

Eulogy for David Shepherd - from his long-standing friend Les Shaw

An earlier version of this was read out on behalf of Les at David's funeral on 30 October 2020

I heard about Dave's passing last Sunday. It was a profound shock then - and still is now. I am deeply flattered and honoured that Astrid [David's wife] has asked me to say a few words about Dave and our friendship. This has started a thought process of when we actually met, and I realised that I could not remember. Well, it was nearly 60 years ago – in fact, a lifetime.

What I do recall is that the connections were Jazz, beer and pubs - well, many pubs and a lot of beer! I was a young musician learning to play the drums and Dave, or Horace as we called him, went to the same places, and hence we met. Dave got the name Horace from his great friend Richard Castledine; Hungry Horace was a character in the Dandy comic at the time.

Jazz was Dave's passion - he knew so much about the idiom. There was a specialist jazz shop run by a great man called **Bill Kinnell** – it was in the West End Arcade in Nottingham. Bill sadly had a badly damaged arm through a motor bike accident which rendered it virtually useless; and it was Dave who nicknamed him (nicely of course) the "one armed bandit ". Bill never gave discounts!

Dave had a huge sense of humour much like his character and physique – sorry Dave. And, as you will know, a modern jazz enthusiast through-and-through. His knowledge was vast and, alongside his school mate **Richard Castledine** (or Cack, as we called him), started to promote jazz and local jazz groups and musicians. They started **The Riverside Jazz Club** at The Town Arms on Trent Bridge. It was literally a large wooden shack attached to the pub. This was in the very early 60s.



This photograph, reproduced in the book [The Jazz Steps Story](#), shows the Riverside Jazz Club's house band and the promoters standing behind Tommy Saville's Hammond B3: (from left, Mel Thorpe (tenor sax), Richard Castledine (promoter), John Marshall (tenor sax), Tommy Saville (piano/keyboard), Geoff Pearson (bass), Les Shaw (drums) and Dave Shepherd (promoter)

I had become a professional musician by this time and was playing in a dance band on a Cunard ship plying back and forth to New York and Canada, so I missed the opening, but I used to visit the club on a Monday night on my return trips. In those days Dave, myself and Richard Castledine were all very clothes conscious. We always wore suits, ties etc. But one item you could not buy in England was the “Stingy Brim” hat or Trilby, as worn by Frank Sinatra and many famous jazz musicians. Well, I bought one from a shop in Harlem in New York City. As soon as I walked into the club Dave said “Oh Man! I’ve got to get one!!”

So, on my next trip to New York City, I returned to the shop and got him his hat. It was pale grey with a black band. When I delivered it to him, he was beside himself with glee. We were now the only two guys in Nottingham to own this iconic style of Titfer. The only problem was that we got the sizing slightly wrong - UK versus US sizing. Horace was quite a rounded chap, unlike me – so it sat on his head quite comically – a bit like Oliver Hardy – but that did not deter him. Astrid told me the “Norway Story” of him being seen by her brother in Oslo, with his big Crombie overcoat on and stingy brim hat – he didn’t quite know what to make of him. But, inevitably, somebody sat on the infamous hat in the jazz club and I think that put an end to its life.

The early days of the Riverside Club Dave were very active, Dave had asked me to put on a house band to back the guests - all coming from London which included **Dave Robery** who later joined the Animals. One of the innovations that Dave and Richard introduced was to show silent movies on a large screen. This featured Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, and they asked the band to back the films and improvise to them. This then led to a jazz and poetry event at the Nottingham Playhouse with **John Neville** and **Judi Dench**.

Dave and Richard had by now amassed a serious list of names and contacts from the jazz world. He and Richard were now friends of the famous [Ronnie Scott](#) in London and his side kick [Pete King](#), (who, looked remarkably like Dave.) So, after a few discussions Ronnie decided to open the first [Ronnie Scott’s Jazz Club](#) outside London. It was to be at The White Eagle pub on Sherwood Rise, now the Polish club. Many great names played there. One in particular comes to mind was Jamaican-born [Joe Harriot](#) who was an alto saxophonist, the uncle of the celebrity chef Ainsley Harriot.

The White Eagle pub closed after about 9 months and so Dave and Richard started to look for other venues, and, there were many over the years: ‘The Mill’ in Hockley, ‘The Hand & Heart’, ‘The Old Vic’ on Weekday Cross. But then came the founding of [Jazzhouse/Jazz Steps](#) with **Brian Pearce** (Richard Castledine had now pulled out of the partnership). This organisation started some 20 years ago and has promoted hundreds of jazz bands.

I was keen to get the Nottingham Jazz Orchestra - I am co leader and drummer with the orchestra- to play for Jazz Steps; Dave obliged by giving us gigs at The Bonington Theatre in Arnold and at the West Bridgford Library (as part of their joint venture with Inspire).

It occurred to me, whilst reminiscing on our long friendship, that Dave has known and been respected by hundreds of musicians over the six decades he was promoting jazz - including many famous ones, far too numerous to mention.

I shared some wonderful and hilarious times with Dave and have memories that will never leave me.

Goodbye Dave, we won’t be seeing many like you again.