

B&S Clubs & Disco Report

Checkin' out the real North...

SO THERE was I, on holiday in Scotland's fair country, and I just knew that holiday or not I couldn't let a week go by without doing some work. So I did a bit and had a look at a couple of clubs both of which I had known about through letters.

Taking them in the order in which I went along (there's novel for you) the first club is the **Kiwi Lodge** roughly midway between Glasgow and Kilmarnock.

The Lodge is what we in the South would term a country club, well furnished and very smart and with a beer cellar/disco tacked onto the back. **Jock Robert Smith** is one of those fellas who likes to get everything down in writing and I was on holiday so I'll borrow a bit from the copious notes he gave me.

Robert has been jocking at the Lodge for five years and although the disco is open for the three weekend nights (counting Friday) he now only works on the Sunday. Capacity is about 350 people and Robert tells me that capacity is reached most nights. It was certainly pretty full when I was there. Friday and Saturday are commercial Pop nights but Sunday is 100% Soul, mostly to be honest, chart stuff but with some imports being featured.

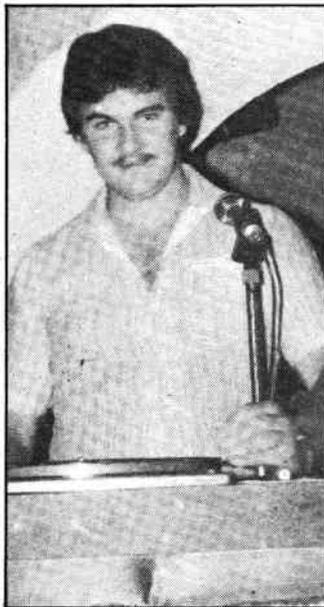
A very nice feature to my mind was that the floor stayed full for most of the night — as many people dancing to **Idris Muhammed's** "Could Heaven Ever Be Like This" as to **The Commodores'** "Easy" — which incidentally I must not let pass without congratulations to the group for making one of the nicest Soul floaters I've heard in many a long year.

The club is open between 8 p.m. and 1 a.m. and admission is £1 which may sound a lot but it does include a supper. The layout is the usual cellar type place with lots of seats and a fair sized dancefloor although the seating is full rather quickly 'cos there are so many people in the place.

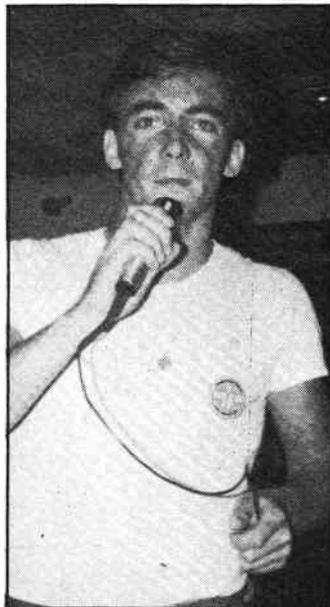
Robert told me that the crowd consists of regulars, who, because the place is rather remote, have to come in cars and therefore are on their best behaviour. I often find the best atmosphere in discos that are relatively hard to get to. People who take the trouble to travel all the way out to the Lodge don't want any trouble.

Because they are regulars everyone seemed to know everyone else and the atmosphere was one of relaxed enjoyment. Although I was led to believe that Funk and commercial Soul discos are pretty well spread out in Scotland (unlike Northern Soul Discos) a few people that I spoke to said that they didn't know of any where else around Kilmarnock where they could hear imports. That did surprise me.

A handful of the more popular sounds include **T. Connection;**



Robert Smith



Terry Quinn

Checkin' It Out

Frank Elson on the Midlands and the North; this issue spotlighting Scotland and Whitby ...

Isley Brothers' "Living In The Life"; **Philly All Stars;** and **Timmy Thomas.** Most popular record of all time at the club is "Chrystal Grass" by **Chrystal World** which Robert reckons he could play all night!

To sum up, the Kiwi Lodge Sunday night scene is well worth a visit if you live around the Glasgow, Kilmarnock area or find yourself up there on holiday. A thoroughly enjoyable night.

● Second place I visited in thistle land (and they really do grow all over the place — I sat on one while fishing!) was **The Banks and Brays** in Saltcoats near Ayr. The idea was to see this place, a pub disco, for an hour or two and then go over with the jock who runs it, **Terry Quinn**, to Ayr to another disco he runs on the same night.

Unfortunately as I arrived at the Banks and Brays Terry, in a bit of a state has just heard that the guy he thought was to start off the other place, **The Stirling Suite** of the Darlington Hotel, hadn't turned up and he had to head over there immediately.

So before dashing off behind Terry's van (it would happen to me just when I get a parking place right outside the gaff) I had time for a quick look around the Banks and that was it. I didn't even have time to say hello to jock **Tony McGreevy** — so, here and now, hello Tony!

