Jarek Zaba: This is Jarek Zaba for the AMP Kingston Project from Creative Youth exploring art, music and pop fashion heritage in the Kingston borough and beyond. Today is the 21st of October 2022, and I am with Tim Harrison at his home on Effingham Road, Surbiton. Tim is the author of the Hello Tolworth, I'm Ziggy book, which details the history of the Toby Jug pub in Tolworth and the launch of David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust character there in February 1972. He is also the editor of the Good Life local newspaper here in Surbiton. Um, Tim, do you mind stating your name for the tape, uh, as well as your date and place of birth?

Tim Harrison: Yeah. I'm Tim Harrison. I was born on the 3rd of April, 1957, uh, at Queen Charlotte's Hammersmith. uh, lived my first year in a flat off Kensington High Street, and then my parents moved to Kingston. So I've lived in Kingston from the age of one and I'm now 65 or six. Can't now remember. Anyway, whatever it works out had from 1957. Um, yes, so I grew up in Kingston. I went to Latchmere Primary. I then went to Kingston Grammar School and I left Kingston Grammar School in 1975 and did some work experience on the Surrey Comet newspaper and finally got a job there in the spring of 1976. And I worked at the Surrey Comet for about 15 years, then went freelance and I've been a freelance journalist ever since setting up Surbiton's local newspaper in, um, 2012 with my wife Jane. Uh, so I've lived here in on the boundary of Surbiton and Long Ditton, um, for 25 years, but before that, as I say, Kingston, briefly in Teddington, um, but always within a mile or two of this area.

Jarek Zaba: Yeah. So I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the character of Kingston over, over those years. How, how would you have described the Kingston that you, you were brought up in, um, and how has it changed over the years? And I wonder with specific sort of, uh, reference to music and, and, and, uh, yeah, the sort of entertainment side of things.

Tim Harrison: I mean, I think the key thing, um, growing up in Kingston in the, uh, 1960s and seventies, um, so I'd have been a teenager. In the early seventies, uh, going down to Bentall's or to the HMV shop on a Saturday morning with my pocket money, uh, to buy singles. Um, early seventies. I mean, the singles I was buying then were things like Gary Glitter, um, T-Rex, that sort of thing. Um, but Kingston yeah, has changed. Enormously. I mean, it was really a very sleepy, traditional market town in the, in the sixties and seventies. The marketplace was very much, uh, fruit and veg and fish. Um, not so much anything else. Very few, relatively few cafes. The scene has boomed, um, and many, many more pubs than there are today. I mean, Relatively few pubs in Kingston have survived, um, the ones that have no longer seem to do

music, but in that, well, I often think of as a kind of golden era. But maybe it was just because I was a teenager then. Um, just about every pub seemed to be able to clear a space, uh, and put a little band in on occasional evenings or would have a side room, uh, where bands would play and where you'd have parties and wedding receptions and things. But a lot of pubs offered live music. Uh, and that has been really the big loss over the decades, um, to today when there are very, very few pubs now, uh, in the whole royal borough. Offering local bands a chance to, you know, just have a strum on a, on a Thursday or a Friday evening. Um, that has been the big loss in Kingston. Kingston has become much more developed, looks much more like Croydon than it, than it ever used to. Um, in a way, for example, that Richmond Town Centre hasn't, there've been much more rigorous planning restrictions in Richmond, whereas Kingston has gone for, um, really boosting the commercial, um, the office space side of things, uh, and shops. Um, . So yeah, it's changed a huge amount, but the loss of little music venues where bands might just get bugged a few quid, uh, but, but gave them a platform to practice, experience an audience, and gave local people a chance to see and support local bands. That seems to have gone now.

Jarek Zaba: And in terms of your own specific tastes, I mean, you mentioned a couple of artists there. What, what, what, what was your early route into music and what were some of those when, when you were frequenting some of these pubs that, that, that had music?

Jarek Zaba: Yeah.

Tim Harrison: I mean, it wasn't just pubs, it was also, um, like village halls, parish halls, church halls. Mm-hmm. Uh, Churchills tended to have, uh, a, a regular youth group, typically Thursday or Friday night. Friday night usually seemed to be everybody's choice for going out at the end of the week. So, even. Um, every church hall would have a youth group, quite possibly a, a small stage. And if a youth group produced, um, a little band, they'd give themselves a name. They'd stand up there on Friday night, play the only two or three songs they knew, plus a couple of relatively recent chart covers. And that was the pattern, I think for, for all the churches around here. Uh, all the church halls. I remember St. Peters Norton had a very good church hall. Um, St. Paul's, Kingston Hill had as well. A lot of the, a lot of church halls and also, um, halls that were run by the local authority. So you'd have former sports halls. Manor Park Pavilion in New Malden was a great one, just midway between New Malden and Worcester Park. I remember going there to see a band, local band called Serious Drinking Who, uh, who had the sort of slogan, the revolution starts at closing time. Um, it, it was sort of very rous kind of punk band. That

would've been late seventies probably. The, they, they do all blur. Mm. I didn't keep a very good diary then. I mean, it was very sporadic. Um, so I haven't, it's hard to pin down the exact dates. Um, Kingston, Polly as well along Penrhyn Road. So the students union stood opposite County Hall alongside what is now this extraordinary new, um, townhouse or whatever they call it. Yeah. Um, it was a low, a funny low building the students union to the side by the side road, I think, is it Grove Road? Um. And Friday nights were terrific there for about 50 p, perhaps 40 p even for lesser known bands, you would just bowl up there. There was no sort of, who are you or anything? They took the money, stuck it in a beer mug, uh, and you'd walk in on a Friday night. And I remember, I, I think the best band I ever saw, there was a strange outfit called Prefab Sprout. I don't, do you remember that? I, I know, I know the name. Yes, yes. Um, that, that Northeastern band, I believe. Yeah, I think so. But. , but the poll, Kingston Poly used to have a terrific reputation, uh, for, for hosting bands there. Um, I mean there was a big army of students, nowhere near as big as the Kingston University student cohort of today at plus Kingston College, of course, alongside or very close by. Um, but there were a lot of people in town, a lot of students, and of course having a load of young students attracted loads of other people in, um, from surrounding areas. So it was quite a magnet on a Friday night, uh, very low ceiling, very dark, incredibly smoky. Uh, the, the thing about all these venues was that strange mix of, um, sweat and smoke, um, that developed through the evening so that by about 10 or 11 o'clock, um, it was, there was very little air left in the room. Um, But a terrific atmosphere. I mean, just fantastic memories of those, um, strange, dark, smoky rooms and halls and pubs. Um, the big difference is the smokiness. It's strange, isn't it? You go into a place now and well, it's just clean air. But, um, presumably then it was very

Jarek Zaba: different

Jarek Zaba: different. I was gonna say, presume you'd come home and your clothes would be smelling, your

Tim Harrison: clothes would re, you'd smell like an old ashtray the following morning.

Tim Harrison: You'd get up and you'd probably throw on the same clothes just to loaf about. You would walk around stinking like an ashtray. Um, and it, it seems unbelievable now, now that we know about health risks and so on. But then it was just a kind of part of the scene and I guess in a way, It was, uh, cigarettes were cheap. It was part of the whole, um, routine of being a slightly rebellious teenager that you'd go out and drink and smoke even if you were only 15 or 16. And landlords of pubs that hosted music would typically turn a blind

eye to people's ages if you looked. Okay. If you looked sort of 15 or something, but you were reasonably respectable and you weren't gonna kick off, then they would let you in. There'd be a, you'd nod often at the man, at the, um, at the door. I mean, to say bouncer would be going a little bit too far, but, but there'd usually be someone, uh, perhaps a friend of the landlord would be standing at the door just to make sure really tiddly kids didn't come in. But, but generally, um, you were welcome. There were no entry charges for the pubs. That was the great thing. So if you were going to, another great place I used to go is the Berrylands Pub, uh, right by just up the hill from Berry Lands Station. It has still has today a funny little side room. Detached from the pub that was built as an extra function room long after the pub itself was built in 1934 at the same time as the Toby Jug um, and that little standalone room was, was used and is still used. It's hired out for parties and things, but a band played there every Friday night. I can't remember the name of the band, but they used to do wonderful cover versions of things like, uh, walking the Dog, uh, stuck in the middle with you. I remember I was, so I'd been about 15.

