

**Northern Soul Scene Project**

**Ian Parker (IP) interviewed by Gemma McDowell (GM)**

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

GM: Hi, my name's Gemma McDowell and I am here today with Mr Ian Parker. Ian, you spell your name for us, please?

IP: Yes. IAN

GM: Yep.

IP: PARKER.

GM: That's lovely, thank you. And today we're here to talk about the northern soul of Peterborough project. And I'll just be asking Ian a few questions about his recollection of the northern soul scene back in the '60s and the '80s. First of all, we must say that because of the Coronavirus, we are doing this interview by telephone. So it's a little bit different to what it would be normally. I'm currently sitting in my house in Fletton, Ian where are you?

IP: I'm in Grantham, Lincolnshire.

GM: Lovely. So Ian, where were you born?

IP: I was born in Grantham, born and bred.

GM: And your date of birth, Ian?

IP: 29th March '62.

GM: That's lovely. So, Ian, whilst we're starting, I think we should start with you telling us a little bit about yourself.

IP: Well, I'm 58, just. I'm semi-retired, but sadly no work at the moment because of the virus. So I'm sitting around like a lot of other people are at the moment. But yes, I'm single. And I have three dogs at the moment, because my mother passed away last week and I inherited her dog as well. So at the moment I'm sat alone at home with the doggies and talking to yourself.

GM: I'm sorry to hear about your mother passing, Ian.

IP: That's fine, that was her funeral on Wednesday. So sad time, difficult time for us all. But, yes, shall we carry on with jollier things?

GM: We should, we should, we'll come back to that later if you want to talk after the interview. So basically, Ian, I'm just going to ask you today a few questions about your experiences with northern soul, how it makes you feel, and things like that. So I think we should start right at the beginning. So how did northern soul start for you, Ian?

IP: How? I would say the summer of 1976. I was 14 years old, and it was hot. I doubt if ... if you look through history, you'll see the summer of '76 was very, very hot and very dry and I can remember to this day going to Skegness on a Working Men's Club trip with my parents and everywhere, everywhere I looked in the shops, in the stalls etc was northern soul memorabilia, paraphernalia, records, music. It was very, very big at the time and all of a sudden, I thought "What's this?" And I can remember from that day, I wanted to be a part of that. Obviously, I was only 14, I was very young. And we had to wait a little bit longer, obviously, until age caught up with us to actually get out and about and do something about it. So yes, it was the hot summer of '76. I remember it distinctly.

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GM: Lovely. And you spoke about going to Skegness, Ian, so with the northern soul scene, was there a lot of travel involved?

IP: Oh, definitely. I mean, in ... in ... in my local area, there was obviously nothing. All we had, I mean, I was too young to attend even a nightclub in those days. So when I turned 15 it was ... it was towards the end of 1977 I actually got my first taste of a soul club, shall we say? And it was... it was thumbing a lift. You didn't tell your parents where you were going. It was all a bit naughty, a bit tongue in cheek and I remember going to St Ives, which is a bit further down the A1 from yourselves. And I think it was the very last thing they had at St Ives. I think it was August, October sorry '77 and the rest is history and I'm still doing it today.

GM: Wow! And so, you spoke about the ... obviously the travel there, can you tell us a little about ... about the clubs that you did actually go to when you were allowed?

IP: Well, I mean, East Anglia is where it started for me. And then obviously, I had some peers who were some guys a little bit older than me, in fact one's still a very good friend who lives probably 200 metres from me at the minute. He's not very well at the moment, Kev. Then there was himself and his good friends and close friends and I thought I need to go, I need to do some of this and they were 16/17 years old. And they even had cars, believe it or not you turned 17 and you were driving. And I mean, I was a young looking kid anyway, I probably looked about 12 when I was 15. So it was very difficult, until you actually made that move yourself and said "Right, I'm going". And you actually went and you did it. But the travelling, I didn't start driving until I was 20. So it was buses, coaches, thumbing a lift, get a lift if your friend borrowed his Dad's car. It was anyway you could, you got to a venue whether it was Peterborough, St Ives, Nottingham, etc etc and ... and that's how we've travelled, we made the most of what we had. And sometimes it would take us eight, nine, ten hours to get home the next day, because bear in mind there was no trains or buses on a Sunday, well, just very, very limited. It was just a nightmare.

