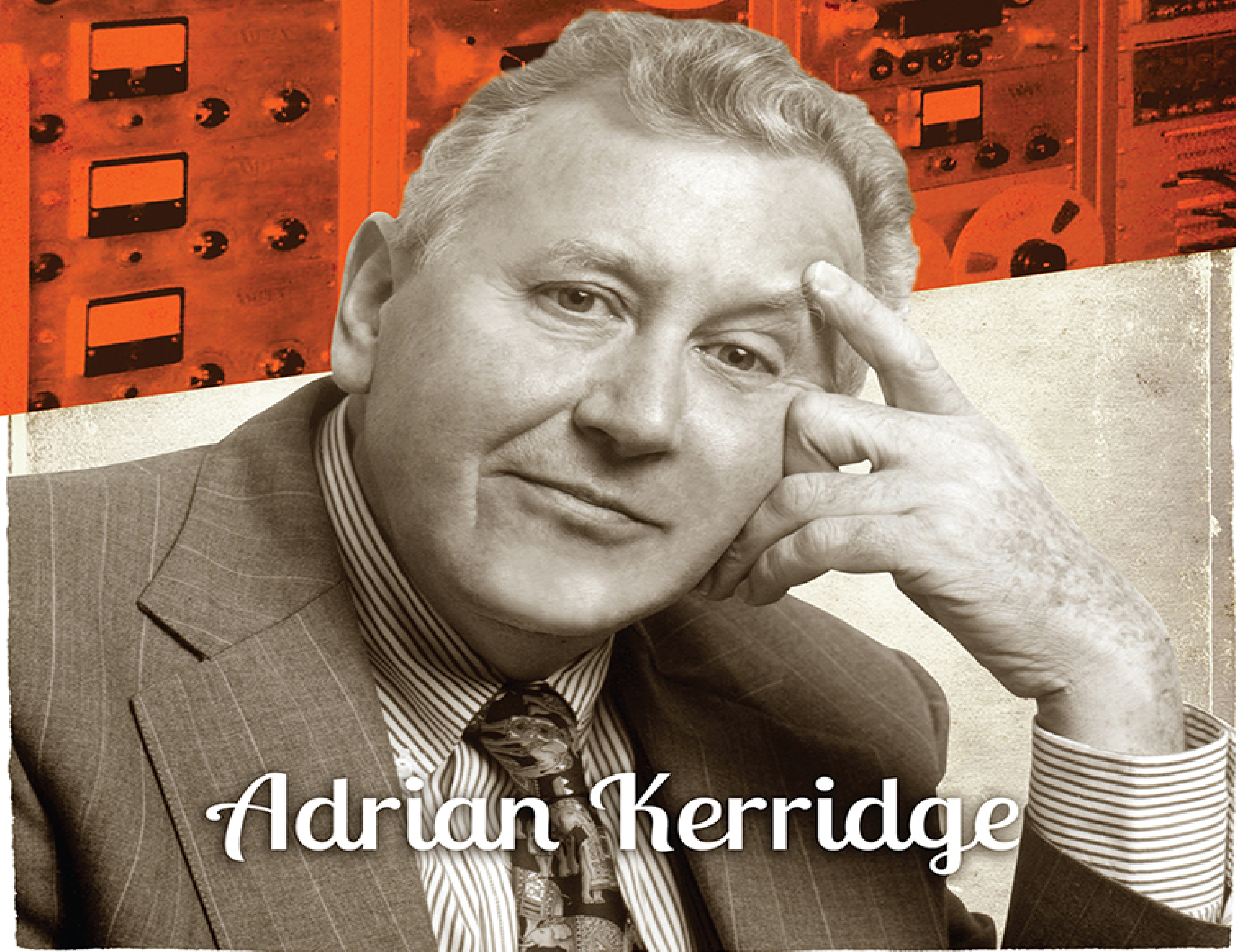
tape's rolling, Take One!