Eventually we arrived at the Stirling Suite (I should get a new van if I were you Terry, the back doors flex as you're driving!) and Terry got set up in a hell of a hurry. It was about 10 p.m., the place had been open for an hour and there was already a large number of people sitting around waiting for the music.

Terry started off with a 12 inch acetate called "Keep It Up" by an unnamed artist and I was going to say that a little bird had told me that it was **George Chandler** and **the Olympic Runners** on RCA. However, since that night the record has been released so I won't say that! I will say that it is a winner and about time 'cos George Chandler deserves a hit if anyone ever did. It should certainly sell around Ayr 'cos Terry played it about six times in a row while setting up the rest of his gear! Some people danced to it all six times as well.

Terry is the guy behind **Buster Discos.** He lives near Ayr and with his brother **Pete** and **Jerry Turruchi** as well as **Tony** the four of them split the work up. In fact while Terry always does the Stirling Suite anyone of the others may be at the Banks on a Sunday.

The Stirling Suite first of all reminded me of a **Bailey's.** Huge dancefloor and rows of tables and chairs stretching off into the middle distance. The capacity is

1,500 and the usual Sunday night crowd is 1,100 which can't be bad.

Like Robert at the Lodge Terry depends mainly on commercial disco Soul with some imports and although he finds himself having to play rubbish like John Miles' thing he steadfastly refuses the regular requests for Status Quo. In other words just like anywhere else in Britain a jock striving to build up a Soul only night has to put up with the people who come along just 'cos it's a disco. Despite the few though the majority of people in the Stirling Suite were quite happy with the music being played.

As I couldn't stay very long with a long drive back the following day (did I say it was a Friday night) I can't say much about the people or the place but Terry seems to have it together and I have little hesitation in recommending the Stirling Suite and the Banks and Brays for people in the area.

● **Details are:** Banks and Brays, 8 p.m.-11 p.m. 7 nights a week. Stirling Suite, Fridays, 9 a.m.-2 a.m., admission £1 with a group.

Tropicana, Whitby

I HATE holidays; they screw up my already disorganised schedule. So having hardly arrived back I've only got one other place to give you this week.

The Tropicana is the place **Tim Argument** write to me about several issues ago without naming it. Since then a few letters have flown between us and eventually I've made it up to Yorkshire's East Coast to a beautiful little seaside village by the name of Whitby.

Being more than a little disenchanted with Scotland's holiday delights, I was surprised and pleased to find that Whitby really is delightful. To my mind a trip to the town followed by a visit to the Tropicana in the evening could well catch on on the Eastern side of the country.

The story of the Tropicana told by jock **Tim Argument** begins thus: it is tucked away behind the Royal Hotel and is owned by the Hotel although there is a separate entrance. Tim became friendly with **Barry Palmer** who owns half of **Jet Records Shop** in the town and being a Northern Soul freak talked Barry into putting on a Soul night at the Tropicana which Barry also manages. This was about five months ago and during that time the figures for the Soul night have varied between 150 and 300, being about 200 on the night I visited the place.

The funny bit concerns the music. It is Northern Soul with some old Motown but Tim doesn't call it Northern. The problem being that he reckons on their being no more than a handful of solid Northern fans in the town and their is a pronounced prejudice against Northern in Whitby.

We therefore arrive at a situation

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where about 200 people who profess to dislike Northern Soul go along and dance all night to Northern Soul without knowing it! In fact the situation is validation of a point many of us have been trying to make for a very long time that Northern Soul is in its own right, without the fancy frills of the "Scene" damn' good disco music. (Is there such a word as validation by the way? If not there is now!)

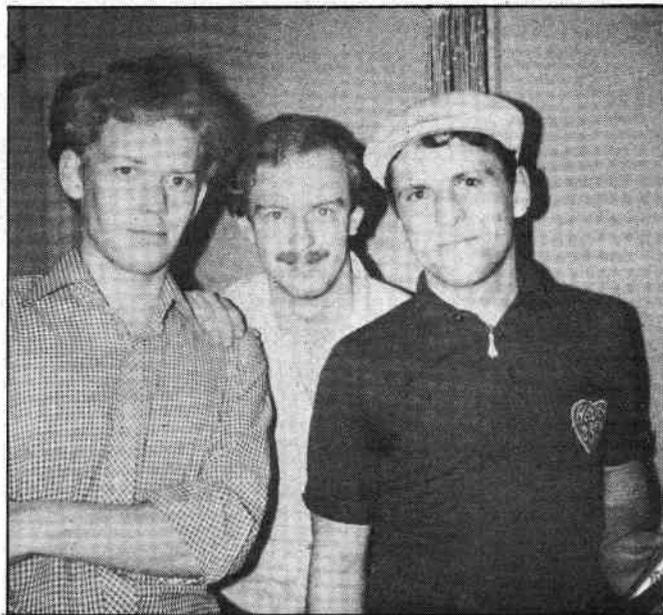
In fact the same situation exists at another club in town which I will come to later on in this epistle. Inside the disco is all it needs to be without being anything else if you get my drift; seats and tables, a bar and a dancefloor adequate without being over-big.

