

75-year-old relives 'Battle of Brighton' clashes in the summer of '64 Mod Willie versus Rockers who wielded bicycle chains

Gig salute to DJ 'lost 20 years ago'



by EMILY FINCH

EVERY May bank holiday, Willie Deasy remembers the Rocker he whacked over the head with a beach chair during the riotous summer of 1964.

The 75-year-old Archway resident was a leading Mod whose seaside battles with the Rockers saw his tribe featured on the front pages of tabloid newspapers.

"Battle of Brighton", "Mods and Wreckers!" and "Wild Ones invade" were just a few of the sensationalist headlines, but Willie doesn't remember his first visit to the seaside resort being quite so dramatic.

"All London closed down. The Tottenham Royal was closed for that long weekend. And somebody said: 'Let's go down to Brighton for bank holiday.' We all got together. We got some kid to buy half price kids' train tickets. Loads of us got there for half price.

"The weather was so bad we had jumpers, coats and umbrellas up. And then we hit that moment in time," he said.

On that first visit, there



Willie Deasy at home in Archway. 'We hit that moment in time,' he says. Above left, a young Willie

weren't any Rockers or riots. "We jumped over the fence [to the pier], everyone followed me over and we ran down to the end [of the pier]," he said. "And the guy at the gate rang up the police. I think he was an ex-soldier. The weather was terrible. The next

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morning people were saying there were lots of riots, but there weren't. Because of the bank holiday, all of the press came down."

As stories of the so-called battles spread, more and more youngsters descended on English seaside towns

that summer to pick fights with other youths whose music taste and dress sense were different.

On one side you had the Mods, smartly-dressed hedonists and soul-music lovers usually seen dancing through the night at the Tottenham

Royal and Finsbury Park dance halls. Then you had the Rockers, famous for their baggy leather jackets and love of motorbikes.

"We went back down there, and that's when all the trouble started," he said. "We went up a mound at the end of the beach. Suddenly, there were four Rockers with bicycle chains coming up these steps and they had us cornered. There was an old couple there. I told them to move away and give us their deckchair."

"There's a big picture in *Quadrophenia* of me and Terry Charles knocking a Rocker over."

Quadrophenia, the 1979 film backed by English rock band The Who, chronicled the Mods versus Rockers battles. The Mod leader with side-swept hair

played by Phil Daniels, also from Islington, strongly resembles a young Willie.

As a 10-year-old at St John Evangelist RC Primary School in Angel he "whacked" a tormentor, showing that he never let anyone walk over him.

"I got caned, and asked why did I do it. The thing is, they were going to go after me and they left me alone after that."

Growing up off Essex Road with an absent father made him "tough".

"My sister was born seven years after me," he said. "That left me free to roam around. I was going to school with people with families and you become a bit tough."

Although Willie found work in a print factory in St John Street – "a job for life" earning £22 a week – he decided to focus on a TV career. He regularly featured on Mod favourite *Ready Steady Go!*, which showed the latest fashion and music every Friday on ITV.

As the 60s ended, Willie reinvented himself as a psychedelic hippy who sold vintage clothes in Kensington. "That was actually my favourite era," he said.

DANCE music ravers have remembered one of the clubland DJs behind the explosion of drum 'n' bass music, 20 years after she was killed by a motorway "cat's eye" that flicked up from the road.

DJs and dancers paid tribute to Kemistry, who lived in Finsbury Park and was famed on the scene for being one of the founders of the Metalheadz club night.

Last Thursday marked the two-decade anniversary of her death. The performer, whose real name was Kemi Olusanya, died aged 35 in the freak incident on the M3 near Winchester. A "cat's eye" light was dislodged by a lorry in front and flew through the windscreen. It is the only such incident involving a "cat's eye" recorded on Britain's roads.

On Sunday, some of the genre's biggest names from the 1990s gathered for a gig at the Village Underground in Shoreditch.

Metalheadz became the go-to club night, switching venues across the city as its popularity grew.



Clubland DJ Kemistry

DJ Rap, another artist who helped transfer the mushrooming popularity of drum 'n' bass to a mainstream market in the 1990s, said: "The fact that 20 years have passed and this legend and beautiful soul is still in our hearts is the measure of her beauty, talent and grace."

And Doc Scott said: "Twenty years ago we lost our sister. A part of the foundation of Metalheadz, a trailblazer for female DJs, but more importantly a beautiful human being."

He added: "I feel blessed to have known her for as long as I did and that I could consider her a friend."

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