

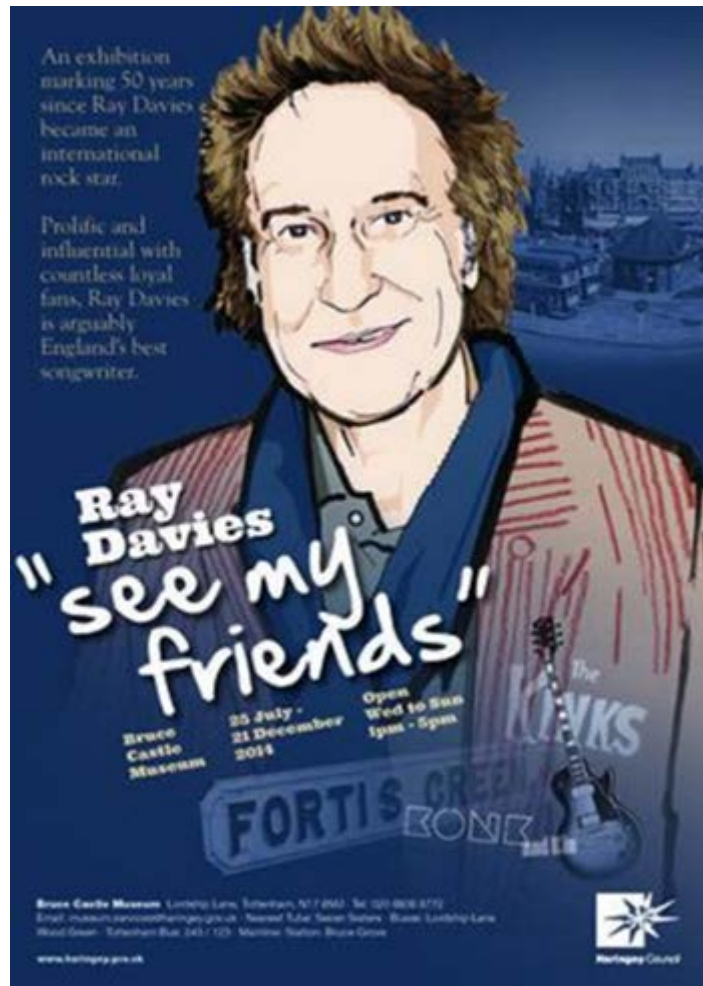
Forage Friday: A Sunny Afternoon Friday 22 May 2020

Welcome to Forage Friday: A Sunny Afternoon – sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

It's Forage Friday - and with a long weekend ahead too! – so we are inviting you to forage through your vinyl, CDs, tapes (does anyone still have any audio tapes out there?) or just stream your favourite songs, and listen to some great music over the weekend. We are coming to the end of [Mental Health Awareness Week](#) and there is a lot of research that shows how music can help and enrich people's lives by relieving stress, depression and anxiety. [Music sessions can benefit those with dementia](#), stimulating positive memories and helping maintain physical movement and speech and language. So it seems too good an opportunity not to talk about a world famous musician that grew up in, sang about and still works in our borough.

Last week we mentioned how we had a visit to Bruce Castle from musician [Feargal Sharkey](#) (formerly of the Undertones and a solo artist) in 2005, well he's not the only internationally renowned musician that has dropped by...

In 2014 we held an exhibition at Bruce Castle celebrating one of the UK's most influential and admired singer-songwriters, [Sir Ray Davies CBE \(b.1944\)](#), and the 50 years since his band, The Kinks, had their first hit. The exhibition, *Ray Davies - 'See My Friends: The Kinks, Konk and Kin'* was a celebration of the man and his music, and showcased the extraordinary collection of Kinks memorabilia kindly lent to us by collector and local resident Gary Forsyth.



Poster advertising Bruce Castle's exhibition in 2014 about Ray Davies and the Kinks
 From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

Ray and his brother Dave grew up with their parents and six sisters in 6 Denmark Terrace, on Fortis Green Road in Muswell Hill.