6:24

GM: It sounds very fun and like a really good adventure though.

IP: Adventure is certainly the word. I mean, I phoned a friend this morning and said look, we're talking Peterborough. Can you just jog my memory and he's told me a little couple of things which I forgot. And ... and they are all little, little stories to tell so yeah, ask away.

GM: Great. And so, if we go back to the club scene and the travelling, what's your favourite place which was your favourite club to visit? Which was your favourite place to go?

IP: St Ives, the Ivo Recreation C93333entre. I don't know if you know where I mean, it's obviously in St Ives in Cambridgeshire. And, and that was a place to be. I went to the very last one. And then it closed for ... for nearly two years, probably 18 months and then it started again. So we made a point of actually going to St Ives. I mean it was a wonderful place but just off the foyer, there was a little room which was like a small gymnasium, which ... they played the old, shall we say the oldies in that room? And it was pitch black, it was absolutely pitch black. There was stuff going on there which I can't even tell you about because it was obviously things what shouldn't be going on in there because it was so dark, you know. But you just ignored it. The only light was from a corner where the DJ set his equipment up and they had lights, obviously, to see the turntables and his records and that was it. And that was

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the greatest place on Earth at that time. There was nowhere better and nowhere else I wanted to be apart from in that little oldies room at St Ives recreation centre. It was just fabulous. In fact, it was so good in there, I don't remember a lot about the big ballroom. This was obviously a main ballroom and I don't remember a lot about that. I spent most of my time in that little dark, dingy room. Fabulous.

GM: So we ... you just touched a tiny, tiny bit on a DJ there, Ian, you said DJ would stand in the corner, with their little light shining on their decks. Do you have a favourite DJ?

IP: Well, the guy ... the guy who did that room was it was a guy from Warrington called Brian Ray and he's still about. These guys have been around forever. Seriously. I mean, he was DJing in the '60s. And he's a fabulous guy. He's not in the best ... best of health at the moment, but he's still doing it obviously virus permitting, but he's a little chap and what he ... what he didn't know and what he didn't play was ... was ... was not worth knowing. He was a wonderful guy. And like I said his name was Brian Ray. And still to this day, he's my favourite DJ.

GM: Great. And ... and you said as well earlier, Ian, that you're still doing the northern soul scene. So is there still northern soul venues open? Are there still the all-nighters that go on?

IP: It's massive. It's absolutely huge. I mean, seriously I've got memberships here from '79 up to, I'm looking through these now, early '80s. I've got one from the early 2000s, which was actually Peterborough itself, the Parkway Club. It's ... it's a ... it's a massive thing. In fact, it's so big there's too much going on at the moment. Seriously, there's a there's a hell of a lot of, of clashing venues, etc, etc and people are spoilt for choice, which is good in one respect, but it's a shame because it thins it out a little in numbers, because it's all a bit condensed, shall we say? So, it's a big, big thing still. Yes, definitely.

10:43

GM: It's too popular for its own good.

IP: Absolutely. Yes, you can go, you can go to Nottingham area, South Yorkshire and you're spoilt for choice and it never, ever used to be like that. There was no internet in those days, obviously. You bought the magazines, which ... which concentrated on the soul scene and you say, "Oh, that's on this week or that's on next week. We'll go there." That's all you did, that was all you did. It was word of mouth and monthly or weekly magazines. That was how you knew there was something going on.

GM: That's great. And nowadays, it's all social media, isn't it? So ...

IP: Absolutely. It is a very, very popular pastime still. Yeah. I mean 40 ... 40 years ago, I'd never, ever have dreamed that this was still going on. And I would still be out and about. And I do DJ sometimes to be honest, which is a great feeling, but I never, ever dreamt that I would still be doing this 40 ... 40 odd years later.

GM: So, Ian, what do you think it is about the music that keeps it going and keeps it so current still?

IP: I don't know. I mean, it's ... it's like any ... any kind of music, isn't it? We ... you've got... it doesn't matter what sort of music you're into. I mean, I actually play drums in a classic rock

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band, believe it or not and I know it's a different thing, but we are playing the songs, which people want to hear. Does that make sense?

GM: Yes.

IP: Regardless of what your musical tastes are, you still like the '60s stuff, or the '70s stuff and the modern stuff, it doesn't cut it for me and a lot of other people, some people it does, it's ... it's you, you know and love that music. So you want to hear that again? Does that make sense?