The recording life of Adrian Kerridge



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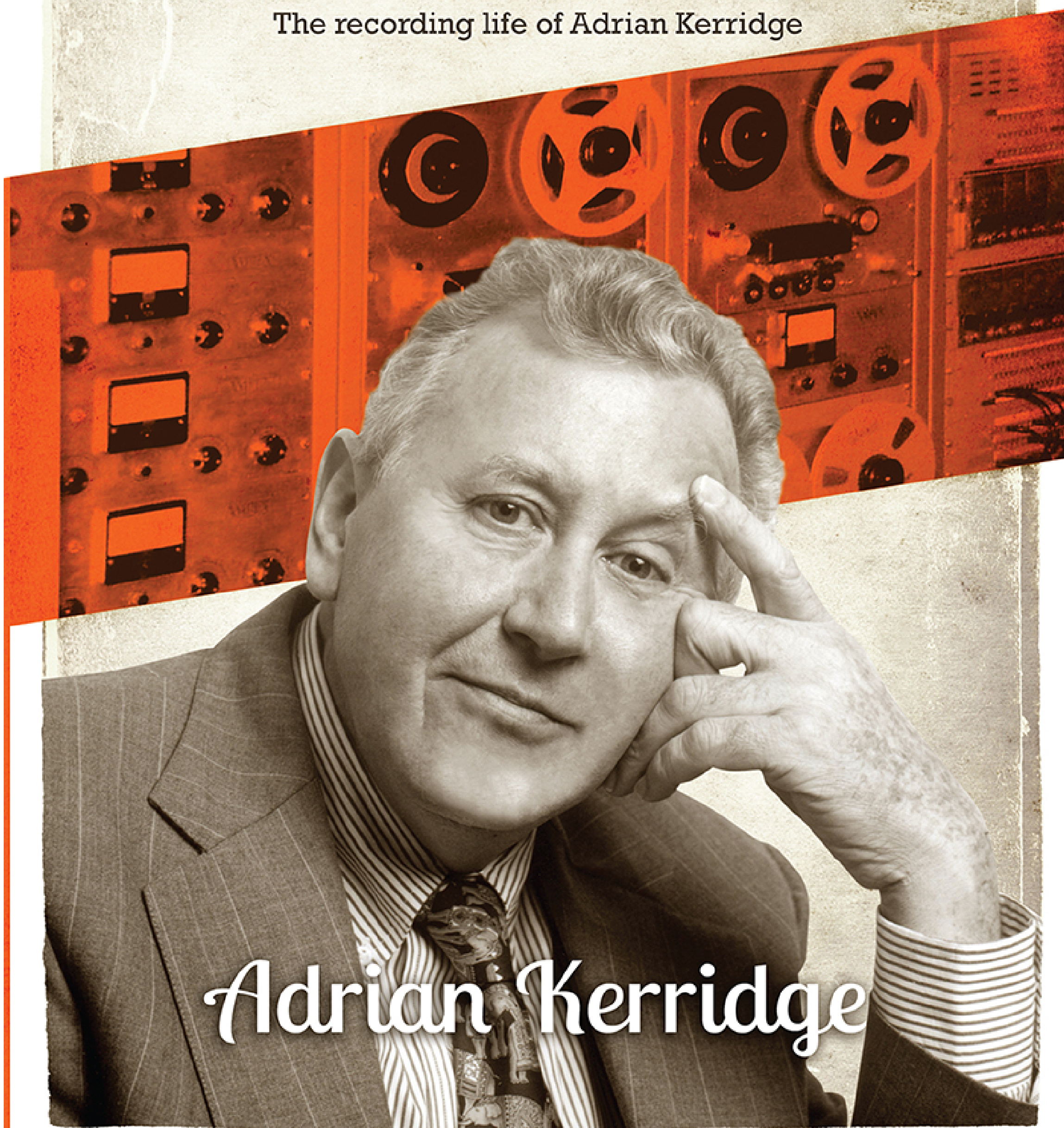

Adrian Kerridge

“TAPE’S ROLLING, TAKE ONE”

The recording life of
Adrian Kerridge

Six Decades of Recording and Producing,
from the Rock ‘n’ Roll Years to
TV Scores & Blockbuster Movies!

Volume One – 1940s, ‘50s and ‘60s

M-Y BOOKS PAPERBACK

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Adrian Kerridge

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife Mary for her love, patience, understanding, and encouragement when I spent so many hours in the studio, recording and producing music in England and Europe; also to my children Kathryn, Suzanna, Virginia and Nicholas.

I would also like to dedicate this book to my dear friend and business partner Johnny Pearson, who sadly passed away in March 2011 after a brief illness, and with whom I enjoyed so many memorable and creative times in the studio. A very successful pianist, composer and arranger, Johnny was a man of integrity and humility, and a wonderful human being.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the part played by Peter Gregory – group financial director, friend and colleague of some forty years' standing. A brilliant and thoroughly creative accountant, Peter was of enormous help and kept a close watch over the expenditure, taking much financial pressure off my back. His skills proved an ideal complement to Johnny's musical talents, and he was always there when needed, without question. He passed away suddenly in October 2007 aged 59.

Madeira November 2013

Foreword
By Dave Clark

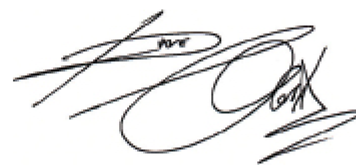
People talk about the late, great Sir George Martin as being The Fifth Beatle and he certainly deserves such an accolade, not least for producing their legendary and ground-breaking records. By that same token, Adrian Kerridge surely has to be the sixth member of The Dave Clark Five (The DC5). While still in his twenties, Adrian totally got what we were all about and thanks to his empathy for The DC5 as artists - along with his technical wizardry in the studio - he managed to capture the essence of our live stage sound on analogue tape.

Who could have known back in those heady days of the 1960's when we were all so young that fifty years on our records - with Adrian at the studio controls - would stand the test of time and still manage to thrill people?

Bruce Springsteen has publically stated that he is not only a DC5 fan but that he studied some of the studio techniques Adrian and The DC5 developed and applied them to some of his own recordings. Praise comes no higher! Indeed in a filmed interview Bruce generously said, "The DC5 made some of the greatest Rock And Roll records ever made; those were big, powerful, nasty-sounding records, man; a much bigger sound than, say, The Stones or The Beatles. They were thrilling, inspiring, simply exciting. To this day they are still great productions."

In the studio Adrian was a one-man band with no assistants; not only was he the engineer and tape operator but he also set up, maintained and fixed all the studio equipment as well as the DC5's equipment. When in 1998

the Association of Professional Recording Services honoured Adrian with their prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award - as they had done with Sir George Martin the previous year - it gave me great pleasure to present the award to Adrian. That recognition from his peers for his ground-breaking technical achievements confirmed what The DC5 and their fans worldwide had always known from the evidence of our own ears: that behind the scenes of Rock And Roll's great era, Adrian was a true creative innovator.



