

# MERTHYR TYDFIL 1955-75

MEMORIES OF POPULAR MUSIC  
ATGOFION O GERDDORIAETH BOBLOGAIDD

## MID TO LATE 60s

### The Saints

A Letter from Frank James, Guitarist in The Saints and Chapter Five

Cliff Richard signing 'Move It' catapulted me into the world of music. My parents bought me a guitar and I never looked back.

When I was eighteen, in the mid sixties, I joined forces with a Richard Power. One memorable event was when we played in the Catholic Hall, Dowlais. We had no transport and we walked from Queens Road, where we borrowed the equipment from another band, to the venue carrying some of our equipment. Then walk back to Queens Road to walk back up again with the amplifiers. Of course, after 'the gig' we had to do the two journeys all over again.

From there we gained three new members, Terry Carolan, Tony Williams and Stewart Evans and the group The Saints was formed.

We were going places and had a road manager with a van. I remember playing in The Castle Cinema, Working Men's Clubs and again the Catholic Hall in Dowlais. I composed an instrumental The Red Sea as a follow up to The Shadows 'Exodus'. At this time, I was living in Glazier road in Twynrodyn. If you, and you should, talk to Dai Shell he will remember me and has given me credit for his interest in guitar playing.

Soon the group took the long journey to London to audition for Opportunity Knocks. Unfortunately, the electric plugs we need for the amplifiers stayed in Merthyr so we could not audition. I wonder what would have happened if they had not been forgotten.

Now gone, the Cinema in Treharris, was another venue for one of our gigs. Some lads came along to watch us. At the end of the night, they asked me to join their group as lead guitar, CHAPTER FIVE was born. Bobby Watkins and Dai Shell played with us too.

We played in the Palace, Merthyr, Catholic Hall Dowlais and Merthyr, the Kirkhouse and the village hall in Trefechan. We toured the valleys but it was a long time ago and the venues are lost in the mist of time.

Screaming Lord Sutch had a hit with 'Jack the Ripper'. After hearing it, we included it in one of our sets. We made props, organised for the lighting to go up and down and had a mannequin on the stage. After the first few bars Bobby Watkins, dressed as Jack the Ripper leapt on stage with his black cloak and top hat, oh how those girls screamed, they loved it.

We also played the clubs in Ebbw Vale and Tredgar. I can't remember which club it was but one of our band members had a wardrobe malfunction. The committee thought it was part of the act and banned us. We played the clubs in the Rhondda and Ferndale thank to our trusty van, if that van could talk!

April 1967 Chapter Five, which now had a female singer, was given a silver award from the National Association of Boys Clubs for 'Beat Groups', that's a phrase I haven't heard in a long time.

On a more personal note, I think it was in Abercynon, a guitarist for another band was late so for one piece I took his place, the singer of the group is now known as Tom Jones. A talent scout came to Merthyr and I was asked if I would like to join a band, the front man was Joe Brown. My father pointed out I had a steady job and girlfriend. I stayed in Merthyr and I am still married to that girl friend.

Over the last ten years, I have played at various open mike nights in Swansea and became a member of a resident group. Since returning to Merthyr, I have had a weekly Sunday gig in a Pontypridd bar/restaurant. I still play Exodus. I cover the Shadows, Patsy Cline, The Platters, Roy Oberson and many more. However, I am a long way from being eighteen years old and able to carry amplifiers the length of Merthyr so I have had to stop. The music still calls to me and now I play at home. Due to the wonders of technology, I still have a bit of an audience as I record myself and post on You Tube and Facebook.



(Courtesy of Irene Janes)

The Saints in the Merthyr Express 1964.  
(Courtesy of Irene Janes)

