

Full Memories

early-life

I was born on the 28th February 1955 in Hastings, We lived at number 2 Cornwallis Gardens. I have a memory of standing up in my cot looking at the trains below as they emerged from the tunnel. I was one and half or maybe two years old. We moved to 3 Marley Gardens in Battle, a prefab bungalow. It had a large front and back gardens. I don't remember much of my early time there; my mother told me that I made a bonfire from matches on the front room carpet and was attempting to light it when I was caught. I was also told that I connected the valve radio speakers, directly to the mains and blew them up. I also remember holding a knife by the bone handle and poking it into an electric fire. The knife shorted against the fire's grill and started to glow red. I pulled it out. No fuses blew. My mother's friend was Dianna Elgar, she also lived on the prefab estate. I can't find anything pleasant to say about her unfortunately. Her husband Peter had a shed to the right of their prefab, he made model aircrafts, I loved to stand and watch him and loved the smell of balsa cement and dope. Peter made me a very small elastic powered aeroplane; it looked like a piper cub. It was built up construction with tissue covered wings. I loved it. Of course, it soon had puncture wounds in the wings, I think my dad may have repaired them, he was not interested in model aircraft. My dad had some of his toy cars in a draw in their bedroom, they were army lorries, I think I played with them to death. The front room carpet had lines on which made excellent roads. I the summer I remember pushing the toy cars about in the dried mud making roads. I remember my mother finding me something to do. It was summer, probably 1959 Mum would give me a paint brush and a jar full of water and set me off painting the coal shed. It was matt black corrugated steel, as I painted it with water, it went gloss black, I would proceed round the coal shed to find the side I'd painted had gone matt black again. I also remember a jam jar with sweet water in to attract the wasps, I felt sorry for them as the drowned in the sugary liquid. On that note I also remember sitting on the steps to the front door, it had rhododendron bushes either side of it. I was pulling the legs off daddy longlegs, when suddenly it struck me that what I was doing was very wrong. I stopped. There was also a Gooseberry bush in the back garden, which was where my mother told me babies were found. Peter left Dianna, my sister tells me that he had an affair. I can understand why! One evening, my mother father and me went to Dianna and Peter's prefab, there was a row going on inside I stayed outside. I never saw Peter again. That was a real shame. As I grew older, probably around seven, I remember my mum used to lock the prefab and go out. My sister Jane is four years younger than me, I expect mum went shopping with Jane, either in Battle or took the bus to Hastings. I would play with my friend David Brown, who lived in a brick house behind the prefab. Behind the prefab was a line of trees that was used by the kids to move up and down between the houses in Marley Rise and the prefab estate. The trees were often climbed and the mud below was worn smooth by the children's feet. From the trees I could see over the roof of the prefab and down to the end of the estate.

education

I started Claverham Community College in 1967 I was happy there, in the second year there I was keen to get out of the B stream and fancied joining the A stream. To do that I had to improve my maths and English. Miss Burt was my maths teacher. We were studying Modern Maths...and were given the course book to study from, we were given tasks as homework. My dad was much quicker at understanding the problems in the book and took time helping me to learn. I can remember sitting on the sofa working through the problems. I actually understood, and was keen to carry on learning, so much so that I did more than was required and advanced in the book. At that time our class was half Pestalotzi children, one of whom was Vasanti, she and I fought tooth and nail to get ahead of each

other in maths. At the same time my English was appalling, my mum and dad got me some English books to study, through the summer holidays of 1968 I worked through the book, doing the exercises. It paid off, when I returned to school my maths and English had improved and I think I came first in maths and second in English. I was put up to the A stream. Unfortunately, the goal had been reached and I no longer put in the same level of study, but sufficient to get my O levels. Miss Burt was disappointed in my behaviour outside of school, one day I was going home on the bus, which was a rare occurrence, I was sitting in front of Jacky Price, she was a wild one, very attractive and at least a third taller than me. She started to pull my hair. When I got off the bus, opposite the Abbey green in Battle, I jumped up and pulled her hair. We might have had a bit of a hair pulling tussle. Unfortunately for both of us, the Headmaster, Peter Court was passing in his Ford Zodiac (The car with a very long bonnet and tiny V4 engine). He came over and accused me of punching Jacky in the face, which wasn't what happened. He was very cross; we were letting the school down... We were summoned to his Office the next morning. He told the whole school assembly of what he thought he saw. Disgraced I was, Miss Burt was never the same to me after that. I met Jacky, her husband and son in 2021 when they came to the gliding club at Ringmer. Jacky's husband put two and two together when I told him I came from Battle and went to Claverham. He said "My wife went to Claverham"... I enquired "What's her name...Jacky...Not Jacky Price". I went over to the Clubhouse where Jacky was, we embraced and laughed about the hair pulling incident. Then posed for a photo where we were clenching fists and growling at each other.

