



My Conversation with a Famous Person

The summer of '69 – it might have been '70. I and a group of five other teenage boys arrived in a farmer's field near Traeth Bychan (The Little Beach) on the north-east coast of Anglesey. Three tents, a few cans of beans, and a gaz stove that nearly took our lives away. It was our first time away from home as a group and for a couple of us (me included) our first experience of life under canvas. Ours were the only tents in the field, the other accommodation being a small, static caravan the other side of which a stony path led to an even stonier shore. This was to be our holiday locale for the weekend.

We spent our time throwing stones into the choppy waters of the bay, exploring the coastal pathways, finding our way to nearby Benllech (a resort very popular with Mancunians and Liverpoolians, even to this day) and learning how to shop. Richard Quinn (already fifteen and shaving) was sent to the local off-licence and came back with the holy grail of boys' camping – a brace of Party Sevens, fourteen pints of best bitter. Split between six callow youths that was ...well enough to get any party started! Having shouted a cheery hello at the wrong gang of scooter-riding mods we hared back to the camp, braving the fifty-foot drops, clutching our beer and tinned potatoes. We were going to have a feast.

Later, after I had almost set the camp alight with a gaz canister that sprayed its contents through an already lit primus stove, we settled down with mugs of gassy brown stuff, and plates of beans and potatoes to enjoy a night of joke-telling, joshing and general larking about. Richard could play three chords on a guitar, and we did our best to murder Norwegian Wood and, of course (given Richard's surname) the old Manfred Mann classic Quinn the Eskimo. Both songs died a horrible death, but we went to bed happy.

The next day, fuzzy brained and exhausted, we were sitting eating breakfast – cold beans and potatoes – when a three-legged dog suddenly appeared from the direction of the caravan. It hopped about, very adroitly I seem to recall, until its owner appeared and, shouting *Tiko! Tiko!* called it back home.

'Flippin' heck!', one of the boys shouted [Author's note: the exact words may have been misremembered] 'Flippin heck! It's Gerry; Gerry and the Pacemakers! Now Gerry Marsden was at the time almost as big as The Beatles, so this was, indeed, something to shout about. Stunned and unsure what to do we did what came naturally and just screamed his name only to feel suddenly really embarrassed and unsure what to do next. He came over, then looking at our breakfast said with a wide smile, "If you've got any scraps, lads, chuck them to the dog." "Yeah, Gerry! Of course, Gerry!" was all we could muster, and he went back inside.

Not much of a conversation, I'll concede, but having missed out on The Beatles visit to Bangor in August 1967, it's a precious memento from the 60's, and proof that 'I was there!'