Tim Harrison: When stuck in the middle with you, the Steelers wheel was a top 10 hit. Um, and I remember they did a very good version of that, really authentic, um, and it was just a cover band. They didn't seem to do any of their own stuff. They did a lot of early Stones music and it was packed. Um, and at 15 we could, a group of us from school, from Kings and grandma would go up there. I used to go cycle on my bike. Um, we'd go there on a Friday evening, we'd go in at about eight o'clock. We'd always have Keith Knight with us. Keith Knight was one of these strange boys who was six, two at 11. So he was always shoved to the bar to buy, to buy the drinks. He would come back with, um, five or six pints or half pints probably, and, um, bring them to us. We'd be hiding slightly around the corner. Then we'd all go in, um, and listen to the music. But I've got very fond memories of the Berrylands on a Friday night. It was, uh, a wonderful scene, jam packed, uh, and so supportive. I mean, the whooping and cheering after each number went on and on. Very happy days actually.

Jarek Zaba: In your, uh, youth at this time, would your, would your parents have been aware of what you were up to? Would they have minded, was it rebellion on your

Tim Harrison: part? Yeah, my father locked me out a few times. He thought it was wrong for me to come back anytime after Harper's 10, but it was always after about 11 by the time I cycled home to, uh, to Kingston Hill. Um, yes, he locked me out a couple of times to make the point that I, I'd kind of exceeded the curfew. Um, but no, I, I very, um, happy, supportive, um, family, two younger sisters, so, uh, they were both at Lady Hollis in Hampton. So on the

strength of that, I remember we used to, at school, at Kingston Grammar, we used to borrow Lady Hollis girls for our, um, annual school play. Um, So, yeah, no, it was, um, it was fine. It was just one of those teenage teenager versus parent situation.

Tim Harrison: Yeah. No, no, no real, no real problems. And, uh, I

Jarek Zaba: just wanna sort of, uh, Talk about the poly for a bit as, as you brought it up. Um, we are talking about the, the, the main hall on Penrhyn Road. Is that

Tim Harrison: No, no, it's the hall. It was a hall to the side. It was, if you face the Kingston University building, so you've got your, um, back to that, um, what was the church of First Church of Christ Scientist, I think it's called, is, there's a very funny domed building next to County Hall. If you are, if you have your back to that and you're facing Kingston University. It was over on the far left side, well to the left of this new, um, sort of skeletal, uh, Townhouse. And it was a. White painted building. It was the students union building, right? So very specifically, a a, a long bar. Um, loads of, of beers being sold every, every night.

Tim Harrison: But it, it, it kind of built up through the week, um, to Friday night when there was, um, always music. Sometimes I think Saturdays as well, can't remember exactly, but by 1976 I was working on the Surrey Comet. Uh, and I and two other people, Tim Bryant and Alan Golden tended to cover the local music scene. So I would go off as a reporter. Or rather I got free entry to, um, the local gigs that were happening. For example, at the Polly, I'd turn up, flash my press card, say Tim Harrison, Surrey, Comet. Uh, and usually be waved in because we'd have done a piece in the previous week's paper plugging the gig that was coming up. And then we'd also put a little piece about saying, uh, how the band had.

Tim Harrison: uh, in the following week's paper, um, perhaps with a picture if, if we could get a photographer along or if someone had a photo. Of course, in those days, you didn't have mobile phones. Not everyone was able to take photos. Which, um, moving on briefly to the Toby Jug Pub, uh, where David Bowie launched Ziggy Stardust on February the 10th, 1972 in the middle of Power Cuts and a three day week. Um, it was why, oh, I've lost, lost my thread. Now what were we doing? Uh,

Jarek Zaba: We were talking about the poly, um mm-hmm. .

Tim Harrison: Anyway, whatever it was. can't remember, just suddenly lost my train

Jarek Zaba: of thought. Well, what I was gonna say about it. Yeah. But about the poly was, I mean, what interests me about that is, you know, certainly when I came to university, that didn't seem, there wasn't the culture of student unions, uh, laying on gigs, uh, like that. Whereas you look at the history and the Kingston Poly U managed to put on the likes of u2, we had David Bowie. Um, I wonder what, what's at the, what's at the root of that? Um, sus being sort of able to sort of put on things like that.

Tim Harrison: The answer is it was a well organized circuit. Um, and bands were passed from poly to uni to, to colleges and bands got onto this circuit because the way they would promote themselves and improve themselves was regular playing, uh, in front of audiences. They would be often someone at the door. Selling records or cassette tapes, um, as a, as an add-on at the end of each gig. But basically, bands were passed from cer, you know, along the circuit from university to college, to university, um, to maybe sometimes town halls. Um, and, and that was the way bands promoted themselves. That was the way that, uh, you would, um, either attempt to sell records if you reach the stage of actually making records, or if not, you'd just try and raise awareness, get familiarity, um, and build an audience. So I think the, both the pub circuit and the college circuit, uh, and they often sort of interlocked a bit, um, were really roots for bands to promote themselves and polish their acts and get experience of playing in front of a live audience. Um, a and get the feedback from an audience and, uh, be able to. Um, blossom as a result of an Audi, a live audience reacting to them. So the college circuit was very well set out. I would regularly go and visit my mates who, who had gone on to university especially kent in Canterbury, and there was a college in Walsall and Portsmouth as well. Portsmouth Uni and Portsmouth Poll. And I would regularly go and, and sort of spend weekends with, with my former schoolmates who are now at college. And invariably we'd go along to see a band go, went to see the jam at, uh, at Portsmouth.

Tim Harrison: And, um, the slits, female punk band were, were quite impressive. They only played one song and then got so fed up with the spitting, um, that they just marched off. Same with Lena Loic as well. She was playing at Gilford Civic Hall. We used to sometimes cover the, the acts at Guildford as well. I remember she got, I think after the second song, she warned the people in the front to stop spitting or she'd leave.

Tim Harrison: and she left. She just walked out . Whereas the Undertones, who I think were also on that bill, um, just stuck it out. Just took

Jarek Zaba: it, yeah. Yeah. . Yeah. I, I, I think it's fair enough to walk out of on being spot on, to be honest. Yeah. Um, so moving on to the Toby Jug then. Um, out of interest, was, was the Toby Jug an open venue when you were growing up? Or

Tim Harrison: had it I, I've just remembered. I've just remembered. Go on. Uh, it was, I was talking about the newspaper and the fact that as a reporter we were able to get to, to all these gigs, so it meant that the. This little team of young reporters on the Surrey Comet, it basically became our social life as well as our job because we would go off and interview, uh, local musicians, or they would turn up at the office begging us to plug a gig that they were doing in a couple of weeks time. So we all developed the, the reporters on the paper, the younger group of reporters, um, developed a really good relationship with the local Kingston bands in the late seventies, early eighties. So it was bands like the Wardens, the Pedestrians, the Magnificent Seven. Um, the Cardiacs were very big, the Trudy and from, they were in Worcester Park, but um, BoomTown Rats as well, who were in Chessington. Um, Who of course, I think may have had some modest success. Um, but, but we, we got a real bond with them. We were able to phone them up. We could phone up Bob, Bob Geldoff and, and get a comment for him, from him about something. He didn't actually have a phone himself. He lived above at that time, in a flat. He lived above a bookmakers. So we'd have to phone the bookies in, um, Chessington, and they would send someone out the front door along two doors and bang on the, um, door to the flat above and get him down and bring him to the phone. But we had a great bond with the, um, with the local bands, um, and the other big venue. Then, I know we're gonna come onto the Toby Jug, but the other big venue was Surbiton Assembly Rooms, which was huge. It could cope with an audience of five or 600 and. , it was a terrific place for, especially for multiple bands. So each band had its own local following, but if you got three or four bands together on a, on a bill, and it would typically be something like the Wardens, the Cardiacs, Cardiacs would probably top the bill, then perhaps the Trudy, then the Wardens, and then finally you'd have the Mag Seven. Um, Magnificent Seven was a teenage band, but weirdly had a, it was a sort of intergenerational band. It was strange. It had a. A guy in his early sixties up front playing the trumpet for some of the songs. Very strange. Really, uh, really good band. I really enjoyed seeing the Magnificent Seven. Uh, Chris White was the leader. He sadly died about two years ago. Um, but yes, let's get onto the, the Toby journey. Well, actually, as, as you bring up the assembly, ah, let's go onto the assembly rooms. Well,

Jarek Zaba: I was, uh, I I, it was just an aside really. Um, my understanding is that in prior, prior to the period that you are talking about in the, in the sixties, it was a, it was a very, um, uh, high profile folk venue. Um, you, uh, I think, I think you, Simon and Garf uncle may have played there, or even, I think there's a rumor of Bob Dylan,

Tim Harrison: but I dunno if that's true. Not sure about that. There's even a rumor about Jimmy Hendrix. Some people claim that, um, he used to come and visit the, um, He knew a few of the people down in the Kingston area and visited the assembly rooms and may have joined in some jam session there in a, a kind of folk folk rock, um, era in the sixties.