early-life

Hastings Pier 7th March 1975, I'd gone along with friends to see Osibisa. While I was in the bar a young lady bounced up to me, I remember the bob as she came to rest in front of me. She said that she had seen me watching her play tennis in Alexandra Park in Hastings. I replied that she was mistaken as I hadn't been to the park and had not seen her play tennis. This seemed to intrigue her. I guess, I bought her a drink, rum and black probably. We went to the balcony at the back of the pier ballroom to watch Osibisa. While we were watching we found ourselves holding hands and eventually kissed. After the gig, and a bit more kissing, it was time for her to go home, her dad was picking her up. We arranged to see each other the next day as it was Saturday. I drove to her parent's house, a bungalow, 32 Iron Latch road, Hastings. I rang the door bell, a young lady came to the door, she looked very much like Jayne from the night before, but somehow different. It was Jayne's sister Karen Gale. Karen called Jayne to tell her I was there. We went out for the afternoon, I'm pretty sure we went to Uncle Doug's Wattle making yard, in the woods in Powdermill lane Battle. Uncle Doug was the last Wattle maker in East Sussex, he coppiced the chestnut woods to make hurdles and fences. As time progressed Jayne and I saw more of each other, until early June 1976 Jayne became pregnant. Both of us wanted to keep the baby, so decided to get married. It was a bit of a shock for our parents. Jayne's mother was not pleased at all. Jayne and I got married and moved to a rental flat Marina St Leonards Hastings. I can't remember the number. It was a dismal flat and the large sash window rattled loudly from the wind directly off the sea. I remember my car was a green Morris Marina.. Poor Jayne, looking back now, it must have been awful for her, to find herself alone in the flat all day, pregnant, her mum not talking to her. I came home every day from work at Stiles Garage in Battle. My mother was very kind to us, often buying us groceries. Jayne had our baby in the Buchanan Hospital in Silverdale road Hastings. I remember driving Jayne to the hospital in the Marina from our new home Cartref in Battle. Jayne walked into the hospital with me. I was promptly shouted at by an officious matron..."Get out!" This was because I didn't have a mask on..The matron did not offer any advice on where to get one, she clearly did not want me in the delivery room. Feeling lost I sat on a bench and waited, I didn't know what to do, so eventually I went home. I returned the next morning 18th February 1977 to find Jayne sitting up in bed with John David Stiles lying in his cot.

education

In 1986 I worked for a short period in Eastbourne, firstly at a garage called Sergeant-Hall for Tony Hall, who also used to work for my father but had struck off on his own with John Sergeant. That didn't last long as John Sergeant lost his temper with me and I left to work at Bacon's Garage. That also didn't last very long as I found the working atmosphere difficult. By chance I saw an advert for a mechanic at Mark Cross Garage near Rotherfield. I got the job and was very happy there. The garage was next to the Church and primary school, next to the Mark Cross Inn. The owner of the garage was Mr. Quinton, I never knew his first name. The garage was run by his son in law, Harvey. I liked Harvey, we used to have lunch at the Mark Cross Inn and would often drink a couple of pints of beer, in my case Guinness. The food in the Mark Cross Inn was superb, I used to love smelling it cooking as I worked in the garage workshop. I could also hear the children playing at the school. It was a happy time. I met Tim Green there. Harvey lent Tim an 1/8 drill, which he didn't return. I tracked Tim down to the Bates' house where he was trying to restore an MGB GT. I got the drill back then Tim and I went to the pub and that was the start of a long friendship. The years rolled by happily, I was very attracted to Angela Whittington, as were most men. On Saturdays I would work at her stables in exchange for horse riding lessons. Angela was married to Peter. Nothing ever happened between us, not that I wouldn't have minded to be honest. Sadly Harvey decided to sell Mark Cross Garage, almost as soon as Mr Quinton had given it to his daughter Wendy, who was married to Harvey. I took the decision to carry on the motor repair business and moved all the tools and the car lift on the back of a farm trailer to Style House Farm which was about a half mile down the road towards Mayfield. I towed the trailer with the short wheel base Land Rover, the front wheels skipping over the road. Tim and my friends including Marianne helped me assemble the lift and I started trading. The first day I remember sitting down on the floor sorting out a tin of old nuts and bolts, when in came my first customer. That was the start of my business and the customers kept coming. I persuaded Tim that it would be a good idea that he started an engineering business next to me. I thought there would be a market for reconditioned radius arms for Mini and Austin 1300s. No sooner had Tim installed the most huge lathe when our local motor factors started selling reconditioned radius arms..oops.