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Introduction

Adrian Kerridge, recording engineer, producer and studio owner, presents his personal view and history of the music recording industry, tracing his long career from its analogue tape beginnings in the 1950s, through to the digital hard-drive recording of major film scores in the 21st century. Unique in its scope, it covers the bands and artists, engineers and personalities, techniques and technology.

The story encompasses Adrian's work with the legendary Joe Meek, his recording of the UK bands that spearheaded the 1960s invasion of the US charts and his involvement with mixing console design.

A long and successful career:

Awarded some 300 Platinum, Gold and Silver discs across multiple musical genres, with recordings of the Dave Clark Five alone resulting in worldwide record sales of 100 Million. (Source: Dave Clark)

Recipient of Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Professional Recording Services (APRS), in recognition of a lifetime's service to the music industry. One of only two such awards – the other being awarded to the late Sir George Martin.

Gold-badge Merit award from British Academy of Songwriter & Composers, for services to the music industry.

Fellow Institute of Professional Sound (Broadcast)

Fellow Association Professional Recording Services (Studio Recording)

Life Member Audio Engineering Society.

Member Association of Motion Picture Sound. (Music scoring).

Retired previous member British Kinematograph, Sound and Television Society serving the technical and craft skills of the film, sound and television industry.

Retired previous member Institute of Directors.

Retired previous member Institute of Management.

Chapter 1

Growing up with Music

The month of March 1938 was unusually dry and sunny for the time of year, with an average temperature of 8°C. At Harrow-on-the-Hill in North West London, in a private nursing home at 100 High Street, a boy was born to Margery and Leslie Kerridge. Christened Adrian Nicholas, their only child, he arrived eighteen months before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Switches and Bombs

My family lived in Northolt, Middlesex, in a new semi-detached house at no. 7 Harewood Avenue, bought by my father Leslie for £675 (around £48,000 today) in 1935 shortly after my parents married at St Mary's church Northolt Village. There was no central heating instead we had a fireplace in every room and we had mains electricity. Coal was stored in a coal bunker outside containing Anthracite for the boiler and coal for the fires. Some homes in the surrounding area had no electricity and relied on gas lighting! Those with no electricity and to listen to the wireless they had battery models which had lead acid accumulators, with glass sides, for the valve heaters and high tension batteries for the valve plates. To recharge the accumulators they had to take it to the local radio store. We had a telephone – with the number WAX 1927; not everyone had a telephone in those days. We had that privilege

because my father was in a protected occupation during World War Two maintaining and repairing telecommunications in London that had been put out of action by the Nazi bombing during the battle of Britain. Prior to the start of WWII, my father was employed by Reliance Telephones to service PBX (private branch exchange) systems which also connected to the UK General Post Office network. These were to be found in large companies, and had one switchboard operator or more, depending on the size of the firm, to route calls internally and manually. By today's standards these were archaic and needed much maintenance, but they evolved into the computerised PABX (private automatic branch exchange) digital systems that are now all too common, using the somewhat notorious automated messages and menus – push this button, then that, and finally one gets to speak to a human! My father, before outbreak of war, maintained Selfridges' PABX in the basement of the store.

At war's end, my father changed jobs and travelled around Southern England maintaining and repairing traffic light electronics, which were housed in cabinets that were usually located on windy street corners. Sometimes I would travel with him and experience his working outside in all weathers – not pleasant. The traffic signals in those days were operated by electro-mechanical devices – relays. He subsequently changed jobs back to telephone engineer, maintaining and repairing broken equipment in telephone exchanges, which had a vast array of electro-mechanical switchgear invented in 1888 by an American, Almon Strowger. He patented the first automatic exchange in 1891. Born in 1839, he was an undertaker in Kansas City, Missouri! The Strowger switchgear (known as uniselectors), of which there were many, chuntered away with incredible noise that could be heard outside the exchange walls. They needed much cleaning of their multiple switch contacts, which were arranged in 10 levels, otherwise there was a possibility of a

misrouted call or no connection at all. Each level had 10 contacts arranged in a semicircle, with these devices connecting one caller to another via impulses from the rotary telephone dial – a slow and cumbersome method. Even aged ten, with my first experience of electro-mechanical technology devices, they held a special fascination for me. There were huge lead-acid batteries, connected in series to provide a nominal 50 volts DC to power the exchange in the event of a mains failure.

The exchange was in Shell-Mex and BP Ltd Company House, to provide for the internal telephone system located in the sub-basement. It was quite a noisy place with all the Strowger electro-mechanical switches operating. The ringing tones were generated by two mechanical rotating machines driven by small electric motors with a shaft that engaged the contacts. These operated in sequence, to provide the familiar *ring-ring* sound of old analogue telephones – difficult to imagine in the today's digital age!

We lived one mile from Northolt airport where, at the outbreak of war in September 1939, were stationed a squadron of Polish airman who flew Hurricane aircraft, and what a good job the fearless Poles did in dogfights attacking the Nazi aeroplanes. During the war, I was woken most nights by the Luftwaffe trying to attack Northolt aerodrome. Every morning at about 5.00, I was awoken yet again by the Hurricanes' engines warming up, ready to go at a moment's notice during the height of the Blitz.

