

STILL ROCKING AND ROLLING

REMEMBER WHEN

DEREK AJ LISTER continues his profiles of movers and shakers on Bradford's rock 'n' roll scene:

The Dakotas were one of Bradford's premier groups from the early 1960s, with almost the same line-up until 1966.

It was over 30 years later that the group re-formed, in 1994 with the same line-up, to play at charity venues - which has continued into the 21st century.

The band evolved from a skiffle group formed by Terry Lee in the late 1950s, but it was not long before tea chests and washboards were set aside in favour of the electric sound. There were one or two personnel changes at first, but the line-up and style became established in 1962 with Brian Smith, vocals, Paul White, lead guitar, Terry Lee, bass guitar, and Dave Murgatroyd, drums. For a short while Dave Cochrane, a rhythm guitarist, was a band member.

The group was well managed by Stephen Laverack, a non-playing member. The popular Dave Arran spent a few months with them in the early days before moving to The Crusaders.

Throughout the early 1960s The Dakotas regularly performed at the main Bradford dance halls including the Locarno, Majestic, Kings and



Queens, Gaiety and the Students Club. They also appeared at many of the working men's clubs in and around the area, where they competed against bingo, raffles, shellfish vendors and concert secretaries to get the artistic recognition they deserved.

It was great fun with great friends, but by 1966, when 'groupies' had become wives, proper careers had been established and Billy J Kramer had borrowed their name, it was decided to retire gracefully from the music scene. For the next 10 years they kept in touch and met regularly,

but then contact became less frequent, particularly when Stephen Laverack moved with his family to Cheshire.

In 1994 Terry, Paul, Brian and David agreed to re-form the group for a one-off gig to celebrate Stephen's 50th

The Dakotas evolved from a skiffle group and became one of Bradford's premier groups in the 1960s

birthday, and Stephen insisted that he should become a playing member on this occasion. The performance was well received and, more importantly, thoroughly enjoyed by everyone in the band. The rest is, as they say, history.

They enjoyed it so much they decided to keep rehearsing, and with an extended playlist they accepted their first formal engagement, a charity function at South Bradford Golf Club. Stephen was now the group's rhythm guitarist.

For a while they added an element of sweetness to their vocals with Paul's sister Josie (late of Jo White and the Bluenites), but following her retirement in 2008 the band is back to its original sound, playing in and around the Bradford area wherever they are invited to support a worthy charity.

The Dakotas had raised several thousand pounds for such good causes as Macmillan Nurses, Cancer Relief, The Candlelighters and the Royal British Legion. It was great that five friends still enjoyed each others' friendship and continuing to play music from their youth, finding many audiences for their simple brand of rock 'n' roll.

* Derek and collaborator, musician Reuben Davison, profile singers, bands and musicians from Bradford's 1950s and 60s music scene in their website: wwwwhenbradfordrocked.co.uk

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