early-life

My mum's name was Gloria Moreen Stiles, born 23rd May 1931 in Blackman's coal office. Mrs Blackman was a midwife as well as running the family coal yard. Mum lived at 32 Lower Lake Battle with mother, Audry Ginn. Audry was called "Aut" by everyone. I was very fond of Aut, she smoked fags and often had a very long ark of ash perfectly balanced on the end of her fag. My Mum's father left when she was little, she doesn't remember him. His name was Charles Ernest Ginn, he had another wife and children in London. Aut's brother was known to us as Uncle Doug, he took on the role of father for my mum and bought her things including a bicycle. Which was bought from Englefield's in Battle that was to become Stiles Garage, after my grandfather Harry Stiles bought it after the war. Mum left Battle and Langton primary school when she was thirteen. At school Mum was sent out into the playground to watch for German "Doodle Bugs" they were the German V2 flying bombs. Mum had a spaniel dog called Nicolette Elizabeth Mum was very upset when she had puppies, and my Granddad sold them all. Mum was shot at by a German fighter plane when she was in the fields behind Battle Abbey. She collected the plastic from a crashed German aeroplane to make rings and jewellery she was on our way to the wreckage when a fighter spotted her and sprayed bullets at her. None hit, and she wasn't worried at all. Mum's first job was at the Watch Oak council offices in Battle where she worked filing papers and doing odd jobs. Her boss was called Mr Beaching. He would send Mum out for "smokes" Mum was told off at work for dancing and singing loudly on an office table, She was being Betty Gable Mum met her husband John Stiles in Battle. His father Harry Stiles owned the garage in Battle which was called 'Stiles Garage' My mum and dad made a handsome couple, they got married secretly in Hastings' registry office and rented a flat in Cornwallis Gardens. My dad's mother "Meme"

was not pleased, Mum thought that “Meme” didn’t like her much and would have preferred a Miss Downer who used to darn my dad’s socks while he was out. After two years in Cornwallis Gardens Mum and Dad moved to Battle where they rented a prefab in Marley Gardens.

early-life

Dave Craven “Big Dave” and I were in a band that we started in the early 80’s called the Gen Kiddies, I was Furb Macoy, Furb because my granddad Harry Stiles’ name was Harry Furber Stiles... The annoying thing about the Gen Kiddies was that I wrote a song called “Who you Lookin’ at” It was ripped off by the Salford Jets. I know this because we kept being told that people had heard it on the radio. But we never recorded it at that point. Now in the year 2009 Big Dave and myself are caught in a time loop still making music, getting older. We’d been immersed in a music session and came out for a breath of ‘fresh air’. The conversation turned to the whereabouts of Dave the Fish.. I was gob smacked to learn that he had hopped on his motorcycle with an Arab chap and headed off to Portugal, leaving his wife Joyce and the kids. It seemed so sudden and entirely out character. It was! The wrong end of the stick being firmly grasped and now lodged in my imagination. ‘What’s his name?’ Big Dave couldn’t provide an answer. ‘Was it Abdul?’ I ventured. “Abdul will do” Dave chuckled. I dissolved into a fit of giggles.....‘Abdul Adool!’. We returned to the front room and promptly wrote the song ‘Abdul Adoo’ detailing the couples’ imaginary adventures. Big Dave sang the bass vocal part and played the flute as Fluty Steve was absent, Marianne sang on the verses in the background. Dave the Fish eventually returned, he loved the song and forwarded a copy to Abdul. Contrary to my initial fuddled thoughts Abdul was unbelievably another Dave and not an Arab at all, they’d not gone to Portugal but Ireland sharing their passion for Moto Guzzi motorcycles, but apart from that, the pair were thrilled to have a song written about them. Dave the Fish returned home and once again all was well in the world. For the time being.