Tim Harrison: Um, it's possible he was living in London at the time, but I've never definitively found anyone who can absolutely, certainly say Hendricks played there. But it's a, it's an interesting little local rumor. It's quite possible he may have jammed there one evening. Um, there was a very active folk club. It was run by a guy called Derek Sergeant, I think.

Tim Harrison: Um, there were little folk venues again in pubs. There were pubs that were better known for folk music. Um, but. The upstairs room at Surbiton Assembly Rooms was where the folk regular folk nights were held. It was up a creaky staircase that went from the front front door, and it had a huge door leading into this, um, upstairs room. And I remember the chief Subeditor of the Surrey Comet, a guy called John Vivian, um, used to love going there to these folk nights, but his great source of irritation was this colossal door would keep banging as people came in and out and the light poured in. Um, you know, he said killing the atmosphere every time anyone entered or left the room. Um, but it was a great, great place. Very enthusiastic, very knowledgeable. Um, folk fans and folk musicians would go there. and to an old thing called the Folk Barge, which was moored up in Kingston and a tiny little boat really. But, but there would be all acoustic. Um, they would be playing again regularly. That was, I think, early sixties. Very early sixties. I think John Martin

Jarek Zaba: was supposed

Tim Harrison: to have played in on the Boat by Imagine. Yeah, I think that's right. But quite a few big names. Uh, there was also the Cellar Club in Kingston, uh, which began life in Ashtown Road, uh, in a cellar. Uh, but then eventually moved up onto a, an old boathouse, I think, up on stilts, um, near where the Rose Theatre is today. Um, where you could actually see the Thames underneath. You could see the water lapping through the, um, floorboards of this strange building up on stilts. The Stones played there. They arrived in an

old bedford van, uh, the Roosters. So, Eric Clapton was a, was a regular in one of his early incarnations, uh, the animals.

Tim Harrison: I mean, the Cellar Club was a, an amazing place just before my time of, of going to music. Um,

Jarek Zaba: some, someone told me that the assembly rooms, uh, ended as a live music venue because an anarchic punk band played there. And it led to some sort of mini riot situation.

Tim Harrison: It wasn't, it wasn't a mini riot, it was a really serious riot. There was something like 60 arrests from memory. Um, It was the Lost Cherries, a Worcester Park band were one of the acts, uh, fronted by a girl singer. Um, this was the real height of punk. Um, so I think we'd be talking probably 1977, maybe. Lot of Mohicans, uh, because there were multiple bands. I think it was an almost all day thing. It started in the afternoon and went on through into the evening with us. I think there were seven or eight bands playing, uh, through the day. Um, it attracted a huge crowd, mainly people from outside the area, and it just all kicked off. There were fights in the hall. The police were called. The local police couldn't cope. And so the, um, Territorial support group turned up in their armor. Plated Ford Transits, the ones with the grills over the front windscreens to protect them from stones and things. And they made about 60 arrests. Uh, and there were serious fighting with the, uh, police. Once the police moved in, uh, then they suspected drugs were, were going the rounds as well. So they were trying to arrest and haul people off, uh, into the vans. , all these arrests happened on, I think it was a Saturday, and I believe I'm right in saying Kingston Magistrates Court set up a special court on the Sunday, uh, which was almost unheard of to actually hear all these cases. And the first few people who were dealt with were immediately imprisoned for, I think it was something like two months. Um, I mean, this was absolutely extraordinary. Had it just been an isolated arrest, it would've been dealt with on the Monday morning court. Uh, and it would almost certainly have been a fine or something like that, but the local authority and the, the police and everyone thought they really needed to put a lid.

Tim Harrison: This rioters behavior and the sentences were extraordinarily severe. Um, and there was a long debate then about the assembly room's future. There was a big reaction from the local area, the streets surrounding, uh, the assembly rooms, the Cranes Park area of Kingston. Um, people reacted strongly to, uh, this rioting on their doorstep. The Kingston Council owned the building at the time, um, and they. Press the council to introduce really strict rules about who could perform there, uh, when a performance had to end and increase

security and, and supervision, um, to prevent any further riots happening. So, um, yes, that, that particular incident hastened the end of the assembly rooms as a live music venue. Great shame because, I mean, it had been in a way the key, uh, performance space for. On the, on the boundary of Kingston and Surbiton since the 1890s. I mean, a remarkable history of kind of musical acts and things through the early part of the 20th century. Um, it was an amazing place for drama and music and dancing and just general entertainment, a huge venue. Um, but it, television had killed off so many of these, uh, types of local venue, um, and its days were numbered. But yes, that punk riot, um, really hasten the end and ultimately it never really, uh, recovered. It limped on into the eighties. Uh, there were attempts made. Sell it off to promoters. Uh, and eventually it was sold to Surbiton High School and is now the main stage has been divided in half and underneath is the school refractory, and I think there's a smaller stage area above.

Jarek Zaba: Imagine it would've been a big story for the Surrey Comet. It was a huge story, .

Tim Harrison: It was, it was from page, week after week, the aftermath of the riot and the way that the rioters were dealt with. Um, yeah, to make an example of them and to try and get the word around that anyone rioting in Kingston, um, would be dealt with.

Tim Harrison: Um, very severely . Yeah. Yeah. Of course you can.

Jarek Zaba: Yes. I must look into the, uh, into the, into the archives for, uh, for the, for

Tim Harrison: the, I got, I mean, I actually give a talk about that. One of my little talks is, um, about riots at Surbiton assembly room. So I actually do have quite a bit more information, um, about that. I can dig that up.

Jarek Zaba: Yes, yes. No, no, no. That's a, that's a whole, whole other story. Right. Let's, let's, let's move on to the, the sort of, the, the main, the main story we're talking about, so, right. So the Toby Jug, um, I mean, your book is, uh, a fabulous resource, not just about the Bowie gig and, um, the Toby Jug is a music venue, but also the sort of history of the entire site.

Jarek Zaba: Yes. Um, and, and how it's changed over the years. Prior to it becoming a pub, do you wanna just give a quick summary of what used to exist on that site?

Tim Harrison: So nothing existed on the site in the 1920s. It was, it was just a blank corner of a crossroads in Tolworth. Um, but the opening of the Kingston Bypass in, uh, around 1928, um, meant that Charrington's, the brewery, um, had seen an opening for, um, a roadhouse along the lines of quite established American road houses that typically, um, were dotted along. You know, your Route 66 would be a classic example, but any long road in America would have a roadhouse, would have a restaurant, would have a, um, perhaps a bar. Um, and just to break up the journeys, well, Britain was just falling in love with the motor car in the late 1920s, but it still hadn't really arrived the era of mass car ownership. But the brewery, Charrington's Brewery thought this could be, um, the start of something. The idea of placing a, a big pub, um, on a key intersection, um, to appeal to the motoring public. So in 1934, the Toby Jug, um, opened, I think it was April the Berrylands had opened a month earlier. and it, it was designed to serve the motoring public and be a local pup, but alongside it was a very big, um, hall with its own separate entrance and Loos um, which was a function room. Um, it was a tea room, a lunch room, an afternoon tea, um, place. And in the evenings it could be, um, a party venue or a music venue. And gradually, um, music, um, built up through the thirties, forties, and fifties. Initially it tended to be, um, a perhaps a little trio playing at wedding receptions, but the idea of more, um, commercial and formalized, uh, bands playing really developed through the sixties, um, in the. Very early sixties, a jazz club was tried. Um, There was a guy called, I think it was Len Fletcher, um, who tried to, uh, set up a jazz club. It didn't really take off. Um, but in 1964, Peter Silcock, the landlord of the Toby Jug, um, got together with this promoter and they decided to try and set up a rhythm and blues club because that was the music of the era, 19 63, 64. And so they got the Yardbird as a little local band to be the resident group. And in January, 1964, the Toby Jug Rhythm and Blues Club was formed and it had its first night and Silcock had hoped for a hundred people to turn up. In the end there were 200 inside and 300 locked out outside. And Peter Silcock, the landlord, went out to them and explained, I'm awfully sorry, but we cannot safely get anyone else in. And he said they reacted like animals. He said they were sort of, you know, furious. They were throwing things at him. So he tolerated it for one further week, but when the scenes were repeated the next week, um, he just pulled the plug he said, no, we're not going to have any more music. So the Yardbirds famously played twice in the early 1964. Um, and then music was stopped. Silcock couldn't, you know, couldn't abide anymore. He didn't actually live at the pub. He lived over in Bexley. But, um, his, his manager, um, said, well, you know, they just can't cope with it. So music stopped for a while. Um, it stopped for about four years, and then the, the huge boom in music that was around then in the late sixties, so many British bands were starting off. You know, John Males Blues Breakers, the, uh, Chicken Shack, uh, Fleetwood Mac, the early Fleetwood Mac. Um, So many were local as well. I mean, um, Fleetwood Mac had Peter Green, who lived in New

