

## **Gary Edward Davies**

‘Gary and ‘funeral’ are two words I didn’t think I would ever say, or even think about.

Gary has been unwell for a number of years and lately was increasingly frustrated by his lack of mobility, supported by his wonderful wife Linda, who unfortunately has her own health problems and daughter Hayley and family.

And remember Linda and Hayley – you are not alone. We are all just a phone call away for anything; and Linda, you can keep ‘the pot’ on permanently, as we will be popping in on a regular basis!

What can I say about one of my oldest and dearest mates?

Well, these are just some musings and band stories from myself and my brother Pete, who I think Gary treated and loved like a brother he never had. I was an irritant and a plaything for him!

Gary has been a constant in my life and my brother Pete's for 50 years since I was introduced to "this bloke who can play a guitar"...oh, he hated that gesture as well, really wound him up, so we would do it all the more...by my old school mate Glen Ostins in 1971 as he cycled past Albert Williams clothes shop in Stourbridge where I had a Saturday job.

After a few chats the immortal words "Do you fancy a knock sometime?" and then Ezra Pound was born with Gary on guitar, Pete on bass and me on drums, then later Nick DeSylva on keys.

An incredible 15+ years followed with gigs – especially the Birmingham scene of The Barrel Organ, Bogarts, R&Js, The Railway to name a few - studio work at the wonderful SeanDee studios in Kidder (in which Gary excelled) and just hanging out twice a week to rehearse, write and pub it, usually at the Waggon,

Ismere, the temple that is the Bathams at Shenstone and the old Viaduct, Kidder.

So many stories, not enough time to relate them!

Gary loved telling stories true and not so true. He was indeed a master at it, with an imagination bordering on genius – seriously!

His ‘what if’ moments in his youth – one example:

Whist riding pillion on a push bike playing a game of Romans and Britons, carrying an old cemetery railing as a spear, he wondered ‘What if I poke the spear into the front wheel as we are going down this steep hill at a rate of knots?’ So he leaned forward past his mate who was steering and poked the spear into the front wheel. A short stay in hospital resulted!

In his madcap teenage years, he rode a motorbike with a sidecar – which was actually a coffin – and rode like a lunatic! He told the

tale of picking up his mate Jimmy Mole (who, by the by, has driven all the way from the isle of Skye to be with us) from his work dressed in his business suit and briefcase, sat upright in the coffin – just close your eyes and picture the scene!!

Speaking of transport, Gary enjoyed all things to do with classic cars. He owned a 1950s Riley, Bentley and latterly an Aston Martin DB7 soft top, his dream car. More stories connected with his cars:

In 1975, going past Lea Castle to the traffic lights and dip in the road in his Riley, Pete, Tina, Linda and me hung on for dear life as he put his foot down. As we fled across the green lights something went ‘BANG’ as the Riley bottomed out. Upon reaching the brow of the hill, then descending at speed down towards The Lock pub, Gary turns round and casually says: “Er...I hate to tell everyone, but the brakes have gone and the pedal is on the floor.” The brake cable had indeed snapped

and plunged us into a potential life threatening moment.

Screaming to get out, we hung on for dear life as he hit the Lock car park at a rate of knots and freewheeled in ever decreasing concentric circles till it slowed to a stop. Fortunately, the car park was relatively empty. I said to him then – never again.

And – in the early 1980s, as Ezra Pound, for a photo shoot for America, we dressed up in horse racing, cricketing and hunting gear – complete with monocles. Gary had a striped Edwardian blazer, straw boater, white flannels, spats, make up, a beauty spot, monocle and – a sawn off shot gun! He then drove us with no licence, tax, insurance, MOT in the Bentley round to Captain's Pool in Kidder, at the back of his house, for the photos. How we got away with it, I have no idea!

And dressed like that at a gig at The Teaser in Brierley Hill, a bloke came up and said: "Do

yow do any Quo, mate” – bearing in mind that The Teaser was a well-known trouble spot frequented by some very interesting cro-magnon “characters” Gary – who spoke on stage with an utterly amazing toff accent, full of made up words and toffish rubbish - replied, squinting through his monocle: “I’m sorry old boy, they’re not in our repertoire”. That confused the Neanderthal and he shuffled off into the bar with his eye brows so furrowed, he could screw his hat on.

Gary then did it AGAIN, a few weeks later at The Railway, Digbeth, where we were resident every Wednesday. A body of proper hells angels on their way back from a trip packed into the room, so to break the ice, Gary – dressed in all his Edwardian get up, plus a beauty spot (!) asked the leader who was wearing a German helmet : “Are you doing an impression of a boiled egg?!” I turned my cymbals vertical, expecting a hail of bottles, but after absolute silence, the leader burst

into a roar of laughter, and so too did the rest of them. The only time I was genuinely worried a bit!!