GM: It does, completely. Ian, do you have a favourite northern soul record?

IP: Do I?

GM: Yes. A lot to choose from.

IP: Yes, so many to choose from. So many. I mean, it's gotta be a simple ... a simple song. Are you ready?

GM: Yes.

IP: It's a song by Al Williams. Yes.

GM: Yep.

IP: And the title is "I am nothing".

GM: I know it well.

IP: You know that one?

GM: Yeah, I know that one. Yes.

IP: Yeah, absolutely. It's very simple. If you ... if you ... if you listen to it, you'll hear no orchestration, no horns, no nothing. It's two guitars, and a bass guitar, and a set of drums and some vocals. And it is so simple. It's fabulous. So, but yeah, that's my favourite.

GM: That's great and I think it's one of those songs that people have tried to cover over the years as well isn't it, it just shows how important the northern soul music is. And how many artists have tried to copy it and tried to do their own style.

IP: Yes. I mean, there's obviously bands going around at the moment, which ... which actually cover classic northern soul tracks, they're doing quite well, but obviously there's nothing like the original.

GM: Exactly. And so talking about music still, Ian, could you read off some artists for us that come to mind just for the people that don't know anything about northern soul or northern soul artists?

IP: There's a lot of mainstream artists, shall we say who ... who released a record, and it got absolutely nowhere in the charts because everybody released a record to get a hit record did they not, so regardless of what it was. So there's a lot of mainstream artists whose first or

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final record absolutely bombed. I mean, there's people like Eddie Holman. There's even the English girls like Kiki Dee, Dusty Springfield, etc, etc. There's ... there's even the big boys, the Edwin Starrs, the Jimmy Ruffins, the Four Tops, those records which got to number one in the charts, they don't matter to us. We want the stuff what didn't. Does that make sense?

GM: Yes.

14:45

IP: So there's ... there's a lot of records and you think "Why wasn't another hit? It's fabulous. It's my favourite, and it wasn't a hit." Yet we can ... we can obviously put the radio on and we can hear the hits. But we didn't want that, we wanted the records which we ... we dragged from obscurity. And that's a big, big thank you to a lot of the DJs who found and discovered these records and brought them to the masses because without those guys, I mean, we owe it to those guys for going, for even going to America to dig in through record shops in the '70s and still to this day and finding records ie the Al Williams or the lesser hit of the big name guys you know, you name it, everybody has had a record which wasn't a hit in the mainstream. It's those records, which keep this scene going.

GM: Yep, that's great. Ian, can you describe how it was in different areas so, obviously you're in Grantham and you're talking about St. Ives, did you find that the people were all the same or did you get a difference of attitude from people whilst you were travelling around?

IP: No, I was ... I was quite naive. I ...when ... when I think back I was quite naive. I mean, I can remember going to ... it wasn't that it that when you got into a club, the people were pretty much the same. There was dodgy characters I do know this, I can remember, but it was ... it was the getting somewhere. It was the trouble, we used to have bother getting to so if we went on a train to wherever, and you swapped, you swapped a train at a certain station. I'm not mentioning any stations. You could be talking about Peterborough. You, you'd get trouble. You'd get approached. You'd get ...you'd get hassle, because they saw the soul boys and they didn't like it, you know. It ... it was the travelling which if you was on a train or a bus, that's when you've got a little bit of grief. But when you got actually into a club you knew everybody, even though you didn't, but you knew that they were all there for the same thing. And somebody should pat on the back, shake your hand, they'd give you a drink of their coke. You know, it was ... it was such ... such a different world. You got inside that building and you're home. That's how it was for me.

GM: Okay, did ... did it feel a bit hostile then whilst you were travelling?

IP: I do know a couple of occasions where we had grief and it was hostile, yes, but thankfully they were few and far between and the rest of the time you were in a car so you were straight from home straight to a venue, in the car park and in you went. It was train journeys which I always found a bit daunting, shall we say?

GM: Why do you think that is, why do you think people looked at like the soul boys and girls and ... and didn't agree with that?

IP: There's always been a thing hasn't there, it's like the mods and the rockers thing. The Teddy boys and the punks. There's always been that rivalry. But a lot of the time we ... we came across shall we say, just lads on a night out. And another couple of occasions we actually bumped into a football crowd shall we say, I'd have called them hooligans but they were ...