early-life

In 19Big Dave and I finished with punk rock, after he shouted ‘Scott yer Wanker!’ across Piccadilly Circus at Tommy Scott who had just signed us to his label along with Lena Zavaroni. It seemed like a reasonable thing to do as a Punk Rocker, step one in the unwritten handbook of Punkrockery, insult a record company executive. Box ticked. We never heard from Tommy Scott of Kelvingrove Records again. Not that it mattered really because our songs were awful, and it hurt Dave’s wrist playing straight eighths on the high hat. I didn’t like having to play down stroke eighths on the bass either. We embarked on our next musical adventure. I had a Fender Strat that I tuned DADGAD ish I say ish because it wasn’t, Dave had his kit, we just needed a bass player and singer. At that time I lived at 121 Bohemia Road in Hastings, with my poor wife Jayne and our son John. The house sounds as if it might be in quite a posh location, but it was really a derelict three-story house in a street that had never seen better days. Across the road was Bob Turner’s shop, it wasn’t a Bohemian Boutique but a fur fabric and broken biscuit shop. What else? One of Bob’s boys was a trumpet player, you could hear him practising, he was dating Liane Carroll, not that has anything to do with it. Bob had a much younger brother called Chris, who could play bass. Dave and I went to see Chris, his flat was in St Paul’s Road, just round the corner from my place. Chris and Wendy’s front room was doubling as a black-market video player outlet, it was full of video players, apparently one of Chris’s younger brothers had ‘found’ a credit card and had bought them to sell off cheap to raise money for their mother. It didn’t end well but Chris’ mum got a load of cash. They loved their mum. Chris was up for playing bass and remarkably he was really good, a natural, so we started to ‘write songs’ and rehearse in his front room, Dave playing on his knees and me and Chris strumming away unamplified. In the following weeks Woll came into our lives, he was dating Maggie, the most stunning girl I’d ever seen. (Forty five years on Maggie and Woll live just round the corner from me Maggie is still a stunner) Woll was enthusiastic and great fun but his

heart lay with his own band Woll and the Trilobites. We tried Punky John; he was indeed very punky but that was a blind alley. How we heard of Kevin O'Conner is a mystery, it was rumoured he could sing. He lived with his parents up at Ore, still doing his O'levels so I guess was fifteen. We had trouble getting him out of his parent's house as he was supposed to be doing homework. Kevin could sing, so we began working up a set in between going to the pub and having cheese snip eating competitions and playing space invaders. I must add that a cheese snip eating competition is not as easy as you might think, first fill your mouth with a pack of cheese snips then see who is the first to eat them all. You'll find that this is a serious business. And certainly not one to be sneezed at. I thought the Gen Kiddies would be a good name for the band, I became Furb Macoy of the Gen Kiddies. Furb after my Granddad Harry Furber Stiles who played sax for Frank Chacksfield. I remember sitting on my bed strumming away and the words "Who you lookin at" sprang to mind, over the next few minutes the song was completed. We had a regular gig at the Chatsworth Hotel and drew quite a crowd with covers such as "I am a mole and I live in 'er ole" a masterpiece. Chris would often stop playing bass and drop his arms down, Dave would be lobbing drumsticks at him while keeping the beat. After one gig Kevin ran up to me and Dave and excitedly said that a man had asked him if he could record us. Dave and I replied in sync, tell him to fuck off. We still possessed the punk spirit. We became aware that our song "Who you lookin at" was on the radio. Strange as we hadn't recorded it. It seems that the Salford Jets, had ripped the idea off and released their own version, it was, of course, shite. Unfortunately, it would seem that even having our song ripped off well was too much to ask. Rehearsals with the Gen Kiddies morphed into weekly visits to Hastings swimming pool; Chris' Cousins came too. We had the intention of taking gentle exercise as a precursor to going to the pub, but swimming became a water bombing and play fighting session. The swimming pool staff instructed Chris and his cousins to stop it but the more they became agitated the more Chris and his cousins enjoyed it. The police were called, the pool emptied... apart from a delighted pair who were calmly swimming up and down the middle. As Big Dave and I climbed out of the pool we could hear the police shouting at them to get out. "Come and get us then!" We were all banned. Chris moved to a ground floor flat in Priory Road on the West Hill, I don't remember ever rehearsing there but I do remember the night in a howling gale when we tried to unsuccessfully aviate by leaping of the cliff supported by my huge kite. Although we did manage to fly several plastic beer crates and were intent of taking the flying ensemble down Wellington Road to the Town centre until balked by the phone wires, after which the string became hopelessly tangled so we tied the parked cars together and went home. I felt that it was time to leave the Gen Kiddies. They became Harry and the Boys. I was out on my own.

