headquarters for the – I think it's the fourth army air force. How you can have an army air force I don't know, but as opposed to the US air force, but anyhow it started off there. It was pretty much an administrative centre as far as I can make out. They completely transformed the park by putting up these prefabricated Nissen sheds all the way along Chestnut Avenue in between the trees so they had to put a natural camouflage anyway. And then they had – they dug some underground offices there. And later on, Eisenhower had his headquarters there. At one time was living in a house just opposite the park gates, until he moved to Telegraph Hill in Kingston. The concept of the American forces was to really make their army bases a home from home, and they really had all mod cons there. And everything was the height of luxury. They built a running track there for leisure times and at the time it was sort of second only to the White City, which was used for the 1948 Olympics. They had a ten pin bowling alley- I think it was an eight lane job, might have been ten. Nobody had seen bowling before so that was quite incredible. I'm not sure how many restaurants – they had a couple of restaurants at least there. If you Brits got on the right side of a couple of Yanks then you got invited in there on a Saturday night. There was quite something I gather. So it's ultimately a military defence establishment, I think more planning went on there than anything else, but it stayed – well, of course immediately after the war you had the Berlin problem where the Russians took the whole of East Germany I think, they surrounded Berlin and the only way in was by an air supply. And that was organised from Bushy Park so it was still necessary to keep the base going there while that problem existed. And that went on for some time. I think it was finally in the early 60s that the base closed down and the troops went back. And of course by then it had been pretty well established for nearly 20 years, and all the local people who had got access to it thought it was quite a good thing. And there was a big appeal for it to stay and be transferred into a sort of community centre. But the deal was with the royal parks that it had to be returned to park land as soon as the wartime activities had finished and that's what happened.

[35:14] JZ: So the park itself was just a – pre and post – just a public park, is that right? A royal park you say.

KH: That's right, a royal park. It's – it was a deer park, hunting park in Henry VIII's time – and it's stayed as a royal park up until now. It still is.

[35:18] JZ: There's so many interesting aspects to what you just spoke about. I'll just pick up on a few of them. The Eisenhower thing. Was he kind of Europe based for a lot of the war, or was it just when he had his visits...

KH: Oh no no, that was his base. I'm not quite sure when he first came over to England but he pretty much moved into Bushy Park as soon as he was here. And stayed there right the way through until the D Day landings.

[36:16] JZ: And you say he moved somewhere in Kingston as well?

KH: Yeah, Telegraph Hill. Sorry, Telegraph Cottage at Kingston Hill.

LA: My gran talks about that. My gran lives down the road from there. She says they use to – she used to get her bike out in the mornings to go to work and see their cars driving up the road, the American cars. You know, things like that. [Inaudible]

[36:45] JZ: I had literally never heard this thing about Eisenhower staying in the area, in Kingston specifically. Again, this is the kind of local story we don't really make a deal of...

KH: Well of course when the Americans first went into Bushy Park and set their base up, it was commonly known that they were quite wealthy, they were looking for company, and were splashing things all around. Certain ladies used to come down from the West End, here you've got this wide open park space where you could just sort of wander off into the ferns and make merry. There were a couple of houses along the road to Bushy Park that were lodging houses I think. And as soon as Eisenhower came over, before he fixed on Kingston Hill, he took a place called Bushy Park Cottage, which was almost opposite the park gates. Before he moved in there, I think the police had the job of moving some of these ladies out and sending them back to the West End where they'd come from. Generally, cleaning the place up a bit. Probably to the annoyance of the GIs who were... [Trails off]

[38:21] JZ: And I do want to ask about the perceptions of the Americans from the local's point of view because I've heard differing things in this regard. I just wonder what your impression – were they a popular presence or not?

KH: Erm. [Pause] I'm not sure what they were like in wartime. I think they were quite resented in wartime actually, because they had more of everything. Whereas you know the Brit's rule on rationing, they could go into their restaurant in the camp and you know have anything they wanted really. There was a strong resentment there. Also they would get the ladies running after them, which didn't go down terribly well all the time. If you ever saw a lady with a new pair of stockings you knew damn well how she'd got them. And that sort of just created a lot of antipathy. After the actual war years I don't know whether they just came to be accepted or what, but the relationship was much more cordial and there was a good deal of intermingling then between the British and the Americans. But I would think for those critical war years it was – well, they were a reluctant ally.

[40:04] JZ: Yeah, some of the people who lived through these times – we had an old married couple here, and he was not very keen on the American presence. But he did keep pointing out how they would take all the ladies whilst hastening to add – 'but they only took the ugly ones' – pointing at his wife.

[Laughter]

KH: Lovely.

[40:28] JZ: I think it's interesting to get that. Do you personally have any experience – because you would have been 15, 16 when they eventually cleared off – is that right?

KH: Yeah. No, my parents got to know one American family very well. We did socialise quite a lot with them. And that meant going into the camp for sort of Sunday lunch type thing. It was quite a set up there I must say, I've never seen anything quite like it – everything was just there on tap. You know you would think you were probably in some of the top West End hotels, the way everything was so available. Quite incredible.