After the war, in May 1955, a memorial was erected to those Poles who flew out of RAF Northolt: "The Polish War Memorial", on the left hand side of the A40 adjacent to the slip road to Ruislip.

My father worked in his normal job by day and on many nights was an ARP (Air Raid Patrol) Warden, patrolling the streets to ensure blackout was maintained. He wore the regulation tin hat and would often bring home shell shrapnel; heavy, evil-looking stuff. While on patrol during a

heavy raid, he would briefly return to the house and ask my mother through the letterbox, “Margery, are you and the boy alright?” During a raid my mother and I would take shelter under the stairs. It was deemed the safest place to be if there was a direct hit on the house, and living near RAF Northolt that was a distinct possibility. There was a concrete built air raid shelter very near our house – it was damp and it stank so my mother refused to go there. My mother was a seamstress by trade who gave up her job when I was born and spent many hours behind her electric Singer sewing machine at home, modified from treadle power, making dresses to supplement the family income.

When I was very young, and heard any music played by an orchestra on the wireless (as it was then called), I imagined the band was in the radiogram’s loudspeaker! I listened every night to *Children’s Hour*, broadcast on the BBC Home Service from 5 to 6pm with “Uncle Mac” (Derek McCulloch). *Children’s Hour* was one of my favourites, especially the “Larry the Lamb” character. When other regions joined the London broadcasts, the engineers were warned to be aware of sound levels. I guess this was because there was no transmitter protection – no limiter in the signal chain – and any over-modulation would cause the transmitter to come off air. Perish the thought for dear old Auntie Beeb! Derek McCulloch signed off air every night with the line “Goodnight children everywhere”.

Despite the strife of the war years, and the shortages that went with them, I had a very happy childhood, despite the deprivations of war, with caring parents always working and a few toys built by my father, my favourite, a sit-on wooden model of a road steam roller. Those early years got progressively harder for all, thanks to strict food rationing imposed in January 1940. Foods considered a basic now such as oranges or bananas were scarce and rarely seen, let alone any of the exotic fruits that grace the shelves of today’s supermarkets. Food rationing was strictly enforced

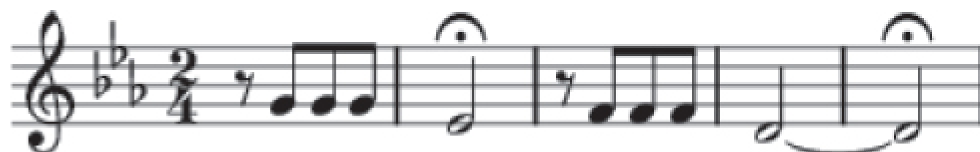
by the ration book, one per person with coupons that were exchangeable for foodstuffs, such as meat (except sausages, which were hard to come by), eggs – one fresh egg a week if available (unless you were lucky enough to keep chickens, in which case eggs were plentiful!) – milk, butter, and cheese. If you were a farmer there was not as much of a problem with rationing as there was in towns and cities (unless you went to the black market) because they had the animals to kill and eat – pigs, cows, sheep – and made butter. Rabbits were plentiful though! We had so many to eat I got fed up with eating them. Even today, when I see rabbit on a menu it’s a no-no for me! Even clothes were rationed, known as standard clothing, and were marked by a CC41 label and young children were given small bottles of concentrated orange juice as a vitamin C supplement. It wasn’t until sometime after the war’s end that I saw an orange; I never knew what a banana was or even saw one until they returned to the greengrocers’ shops – hard to believe now. My father grew as many vegetables as he could in the front and back gardens – the cabbages sometimes decimated by caterpillars. The whole population was encouraged to do this, using every available piece of land, inspired by the “Dig for Victory” slogan. Those circumstances are difficult to comprehend now in an age of immediacy and plenty. I clearly recall, during the height of the Battle of Britain, playing with my friend Pamela Yost from across the road. She had a brother, Peter, with whom I was friendly, but I found it quite odd that his father and mother always addressed him as *Boy*: “Come here *boy* do this and do that *boy*.” I only saw their father once and had no idea what he did for a job.

During the Blitz in summer 1941, while playing in my back garden, Pamela and I would often watch the dogfights going on very high in the sky with the swooping and diving planes (only after the war did I learn the planes were Spitfires and Hurricanes) painting vapour-trail patterns

across the clear blue sky. Since we lived so close to from RAF Northolt my back garden gave us a ringside seat. It was remote and surreal but, as children, we were not as frightened as during the night-time bombing raids; never knowing when the next raid would come and what devastation it would bring about. Reflecting back the night time air-raid-sirens put a chill down my spine. We would wait anxiously for the relief of the all clear siren: no attack on RAF Northolt aerodrome but attacks elsewhere.

