

## Childhood Home

The home I grew up in up until the age of 17 was 198 Underhill Road, East Dulwich, a lovely two bedroom Prefab.

I was only about six months old when we moved into a Prefab in Underhill Road, there was a shop just across the road that sold practically everything, if you wanted some Cheese it would be cut on a board with wire and then wrapped in brown paper, the name of the shop was Derek Stores Ltd, a Grocers shop at 212 Underhill Road/corner of Friern Road, it was there around 1960, at the back of the shop it had a high wall around the ground with a garden shed, when it closed I used to go in there with a couple of my mate's and played Cowboys, we made out it was "The Alamo"

There is a Parade of shops just down the road from my Prefab in Market Place, Underhill Road, East Dulwich, S.E. 22

Below are a list of these shops as they were in 1964.

311 Underhill Road, Ronald Cunningham, Greengrocer, this was the shop I worked in after school and on Saturday's.

313 Underhill Road, Walton Lodge Laundry

317 Underhill Road, Jas Edgar Hannant, Hairdresser

319 Underhill Road, P W Tyler, Confectioner

321 Underhill Road, D P Cutbush, Hardware

323 Underhill Road, FJ Hughes, Newsagents, sold Sweets, Toffee Apples, Newspapers, Cigarettes, etc, my Nan Stacey used to clean there everyday in the early morning, she used to go up there about five o' clock and finish about eleven o' clock.

325 Underhill Road, Stan Watson, Boot Repairer

327 Underhill Road, Astells the Butcher, quite a large rounded man, always wore a striped apron.

329 Underhill Road, Harry Hastings, the Greengrocer, had a black patch over one eye, he was a tallish slim man age about 45 - 50.

331 Underhill Road, Ken Hugo, Toy Shop, I remember one Christmas there was a display in the window of reindeers, snow, trees & Father Christmas, they were all animated, it was great

333 Underhill Road, Mrs F Moore, Haberdashery.

The shops are still there today but very different from when I was growing up

My Famous Next Door Neighbour

The first time I met Francis Rossi (Status Quo) I was 14 years old, Francis was 17, he was sitting on the ground in the garden of 200 Underhill Road, this was the Prefab home of my next door neighbours, Mrs Smith and her two daughters Pat & Jean. Francis had his back up against the coal shed next to the dustbin, he was reading those little war books, they were called "Commando", he was going out with Jean at the time.

One of my girlfriends at Thomas Calton Secondary School was Doreen Lancaster, she was about 4'11 tall and she was gorgeous, In the winter she used to wear a white furry hat that would also cover her ears and a three quarter length leather coat, it was a bluey colour, Doreen lived in the flats opposite Peckham Bus garage with her Mum, Dad & Brother Alan.

One day in the winter of 1966 on our way back to my Prefab, Doreen told me her brother had his own group, I said the bloke next door had his own group as well, they were called "The Spectres", she said "That's my brothers group", I couldn't believe it, Doreen was Alan Lancaster's sister, the Bass player in what was to become Status Quo

I remember on one weekend in the early summer of 1967 Francis asked me if I would help him do the garden, he told me he couldn't pay me but he would give me some acetates, these were the first recordings of songs he cut in the recording studio before they were released, "Almost but not quite there", "We ain't seen nothing yet" and "Hurdy gurdy man", were just a few of these, some I kept and some I gave away, like an idiot, I did sell two at Christies Auction rooms in the 70s, they fetched £250.00, Francis also gave me some of his old stage clothes, Flared Trousers and a green coloured Long Tail Coat that he had made in a tailors in Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, also an Orange Silk Shirt with a wide frill down the front, if only I had kept all that memorabilia.

We got down to doing the garden, it was absolutely scorching, we both worked without our shirts on, or any sun tan lotion, we both got so burnt, I think we both suffered with sun stroke, I remember I felt so sick and my back was red raw, I stayed in bed on the Monday, Francis said he had felt the same.

Francis asked me one day if I could sing some backing vocals on a song he had written as he wanted to see what it would sound like, he had a reel to reel tape recorder, he would sing each verse and I would sing the backing vocals, he also told me that on another song he had written he wanted to get the swirling effect that you heard on The Small Faces records.

Francis told me that he and his brother Dominique were going to form a duo but changed there minds. Dominique worked on the boats at Southend Pond in Bromley, he also got my mate Bob Webber a Lambretta, he said it would cost ten pounds but if he wanted Chrome panels on the side it would cost Fifteen Pounds, Bob had the Chrome Panels, soon as he got the scooter he took it up Underhill Road and tried it out, he come roaring down the road, as he got near my house he come off the scooter and damaged one of the Chrome Panels, he got up, picked the scooter up quick and run it up to my back garden, he said to me "C'mon, quick, there's a copper coming down the road, he must have seen me come off" we waited in my back garden and lucky for us no copper came up.