[Mobile phone interrupts recording] [41:25] JZ: It's so very American isn't it? It's so unBritish as well.

KH: Yes, well exactly. But I think quite a few people were sorry to see them go. Well quite a few

women went back with them I think.

[41:50] JZ: Yeah yeah. And did you ever hear about this notion – it's fine if you didn't – but this notion that might have brought records with them that the British people wouldn't have been familiar with? The kind of – as we're talking about imports into record shops, I wonder if the American army was also a potential avenue...

KH: I guess they must have. I mean they'd have had their own record collections but you're probably talking about the old 78 records then. Huge plate sized things that were a bit fragile. That's something I've never considered to be honest.

[42:30] JZ: No no that's fine. I mean it's actually not something we have lots of concrete evidence of but it's something we've heard about, so yeah. So just an interesting angle. But picking up the social aspect, you said your parents made friends with... So there was opportunities and avenues for the locals and the Americans to mix and mingle, is that right?

KH: That's right yeah. Very much so.

[42:58] JZ: And what kind of form would these – for example where did your parents meet the...

KH: My father had a newsagents and tobacconist shop in Teddington. So you had the number of the troops that had billeted round in Teddington – certainly after the war, the old Nissen huts that were mainly down the Chesnut Avenue were pulled down, fairly soon afterwards. The troops by that time had been dispersed within the town - either taking over whole houses or else some of them still lived in British houses. But then a lot of the troops had their own families come over to stay with them, so it was a combination really of single blokes and American families. But I think they proved quite adaptable going on horse racing outings and things like that. They could never understand cricket. Thought baseball was a superior game – they did have their own baseball, I don't know what they call it, is it a square or...

[44:18] JZ: Erm, pitch? I don't know!

KH: Yeah. Well they had one in the park. Anyway that was there until they all went home.

[44:30] JZ: I imagine in their heads they were probably exporting the fine game of baseball to us. You know, we were all gonna pick it up and throw cricket out the window.

[Laughter]

KH: Didn't quite catch on.

[44:45] JZ: Ok, so. [Inaudible] If there's much more on the army front. It's so funny, the way you describe it really does just sound like a holiday home, it's so easy to forget that there was a war going on across the Channel you know.

KH: Well you know Glenn Miller, he was in the army wasn't he? So he got his band in well I think his band had all signed up in different areas and so he got them all back together, and he used to do these concerts around the army bases and he played at Bushy Park there. You'd get other top American singers, groups coming over – the Ink Spots if you've heard of them. They were a coloured trio I think. The Coasters. I remember my mum and dad talking about them, and they'll be performing down at the park, restaurant. I don't think they had theatres – yeah they did have a theatre actually, I don't know if it was actually in the theatre they did that. Joe Louis, the boxer, world heavyweight, he came over and did some exhibition bouts there. It's all part of the home from home, support our boys thing.

[46:24] JZ: And would the locals have had any access to these things?

KH: Not in wartime I would think but certainly afterwards they definitely did.

[46:36] JZ: Yeah, yeah. The Glenn Miller thing is one – there's a couple of very specific concerts that I'm trying to find the coverage of, if there was coverage of. And you pointed out to me off the record that yeah maybe the Comet wouldn't have covered the Glenn Miller thing because it might have been...

KH: He is supposed to have disappeared having taken off from Bushy Park. I don't know how true that is.

[47:00] JZ: Right, Ok.

KH: Yeah all sorts of rumours around that. That's one of the great mysteries of all time.

LA: AWOL from Bushy Park.

KH: Pardon?

LA: AWOL from Bushy Park.

[Laughs]

KH: Well they had two runways in there actually. One was down the main road, and another one was a smaller one over at Hampton Wick, where there was a small prisoner of war camp.

[47:32] JZ: And would this have disrupted day to day life among the locals? You know all this commotion – or was it all commotion, or would it have just been out of sight, out of mind kind of thing?

KH: That's a good point. I would have thought that the – the Americans didn't walk anywhere, so they had big trucks, cars, jeeps, what have you. They must have – at a time when there weren't that many cars amongst English people, that must have made a hell of a difference to the roads. But I just – I was a bit too young to take any appreciation of that.

[48:21] JZ: And was this one of sort of several bases that the Americans had in this part of the world? Was it the sort of primary one or...

KH: They had another one in Ruislip. [Pause] Someone says there's Uxbridge as well, but I think that's the same one. Those two towns are pretty much together. But most of the things seemed to be more going into Suffolk. Because the major part of their first forces were bomber crews where they used to do bombing raids back onto Germany so I think they needed a bit more space than London had to offer for that.

[49:16] JZ: It's all very interesting stuff.

KH: It's funny how one thing sort of links into another actually and nudges[?] onto something else. I'd never thought about the idea of American soldiers getting records for other people, but I'm sure that happened.