Morden, was able to actually walk to the pub up the bypass. So they started again, uh, March, 1968. Chicken Shack. Chicken Shack relaunched, uh, music at the Toby Jug in March, 1968. Um, that included the 24 year old, really local pinup, Christine Perfect. Who then became, uh, Christine McVey when she, um, merged with Fleetwood Mac, as it were Fleetwood Mac with the second band to. , um, Peter Green, who lived in New Malden with his parents, uh, was able to walk up the slip road of the Kingston Bypass and actually get to the pub in about 20 minutes. Um, John Males Blues Breakers played many times, Black Cat Bones Championship, Duprey, um, so many bands, um, of that era, um, used the Toby Jaggers, um, as one of their regular venues. It was on a circuit. Len Fletcher and Co used to pass the bands around. Places like the winning post at Whitton, um, and various pubs. Um, I think it was the Fox in, um, Croydon. There were various other, other pubs on this circuit and they would, the bands would be passed around, uh, between them. But it was also a chance for local musicians to sometimes be a backing group. Um, and just play a couple of numbers just to warm up the audience. Uh, one of the regular performers was Duster Bennett, who lived in Ham and who used to come over. He was a sort of curious one man band. He would play multiple instruments himself. Um, almost a bit of a novelty act, but again, had a very strong local following. And so it went right through the late sixties and into the seventies. Um, Jethro Tu uh, Keith Hartley family, um, traffic with, um, Stevie Wynwood. Um, 10 years after. Nice. Um, a huge number of, of bands played there, and we got right through the sixties and into the seventies and it gradually, the music was changing. It, it was all evolving. Um, sometimes the pub decided to stop the music if they were redecorating or they had a load of bookings for actual functions. So the music was never a hundred percent reliable. But what it did do was build up a very strong local following who would turn up at the Toby Jug on perhaps a Wednesday night or a Sunday night, irrespective of who was playing. There was a sort of loyalty. To, um, the Toby Jug Blues Club, you had a little membership card. Um, it was, it was very cheap to get in. It was, it was often 50p. Um, indeed it was, I think it started off with something like five shillings in the, just the pre decimal days there. But people would bowl up, meet their friends at the bar, uh, and watch whatever act had turned up. They would give everyone a chance. They were a very supportive local audience. They didn't sort of prejudge, which paved the way oddly for, um, David Bowie's performance and his launch of Ziggy Stardust, the only time he ever played the Toby Jug, um, the only time he ever played Tolworth, uh, February the 10th, 1972, an era of power cuts. Um, so Robin Mayhew, the sound engineer, uh, was constantly worried that the place would be plunged into darkness, very uncertain times for a sound engineer, trying to keep the sound steady for a, an evening gig. Uh, but mercifully the, uh, the power held that night. But it meant that the audience, although, um, Bowie was doing, uh, a very different act and launching this new alien character with several changes of costume, not nearly

as many as towards the end of the tour, but there was nevertheless two or three changes of costume during the gig. It meant they tolerated that this, this sort of androgynous, strange looking figure covered in makeup and with odd hair, although he didn't have the actual red hair at that stage. Um, and he would dash off up the stairs at the back of the pub and go leap into the green room and, uh, be helped into his, uh, next costume and come down and then do a little acoustic bit and then the band would play again. So, um, the audience enjoyed it. Um, I think some of the early biographies of Bowie, uh, actually said that the audience was very dismissive or couldn't understand or didn't like what they saw. Um, but it's not true. It simply isn't true. Uh, it was a very open, supportive audience who would give every musician a fair hearing. Um, and it was one of the strange characteristics of the Toby Jug, perhaps unlike some of the other pub venues, it was a very tolerant, very knowledgeable, um, musical audience. And if you knew what you were doing and you had confidence in your playing, the audience would support you.

Jarek Zaba: I'm interested in the, um, this, this idea of these locals that are just regulars at the Toby Jug. Do you get a sense that these would've been toll worth residents who sort of lived within walking distance, or would they have been Kingston residents? Would they have come from the wider, wider region southwest London?

Tim Harrison: I, I, I think it was principally Tolworth and Surbiton the audience, but it was also because it was on the bypass. There were a lot came from New Malden and a lot would come from. really the other direction of the crossroads there, um, from Epsom and Ewell um, it's interesting actually writing the book and producing the book about the Ziggy concert and the history of the Toby Jug. Um, there's been a huge interest in the Epsom and Ewell area, uh, because they could easily hop on the 4 0 6 bus and get to the Toby Jug in about a dozen stops. Um, and there was a bus, was it the 72 I think came down the bypass from New Morton. So if you think about it again, back in that era of the sixties, uh, late sixties and into the seventies, again, car ownership wasn't complete. People did rely a lot more on public transport and younger people, teenagers, um, Would've used the local bus network much more. You also had Tolworth station very close by. So when eventually Led Zeppelin famously played at the Toby Jug. I mean, two of the band arrived by train at Tolworth Station. Having come down from Waterloo with their guitars in their cases. I mean, it's just, you just think it's a, it is a completely different era, but I would say the lion share of the audience was local. Each individual band and act would've had its own. Very specific following who would've followed them anywhere. Um, but again, that was a fairly small number and there'd be a little entourage. So, um, members of the band might, of whichever band was playing, might bring, uh, half a dozen mates along and they might bring mates along.

And so you would get a churn of people. The fact that it was a roadhouse on the Kingston bypass again meant there was always the chance of some passing trade on a Friday night. People would stop in their cars, uh, to break a journey, and perhaps if they overheard music coming from the next bar you'd go in. So the difference with the Toby Jug was there was an entrance fee. Um, I think there may have been a discount in the early years if you actually had a formal membership of the Blues Club, you'd. I dunno, a shilling or something to become a member and it might give you a discount on the door, but you paid to go into those gigs. Whereas for a lot of the gigs, for example, in the Gray Horse in Kingston, um, a lot of them would just rely on extra beer sales and so on to generate interest and, and may not charge an actual entry fee. I remember seeing Peter Ted, the guy who recorded, where do you go to my lovely, uh, in the sixties he cropped up at the gray horse in Kingston.

Tim Harrison: Sorry, I'm going off on a tangent here. Um, and I went along with my best mate John, and I remember we were absolutely hooked on Peter Sarstedt early two LPs. Uh, and he said at one point, um, Does anyone have any requests? And we both immediately shouted, No More Lollipops, which was a very obscure track on his very first album. And he looked at us in amazement and said, we just did that in the studio. I've never actually played it. Um, and I don't think I could play it. So we got up and stood by the microphone and sang the chorus while he attempted to strum it. Oh, it was, it was a very strange evening indeed. But, but I mean, a huge name like Peter Sarstedt did, turning up on a stage half the size of this coffee table, um, to, to stand in front of 30 people in a backroom of a Kingston Pub. Um, Playing music from previous albums. I mean, these are extraordinary moments. Yeah. Little, little landmarks in your childhood that, that really have stuck, stuck with me screaming, Lord such was another great one. Now, he, um, regularly with a monster raving loony party. He would stand for election, typically against Norman Lamont. The, um, former chancellor who was then Kingston's MP, uh, back in the seventies. So, uh, , he would pay for his 100 pounds election fee by doing a gig. The week before at the Gray Horse, he would turn up with two or three page three topless, go-go Girls from the sun newspaper. Uh, they would dance alongside, needless to say, that would pull the punters in and they would all pay their 50 p or. Um, to watch and he would sing a few songs and, and that would generate his fee to enter the election, to fight Norman Lamont the following week. So there were some very funny moments.

Jarek Zaba: Did he ever get his deposit back? I

Tim Harrison: wonder? He never got his deposit back? No. He had some wonderful policies. One of his. One of the policies that sticks with me was he

wanted to introduce a 10 pound coin weighing 10 pounds, which I thought was quite inspired.

Jarek Zaba: Um, in terms of, uh, oh, I was actually, I meant to ask, was, was the Toby Jug still going as a live music venue in your time, or had, did that start to go on the downhill by that point?