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they were football supporters and that's when you got a lot of hassle, shall we say and confrontation?

GM: Can you describe to us, Ian, what you used to wear?

IP: Well, you wore the fashions of the day, believe it or not, I mean, but when I look back and I think back and obviously in the mid '70s there were very, very wide trousers and I'm talking 40 inch wide bottom trousers. You probably wear those, some people still wear them now, but obviously the very late '70s it changed. It went from one extreme to another. I can remember wearing some what you'd call skinny jeans now, but I can remember I've got a photo of me in some... in some real skinny jeans, a pair of Monkey boots, and a red Fred Perry and a donkey jacket and what the hell possessed me to wear that I do not know. But it was ... it was comfortable. Well, they certainly weren't but up until then it was very ... it was comfortable clothing for you to move around in, dancing, it was bowling shirts, Fred Perry's cap sleeve 'T' shirts, even a vest sometimes because things got very, very hot and baggy trousers and slippery soled shoes. So you could move about, yeah, that's what I remember.

21:04

GM: So were you one of the dancers, Ian? Did you dance all night?

IP: Oh, I don't remember not. I don't now. But those I mean, you'd hear a record and you'd think Wow! I think I leapt 20 feet from where I was sitting into a dance. It was non-stop. I had a habit of ... I was known for falling asleep as well late at night and because that's how I am and I can remember sub-consciously hearing a record on waking up and I was away again and all of a sudden you're 100 mile an hour dancing to your favourite record and then you'd sit down again, or in my case fall asleep because it was a standing joke. Oh, Ian's asleep again! But yeah, it was a wonderful, wonderful time. Friends of mine, they'd go all day, all night, then an all day the next day. But me, I'd have a snooze, yeah, I own up to that, sorry.

GM: I don't blame you. Ian, for those people out there that like have no idea what a northern soul night would be like or have never heard of an all-nighter, could you like walk us through just from leaving your house to getting back the next day?

IP: What, any particular occasion or just in general?

GM: Just in general.

IP: Well, when we was about 18, a good, good friend of mine, he started driving. So his Dad lent him his car and that's when it really kicked off for us. He'd pick us up or I'd walk to him because it wasn't far away. And that was when your adventure started. It was jump in the car, get a tape on because there was obviously no CDs those days. It was an old cassette tape you'd recorded next to your speaker in the house. And off we went. We were going Peterborough, we were going Rotherham, sorry, Nottingham. We were going as far north as Wigan, and we were going everywhere. And it was at Cleethorpes. It was just a total adventure. And it was yap, yap, yap, yap, yap all the way. We'd get there in the car park or park nearby, and you were in and the cars were okay because you were sat in your ... in your own company. But it was when I can remember, I have vivid memories of bus journeys and train journeys. And that didn't seem to end, they were never ending. All you wanted to do was get home. But like I said earlier, it would probably take you seven, eight, sometimes I remember it taking us nine hours once to get home on a Sunday morning and it was no fun at all. So when ... when you actually got the freedom of a car, things changed and it was so

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much better. But it was just an adventure you were singing along, you were bored in a car park, waiting for the venue to open and all around you there was people with ... they even had portable record players and music was playing and people were talking, talking about records, etc, etc. So the music was always, always the most important thing, for me anyway.

GM: Wow! And whilst you in were in there, did you see like a difference of people, the ones that were there to dance, the ones that were there just to listen.

IP: I mean, you always got ... we ... we used to go to the Palais Ballroom in Nottingham quite a lot. I know it's not Peterborough but as an example, you'd queue up, you're queuing for an hour. The doors would open, you were in and you'd carry a holdall with spare clothes in etc. You would throw that holdall down at the first record and you were on the dance floor. And it was a bizarre thing. But there was a lot of when ... on the big, big popular clubs, there was a lot of people who just went as observers to have a look to say, what's going on here. We need to have a look at this. And you'd spot them a mile off, you would honestly and, and but the general people who are into that thing they were everywhere. So somebody who wasn't, who would just wanted to have a look who wanted to be an observer or thought I'll have some of this, I'll go along. They stood out a mile. It was quite bizarre, absolutely.

26:09

GM: I'm just going to bring it back to Peterborough now a little bit, Ian, so can you remember what Peterborough was like in the '70s?