Francis asked me if I wanted to go to rehearsals with him, I said yes I would, we took the bus to Lambeth Walk and popped into the local pub when we got there, Francis asked me if I had any money, I told him I hadn't, Francis looked in the pockets of his jacket, which was one of those three men in a boat striped jacket's and he found a ten bob note in his top pocket, he said "That's handy, now we can have a drink, what d'ya want" Francis had an orange juice and I had a coke, in those early days they rehearsed in the damp and cramped basement of a shop that sold fridges in Lambeth Walk, after that night I went down with a terrible cold, it was more like the Flu.

One day I asked Francis who cut his hair, he said Jean did, I asked him if she would cut mine the same style as his, he said "Yeah, come in tomorrow night" I had very long hair then, I went round the next night, Jean sat me in one of the kitchen chairs, Rossi was sitting there watching, they both seemed to have a bit of the giggles, I said "What do you keep laughing at" They said they wasn't laughing at me, Jean put a towel around my neck, brushed my hair then parted it in the middle, she lifted one side of my hair and cut the whole lot off, I couldn't believe what she had just done, Rossi was laughing his head off, Jean had literally wet herself all over the kitchen floor because she was laughing so much as well, I said "What have you done"? they just carried on laughing, I said "You B..h" and walked out, I was really upset, the next day I had to go to the barbers and have all my haircut short, they apologised later.

Francis loved a bowl of lettuce with olive oil on top, vinegar and chips, I must admit I liked it myself. Francis used to smoke Players no.6 cigarettes.

Francis had a white Thames van and every time you turned a corner the hooter would go off. He also had an Austin.

Francis was a struggling musician and needed a job, Jean was pregnant, Francis was now 18 years old and needed to bring some money home, my Dad was a Foreman on the council on Parks & Open Spaces, he got Francis a job cutting grass on the Lordship Lane Estate, Francis got the odd gig, sometimes as far as Scotland, he told me not say anything to anyone, he would make out he was sick and take a few days off, when Jean got near the time her baby was going to be born my Dad would make sure Francis was not working far away so he could get home quick if he needed to, Francis still continued to take the odd day off sick here and there until my Dad got so fed up with it he sacked Francis.

The day Francis Rossi got the sack was the day his life was about to change forever, I went next door that night to see him and apologise for what my dad had done and see how he was, his mother in law told me that Francis was busy writing and could'nt see me that night, he was actually writing "Pictures of Matchstick Men" and the rest is history, I met up with Francis backstage a few years ago, we had a lot of catching up to do, he told me he loves telling the story of how he was sacked and how it changed his life, in his concert programmes he said he always adds Previous Occupation: Grass Cutter for the Council.

Growing Up in our Prefab

We had chickens in our back garden when I was growing up, I must have been about 6 or 7 years old when Dad got his first chicks, he ordered them from some where in Littlehampton in Sussex.

The chicks arrived by train and Dad went to collect them from East Dulwich Station, when he brought them home I fell in love with them straight away, they were bright yellow little chicks and chirping away, Dad kept them in a box under his bed for a few weeks until they were ready to go out into the chicken run he had made.

Dad had made proper chicken sheds and an area that was fenced for the chickens to run around, he fed them on potato peelings and bran and when it was cooked up it smelt delicious, I could have eaten it myself, I loved going out to collect the eggs.

Dad had done a great job of rearing the chickens and Christmas time was very close, one evening Dad laid some old newspapers out on the kitchen floor of the Prefab and told me to wait indoors and not to come out in the garden, as I stood there I could here a load of squawking, then the back door came open and Dad laid a chicken down on the newspaper, the chicken was shaking, Dad went back into the garden, I knelt down and started stroking the chickens head and I said "You'll be ok", I was about 7 or 8 years old.

Dad came back in and said "Leave it alone" he picked the chicken up and put him on a board, then proceeded to cut the chickens head off and clean and pluck him, I couldn't believe it, it upset me, I went out of the kitchen, Dad had reared the chickens to sell at Christmas for an extra bit of money, he sold them for ten bob each, and yes, that Christmas our dinner table had a chicken on it.

Dad told me he also had a Cockerel which had become quite vicious and it had to go, he said he went out and tried to grab hold of the Cockerel and it attacked him, he punched it straight in the beak and it staggered backwards, the Cockerel then tried to attack Dad again but he punched it again and grabbed hold of it, the Cockerel would not be attacking anyone else.