6 Denmark Terrace, Fortis Green Road, Muswell Hill, c.1970s.
 From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)



Ray (standing) with Dave and his sister Gwen and niece Jackie.

Courtesy and © Davies Family

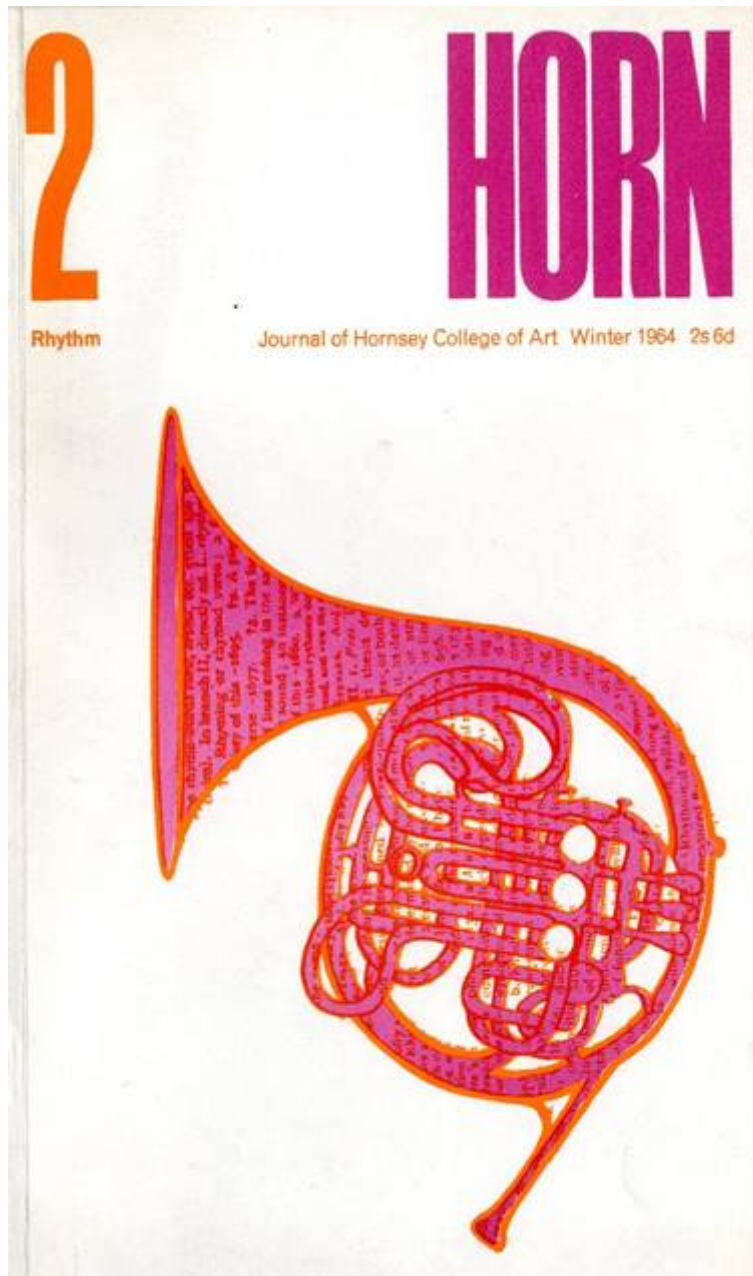
The boys went to their local school, William Grimshaw School (now Fortismere School), as did their friend Peter Quaife who was to become The Kinks bass player. Another rather well-known musician, [Rod Stewart](#), was also there around the same time - now THAT would be some school band! The brothers played guitar and had lessons after school from their brother-in-law. In 1960 Dave and Ray Davies played their first gig in the pub across the road from their family home, the Clissold Arms.



Clissold Arms, Charles Holman (1919–2008), c1950-60s

From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

After secondary school, Ray completed a foundation year at the Hornsey College of Art in 1962-63, and continued his studies at Croydon College of Art where he decided to focus on music.