Tim Harrison: No, no. It was, it came and went the early seventies. Um, after, soon after the, um, Bowie gig. I mean, it would've been later that year later, 1972, the pub switched to being a disco pub. So every night of the week was disco music. And again, it got a huge following. It meant live music had was pushed aside for four or five years, and then by about 19 76, 77, you are in that height of that extraordinary punk movement when local bands could, again, stand up on stage, strum their guitars and sing, or not particularly sing. But, but again, it was a, a grassroots movement. The punk movement, it meant local bands once more stood a chance of being able to play at their local pub. Um, landlords and breweries cashed in on that. And so the disco era ended after about four or five years, and we went back to live music. So at that time it was bands like, uh, Squeeze, um, I mean there was a whole second section, um, used to. Well, did, did play then it went after the disco years. I mean the, what I've called the punk months, uh, because it barely lasted, um, a year. But the Stranglers, who were based in Guilford and turned up for gigs in a converted ice cream van, uh, they played there at the start of 1977. Um, but then you had some Motor Motorhead were due to play but didn't in the end. The Vibrators played several times. The Damned, um, played and. Stray and, and Ultravox played. Um, so there was that era, it only lasted about three or four months, but it was quite an intense time. Mm-hmm. dotted in between. Those were occasional gigs. Um, and I remember one night I was actually a roadie for, um, a band called Sing Carla, who, uh, were made up of former Kingston Grammar School boys. I helped move the drum kit in, so that got me in free. Um, and I remember we drove to the gig, um, with the entire band and me and a drum kit all in a Morris traveler, you know, like a, an sort of wood extension to a Morris Minor. And we managed to get the drum kit into, into that as well. So you did still get local bands, but they would have to organize a gig separately with the landlord. Um, and the landlord would have some agreement that if, if he sold a certain amount of beer, they'd get, you know, a 10 quid to cover their petrol or something like that. It was just an opportunity, it was a occasional opportunity for local bands. So it limped on through the seventies, briefly into the eighties. But really after that, um, pubs started struggling. I guess in the eighties and nineties they tried all sorts of things, live football, on big screens. Um, the Toby Jug tried, um, snooker and pool. It had two full size snooker tables, uh, and nine pool tables. So it kind of moved on from music. Music was a, a specific era, and frankly, when you've got nine pool tables and two full size snooker tables,

there's no room for a band. I mean, you can try moving the tables around a bit, but it's a herculean effort. So music really died off then, and a lot of the other venues and pubs. The Southampton Arms by Surbiton station was another one. It managed to dodge the, um, musician's union rules, uh, where you had to actually, uh, pay for music, I think, or, or pay, pay a band by employing two acoustic musicians. So they would sit on bar stools in the Southampton arms. Um, and I think you had to have three to constitute a band that needed to be pl paid under musicians union rules. Um, so there were often duos would still crop up, uh, pubs, um, of an evening. But, but the number of pubs offering music went down and down. Recorded music was much more the thing. You would have recorded music all evening as a, as a backdrop to drinking. Um, and areas that were used as music stages were often then converted into, um, serving food in the evening. As, as pubs sort of tried to diversify a bit and appeal mm-hmm. to different groups to ensure survival.

Jarek Zaba: Um, I'm in, are you, are you about to keep going? I realize we're, we're coming up to an hour. Yeah. Um, so if you, if you need a break, just shout. Um, but, um, yeah, so I'm interested in this idea of the Toby Jug being on, you know, this, this, this idea of a circuit, um, and how the Toby Jug is a key part of a circuit, um, and how that led to bands like Led Zeppelin and Fleetwood Mac, and of course David Bowie choosing to launch Ziggy Stardust there. I mean, what, how does it become part of the circuit? What, what are the key factors that enabled it to become part of the circuit and why was it a, a place that led David Bowie to go, this is where I want to launch this tour?

Tim Harrison: Yeah. I mean, he didn't, he didn't make that decision. But, um, how did it become part of the circuit? It was down to the promoters. If you think about it, the previous way that pubs would organize live music would be a band would make contact with the landlord. They would either call in or they would phone. A busy landlord would then be confronted by someone from some oic, from some local band saying, oh, we want to play, can we do it on Friday night? And he would pencil them into a diary, um, and briefly agree whatever terms they wanted at the bar. But if this went on night, after night, after night, um, the landlord was, was getting a bit fed up with this having to be his own music booker and promoter, the bar staff might answer the phone. They wouldn't know what the procedure was. So what happened for many of their pubs, including the Toby Jug and many other pubs, which effectively formed a circuit, was that a couple of music promoters would take it upon themselves to do the organization. They would say to Peter Silcock, look, leave it to us. We'll organize the bands. We'll pay you 20 quid at the end of the evening. You'll increase your beer sales. You'll bring in a different cleon, tell, we'll do the organizing. Leave it to us. And you know, a relieved landlord would say, thank goodness, you know, I'll, I'll leave it to you. So they would handle the bookings.

So they would arrange for this circuit of. Of pubs to, um, have a regular band guaranteed on a, on a set night of the week. You know, Monday night it might be the Winning Post Tuesday night, it might be the Greyhound. Um, Wednesday night, it might be the Toby Jug. And that was how it went. And from a promoter's point of view, they could organize a band and say, we will give you work. We will pay you, uh, five pounds a night or 10 pounds a night, or whatever it was, plus your petrol. Um, you will come to this pub on this night at this time, play your music and go, and that'll be it. That will be all your responsibility. And the landlord then could just stand behind the bar pouring a few extra pints and get his money at the end of the night, provided he could Collar. The promoters who tended to scurry away pretty quickly afterwards, before even the band were paid. So, um, and they would get 30 to th to 40 pounds perhaps in, in money, which was collected in a dimple beer jug. Um, the landlord might be bugged five or 10 pounds depending on how much it was. Um, the promoters would, uh, give the band a tenor and they would keep, um, 15 quid for themselves. So it was a guy called Brian Mason, it was Fox Promotions, um, Brian Mason, and, uh, I think it was Len Fletcher, uh, ran this circuit out of West Croydon. Um, and they, um, typically would, would be organizing music every night of the week. They organized it out of a little. Uh, record shop that they also ran in Croydon, um, and Fox was the. Was the name of the promoters. Um, so it would be Fox at the Toby Jug, it'd be Fox at the Greyhound, Fox at the Winning Post, and so on. Um, so they took it on themselves to do the admin and the organization and handle the money. The landlord merely got a little bonus and extra beer sales. So that was how the pub circuit came about. And it was really more to do with landlords being fed up with having to individually organize a band for a certain evening and perhaps then find they didn't show up anyway. Um, because, uh, the other problem was even if bands were going round in, in vans and things, vans often broke down. I mean, there were a lot like, or they'd be double booked or all sorts of problems like that. So it

Jarek Zaba: would've been Fox that would've arranged the, the, the Bowie. , um,

Tim Harrison: that night, yes, Fox organized the, the Bowie gig that night, but it was organized also, um, by, in conjunction with the, um, with RCA Records because, um, the, the, the, the part, this particular, um, night, um, there was a gr a guy called, uh, Nicki Graham, who worked for Tony Dere, David Bowie's manager, um, he worked for him up in, I think it was Gunther Grove in Chelsea, where they had an office, uh, I think it was called Main Man. Um, anyway, they, um, They were trying to book Bowie into different venues initially to promote the Hunky Dory lp, which had been a big disappointment to rca. The sales had really not done anything, I don't think. I think it may have just vaguely

scraped into the top 40 albums briefly and then disappeared from view. They were trying, RCA was trying to promote it so it linked. with, um, Brian Mason and, um, Nikki Graham from, uh, Tony Defries office. Uh, got in touch to say, you know, we want a, a few slots for, um, this act, David Bowie. Um, and I think Brian Mason would've said, oh, wasn't he the one who had a hit ages and ages ago with space something or other? Um, and so he was, so it was inked in by Nikki Graham. , um, in the diary, uh, and it became, yes, it was part of the Fox circuit. So, um, Nick Graham firmed it up. Uh, he was, um, already a, a pianist with a, a band called The End, uh, which had actually mainly functioned in Spain. Oddly enough, it had more success in Spain than it had in, uh, in England, even though they were all English. Um, most of them had gone to Cton County Grammar School, so it actually was a local band. Um, he, he phoned up that booking, and so Bowie turned up after a warmup gig without the full costumes and without the words s the spiders written on the bass drum, which was done in Toth that evening, 10th of February. um, they all turned up for the first gig, the first proper gig. Um, the first full gig with all the music, all the costumes and everything at the Toby Jug. And Nicki Graham actually then, um, he was there that evening with Diana, his girlfriend, and a few friends. Um, there were about 60 in the audience. Um, most of the others were just Toby Jug regulars who were just intrigued to see what was going to happen. And gradually, um, momentum grew. They went on to Wallington Town Hall. They ended up at the Kingston Polly. And as, as the fame and the word spread, they got a few write-ups. Imperial College London was an important gig because it resulted in. , um, a write up in, I think it may have been Melody Maker or New Musical Express. Once that gig was reviewed, the word got out. More and more people were intrigued and gradually the venues grew and grew. But Nikki Graham actually played keyboards for, um, the first couple of months until he had a big bust up with, uh, Angie Bowie, uh, over money. Um, he played keyboards, uh, for things like Life On Mars.