My father was a keen amateur photographer – he won some awards at the local camera club for his black and white photography taken around the streets of London pre war – and a member of a church choir in Roxeth Church, Harrow-on-the-Hill. He also learned to play the piano and studied music theory and composition, for classical and church music. We had a very extensive collection of twelve inch 78s – Mozart, Brahms, Beethoven and so on. Being 12” 78s, and some of the works being quite long, they were in boxed sets of four or five records. So, for example, on reaching the end of the first side the second side started as an edit, and so on with all the sides to the end of the work! It always fascinated me that when the records were played the needle was not steel but a natural thorn, which could be sharpened by a small round hand tool. It was explained to me that when you used steel needles too many times on shellac records they could damage them by cutting into the grooves, so that gramophone record took on a shade of grey, which degraded the fidelity. I spent many hours with my father listening to classical works. My favourite was the last movement Beethoven’s Symphony No 4 in B flat Major Should be Symphony No 6 in F Major (Pastoral) – a good tune! Herr Hitler would have approved, accordingly the three master composers that represented good German music in his view were Ludwig van Beethoven, Richard Wagner and Anton Bruckner. Nonetheless, Hitler particularly favoured Wagner, who was uncompromisingly anti-Semitic

and loved by the German people and it has to be remembered that these three composers lived prior to the 20th century. However, a point of interest, *Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C minor's* opening began with a four-note, short-short-short-long intro, which repeated twice within its five-bar length:



Those of you who studied or remember WWII history, will be aware that Churchill used the V sign with the palm of his hand pointing outward (not the V sign some use today): it signified V for Victory. V in Morse code is "dot-dot-dot-dash" sounding "da-da-da-dumm, da-da-da-dumm" – the four notes over five bars. During the war, the BBC adopted those four notes in its broadcasts to Europe they also transmitted messages personnel after the evening news: coded messages ("Yvette likes big carrots …Paul has some good tobacco … the secretary is very pretty"…. Mademoiselle strokes her dog's nose: source BBC) to the resistance and others in occupied France to alert the listener to a parachute drop of weapons or an agent where the resistance could locate them. The BBC recording was played by percussionist Jimmy Blades (I later met him on sessions when I was at IBC) on a damped African membrane drum with a tympani stick, to signify V for victory. (Source: Graham Melville-Mason, *Independent*, on James Blades). The short notes were damped by his hand on the drum skin. Blades was often at IBC as a session player on percussion. Any persons in Europe painting the V sign in public places, if caught in the act, would be severely punished, and even more so in the occupied UK channel islands. How ironic that the music of one of Hitler's favourite composers was used against him!

When just five years old, I went to a local infant school within easy walking distance of my home, and recall we had chalk and small slate boards to learn to write on. It was small class of not more than ten infants and one teacher. It was a relief when "Victory in Europe" (VE day), war's end, was announced on Tuesday 8th May 1945. Up to then, as a young child I had only known a state of war, fuelled by the constant attacks on the country. Part of the relief was the realisation that my father no longer had to spend his nights patrolling the local streets, to ensure no light was shining from people's homes to the street thus denying the Luftwaffe any ground reference points to establish their aircrafts position. At last he would be with us at home and not outside in constant danger from bombs and incendiary devices. During one raid an incendiary (phosphorus) bomb no doubt intended for Northolt Aerodrome landed on the wooden roof of our coal store. Fortunately, on this occasion, my father was at home and it was soon extinguished by throwing buckets of sand over the fiercely burning device. The end of the war meant no more Nazi enemy planes attacking Northolt aerodrome, no more big guns booming in the middle of the night (there were two large anti-aircraft guns not more than a quarter of a mile from my home) to defend RAF Northolt and, best of all, no alarming whine of air raid sirens. As a child, the thought of what the next raid would bring was quite terrifying. I remember one night being in my mother's arms in the kitchen when a raid was on – an attack on the aerodrome. One enemy plane was so low that I remember seeing the pilot very clearly; he dropped a bomb that hit a house up our road on the hill overlooking the aerodrome – a lousy shot! For a few years after the war, whenever I heard recordings of the air raid sirens on the wireless it sent a left me cold.

I moved to Northolt primary school in Spring Term 1946, again within walking distance of my home. The teachers

were brilliant. We had gas lighting in the classrooms, which struck me as very odd, as we had electricity at home. In the Junior part of the school there were separate hut-type buildings heated by old fashioned coke stoves in each class, which when stoked up glowed red on the outside – no fire guards around them. (‘Elf ‘n Safety would have a fit today; those box tickers would love it!). The government of the day must have been promoting milk for children’s health and well being because one day a camera unit arrived to film us drinking it – my first encounter with a film unit. Third-of-a-pint bottles were issued free every day, and along with another boy I got the job of delivering them to every classroom on a four-wheel handcart; the attraction being we could whiz around the playground on it, except during the terrible winter of 1947 when there was very deep snow! One clear memory I have is walking to school in deep snow then through the entrance to school playground, accompanied by my mother, through snow piled up either side of a cleared pathway at least six feet in height on either side!

Looking back, I felt such a sense of liberation when the war in Europe ended on 8th May 1945. I could play in the street once again, and walk the fields in spring and summer with my friends and enjoy the bird song – even they sounded free! We looked for birds’ nests in the hedgerows but didn’t take the eggs: instead we just tried to identify the species – blackbird, sparrow, thrush and so on. We climbed trees and enjoyed the fresh smells of countryside, freshly cut hay and the reaping of corn, the dry dust rising and rabbits, hares and small field mice running out for their lives from the advancing tractor. Harvest time saw us watching the cutting and threshing of the corn, the thresher driven by a steam tractor. We climbed up the straw ricks (no straw bailing in those days!) and generally enjoyed ourselves, much to the dismay of the farmer – an ill-tempered rotund man, who took exception to our sliding down the ricks and

chased us away red-faced and shouting. What very happy days they were – to be free after war.