The main college at Crouch End

A Hornsey College of Art magazine of 1964 (above), and the main college building in Crouch End (below) c.1960

From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

During college Ray played in various bands, but it was after he had finished his studies, and returning back to Muswell Hill, that he joined a band with his brother Dave and Peter Quaife. They set about playing local gigs and London-wide venues, including at the Hornsey Town Hall and a residency at the Athenaeum Ballroom in Muswell Hill Broadway (we found one early mention in the *Hornsey Journal* when the Davies brothers were playing at Hornsey Town Hall, but the journalist refers to Ray as 'Roy Davis').



St. James Parade and the Athenaeum, Fortis Green Road, c.1950.

From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

Word quickly spread of the band's energetic live shows and great songs. In 1964 they were signed to the Pye record label as The Ravens, and soon afterwards changed their name to The Kinks. Their 'breakthrough' single was "[You Really Got Me](#)", released on 4 August 1964 and reached number one on the UK singles chart and was included on their debut album, *Kinks*. The song established them as an international act and set the standard and sound for the *British Invasion* acts in the United States. A succession of hits followed and The Kinks went from being a popular London-based band to internationally renowned group remarkably quickly.



Record Mirror headline, *The Crazy Kinks!*, 29 Aug 1964 (when 'You Really Got Me' was at number 4 in the charts).
From the collection of Gary Forsyth.



From the collection of Gary Forsyth.

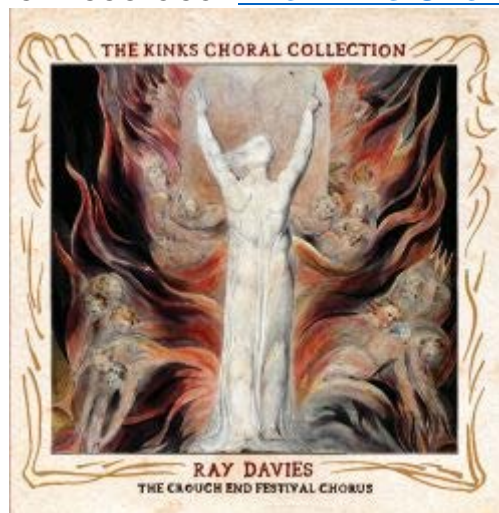
Ray's lyrics were always at the heart of The Kinks sound, and he wrote about what he knew and saw about him. In an article '[Sixteen The Kinks songs that soundtracked England perfectly](#)', the fashion and culture magazine GQ sums up Ray's writing style as such:

"Nobody captured the faux-urbanity of the English middle classes the way The Kinks did: their music is a perfect snapshot of the charm, inconsistencies and foibles of 20th-century England, able to do sweeping and epic as easily as they

could perfect, potted vignettes. They are monarchs of a certain type of British sensibility: the ability to both love, and critique, the things that make us as a nation.”

In 1967 he wrote what is often quoted of as one of the [best songs written about London, *Waterloo Sunset*](#). The song is so evocative of London that Ray was asked to perform it at the closing ceremony of the London Olympics in 2012 – 45 years after its original release!

Regardless of his fame and numerous awards, including a CBE in 2004, being celebrated in the Songwriters’ Hall of Fame and Ivor Novello Awards, Ray has kept close to his Muswell Hill roots, staying friends with people he went to school with, and living in Highgate, not far from where he grew up. [Follow this link](#) to watch him collaborating with the Crouch End Festival Chorus, the local and well-known choir he has collaborated with many times, in a performance of *Waterloo Sunset* in 2009. He has even recorded ‘[The Kinks Choral Collection](#)’ with them.



The area he grew up in and the people he saw around him in Muswell Hill were a great influence on his observational style of songwriting. In [an interview with *The Guardian* in 2015](#) Ray talks about his writing style:

“I wasn’t rebelling against the older generation, I was celebrating the wonderful generation of my parents and grandparents. I’m not a traditionalist, but I’m aware of the value of traditions. I’m not saying everybody should be retro, but at the same time it’s too easy to move on and not take something from the past.”

With their 1971 album, *Muswell Hillbillies*, the title was at once a tribute to their home and a play on the Beverly Hillbillies TV programme which was popular in the 1960s and ‘70s, which pitched the wealth and status obsessed Beverly Hills locals against the down-to-earth and unsophisticated newcomers.