Tim Harrison: Um, and before that, Mick Ronson actually played keyboards, uh, for Life On Mars at the Toby Jug. Um, and then various other pianists came in. So the Ziggy Tour, which started at to with went on about a year and a half, and ended at Hammersmith Odeon Spectacularly when Bowie announced. That's it.

Jarek Zaba: Um, I, I note that you, uh, you, you referenced a warmup gig and, uh, the fact that this was the first full performance of Ziggy style, and I've got, I've got a note here to ask you the Ailsbury question.

Jarek Zaba: So the a break, which, which is addressed in your book, I'm aware. And they, but they have a

Tim Harrison: statue there. Ailsbury has a statue. . Okay. They've got a statue . Um,

Jarek Zaba: but yes, Ailsbury claims to have had, had the

Tim Harrison: first ailsbury had the rehearsal gig. Now, I mean, yes, Ailsbury will always argue that, um, I actually asked the sound engineer. I really put him on the spot because, um, This rumor, this extraordinary claim by Ailsbury that they were the, um, first Ziggy performance. Um, it, it really wasn't true because Robin Mayhew did the sound, um, and had been recruited by David and Angie having heard how good he was as a sound engineer for a rival act, um, during an audition stage, um, for, um, before, uh, Bowie actually signed with, uh, main Main Man and Tony Defries, he tried out a few acts. One of them was Bowie, one of them was, um, another band that Robin Mayhew was doing the sound for. Uh, Bowie was really impressed by the sound and actually hired Robin then to be the Soundman and he was the sound engineer on every single Ziggy gig all around the world, even out in Japan. Um, and he recorded every single. Gig. Now, you'd think to yourself, this is the most remarkable sound archive in history. But he recorded it all on the same tape. And each night they would go back to a hotel or whatever, they'd listen back to it. David would comment about, oh, we need to, you know, a little bit less bass on that point. Uh, the drums need to come up a bit more. They would analyze the performance, listen to the audience reaction, and the next night he would put the same tape back in the machine and record over it. So he has only got a recording of the final night at Hammersmith Odeon, but he was adamant that the Bury gig was not the full, um, Zi. Uh, song list, um, or the Ziggy Tour song list. It did evolve, it's fair to say, but he said, Robin told me it wasn't the, the, uh, the full list. It wasn't the same costume changes. Um, they attempted a lot of the music. They added a couple of other songs, but it wasn't a true, um, Ziggy Stardust tour gig. And he was absolutely adamant that the, uh, Tolworth, Toby Jug gig was the first official date on the tour.

Jarek Zaba: Um, and for your book, you have obviously spoke, how, how many of the 60 in attendance were you able to speak to?

Tim Harrison: So I reckon I'd tracked down about 20, uh, about a third of the people who were there. Um, I researched the book on and off over a period of about five years. Uh, a lot of it was word of mouth. I would sort of say to someone, oh, did you used to, um, go to the Toby Jug ever? And he and someone would say, oh no, but my mate Dave used to go. So I'd track down Dave and he'd say, yeah, yeah, I used to go along. And uh, did you go to the Bowie gig? Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I think I did. Yeah. Can you remember

anything about, yeah, I was a bit vague. I think I certainly remember seeing Chicken Shack there. So you, you, you'd try and you'd almost sort of cross-examine people to make sure that it wasn't either a memory of another Bowie gig that they were at or just a, a kind of false memory. I think people, I, I'm very conscious of this, that, that people can genuinely believe they saw a particular gig but may have got it muddled up with something else, or may have convinced themselves that they were there for that. But it really was only about 60. Um, I mean the audience numbers estimates have have varied, but I made a point of asking everyone who I. Firm ups definitely having been there. Uh, I made a point of asking them to estimate the crowd and to, to think back and to try and remember what the weather was like and how they entered the, the pub, but what they drank that night. Um, and most people seem to agree around about 60 people, um, which would've included five or six of the immediate entourage. I mean, Angie went along and she, I think, was the only one who actually took photos. I think she took, um, pictures on an Instamatic, but they've disappeared, so we've got no actual photographic record of that night. And photos indeed from the gigs from the sixties and seventies are, are fairly scarce. There are a few local newspaper pictures and one or two photographers. There was a, a guy called Graham Page who worked up in the Foreign Office who used to go along with a camera, and he took pictures of Jethro Tull famously one night, but I can't track down any pictures. Um, Mick Rock used to take photos of, of later gigs in the Ziggy tour, but he wasn't around for that particular.

Jarek Zaba: and give us a flavor of some of the accounts that you've been told about that night itself. I mean, I think you mentioned earlier in the interview how it's not true that he faced a, a hostile or disdain reception. No, not at all. Um, what, what were some of the, um, accounts you were given in terms of how people enjoyed the performance, what they made of it, whether there was any sense that this was going to be something huge and culturally a cultural milestone?

Tim Harrison: Yeah, I mean, it, it was, funnily enough, one of the other, um, local history room guys. Uh, uh, Dan Lassner, who, who

Jarek Zaba: I think met, I've

Tim Harrison: met Dan. Yeah, you've met before. He was there that evening. Um, he was at the bar, the main bar with a few of his friends, and they listened to the first part of, um, I think it was perhaps five years or something, started, it started the gig and they listened and they wavered and they thought, no, we're not going to bother. So he left that night and didn't go in. But, um, I remember

him, he used to say that the, um, the gigs at the Toby Jug were, um, Characterized by these strange mix of of smells. There was, there was sweat, there was smoke, there was the aroma of wet Afghan coats, which he always said, smoke like dead goats. Um, there were jost sticks.

Tim Harrison: There was Petly oiled. Perfume that, that the girls wear, you'd, you'd get the old whiff of, of cannabis as well. I mean, it's an extraordinary mix of aromas. Um, but of the other people who, who went along the other 20, um, that I tracked down, it was a complete mixture. There was a guy in New Malden who picked up three of his mates and went in his Ford popular and parked in the huge car park behind the, the pub.

Tim Harrison: Um, they'd heard of Bowie. They, they were one of the, uh, few regulars who actually knew who they were going to see that night. Um, but a lot just turned up on spec. Um, There was a guy called Kevin Crips, who actually lives only four doors down the road here, who went along. He was 17, he was at King's College, Wimbledon, uh, and four, four of them from the school, uh, went along that evening.

Tim Harrison: He didn't know what he was going to, I think one of his powers had, uh, heard of, of Bowie before, uh, but again remembered him from perhaps the space oddity days and so on. So they just all bowled up in an Austin Maxie and, um, just enjoyed the evening. Um, he, he remembers it as being, Just bizarre. He thought, um, he thought it was almost not quite like a drag act, but he, he, he found, he found the whole thing, perhaps a little bit unsettling.

Tim Harrison: Um, and clearly he was responding to the kind of shock element that, that Bowie was actually trying to achieve. Um, a, a mix of that sort of glam rock, which was very prevalent at the time. And, uh, and then just, just inventiveness. I mean, he was an extraordinary chameleon character. Bowie kept reinventing himself, um, as you know.

Tim Harrison: Um, so the, the other problem Bowie had at that precise moment was that on February the 10th, 1972, um, the singles charts and the album charts were both taught by Mark Bolan. Uh, Now Bowie and Mark Bolan had worked together as Office Boys in, in soho in Waldorf Street, um, in their teens. And they'd kept in touch, but they'd kind of gone their separate ways and, and music development, tres were huge.

Tim Harrison: As I say, they were number one album and singles in February, 1972, and Bowie had just had one hit single. Um, and that was it. So, um, he

was playing catch up at that time, um, trying to, um, trying to keep up with his mate. Mark Boer is, uh, quite interesting from that point of view.

Jarek Zaba: And so that's February, 1972.

Jarek Zaba: He comes back to the borough in May, 1972 where he returns to the, to the poly. Yeah. Do you get a sense of. In that time period, in those, in those three months, how his, how the tour has evolved, how his persona

Tim Harrison: has evolved. Mm-hmm. , well, I think it just, it professionalized, if you like. It was still very experimental, um, when they played toll worth.