[49:35] JZ: Yeah I mean that's certainly what I've heard – I mentioned we were set to do an oral testimony with a chap and his mum, his mum who married a GI. And he – we never did the interview in the end, we haven't done the interview yet – but in the sort of pre-interview for that he did sort of tell me about how he remembers his dad having brought over with him all these records that just weren't available in the UK. I think the whole thing does have a whole link into one another as you say, I think it's really fascinating, I was reading that – completely separate to this project – I was reading about in Vietnam, the American army really enjoyed the song, or made a theme song essentially out of The Animals, We've Gotta Get Out of This Place. But it made me think, I mean the Animals are one of the acts we're looking at, and I met Alan Price of the Animals the other day, they're one of the acts we're looking at. And there's this like

pipeline where the Americans came over with their blues, fed it into this country where the likes of the Animals picked up on it, loved it, played it, sold it back to America. And then before you know it, Americans have then taken it off to war again – but taking off the British interpretation of their own sound. It's all – I love the musical narrative of it all. Well, I think we've got a decent amount of content here to work with. Laura, you're welcome to ask anything if you have any – if anything comes to mind but absolutely fine if not. No, you ok? Excellent.

KH: You sure?

[Laughter]

[51:20] JZ: Unless you have anything else you wish to add, Ken, just from the point of view of this topic or anything else you wish to talk about, any other interesting details we might have missed.

KH: Erm. You've suddenly got me thinking Jarek but nothing's really come to the surface just yet.

[51:38] JZ: I mean it's such a huge topic there are so many different angles we could go down. I think the idea – did we talk about the concept of a teenager? I don't think we did, did we?

KH: No. No.

[51:55] JZ: So when you were growing up was the idea of a teenager already established as a thing? Because I know it was somewhere around the 50s, 60s, that it became a term and a concept.

KH: I think I was probably in that first wave of teenagers almost. I've no idea what you had before the war. But then at wartime everyone was soldiers. Immediately after the war it seemed to be Teddy Boys. [Laughs] And then teenagers came sort of after that I think. It was part of the rebellion process of having a separate identity which hadn't been done before.

[52:51] JZ: I guess that's one thing we can talk about that we haven't, which is the slightly wider, outside of the music, this cultural rebellion.

KH: Yeah.

[53:00] JZ: And as a historian I'm sure you can help place in a historical context. What were the factors that led to this period of rebellion and not doing exactly what your parents did, and told you to do, and that sort of thing, and different trends and fashion and music...

KH: Well I think that, erm [pauses] For the kids who were actually growing up in wartime, it must have been a period of real austerity and suddenly the war is over and you've still got rationing for another six or seven years and so it's not all great. I think that you had a lot of soldiers who were returning from overseas, particularly different parts of Europe where they picked onto Italian fashions and suddenly you know they thought 'hey, these are good, can we get these made up at home?' And you had a bit of an influence there. I'm not quite sure – I mean I can't remember when denim first came in. I can remember having jeans as a boy but my father never wore them [Laughs] Suddenly everyone was in jeans. And it stuck. And that's 50 years, 60 years of jeans. Incredible. Then on the recovery suddenly there was more money in people's pockets, jobs were suddenly available, I don't know quite if that's because, well you know there was a whole army to put back into work but it seemed to happen, and I can remember when I was starting work – if you didn't actually get on with your boss, you know you could have a blazing row with him, walk out, go to the job agency, and you'd get fixed up with something else that day. You can't do it now but in those days the jobs were there. And so you had this freedom of movement where you'd been brought up in the family tradition of the father starting off at the factory and working all his life through that for one employer. The new wave weren't having any of that.

[56:00] JZ: And do you think the musical revolution as it were – was that a symptom of...

KH: It slotted in very nicely.

[56:10] JZ: Was it a symptom do you think or part of a cause?

KH: Well that's a very debatable point. [Pauses] Mm. I think that the music would have happened anyway.

[56:22] JZ: Yeah.

[Pause]

JZ: So do you think it would have been possible for – say, your Yardbird like blues rock bands – to have emerged and played the same music that they played but to a crowd of people who were still kind of wearing what their parents wore and you know...

KH: No. No.

[56:49] JZ: So it's almost like that music needed...

KH: It needed a new identity.

[56:55] JZ: Yeah, yeah. It's interesting to consider. Yeah, yeah. I'm very glad I thought to discuss this because that was one of the things I wanted to talk about was the wider social context. Managed to get through the old interview and finish without talking about it. But yeah, yeah.

KH: You didn't see the musical that was on at the Rose last week did you?

[57:16] JZ: I did not, what was it?

KH: The All Or Nothing...

JZ: No, no, no, no.

KH: Small Faces.

JZ: Oh right! Oh God.

KH: You missed that?!

JZ: I had no idea it was on! Somebody should have brought it to my attention, Ken, that's what should have happened.

KH: They did catch the period very well there I thought.

JZ: Really?

KH: Yeah.

JZ: I absolutely should have seen that. So a play about the 60s?

KH: Yeah, that's right.

JZ: Christ knows why no one brought that to my attention. Oh well. Right, yeah, well...

KH: 50 lashes.

[Laughter]

JZ: I think I've got what I've need, and you're happy with everything?

KH: Yeah.