The Harvest service in church on an autumn Sunday was something we boys looked forward to, the church decorated with fruit, vegetables, flowers and wheat sheaves as well as the Harvest Supper at the church hall, usually on the previous Saturday. I used to go to Northolt village, as it was then, play in the stream close to the thatch-roofed pub, where the beer was delivered in oak barrels by a steam dray. Behind the village church was an old hollow oak tree we used to climb inside and play inside and around it, a large pond where we went newting (what beautiful creatures!). My mother said, “Don’t bring them home”. So we didn’t!

My father loved to fish and, on occasions, we would take the No. 140 bus to Hayes railway station to catch the Great Western Railway (GWR) steam train from Hayes to Denham accompanied by the smell of coal smoke, oil and emitted exhaust steam and if you looked out of the window, which I did frequently, the occasional black smuts in the eyes from the engine. We would walk through the fields to the small crystal-clear river Colne running alongside the Grand Union Canal. We caught trout, usually three or four, took them back home and my mother would cook them for our tea. I’ve loved trout ever since – especially the smoked variety.

Summer also saw the fair come to the local Northolt Park, and one particular attraction was the huge steam-driven showmen’s engines towing the fairground rides and the showmen’s caravan living quarters. I was fascinated by the large dynamos mounted on the front of the engines, driven by wide belts from the flywheel with the large round volt and current meters, located near the dynamo on the front, reading a DC voltage of 115/125 volts and the current drawn, which varied according to the type of fairground attraction it was driving. For the dodgems, it was about 50 amps, carried by great big thick cables – so the load on the

dynamo meant the engines had to work really hard, chuffing heavily.

I began to learn piano at seven but soon got fed up with playing endless five-finger exercises and learnt to recognise the notes by hearing them – my father would ask me which was this and that note, which C, which was a sharp or a flat, et cetera, without looking at the piano keyboard. It was all in good-humoured spirit as it should have been – and it was good training for the ear. I also learned to read music – or at least understand some of scores that my father collected, such as Handle's oratorio *Messiah*, which I sang in the church choir when I was older. My favourite was the *Alleluia* chorus, in parts not easy to sing because its long passages without room for taking a breath made good breath control essential. To work around the breath problem, the choirmaster would decide who would take a breath at what bar in the score. This meant that long passages could be sung without large gasps, and the piece sounded seamless. And when you took a breath, it had to be a "quiet" one! In my later years this was a lesson learnt when directing vocals or vocal groups using close-mic techniques. While I was still seven years old, I joined my father's church choir as a junior choirboy – by that time I was attending Northolt primary school. The choirboys had singing practice on Wednesday, and the full choir on Friday evenings, and although our ferocious choirmaster took no prisoners, it was excellent training: "Learn to project the voice, breath correctly, don't sing from the throat, or move the voice on certain notes from stomach to throat, sing from the stomach and feel the diaphragm moving, and oh, don't forget to pronounce the ending of words clearly and ah, as a choir, no machine gun endings please, all the Ts, Ds and Ss should end together. No mumbling of the sung word. Remember your diction! And yes, one other point on the unaccompanied pieces, try not to sing flat!"

Little did I know then that all that good advice would stand me in good stead for the future, when dealing with artistes in the studio, some of whom thought they knew it all!

Unfortunately for the Church Verger we choirboys were no cherubs. The Verger was a portly gentleman who lived in a bungalow at the entrance to the church drive – we called him Foxy. As part of his duties he was responsible for the upkeep of the church grounds and graveyard. He hated us boys trampling over his freshly cut lawns and put iron hoops in the ground to deter us. Every Wednesday and Friday, in the grass-growing season, we would pull out the hoops and scatter them on the ground, leaving holes in the lawn, much to his annoyance. He complained to the vicar and we were warned but "boys being boys"... On summer Sundays whilst waiting for evensong to start we would often sit outside the vestry on Foxy's grass and play five stones – an old game played by children at that time. To play we selected five small round stones and whoever's turn it is throws them into the air and tries to catch as many as possible on the back of the same hand. The *stones* that were caught are thrown up again from the back of the hand where they came to rest and as many as possible are caught in the palm of the same hand until the player fails to catch any and is "out".

On some occasions after choir practice in late autumn/early winter, when household coal fires were lit, we had to walk home to Northolt because the thick smog that enveloped the area brought the buses to a halt. It stuck in the throat and there was a strong taste of sulphur in the mouth – there were many coal-burning fires in those days and, when the weather conditions were right, the smog appeared frequently a thick yellow in colour, causing one to cover the mouth and nose.

During my early choir period I joined the Cubs – but I didn't last long. My simply being too boisterous is one reason that comes to mind – and I didn't take it seriously. All

that *dib dib* stuff! I was asked to leave and didn't really mind because as far as I was concerned I had better things to do with my time. The best part was buying fourpenn'orth of chips after Cubs from the chippy (fish and chip shop) across the road. To this day I still love the smell of fish and chips with vinegar and salt – and it's got to be eaten out of a newspaper!

Something new for me after the war was going on holiday. During the war, it was impossible to go on holiday, as many of the beaches on the South and East coasts were strictly off limits. They were located in public exclusion zones, and some were mined because in the early war years a German invasion was a distinct possibility.