IP: It was the very late '70s for me and early '80s. We did The Fleet, Fleet Centre, the Werrina's gone now. I believe that's been knocked down.

GM: Yeah.

IP: The East Anglian Soul Club was obviously a big part of St Ives and when St Ives finished, a guy, some guys in Peterborough carried on with that name. And I can remember going to the sixth anniversary which I think would have been 1981. I've still got a patch and, and obviously a bit further south was Cambridge, there was Bedford, there was St Neots, there was Kings Lynn. All around that East Anglia as we used to call it, it was a hive and it's still very busy but Peterborough, the main ones for me were The Fleet Centre and the Werrina Stadium.

GM: And have you got a most memorable moment from your northern soul that you can tell us about, Ian?

IP: What ... what any .....

GM: Your favourite night out or something or your most memorable moment from the music or from the actual scene?

IP: I can but it's not from Peterborough. Am I allowed to say that?

GM: You're allowed!

IP: That was December 1979 going to Wigan Casino on a train and that's where I said it took us nine hours to get home, and that's going up there Christmas '79 and walking in those doors, eventually getting in and just absolutely being blown away. It was ... it was hot, it was

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sweaty. You was going up a small flight of stairs into what to you was another world. It was fantastic. Absolutely fabulous. But, but that ... that went for a lot because ... because Wigan Casino was famed for the northern soul all-nighters. We had to go, so we took the train up there, and two other guys who went with me on that day, are still very good friends. And the other lad who went with us, we sadly lost him about 20 years ago, but that ... that is the most memorable one, walking through those doors, those double doors and feeling the heat, the sweat, the condensation and the music booming. That is my main one memory which will never ever leave.

GM: And what is it about the Wigan, I know that he's got this amazing name and everything. What made it so special?

IP: A lot of people, they say for them it finished in '77 or '76. But I weren't going then. We bought the tail end of that. And at the time [dogs barking] I only went on a handful of occasions. And every time I went it was busy. It was really busy. So I must have picked a good night, because a lot of people say it was dead by then. Dogs are barking "Now stop it." Sorry about that

GM: That's okay.

IP: But at Peterborough I actually went to another good night. Can I tell you this little story quickly?

GM: Of course you can.

30:08

IP: I can't remember the year but I think it was '83 and I'm sure it was, definitely 1983, November 12th at the Werrina Stadium, Peterborough.

GM: Yep.

IP: Yeah. Which has now gone I think, I'm sure it has. Well, they put on an all-nighter there and they billed it as ... I've still got a flyer. This flyer is in front of me. I've had it forever and the greatest all-nighter ever. With exclusive appearances of Junior Walker and the All Stars, Eddie Holman and Major Lance. Now those were obviously big names and very popular. So I went to this and it was £6 a ticket, which to me was an absolute fortune, £6 and you were talking nearly 40 years ago. So we went along to this and it was a big old place, huge hall, boomy, echoy hall and there was a bomb scare. This is absolutely true. I might be waffling on, but ... but there was a bomb scare. And it was all very political. I won't go into the details but it was ... it was a rival promoter obviously, who booked something on the same night in the local area. So it all went terribly wrong. But thankfully, we were allowed back in after the police had give it the all clear. So we went back in and big, big memories of this night was actually Major Lance. If you ... if you do your homework you'll ... you'll know who Major Lance was. How big an influence he was to the kids on the northern soul scene. He didn't turn up. So, it didn't matter because we had the greatest showman of all time still on stage, which was Junior Walker, and the fabulous Eddie Holman, and I'll always remember this, I've got vivid ... it's still engrained in my head now watching Eddie Holman and Junior Walker after the bomb scare go on and absolutely blow this place apart. It was absolutely brilliant. So yeah, but there's a lot of little stories of my recollections and memories of the scene in... in those days. Yeah.



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GM: What a great memory to have that was.

IP: Yeah, I've still ... I've got this flyer in front of me, Torch Promotions Proudly Present the All-Nighter Club of Great Britain etc, Saturday 12th November 1983, unbelievable, fabulous time, yeah.

GM: So, Ian, do you have other memorabilia from ... from the nights out and stuff? Did you collect a lot of flyers?

