

# STROLLING ON TO SUCCESS

## REMEMBER WHEN

IN the latest of his series of profiles of acts on Bradford's music scene, DEREK AJLISTER recalls The Brian T Strollers:

The Strollers were latecomers who 'strolled' onto the rock 'n' roll scene in 1962. The founders were brothers Tony and John Rourke and Clive Royston, who met at St Walburga's Youth Club. Clive's father, Clifford, not only offered to manage their affairs but also sold his car and replaced it with a van, so he could transport the group and their equipment. Two new members joined them, and the line-up became Adrian Gunn, vocals, Tony Rourke, lead guitar, John Rourke, bass guitar, Clive Royston, rhythm guitarist, and Charlie Whelan, drums. With good management and a professional approach the group soon became very popular. However, after just a few months Adrian moved on, to be replaced in May 1962 by Colin Rawlinson, a very competent vocalist. Soon the group had top bookings at the Mecca and Majestic ballrooms as well as Cleckheaton and Dewsbury town halls and an assortment of the better working men's clubs in Yorkshire.

In mid-1963 Colin Rawlinson left to further his career in textiles, as did Charlie Whelan. A new vocalist called Brian Tordoff and the experienced rock 'n' roll drummer Phil Mitchell soon filled their places.



In 1963 news filtered through that there was a group in the south of England also called The Strollers - so they added Brian T to their name.

This well-liked group, with Brian Tordoff in top billing, always took to the stage immaculately dressed, which

gave a good first impression - and when they got down to play it was obvious they were not short of talent.

They were now playing at many venues in Yorkshire and beyond, including the Empire in York, Palms in Halifax, the Empress in Mexborough, the Majestic

in Leeds, the Lyceum Rainbow Club in Bradford, the Royal Hotel in Harrogate and Blackpool South Pier. It was at this latter that Brian T and the Strollers reached the semi-finals of the Lancashire division of the National Beat Contest. They never knew why they were grouped with top Liverpool

**The Brian T Strollers in 1963.**  
**Back row**  
**L-R: Phil Mitchell, Brian Tordoff ('Brian T') and Clive Royston**  
**Front row**  
**L-R: John Rourke and Tony Rourke**

and Manchester groups!

They also played as a supporting group to The Applejacks, with another Bradford group, the Del-Fi's, in Harrogate, and later they backed Mike Preston on tour.

Unlike so many groups of the mid-1960s, the Brian T Strollers concentrated solely on dance hall engagements and rarely played to pub and club audiences. They preferred gentler pop music to the more raucous r&b that was beginning to become popular. It was during 1964 that Sharon Vaughan, late of The Caravelles, joined the group for a short while. Given the right sort of breaks they might have reached stardom, but in November 1964 they lost momentum when Brian Tordoff left to continue as a solo artist. Popular Colin Rawlinson returned on vocals in December until March 1965. The following year the group, now with Paul Minchella on drums, went on tour with Ricky Valance. In 1966 the inevitable happened: the group disbanded.

In 1993 the group re-formed, with original members Clive Royston, Tony and John Rourke, Paul Minchella and Brian Tordoff. The group was still playing, with a slightly different line-up and alas without Clive Royston, who passed away in 2007.

\* Derek and collaborator, musician Reuben Davison, profile singers, bands and musicians from Bradford's 1950s and 60s music scene in their website: [www.whenbradfordrocked.co.uk](http://www.whenbradfordrocked.co.uk)

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