My first holiday, of the two spent on the Isle of Wight in 1947 and 1948, was with my mum and dad in Ventnor. We travelled by Southern Region main-line train to Portsmouth, taking the steam-driven paddle steamer to Ryde Pier head – a journey across the Solent of about half an hour – and then catching a numbered and named (which fascinated me: No.16 Ventnor, No. 21 Sandown and so forth) steam train to Ventnor. As a child of nine years, having not been that far afield before, I was excited to be seeing another place – and by having the freedom to roam by the seaside! I clearly remember as the train slowly made its way across the island, looking out of the right hand side of the carriage I saw a row of three strange-looking high masts on a hill in the distance. Naturally, having an enquiring mind, I thought Dad would know what they were for; he told me they were something to do with radio during the war. It wasn't until many years later, still being inquisitive, that I discovered they were part of what we now know as radar (**RA**dio **D**etection **A**nd **R**anging). It was then known as "home chain radar", later supplemented by "chain home low" to detect aircraft as low as 500 feet then later "chain home very low" detection to 50 feet) an early warning system. An early development (1935 by Sir Robert Watson-Watt), it was a

fairly primitive but effective radar system that gave a read-out of incoming enemy aircraft's height and range, which was then interpreted by the radar operator and the read-outs telephoned to the sector controllers of our aircraft. I found out that these aerials, three in-line clusters, with masts 360 feet high, were spread at intervals mainly around our South and East coasts during the war. The stations were operated by the RAF, and Ventnor's installation was called RAF Ventnor Home Chain Radar Station.

Ventnor was a most delightful place, and I remember that we stayed B&B at the Sea View Hotel. One enduring memory was how light it stayed till late in the evening – 10.45pm (to give the farmers more hours of daylight the clocks in summer were advanced two hours ahead of Greenwich Meantime). I persuaded my father to climb up to the top of this hill as I called it. The correct name was St. Boniface Down, and it was about half a mile ENE from the town and 791 feet high (241 metres) – such a steep climb that my mother declined to join us! We climbed to the top and found a small deserted hut next to the aerials. On walking around, I saw bits of twisted metal that looked like aircraft parts. One piece had on it the Nazi Swastika, definitely part of a wing, so there it was – a crashed enemy plane. Curiosity had got the better of me; on further investigation, poking out of the ground I found what turned out to be a very large shattered engine, obviously from the plane. The radar station had been raided by Stukas in 1940, but the attack was only partially successful after they were counter-attacked by Hurricane aircraft. The RADAR aerials were left intact.

I had a very good holiday, walking with my parents and playing in the sea front paddling pool, in the centre of which was a model of the island. I paddled there, and played with my model yacht, and also paddled in the sea, played on the sand and looked for crabs in rock pools: in the light summer evenings walking along the cliffs. Many, many years later,

having obtained my Private Pilot’s Licence, I flew my Cessna G1000 182T Skylane back to the island, landed at Sandown and then went by road to Ventnor. The happy memories came flooding back when, much to my surprise, I found that very little had changed on the sea front and that the paddling pool I had spent so many happy hours in was still there, looking just the same, if a bit more jaded. I visited what was the railway station to find it a builder’s yard and industrial buildings. The stationmaster’s house was still standing. The railway tunnel from Ryde pier to the station passed through St. Boniface Down and was 1,312 yards long (1,200m) the station itself lay 294 feet (90m) above sea level. The tunnel now used by Southern water. An easy walk to the town and a tough climb back up to the station.

When I was ten years of age, my parents gave me a red Raleigh bicycle – my pride and joy – subsequently I installed dynamo lighting for front and back which I rode everywhere on the main roads. On some days, later when I was at Ealing Grammar School, I rode to school along the then-narrow A40, taking about three quarters of an hour – an unthinkable journey now with the incredible volume of traffic and three lanes each way! After school, I would ride to Greenford to visit my maternal grandmother and my cousin Maureen, or take the push-pull train from Ealing Broadway to Greenford Halt. Thursday afternoons were sports in all weathers, summers and winters, on a field owned by the school at the end of my cousin’s road – most convenient. Their house backed onto the Greenford-to-Ealing branch line and we used to play on the embankment looking for grass snakes – they were there a-plenty. My mother’s brother Uncle Eddie was stationed in India during the war, and he had a wonderful and colourful butterfly collection, pinned neatly in glass-fronted cabinets, collected during his time there, which fascinated me. He had a medium sized greenhouse, heated summer and winter by water pipes warmed by a small anthracite stove on the outside of the house. He grew

a number of exotic flowers and plants in there – I guess a hangover from his days serving in India.

While waiting to take the push-pull branch line train back to Greenford underground station – then a Central London underground train (this was above ground at that stage of the line) to Northolt – some of us boys travelling together would place pennies on the line at the halt to be run over by train wheels and squashed flat. This may seem trite now but then it was good fun and had a frisson of danger! On winter evenings when darkness fell early the train carriages were lit by gas lamps! At other times I would cycle to Denham village down the old A40 with friends (as I mentioned above, it was quite safe then with relatively little traffic), where there was a small stream, and we would catch minnows, getting thoroughly wet and dirty in the process, place them in a jam jar, and take them home. Near the village was a very large house, standing in what appeared to be huge grounds, surrounded by a red-brick perimeter wall – it looked very foreboding. Many years later, I discovered the property was the home of famous film-maker and producer Alexander Korda (died January 1956), who built and owned Denham Film Studios, not a stone's throw from his home. Little did I know at the time, that a few decades later I would be heavily involved in the same industry, owning recording studios with my partner Johnny Pearson and recording scores for many major motion pictures and television series! I used to visit my other cousin (my paternal uncle Tommy's daughter Sheila) in Hove, where Uncle Tommy had his own business manufacturing lampshades. We were about the same age, and her mother – my Aunt Nancy – worked in the food industry, so no food rationing for the family in Hove! We used to exchange one-pound bags of sugar for sweets at the sweet shop! Didn't do my teeth much good later on – copious fillings! Brighton and Hove, in those days, was a wonderful place to visit, although some of the beaches had the war defences on them and the