IP: Not really flyers but I've obviously got membership cards and I'm looking at membership cards here. I can't even remember where they were for because it doesn't tell you. I've got one here, look. Soul Time Promotions. 1<sup>st</sup> of the 1<sup>st</sup> 1982 I've signed that. And I've no idea where it's from. Another one here I think that's Stamford, yeah, 9th October 1983. Top Dog Soul Club, which I think was Stafford. This one Soul Promotions membership card, 3rd March 1981, I've signed that, I've no idea where that's for either. You know, I've got so much, All-nighter Club of Great Britain, I've no idea where that's from. Honestly, I do not know I've got so many membership cards. I've got one here from Peterborough though. The Right Track which is from the early 2000s which is still going. The Right Track at The Parkway Club. You know where I mean on Maskew Avenue?

GM: Yes.

IP: That's still going, it's still a popular club, Andy Smith runs that so if you get the chance when all this nightmare is over with the virus get yourselves along, it's a good night.

GM: I'll take that advice. I love ... I love all that kind of music and ... and the whole scene around it so I'll definitely take your advice there.

IP: What else, I don't know how much time you've got, you see. Parkway's still going, there's Whittlesey, obviously Kings Lynn, Holbeach. I've DJ'd at all those places, they're nice little clubs and there's plenty going on. What were this? Oh, yeah, if you've got time for another story?

35:06

GM: Yes, of course Ian.

IP: I went, this was early days again, this was ... this was very early days. I didn't tell my mum where I was going obviously, she'd have grounded me but I remember thumbing a lift and I walked to a village called Great Ponton, which is on the A1 just south of Grantham. That must be five miles and it was pouring with rain and eventually a truck driver picked me up. So I jumped in this truck and I don't know what I looked like. My clothes ... my choice in clothes in them days was a bit strange, shall we say? So I jumped in this truck. And he said, "Where are you going?" I said "St Ives". He said "It's your lucky day, I'm going to Huntingdon.". So I jumped in his truck and we tootalled off, and he dropped me at Huntington bus station. So it must have been about six or seven miles to St. Ives. And I thought, how do I get there? All of a sudden, two lads came out of nowhere and said, "Eh up mate, where you going?" I said "I'm off to St Ives." He said, "So are we, we can't get there." I said, "Oh, okay, mate, what we're gonna do?" He said, "Leave it with me." And this is absolutely true. We went to a phone box and phoned up the Ivo recreation centre and said, "Hello, is Fred Bloggs there?" Obviously I can't remember the name he was shouting but he said and this guy I could hear him plain as day said "How the hell would I know?" He said

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“Well, can you send a message out? It's urgent.” So we sat there and you heard it over the PA system. The DJ said “Fred Bloggs from so and so please go to the foyer, you're needed.” We were all huddled around this phone, this phone receiver in this phone box and I didn't know these guys and we was all chuckling and giggling and he came to the phone, this lad, he came to the phone and these lads with me said “Eh up mate, we need a lift. Can you get to Huntington train station? We need a lift. We've got to get to St Ives, okay? So 20 minutes later this car turned up and he said “Hurry up, hurry up, get in, I've nicked it.” And this guy had actually stolen a car, came to Huntington, picked us up. We got to the ... we got ... I can remember it clearly. Off the road between Hartford Marina and St. Ives and he says “I can't go in, we've got to jump out here” and we jumped out the car there and abandoned this car beside the road and went in. And ... and this is the sort of adventure you had, I remember that distinctly. And I never know who this guy was. I said “Thanks a lot, mate, nice to see you, enjoy your day.” And we went in. And that's the sort of thing which went on. It was ... it was ... it was crazy. It was obviously illegal and a bit naughty. But when ... when you're 15/16 years old, I mean, these kids were 20 or so, so obviously a bit older than me and a little bit more savvy, a bit wiser. I was quite naive. So it was quite an adventure. Yes.

GM: It sounds it.

IP: Absolutely, it certainly was.

GM: And did you actually keep in touch with these people, Ian?

IP: No, no, no. There was so many people. A lot of friends, they've made friends for life and all I remember is certain guys, certain faces and obviously DJs and your local friends Trevor and obviously Grant at Stamford, Newark area but that's all I ... that's all I remember. I just remember faces and the big name DJs and that's it. I'm never one for remembering Fred from Manchester or George from Bolton, do you know what I mean?