work

Around the year 2000 I used to play bass in a band with my drummer friend Big Dave and his keyboard playing partner, Julianne. Fluty Steve would join us, taking apart his flute and occasionally playing it. Another friend, Chris Page, played electric guitar, often arguing with Fluty Steve, often causing one of them to storm off. Mary would come along and sing as well. Marianne and Julianne always eyed Mary with suspicion. Our music sessions took place in the front room at Big Dave and Julianne's house. Julianne had an annoying ability to play anything she heard once perfectly. Sometimes Fluty Steve would write a song, other times it would be me or Chris. Chris enjoyed adding complex chords to confuse us. Dave the fish and his wife Joyce would often come over. Dave the fish has a talent for obscuring the rhythm by placing a beat in a time signature of his own choosing while landing it neither on the on or off. A gift. However, it was always delivered with great enthusiasm and style. Marianne casually mentioned to Big Dave that if he ever wanted to sell his house, she..we..would love to buy it. I didn't know she'd said it at the time. One of the little ditties wot I "wrote" was about Nurse Mandy. She was a hardworking girl who struggled to make ends meet, she found a way to supplement her income by providing a unique service to her patients. In the song, you'll hear a mention of Squadron Leader Henderson. This character emerged before I had ever been to the gliding club at Ringmer or met our friend Terry Henderson. I suppose it was inspired by the Hendersons who "dance and sing while Mr.

Kite flies through the ring". I thought the song was funny, so did Big Dave. We excitedly discussed creating a picture of Nurse Mandy for the single, it was clearly going to be a great success. Mary expressed interest and eagerly volunteered to portray Nurse Mandy. She had the necessary attributes and planned to go shopping the following day for the outfit. Since Big Dave enjoyed photography, everything seemed to be falling into place. However, this is where things started to unravel. Julianne was unimpressed with the song's lyrics and accused me of being a pervert. She also disapproved of Big Dave's plans to photograph Mary in a skimpy Nurse outfit. The situation escalated to the point where Big Dave and Julianne parted company. The photoshoot never happened. The song was never released. Dave the fish was instructed by Joyce to side with Julianne, while Marianne and I firmly supported Big Dave. Mary was excommunicated by both Marianne and Julianne. Steve and Chris just wanted a peaceful existence. Many, many years later, in 2022 Big Dave knocked on the door at 11 Stream Farm Cottages asking if we were interested in buying, Little Millham, his house. That's where we find ourselves now.

family

It was the summer of 1963 I was eight. My mother used to go fruit picking in the summer holidays, once I remember she saved up her wages to buy a fur coat. I can't remember my sister Jane being there, but she must have been as she was four. I used to roam freely around the fruit picking fields while mum was picking, it was hot and dusty. I remember some Turkeys that were in an enclosure, they were taller than me. One of my mother's friends brought her daughter along, her name was Linda Saunders. We played together. I remember sitting on a bank overlooking the fields of fruit with her. I don't recall how it happened, but I remember Linda poking a blade of grass up my willy. She was clearly interested in what a willy looked like. I thought nothing of it. Until the following morning, when my mother quizzed me about what I had been doing with Linda. I felt dreadful..my mother told me that Linda's father Tony Saunders was very cross and wanted to see to me.. I was petrified. I lay in my bed thinking that at eight years old my life had come to a sad end. Tony never spoke to me about the incident, and Linda was not allowed to play with me either.

childhood

It was the summer of 1964, I was making my way home along Marley Lane, down the hill, turn left into Marley Gardens, up the bank to the left of the road. I got into an argument with Eggy Turner..I don't remember his proper name but all the kids called him Eggy, he was odd, looked odd and was odd.. Eggy was much bigger and older than me. I remember him strangling me, I fell to the grass, thinking that this was the end and passed out. I must have been unconscious for a while because when I came to, Eggy had gone. I staggered home. Mum was furious and stormed round to Mr's Turner's prefab. She returned later with a set of football boots. They were my compensation for almost being murdered.

education

1968 I was in the canteen at Claverham, Jacky Price and I played this game where one of us would jump up and shout "TROUT" loudly from opposite sides of the canteen then sit down. This meant that the dinner lady would spin round to see who shouted TROUT! The dinner lady being none other than Mrs Turner..Eggy's mum. Jacky didn't like Mrs Turner anymore than I did. I still held a grudge against Mrs Turner for the attempted murder of me by her son. Needless to say, my behaviour was reported and my form teacher Mr. Elphick wanted to know what it was all about. It was time to stop.

education

1968 It was my first year in the A stream. My form teacher was Mr Elphick. I liked to sit at the back of the class. I can't remember what I said but Mr Elphick had enough of it and got me to sit at the front of the class, on the left by the window, next to a girl. She was Tibetan. I was besotted with her, and could remember every little detail. I desperately wanted to tell her how much I liked her but never did. My feelings for her remained with me all the way through secondary school and into sixth form at Bexhill Grammar School. It's sad that I never spoke to her because I built up this imaginary picture of her that wasn't based in fact. A lesson learned.