Muswell Hillbillies album cover (above) shows the interior of the Archway Tavern in Archway (so not very Muswell Hill!). There is a small inset picture (below) on the back of the album which shows the band below a signpost giving directions to Muswell Hill, which was taken on the small traffic island at the intersection of Castle Yard and Southwood Lane in Highgate.



If you are interested in some of the North London locations mentioned in The Kinks' songs and part of the band's history, then [have a look at this site](#) and follow the walking tour – if you are ok to walk, the part in Haringey is able to be done without any public transport.

In 2018, Ray talked about his life and influences in a documentary aired on *Sky Arts* called *The Kinks: Echoes Of A World*, ([available to view by subscription](#)). He used archive footage of Muswell Hill and Crouch End from our very own film, *Beauty and the Borough* (1959), which we talked about [in a previous post](#). The film is available to look at on the Film London's [London Screen Archives](#) site. Ray became a Patron for Film London in 2014, his 50th anniversary year of working in the music industry. On becoming a Patron, he said:

“How else can we instil pride in our great cities than by creating a film archive that shows how we have reached this point in history? To appreciate who we are, we must have an understanding of where we are from, and today's home movie could well become tomorrow's historical archive.”



Still taken from the film *Beauty and the Borough* (1959), showing the junction of Fortis Green Road and The Broadway in Muswell Hill.

From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

By the early 1970s, through their immense success, The Kinks were able to start their own record label – something very rare at the time - and set up their recording studio, [Konk](#), in Tottenham Lane, Crouch End. It was first established as their private studio. A few years later they opened the studio to outside acts, and ever since it has hosted some of the biggest selling UK and international acts such as Bay City Rollers, Thin Lizzy and the Bee Gees in the 1970s, Depeche Mode, The Stone Roses, Massive Attack in the 80s/90s and more recently The Arctic Monkeys. Unlike many of its contemporary recording studios, such as [Britannia Row Studios](#) or [Wessex Sound Studios](#), Konk is still very much a viable business, and is one of London's longest standing privately owned studios.



Today - Konk Headquarters on Tottenham Lane, Hornsey.

Ray takes his role as an ambassador of music and mentor for young people seriously, and in 2014 as part of the exhibition programme of events, he was a judge and mentored Haringey GCSE music students. GCSE students are required to write a song during the summer term and Peter Desmond (Head of Music and Performing Arts in Haringey) and colleagues mark the work. In 2014, their GCSE song-writing also became a special competition with the best song from each school (10 schools) invited to perform them to Ray and an invited audience. What wonderful memories these talented young students will have of their music GCSE year - all [Haringey Young Musicians!](#)



At the exhibition launch on 19 July 2014, the Mayor of Haringey Cllr Kaushika Amin welcomes Ray Davies to Bruce Castle Museum, showing the Kinks collection of Gary Forsyth. From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service) © Photographer: Rehan Jamil

We also hosted both a lunchtime and evening event with the legendary rock drummer Bob Henrit. He regaled us with tales from a life that began just down the road, to working with some of the top names in the music industry, including Adam Faith, Ian Matthews, Argent and of course The Kinks. Take a look at a [young Bob Henrit in action](#) - Amazing!

If you want to see more of the exhibition itself, the [information panels can be downloaded from our website](#) and here are a couple of images from the exhibition showing the range and scope of Gary Forsyth's amazing collection of Kinks memorabilia.



Image from the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service), showing many items from the collection of Gary Forsyth



Image from the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service),
showing many items from the collection of Gary Forsyth

So, feel inspired by the amazing songs by Ray Davies and The Kinks, pick your favourite song, turn up the music (but not too loud - don't forget your neighbours), sit back and relax or get up and dance, whichever works for you, but most importantly enjoy the music and your weekend!

With thanks to Gary for sharing his collections with us again.
Take care, socially-distance, and stay well and healthy
Best wishes from us all at Bruce Castle

Julie Melrose
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