Tim Harrison: Um, but by then they'd, they'd probably done, um, 20 gigs. They, they were very, uh, together, very smooth. It was a, it was a really professional act. By the time they'd got to the poly, I mean, they could almost do it in their sleep. Um, and they were then feeding on the, uh, The, the feedback from the audience. By about that point, people were turning up, dressed in kind of glam outfits to mirror, um, the extraordinary kind of sequined and, um, flashy, uh, gear that, um, the band had.

Tim Harrison: The spiders from Mars, Mick Ronson especially, it almost looked like he was covered in baker foil. I mean, he was just, the lights were just reflecting off him. Um, so the audience was by then really responding to that. There was. I think by, by May 72, the cult following had begun. Um, people were turning up with, um, with makeup.

Tim Harrison: Boys were turn, teenage boys were turning up with makeup to emulate, um, Bowie himself. But you would, you did have you, you've got the start of this culminating, I mean, eventually in, uh, Hammersmith Odn, um, in the following year, 1973, where I would say half the audience probably then were dressed as Ziggy or dressed as incarnations of Ziggy.

Tim Harrison: Um, Trying to look like David. I mean, he'd become, um, a real fashion leader by this time. And it's interesting following that evolution, I mean, through the sixties, through bands like the, the King Bees, the Lower Third, and so on, the Manish Boys, all these strange bands that evolved through the late sixties, the Becken Mars lab scene.

Tim Harrison: Um, he, he, he would change his hairstyle. He would change his, his look. He would try and become a different character, a different personality for each evolution. Uh, in an attempt to find the breakthrough

character. That's what it seemed to be floundering around for. And he found it in Ziggy Stardust. Um, he found that breakthrough character.

Tim Harrison: And after that, of course, we then went to a lad, insane. And all the other later evolutions, uh, and his fans kept up with this. They, you know, they wouldn't come to a, um, a much later gig dressed as Ziggy Stardust. They would go with him, so they would evolve with him and the fashions would follow. Um, but he'd clearly become a fashion icon by the middle of, uh, of 1972.

Tim Harrison: He was a fashion leader by then. Um, he was pushing boundaries in the same way. , um, a big name fashion designer would launch, uh, a bizarre new look on a catwalk to introduce their new collection of outfits. Um, Bowie was doing the same with, with a mix of music and costume. So there was a big theatrical element to it.

Tim Harrison: And as I say, even at that Toby gig, there were either one or two, I think there were two costume changes, very distinct costume changes. So we started off, I think, in combat trousers and so on, and then almost ended up in a, a cross between a, a sort of blouse and a, and a skirt at sort of a curious, flaky.

Tim Harrison: Dress outfit, um, which my mate and neighbor Kevin Crips said he found quite shocking actually. found it very strange. Um, so, so you got that sense even in that early gig, that very first gig of, um, of evolution of costume changes within a gig. Um, which again, was not something that. Was was particularly done.

Tim Harrison: You would have costume changes during a theatrical play, of course, but for a musician it would tend to be, you would turn up wearing a jeans or denim jacket or something like that, and you would play your geek. You'd have a, perhaps a halftime break and you'd go off and have a beer or whatever, but you'd turn up again in the same gear.

Tim Harrison: You wouldn't consciously change, perhaps to a different character, to introduce another set of songs. Whereas he did that Bowie integrated costume and music, um, in a very pioneering way and a way, which I think has then been reflected ever since by, uh, a lot of musical acts. Yeah,

Jarek Zaba: yeah, yeah. No, I was, I was, Yeah, I was gonna, my, my next question was gonna be, uh, um, and I think you've, you've certainly touched on it.

Jarek Zaba: There is, you know, obviously this, this project, we, we've, we've titled it art, music, and pop fashion. Yes. Um, I mean in, in, in some, what would you say is, is Bowie's legacy in those

Tim Harrison: areas? Well, I think it was that blending of, of. Of music, of costume and of character. Um, he, he switched, he switched between them, um, all the time.

Tim Harrison: Switched between musical styles, switched costumes, um, and it resulted in a show that kept the audience on their toes. There was no risk of being bored. Um, there were changes within each gig. So you'd move from a little acoustic section to, to suddenly, um, I don't know, suffragette city or something. You'd move to, to very hard rock.

Tim Harrison: Then you'd go back to perhaps a quiet, a quiet one. He was keeping the audience fresh, keeping the gig fresh and so on. Um, but it is significant that Kingston Polly, uh, was on the circuit and it would've attracted, uh, a lot of people. Kingston was a real hub of, um, Fashion students, the Knights Park Center, um, the Kingston School of of Fashion, and the art, uh, colleges there, um, really had their own huge following.

Tim Harrison: It had a fantastic reputation. Kingston was a real leader in, uh, fashion design and so on, uh, and training a lot of the, um, a lot of people who went into the fashion industry and clothing industry and textiles and so on. Um, so that all fed into it, I think too. I think the, um, that may gig at the Poly, um, really would've appealed to a lot of the Knight Park students.

Tim Harrison: Yeah, I think it

Jarek Zaba: was, uh, in. Years just prior to that, um, I think Kingston Poly had won, um, I, I forget the name of it now, but there was a, a prestigious fashion prize. Yeah. I think given out in France or Switzerland or, yeah, something like that. And Kingston won it three outta five years or

Tim Harrison: something. So yeah, it had a, it had a fantastic reputation if you were going to study fashion, Kingston was the place that seemed to have the.

Tim Harrison: Lecturers who, who really knew their stuff were really inspiring and also let students have the room to develop and express themselves. It seemed to have a reputation for experimentation and encouraging, uh, new thought and so on. It was, it was really at the forefront, um, of that. And

similarly, art, I remember as a young reporter covering a lot of the Kingston Poly School of Art annual shows, which were hilarious.

Tim Harrison: I actually bought one of them. I've got one upstairs, um, that one of two I've got, I bought two pictures that the students did. I was so impressed by them. Um, but, but it was, uh, the annual end of year show from the final year students. Um, Were incredible events. Um, just the, the innovation, the boldness of them.

Tim Harrison: I remember there was one exhibit that consisted of, I think it was 500 bags of crisps filled with pebbles, and they were all just laid out on the floor like a carpet. And you just stood in awe of this, you know, thinking, my goodness, you know, is this art is what, you know, what is the artist trying to achieve?

Tim Harrison: And you'd ask them, because the artist would, uh, the young student would be standing alongside and you'd say, well, tell me a bit about this. So I remember interviewing loads of the students in the art school, um, and fashion school about them because the fashion school, uh, or the school of Fashion or whatever it was called, Kingston School of Fashion, I think.

Tim Harrison: it would, uh, again, put on shows it would have a catwalk, it, the, the fellow students would model, um, the clothes from these. And a lot of them were inspired by the music of the time. So, um, I think David Bowie's, uh, costumes kind of fed into that as well. I think there was, uh, there was a lot of sort of cross-fertilization between the music and the, uh, and the fashion of that era.

Tim Harrison: But you're absolutely right. Kingston's reputation as a fashion college was second to none in the whole of the uk. I mean, it's an extraordinary place. Yeah. So, so the book evolved by, um, me just chatting to people. Their memories of the Toby Jug. It had always intrigued me. I mean, it was a pub that was built in 1934, had its ups and downs.