The majority of the people dancing and having a good time don't know what they're listening to but the music includes: **Little Anthony**, "Better Use Your Head" (UA); **Jimmy Radcliffe**, "Long After Tonight Is All Over" (Pye); **Isley Brothers** "Guess I'll Always Love You" (Motown); **Velours**, "I'm Gonna Change" (MGM); **Bobby Hutton**, "Lend A Hand" (ABC); **Doris Troy**, "I'll Do Anything" (Mojo). Not the most new discoveries but still damn good music there.

Tim is the jock although he'd never deejayed before in his life. He's a collector and after only a couple of years into the Northern Scene very keen with it. In fact it is down to him that the place gets on as well as it does. He's organised mini-coach trips to Wigan and really worked hard with a few close friends to keep Northern Soul's head up amongst the pop which one might expect to dominate what is after all a seaside resort.

People in the North Yorkshire area, starved of Soul as they most definitely are, have begun to travel from some distance to the Tropicana and on the night I was there a couple of car loads of real North Easterners, from Newcastle, Durham, Darlington, Tynemouth and Middlesbrough — a whole mob from the North East Soul Club in fact were there. Led, if that's correct by **Alex Lownes** a leading Newcastle jock (he's worked with **Bill Swift** at the Sombrero). Alex naturally did a couple of spots which went down well.

Barry Palmer, as I said before, the manager, deserves a vote of thanks for putting up with "our" music although he himself pays tribute to Tim for providing the inspiration and in fact for his help in aiding Barry to stock the right sort of music in his shop. Barry is one of those honest people who admit to liking Soul while having



From left to right, Mick Powney, Alex Lowes and Tim Arguement at Whitby. Alex and Tim play records while Mick listens . . .



A small group of revellers at Whitby. Sorry for all those cut off but I couldn't see a thing the place was so dark. I just pointed the camera and pushed the little button down. David Bailey has no threat from me!

little knowledge of it but without people like Barry to have faith with people like Tim such clubs

The Tropicana is doing well but things can change so quickly in this game and if it is to continue to do

well it needs your support. I've said it before and I'll probably go on saying it but its clubs like this regular weekly effort that build up the Soul Scene, don't let it go.

● The other club I heard about was

The Shipyard Club. **Ronnie Lavender** who jocks on the Monday night Soul Club was of course in the Tropicana and he gave me the details. Times 9.30 p.m.-2 a.m., 75p entrance with records like, **Dean Courtney**, "I'll Always Need You" (RCA Victor); "Girls Are Out To Get You", **Fascinations**, (Mojo); **Mallibus**, "Gee Baby (I Love You)" (Sure Shot). It sounds well worth a visit as well.

Elson's Gems

Betty Wright, "This Time Its For Real" (TK); anyone out there recognise this situation? There's an artist or group that regularly turns out good work. Nice music and a nice performance and you really like that artist. But somehow they're never really in your mind or on the turntable much longer than a couple of months then they give way to your more favoured artists.

Then one day another album comes out and you really flip. You play it endlessly, leaving the player on automatic and playing each side a dozen times and a dozen times more. That ring a bell with anyone?

Well it just happened for me with this latest album by Betty. I've always enjoyed her work but could never really rank her amongst my all time favourites however, if you'll excuse the phrase, this time its for real! Beg, borrow or steal a copy (do all three and you'll have three copies; save them wearing out too much) and I hope you lot get just half the enjoyment out of this as I have done — if you do it'll be worth it.

Bits and pieces

TUCKED away up there in the wilds of Scotland I've missed all the bits really . . . however I do hear that **Bill Swift**, Newcastle's spiritual leader of Northern Soul is expecting an addition to the family at any moment. His wife **Adrienne** is in hospital at the time of writing and by the time you read this they should have a bouncing bundle of joy . . . congrats you two; I hope its a baby!

Ian "Ginger" Stewart enthusing over the telephone about the Camberley All Nighter recently seems it was a big success, and the "new" Bristol All Nighter which the Southern Soul Club have turned into a raving success. Ginger is dragging me down to the Wooden Bridge in Guildford at the end of the month for the Sunday night scene he reckons is worth a visit . . .

Blazes in Bury got off to a good start I understand although the night I got down there was given over to a previously booked private party . . . I'll bring you details of that one — Wednesday nights, don't forget — as soon as possible.