Gary hated football. He hated everything to do with football. He especially couldn't understand the 'we' and 'us' when referring to Wolverhampton Wanderers (Pete's and my team).

And then when we went 'on tour' on Welsh coast (it was one gig somewhere!), we'd arranged to play a football match: The Band v The Roadies. Gary was utterly useless, so we shoved him on the roadie's side. He hated looking at roady Dave Hathaway and me in Villa and Wolves shirts respectively. He just didn't get it! So, Gary being Gary he disappeared with his beloved Irish Wolfhound 'Casey' up the beach. We saw him an hour later coming back – he'd been beachcombing hadn't he! He was dressed as a Roman Retiarus gladiator: Half a bucket as a helmet, pieces of plastic tied on arms and legs, fishing

net and instead of a trident, a carving knife and a ball hammer. He played in that, swirling the hammer around him like a Dervish – nobody tackled him, resulting in various injuries, including knocking the manager of the band out! All good, harmless fun – I think! Typical Dairvis, as we called him.

Later, Dave and Adrian Hathaway – our chief roadies - joined in the ‘Gary football baiting’ them being rabid Villa fans. He would get so annoyed to the point of violence, usually aimed at me. Great fun seeing how far we could push him! Adrian tragically died in his early 20s very suddenly and was greatly missed by Gary. As a tribute Gary & Nick wrote the soul searching instrumental ‘Adrian’s Song’, which we will hear with the video later on.

Gary, on more than one occasion, when he knew I was in Barmouth, Wales would lie in the sandunes the other side of the estuary with his binoculars imagining he was a WW2



sniper! With Linda spotting for him, he would attempt – in his mind's eye – to take off my flip flops one by one, then start on my toes! He would then cross the bridge, surprise us and demand a 'cup of tay' whilst regaling his story of his covert ops in the dunes! An absolute star turn! Gary, along with Linda, would ride bikes everywhere – but Gary would have his bike pulled along by their two dogs – Ben Hur style!

He also loved an infantile game of 'Vikings and Saxons' where he would equip me with a garden cane and a dustbin lid. We would then go at it hell for leather, until he would back me in a corner, as I hid under my dustbin lid, cowering and listening to his cane ricocheting off the metal! At Stars Night Club in Bromsgrove, he even suggested that we have a game of medieval quarter staff with two mic stands, as he was bored. Like an idiot, I agreed, so off we went – Robin Hood v Little John! As he aimed at my head, he stopped

short – as he always did – except the end of my mic stand had a flexible bendy bit, which carried on, hitting me with full force on my brow. Result: stars swirling, birds tweeting, cartoon style, as he – with the only bit of concern he ever showed to me, mopped the blood up in the sink of the changing room asking - worriedly I thought: “Are you alright, mate”.

Gary’s inventiveness knew no bounds. One example springs to mind when – to sooth a troublesome throat and cough – he bought a foul concoction called ‘LiquaFruta’. I’ve smelt some foul things in my time, but this stuff...it had a VERY strong – and I mean STRONG garlic odour, which was so intense, it would make your eyes water and stir your stomach. His favourite trick would be to sit in the car on the way home after the pub – usually The Greyhound or Waggon & Horses in Stourbridge, take the top off and blow over the top of the bottle wafting the foulage into

the confines of the car. We would all hang our heads out of the windows in a desperate attempt to breathe fresh air. One night after rehearsal, the bar at The Greyhound was heaving, so he said: "Right. Watch this!" He then blew the LiquaFruta in the heaving crowd's direction, which parted like the Red Sea. Gary 'Moses' Davis.

And of course, Gary liked the "odd tippie" – and we have a great memory of him cycling off into the foggy night from Sean Dee's studio, with a flagon of cider tucked under one arm. We looked at each other, counted and before we had got to 8, there was a distant yelp, crashing noise and breaking of glass, followed by the unmistakable sound of two cycle wheels spinning to a stop!

And finally – Gary would regale us word for word, the various scenes from his 3 favourite films: Where Eagles Dare, Firefox, and Enemy At The Gates. He would forever do his Clint Eastwood impersonation – his favourite actor.

Gary – old mate – you have been a true friend to us all gathered here today. You were a purveyor of great stories, stupid ridiculous imaginative situations and what if's. You brought laughter – tears of laughter to us. Not just laughter, but belly-aching, belly-busting tears, enabling us to have difficulty breathing, having not yet finished crying at the previous story!

Above all, you were a guitarist and songwriter that should have been heard by millions more. Such talent that was never heard properly. For me personally, it has been an honour and a privilege to have called you 'my mate' for 50 years. This is not goodbye, so from all of us – for now – farewell till we all meet up again for a celestial gig, in some celestial pub.

Rest in peace for now, Gazza.