GM: Yeah, there must have been so many different people crossing your path at that time as well.

IP: I mean, it was absolutely packed everywhere, it was rammed so and some not so rammed and some quite downright awful really, but that's how it was. You went along to somewhere and you had a good night and another time it wasn't so good, but, yeah, certainly Peterborough Wirrina, The Fleet etc, Cresset, they were all ... even Orton. I think I went somewhere at Orton Longueville, I think it was. I can't even remember, but I'm sure people can put me right on that. But what ... what else would you like to know?

40:15

GM: You spoke about having the membership cards earlier. Did you have to be a member at every club to be able to get in or .....?

IP: You did actually. For some ... for some strange reason you ... I don't know why, but you could buy them on the door but actually ... I always thought they won't turn people away so if I went to somewhere without a membership card “Are you a member mate?” “No.” “Here you are, come in.” So they'd move you to the side, you'd sign the form, or a book and then they'd send you one in the post. So ... so either way you'd get in. Does that make sense?

GM: Yeah.

## Northern Soul Scene Project

Ian Parker (IP) interviewed by Gemma McDowell (GM)

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020

IP: Because I don't think they'd ever turn you away. The difficult one that I always remember was The Parkway Club in Peterborough when before Andy Smith took over, there was other guys running it. You had to have a membership, you could not go in without so if 20 people turned up without a membership card they couldn't get in, it was a funny old do. But thankfully those sort of occasions were few and far between. But I've never, ever had any problem because they'd just say "Sign here mate. Give us your pound" and you were a member and then they'd send the card in the post so you'd get in 99% of the time.

GM: Wow! Ian, just to wrap it all up then, I've got a big question for you. Would your life be different without northern soul?

IP: Definitely, absolutely, but let me tell you a quick story. When I was 15, I went to join the Army and I went, this is absolutely true, I was probably a fool, I don't know, but hindsight's a wonderful thing, but I went to join the Army. I went to Army selection centre in Harrogate on the train, they paid and coming back and I'd been selected as a Vehicle Mechanic, Light Vehicle Mechanic, and got coming back and I had to stop and change at Doncaster, I think and had about an hour wait. And I went to a record shop just around the corner and that changed my mind. I thought if I join the Army I'm going to miss all this, this is absolutely true and I bought ... and I can remember buying a record from that shop and I've still got it and I brought it home and I thought to myself, I don't want to do this. I want to carry on going out enjoying myself, and I did. That's absolutely true so my life would have been very different, yes.

GM: Wow! That ... that is very life changing.

IP: It was, it was actually and like I said, hindsight's a wonderful thing, what would have happened, where would I be now? I don't know but I took a path, I took a journey and it's been a rollercoaster, absolutely, so yeah, the soul scene ... when all this is over again, I've got a couple of DJing jobs lined up. I missed one last week, I'm missing one obviously in the next few weeks but fingers crossed if it's all over, I'll be back on it in late June or July so let's go and I hope to see you there at one of those events.

GM: Oh, definitely. Ian, before we go, have you got anything else you'd like to tell us before we sign off?

IP: No, no just keep me posted on this obviously. I don't think this is off the record but it would be interesting to see ... I don't know what you're doing with this actually. Is it going to print or is it .....?

GM: So this will be collected in an archive in the library in Peterborough and everyone can come back and have a listen to this interview. We're also going to use it on the northern soul project that we're doing, the heritage project in Peterborough, where we're collecting lots of different information about the northern soul scene in Peterborough in the '70s and '80s and, yeah, hopefully there will be a nice big heritage festival at the end of it all. Obviously we'll have to wait and see what happens with the Covid 19 situation first.

IP: Right. Well, as I say, I've got a few things here, membership cards, patches. Patches were a big thing when we were kids. I've sold a few sadly but I've still got some which is relevant to Peterborough. I've got all these flyers still so if ... if you want it, let me know. It's a bit dog-eared but it's complete so it's just a couple of things I could probably send you.

GM: Fabulous, thank you, Ian.

**Northern Soul Scene Project**

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IP: Which is obviously just a visual thing for your project.

GM: That's amazing. I'm going to sign off the recording so thank you very much, Mr Parker.

IP: You're welcome.

GM: My name again, Gemma McDowell and it's Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and that is the end of our northern soul interview. Thank you very much, Ian.

IP: Thank you.

The End