

= The Casbah Coffee Club =

The Casbah Coffee Club was a rock and roll music venue in West Derby , Liverpool , England started by Mona Best in 1959 in the cellar of the family home . The Casbah , as it became widely known , was planned as a members @-@ only club for Best 's sons Pete , his younger brother , Rory , and their friends . Mona came up with the idea of the club after watching a TV report about The 2i 's Coffee Bar in London 's Soho where several singers had been discovered . She decided to open the club , which was located in her cellar , on 29 August 1959 , for her sons , their friends and young people to meet and listen to the popular music of the day .

The Quarrymen ? John Lennon , Paul McCartney , George Harrison , and Ken Brown ? went to the club to arrange their first booking , to which Mona agreed , but said she needed to finish painting the club first . All four took up brushes and helped Mona to finish painting the walls with spiders , dragons , rainbows and stars . In addition to the four boys ' artistic contributions , Cynthia Powell , later to become Cynthia Lennon , painted a silhouette of John on the wall , which can still be seen today . The group often played at The Casbah as other venues , like The Cavern Club , had a jazz @-@ only policy at that time . The cellar ? with its original decoration ? still exists .

In 2006 , Culture Minister David Lammy announced that the Bests ' ex @-@ coal cellar was to be given Grade II listed building status and a blue plaque , after being recommended by English Heritage . It was opened as a tourist attraction in Liverpool , along with McCartney and Lennon 's previous homes at 20 Forthlin Road and 251 Menlove Avenue respectively .

= = History = =

Mona Shaw was born on 3 January 1924 , in Delhi , and married John Best in India before moving with him and their two children , Pete Best (b . 1941) and Rory Best (b . 1944) back to Liverpool in 1945 , where they lived in various houses . After moving to Queenscourt Road in 1948 ? where the Bests lived for nine years ? Mona was told by Rory about a large Victorian house for sale at 8 Hayman 's Green , in 1954 . The Best family claim that Mona then pawned all her jewellery and placed a bet on a horse that was ridden by Lester Piggott in the 1954 Epsom Derby called , " Never Say Die " , which won at 33 @-@ 1 , and used her winnings to buy the house in 1957 (to place the bet , Mona would have had to travel more than 220 miles (350 km) from Liverpool to Epsom - as bets were only allowed at race tracks at the time - or placed the bet with an illegal bookmaker in Liverpool) . The house (built around 1860 by an unknown architect) , had previously been owned by the West Derby Conservative Club , and was unlike many other family dwellings in Liverpool , as it was set back from the road , had 15 bedrooms and 1 acre (4 @,@ 000 m2) of land . All the rooms were painted dark green or brown , the garden was totally overgrown , and the cellar was used for storing coal .

= = = The Casbah = = =

Mona came up with the idea of the club after watching a TV report about The 2i 's Coffee Bar in London 's Soho , where several singers had been discovered . She decided to open the club , which was located in her cellar , on 29 August 1959 , for her sons , their friends and young people to meet and listen to the popular music of the day , unlike The Cavern Club , which had a jazz @-@ only policy at that time . Mona charged half a crown annually for membership ? to " keep out the rough elements " ? and served soft drinks , snacks , cakes , and coffee from an espresso machine , which no other club had at that time . Records were played on a small Dansette record player , which amplified them through a 3 " speaker . Mona had booked the Les Stewart Quartet to play the opening night with Harrison on guitar , but they cancelled the booking after Stewart and Ken Brown had a quarrel . Stewart was angry that Brown had missed a rehearsal , because Brown was helping Mona to decorate the club . As 300 membership cards had already been sold , Harrison said that he had two friends in a band called The Quarrymen who would play instead . Lennon , McCartney and Harrison went to the club to arrange the booking , to which Mona agreed , but said she needed to

finish painting the club first . All four took up brushes and helped Mona to finish painting the walls with spiders , dragons , rainbows and stars , but as Lennon was short sighted , he mistook gloss for emulsion paint , which took a long time to dry in the dark , damp cellar . Cynthia Powell , later the wife of Lennon , painted a silhouette of him on the wall , which is also still there .

The Quarrymen played a series of seven Saturday night concerts in The Casbah for 15 shillings each , starting on 29 August to October 1959 , featuring Lennon , McCartney , Harrison and Brown , but without a drummer , and only one microphone connected to the club 's small PA system . The opening night concert was attended by about 300 local teenagers , but as the cellar had no air conditioning , and people were dancing , the temperature rose until it became hard to breathe . After the success of the first night , Mona gave The Quarrymen a residency , and paid the whole group £ 3 a night . Every Saturday thereafter , queues lengthened onto the street , which was financially good for Mona , as she charged one shilling admission on top of the annual membership fee . As there was no amplification , Lennon later persuaded Mona to hire a young amateur guitar player called Harry to play a short set before The Quarrymen , but this was only so they could use his 40 Watt amplifier .

Best was studying at the Collegiate Grammar School when he decided he wanted to be in a music group , so Mona bought him a drum kit from Blackler 's music store and Best formed his own band ; The Black Jacks , who later played in The Casbah . Chas Newby joined the group , as did Ken Brown , but only after he had left The Quarrymen . The reason for Brown 's exit from the group was that he turned up on the seventh Saturday night of The Quarrymen residency at The Casbah with the flu , so Mona ordered him upstairs to the Best 's living room to rest . This caused a massive quarrel with the rest of the group when Mona came to pay them , as they wanted Brown 's money to be shared amongst the three of them , as Brown had not played . Mona refused , so The Quarrymen angrily cancelled their residency and stormed out .

Colin Manley from The Remo Four was also given a booking to play in the club , which was the only venue that young amateur bands could play at the time . Other artists and groups like Cilla Black , Rory Storm and the Hurricanes , The Searchers and Gerry & The Pacemakers later played in the club . The Black Jacks became the resident group at The Casbah , although The Quarrymen occasionally played there again and often visited . It was in The Casbah Club that Lennon and McCartney persuaded Stuart Sutcliffe to buy a Höfner 500 / 5 model ? known in Europe as a President bass ? with the money he had won in the John Moores art exhibition . Even though the membership list later spiralled to over a thousand , Mona closed the club on 24 June 1962 , with The Beatles as the last group to perform .

= = Heritage status = =

In 2006 , Culture Minister David Lammy announced that the Bests ' ex coal cellar was to be given Grade II listed building status and a blue plaque , after being recommended by English Heritage . It has now been opened as a tourist attraction in Liverpool , along with McCartney and Lennon 's previous homes at 20 Forthlin Road , and 251 Menlove Avenue respectively . The club is 3 .5 miles (5 .6 km) from the Liverpool city centre , and only booked groups of visitors are accepted . McCartney was quoted as saying , " I think it 's a good idea to let people know about The Casbah . They know about The Cavern , they know about some of those things , but The Casbah was the place where all that started . We helped paint it and stuff . We looked upon it as our personal club . "

English Heritage 's Head of Heritage Protection in the North of England , Bob Hawkins : " The basement Casbah Club rooms are historically significant because they represent tangible evidence of The Beatles ' formation , their growth in popularity and their enduring cultural influence throughout the world . The club survives in a remarkably well preserved condition since its closure in 1962 , with wall and ceiling paintings of spiders , dragons , rainbows and stars by original band members along with 1960 's musical equipment , amplifiers and original chairs . We know of no other survival like it in Liverpool or indeed anywhere else . "