Tim Harrison: Had a, a sort of heyday golden era in the 1960s perhaps. Um, and then became a key music venue in the outer London music pub music circuit. And I, I was always intrigued by it. So I'd, I'd started evolving a kind of talk to a few local groups, um, about the history of the Toby Jug, and I illustrated it with a few photos I'd found, and I just was chatting to more and more people and discovered their memories, their fragmented memories, and I was starting to stitch them together. And I thought, well, there's a logic to producing a book for the 50th anniversary of that first. Bowie Ziggy Stardust

gig, um, which fell on the 10th of February, 2022. I thought, well, this is a good peg to hang it on. So I tracked down and interviewed as many people as I could about the gig, and then it broadened and broadened into the history of the pub. And I even found some woman in her eighties who had, had previously gone to the Toby Jug soon after it opened and was aware she was there as a child taken along by her parents to the ornamental gardens that once used to be at the back of the pub. She remembered the bandstand. She remembered some of the celebrities who used to drink there. And gradually I started piecing it together. I, I think I interviewed in the end about 250 different people. The fact that I'm local and the pub is local and the pub attracted local people, meant that a lot of people of a certain age in their sixties, seventies, eighties, remembered it and are still in this area. So I was passed from person to person. Someone would say, oh, you ought to talk to, you know, auntie Jen. She knows all about it. Um, and I gradually built up this picture and produced the book and self-published it. Printed 200, uh, 2000 copies. Um, about three quarters have already sold. Um, and it's generated a lot of interest. People are quite passionate about the history of their teenage years and the groups they used to go and. people have a lot of affection, uh, for the bands they saw as teenagers. It's, it's kind of, if you go back to the era when you bought your first records, that is kind of the era that is very special to everyone. Uh, and I think that's why the Toby Jug history resonated

Jarek Zaba: And presumably people also wanna see this history celebrated and commemorated. Um, so I thought we'd, we could talk a little bit about the, the site today. Uh, what has happened to the site today? Because it's not really com I mean, there's, there's a mural nearby. Um, but on the actual site where the Toby Jug stood, um, there isn't anything to,

Tim Harrison: uh, there's some lovely buder plants, now poking over the side. But if you look over, if you climb the little fire escape at the side of the bowling alley and actually look over the hoardings into the site, it's completely flat. They filled in the original seller with rubble. Um, March nine, March, uh, 2002 Tesco sent in the wrecking cruise and they demolished it before anyone could object. Um, I mean, do you,

Jarek Zaba: yeah. Do you wanna just go, go, go back a step. When did Tesco acquire?

Tim Harrison: So, Charrington, um, really had closed the pub by, effectively by the very late 1990s. Its last days were, uh, characterized by quite. Quite violent little groups and unsavory characters hanging around the pub and the underground walkways that stretched underneath the roundabout. It was quite

intimidating. People didn't like going down these, you, you would have to wade through quite deep puddles. They were very poorly maintained. There was a lot of graffiti. People were constantly offering you bags of cannabis for a five or at every little corner. There were security mirrors, but they were so dimmed and covered in stickers and graffiti that they were absolutely useless. They were meant to make you be able to see round corners in case anyone was hanging around there, so people didn't like actually going to the pub because it was difficult to get to. I even knew some people who would take the 4 0 6 bus from one side of the roundabout to the other just because they hated those underground walkways. And there was no, at that stage, no overground crossings to the, to the bypass or the roads. Um, so it was an intimidating place. And by the late nineties, Charrington finally decided it just wasn't economical to keep going. Uh, the brewery owned the pub at that point, um, and it sold it to, um, To Tesco. Tesco had a vision of replicating that huge Tesco Superstar at Shanon Corner. It was a superstore at, at Shanon Corner, New Malden. They wanted to do that again in Tolworth, um, with a huge car park. But the idea of having hundreds and hundreds of extra cars all pouring onto that already congested roundabout, just freaked out. Kingston Council, they, they refused planning permission. Tesco tried again. They redesigned it. They tried to play down the number of car journeys, tried to improve public transport, but it never washed. And, uh, there was never really any hope of, um, achieving a supermarket on that side. And so Tesco eventually threw in the towel. And between 2002 and the present day, 2022, nothing has happened on that site as say a few buder plants, but it's basically been fenced off. And then the other part of the site, um, that where the local, the low rise, um, government buildings from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries once stood. That part of the site has now been developed a Signal Park. There are three big blocks turning up. Uh, they're almost finished and eventually there'll be about 910, uh, flats and houses on that whole site. The developers have always tried to get the bowling alley as well, even offering to rebuild it as part of a, another part of the site. And amazingly, it's owned by some Canadian investment firm and they flatly refuse to, uh, sell it to the developers. You've got this quirky block of bowling alley right in the middle of the, this highly desirable. Uh, housing site. Um, and they refu, they, they call it, they refer to it as the sort of Wembley stadium of Tenpin Bowling. Um, they don't want it moved.

Jarek Zaba: Well, there is some history there with, with, with Kingston Bowling hosting Bowling championships Yes. And things

Tim Harrison: like that. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. It's been a, a big international bowling center, but we all used to go as locals. This was the place you'd go for birthday parties. You'd take a couple of lanes, have 10 kids sort of merrily trying to hurl balls down the alley. Um, that would be a classic birthday party

or, um, leaving due, if you were at a local firm, you'd all go to the bowling alley and it had a bar and everything. So, yeah. So the bowling alley refused to sell, um, Tesco, were going to try and build around it, and now it's, um, Housing developer, uh, Guinness Homes, um, building with a big element of social housing and of, and so-called affordable housing, uh, which was missing from earlier attempts to build on the site. So the councilors responded much more positively, um, to the, uh, including a big element of, of affordable housing within it. I think it's 35%. Um, so they're, they're, you know, Keen on Guinness Homes as a, as a building partner in that sense.

Jarek Zaba: And I think your book mentions how, I'm not sure if it's the current development or to in Tesco's plans, um, but there were, uh, ideas to use Bowie names in, in sort of to, to name avenues and cul-de-sacs.

Tim Harrison: Yeah. Mischievously. I've been trying to kind of introduce that idea myself, sort of suggesting things like Stardust Boulevard and uh, uh, Ziggy Street and so on. Um, an earlier developer, um, I think it was called Mayor, mayor Homes. Anyway, one of the, uh, early developers, and it's been through three or four different hands, did warm to this idea and said, yes, we, we hope to commemorate, uh, Bowie with a few of the street names within the site. Now, whether the Guinness Homes will do the same. I've sort of planted the idea with them. Um, so hopefully, hopefully, um, that might happen in future. But I think the, what people lament is, had the pubs survived, had Tesco not knocked it down on early on that Monday morning, I mean, it was about 8:00 AM when people suddenly realized, hang on, our old pub has been knocked down. Okay, it had been closed and was boarded up, but nevertheless it was still there as an intact building. I think people think now, my goodness, now that Bowie's died, wouldn't that make. Or wouldn't it have made a superb Bowie museum where you could reenact nightly for the benefit of visitors and tourists, that first Ziggy Stardust gig and have a gift shop at the back and have, you know, this could be a real focal point. Um, it's like a pill. The pilgrimage as well, a pilgrimage site. Bowie fans. Yeah. But from around, from around the world. And it's funny, interest in Ziggy Star Dust has been rekindled by the anniversary, but interest in Bowie as a musician and a fashion icon just seems to keep growing. I think the legend is now taking over and sadly, there would've been a wonderful place to, um, to be able to celebrate Bowie and his work.

Jarek Zaba: And I just want to return to something we touched on at the start of the interview around the closure of venues and, and, you know, asking you this within your capacity as a, as a local journalist, as as someone who's worked on the Comet and then, uh, today editor, um, editor of the Good Life. Um, what direction do you feel we're traveling in, in terms of live music in the area? I

mean, I know your, your book site, something like, uh, nearly I think 7,500 UK pub closures between March, 2020 and 2021. Um, what are the consequences of that for live music? Um, why more widely, but also within Kingston specifically. And I guess the key question is, would a Bowie of today have the space? To launch Ziggy Stardust in the, in the same sense.

Tim Harrison: I think it would have to be launched via a different route. I mean, the loss of pubs and the loss of, uh, pub function rooms, um, which have tended to be turned into restaurants. So you'd have, you know, typically it'll be a Thai restaurant attached to a pub rather than, um, a, a function room, music venue, whatever. Um, the loss of, of pubs and the pubs, pub spaces, the loss of local authority halls. So, um, most of those have now been closed and sold off for housing or for alternative uses. The housing shortage has, um, accelerated the loss of these little halls and spaces. Um, there are fewer youth clubs. Youth clubs are no longer subsidized. There are far fewer church youth groups. Um, there are so many other distractions for teenagers. Um, I think all those have have fed into the loss of space for live performing by up and coming young bands. If you try and visualize, um, two guitars, um, a drummer and a singer now trying to launch their band and perform locally, um, where do they go? They could use the school, their school stage. They could, um, ask around, I suppose, and possibly, uh, beg, um, space in one of the few remaining pubs to, to perform. They can perform at, at school fairs and fates. Um, and, and do, but, but there really aren't the opportunities for regular weekly performing. And it seems hard to see how, um, a, a contemporary Bowie would get the exposure. There wouldn't be that circuit where you would be able to build a following around the country, um, by performing in different places because those places no longer exist. You've got the huge halls, you've got the O two s, you've got the, the big regional halls that will still host, um, big acts, but a local band hasn't a hope of playing those. Um, so it's very difficult. And I think now the trend would be to record in a studio and just try and put something out on, on CD or download. Um, but really finding local places to foster your talent is a real struggle now. It's a shame.

Jarek Zaba: It is. Tim, thank you so much.

Tim Harrison: Pleasure.