West and East piers were not usable, as the middle sections had been cut out to deter any German invaders, as was the case with all piers around the coast. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves nevertheless! My parents told me that if I passed the Eleven Plus exam they would buy me a watch, and after I passed they kept their promise. I was given a Bravingtons Renown watch, engraved on the back “from Mum and Dad June 1949”. I still have it, but sadly it is no longer working. I was promoted, if that is the correct word, to Head Choirboy, the result of which was that I had to sing all the soprano solos! On Sundays, there were two services a day – 11.00 am Matins and choral Evensong at 6.00pm. The best part was singing at weddings on Saturdays, sometime as many as three or four in a day, or at the occasional funeral. As Head Choirboy, the church Verger paid me the money that he’d obtained from the Best Man for our singing labours. I would be given the correct amount of money to pay the other boys, often a pound or a ten-shilling note, or even more depending on the number of boys singing. The money had to be split between all the boys (£1 in 1950 equals £31 today), and the summer months were particularly good for income! We all bicycled down to the post office where I changed the money and shared it with the others, each getting an equal share of two shillings (10p = £3.16 today) or half crown each (12.5p = £3.95 today). Not only was this useful extra pocket money – it was also my first experience of earning a living from music! We often saw the mother of the bride crying during the ceremony and as young boys found it amusing. We saw all sorts of different people getting married, and on one occasion the best man dressed shockingly casually for the time and even chewing gum! Boys can be cruel, and we thought and said that all these people only did Christenings, Marriages and Deaths – just three visits to church during their lifetime and their last one hardly counted because they’d know nothing about it, despite the fact that he or she would be there in body, if not

in spirit! Although funerals are generally solemn affairs, I did sing at some that were sad for the family involved and at others that were a true celebration of the deceased’s life, with plenty of humour. We were paid for our efforts when required to sing, although we weren’t often needed. As head choirboy, I was expected to do my share of solo anthem singing. I frequently sang solo works at Matins or Evensong services and (hopefully) I sang without too much vibrato. I did not have perfect pitch but relative pitch. The church had a fete in June each year in the Harrow Hospital nurses’ home grounds, which were pretty extensive – although it has long since become housing. Myself and a friend would join train sets, combining our Hornby 00-gauge train sets in the vicar’s garage and then charging an admission fee, the proceeds of which were contributed to good causes. A bunch of us young boys had girlfriends – and mine was Pat Steele. Her father did not approve – he was very strait-laced and strict with Pat. Regardless, Pat and I got on very well and spent many happy hours together. We eventually lost touch. My father liked going to concerts, and when I was aged ten he took me to a solo piano concert in a school hall in Ealing. The piano, I noticed, was a very large Steinway Grand. On the left hand side of the hall were a number of rooms that you could see into through large glass windows, and I discovered that these were the very well equipped school laboratories. The school was closed for the holidays, and I plainly recall how keen I was to attend that school if I passed the Eleven Plus – it had a good feel. I have never forgotten the smell of the newly treated, dark-oiled pine, herringbone-patterned hall floor. My class teacher was confident we would pass the Eleven Plus but nevertheless said if we did she would eat her hat. After the results, when most of the class passed, including me, she came in with a chocolate hat that she had made and promptly ate it – she kept her promise! My chosen school was Ealing Grammar School, at which I was given a place. Back when I attended

that piano concert I'd had no idea I would eventually attend there. At age 11 in 1949, I was now dressed in long trousers – hooray! I duly reported to the school, which had a good reputation and a disciplinarian headmaster, Mr Sainsbury-Hicks – a formidable man to us boys, but I suppose he was all right to the masters. On the first day I felt out of my comfort zone. I recall Sainsbury-Hicks telling us he would be visiting America for three weeks. The reason I cannot recall, except that when he returned he spoke with an American accent, which greatly amused us. Only three weeks to develop an accent! He soon reverted to English though! Our masters were excellent teachers. One abiding memory I have is of our French master, who was another formidable man, although his name is lost in the mists of time. We had to learn the French verb tables by heart – and there were a lot of them! He was the only master whom I did not like and the homework was an utter bore, mostly spent writing out the French verb tables. We boys were very wary of him. Some of the boys misbehaved, as boys do, and had the cane – six of the best! Fortunately, I kept my head down and out of trouble… well mostly. Classes were divided into 45-minute slots with a different master (no female teachers at the boys' school!) for each subject. They all wore gowns and, on special days, wore the full-hooded gowns that indicated from which university they had graduated. Other lessons of a practical nature were woodworking, which I enjoyed, and learning to swim at Ealing swimming pool, PT (physical training) and best of all skiving off on some afternoons with my mate Geoffrey to visit the cinema – we never got caught despite having to pass the headmasters office window! How lucky can you get! I regret to say that I should have worked harder, and my homework was sometimes done hurriedly in Walpole Park Library at lunchtime to free me up in the evenings. My early interest in music was coupled with my love for electronics and audio amplifiers, which I began to build at age twelve, and so my