One time when I was about 8 years old, I was playing in the back garden, it was late afternoon, my Dad had left some tins of paint up against one of the garden fences, they had been there for about a week, I thought I would help my Dad by shaking the paint up, I picked one of the tins up, started to shake it and the lid came off, the colour of the paint was red, it went all over my face and clothes, I dropped the tin and ran into the kitchen through the back door crying.

My Nanny Stacey was there, she looked at me and said "Oh my gawd, what have you done" ? I didn't answer, I just carried on crying, my Nan called out to my Dad "Freddy, come out 'ere quick, Johnny has fell over and I think he's smashed his face in" my Dad appeared, his face dropped and he said, "Smashed his face in, I'll smash his face in, he ain't smashed his face in, 'av yer, I shook my head no, my Nan asked "What's he done then Freddy" ? my Dad said "You've been messing around with that paint in the garden, 'ain't yer" ? I told him I had only been trying to help him by shaking the paint up, he said "Well in future leave things alone", how they cleaned all the paint off I don't know.

I was in the back garden with my friend and next door neighbour Phillip Ramsey, I was about the same age, 8 years old, we were playing with our toy soldiers, I swapped one of my soldiers for one of his, his Mum came out and called him in for his tea, he took his soldiers with him, when he got in his garden he dropped them on the ground and went in for his tea, I then began to wish I hadn't swapped that soldier and wanted it back.

I decided to climb over the fence and get the soldier back, I got over ok, but when I came back and got on top of the fence to jump over I got into difficulty, as I jumped back into my garden a rusty nail was sticking out of the fence and my trousers got hooked on the nail, I was just hanging there and couldn't get down, as I struggled my trousers and underpants ripped, I now started calling out "Dad, Dad " he came out into the garden and over to me, he lifted me up quick and the rusty nail went straight through my finger, I yelled out in agony, my Dad said "What's a matter, What's a matter" ? he see what had happened and gently lifted me off, I then had to go to the hospital and have some tetanus jabs.

I remember another time, I was still only about 7 or 8 years old, it was about one 'o clock in the morning and everyone was asleep, including my brother who was in the next bed, I thought I would play cowboys, I put my pillow over the thin plywood headboard, I put my school satchel on top of the pillow, that was my saddle, I put my cowboy hat and guns on and climbed into my saddle, there I was riding into town when I slipped and fell off my horse and got wedged between the other side of the headboard and the wall, I was in a lot of pain, my brother woke and said "What are you doing, get up" I said "I can't, I'm stuck" I started to cry, Dad came in and said "What the fff " he lifted me out, I cried out even more, I was in agony, I had to go to the hospital, yet again, I had broken my collar bone.

Like many children in the 50s and 60s me and two of my friends got some old pram wheels and some wood and built a box cart, we were all aged about eleven or twelve, when it was finished we took it up Underhill Road by the back of the old cemetery, one of my friends sat on the front to steer it, I sat on the back in charge of the wooden brake, the brake was a piece of wood fixed to the side of the plank of wood we were sitting on, if you wanted to stop or slow down you pulled back on the piece of wood which pressed up against the back wheel, we were in the middle of the road facing down, the road's were pretty clear in those days, not much traffic about, my friend on the front said "Here we go" and off we went, we picked up a lot of speed and was going quite fast, I thought we was going straight down but my friend said "Hold on I'm gonna turn right into Ryedale Road, I shouted "NO, don't be stupid, we're going too fast, we'll crash" I was really scared, he pulled on the string that steered it to turn us into Ryedale Road, as soon as we turned the corner the boxcart went over and we both came off, he went one way and I went the other grazing my legs and arms, we were very lucky that no vehicles were coming our way.

I remember the time me and some of my mates went up Dawsons Hill, we found a rusty old bit of corrugated iron, bent the front edge over, two of us sat on and pushed ourselves down the hill, it was like being on a bobsleigh, great fun though, the trouble was on the way down we hit something and was thrown straight into a load of stinging nettles.

In the school summer holidays me and my school friends got up to all sorts of things, we might go over the orchard that backed onto Friern road church, we would climb over the wall and scrump some apples, cooking apples, victoria plums and pears.

Me and a friend might climb onto my Prefab roof and sunbathe for a little while, then we make out we were paratroopers and jump off the roof onto the ground.

Robin Speck, a friend of mine, who lived down the road in one of the Prefabs went home and got 10 cigarettes, a box of matches and a large cigar in a tube, we were about twelve years old, when he came back we went into the Anderson Shelter coal shed to have a smoke, he gave me the cigar, I took it out of the tube and unwrapped it, I thought I would bite the end off just like the cowboys did and spit it out, instead, I got a mouthful of horrible tasting tobacco which I kept spitting out, after that we smoked five fags each, one after the other, we both felt sick, we opened the shed door and a load of smoke followed us, Robin went home, I called out to one of the young girls next door, "Pat, Pat" she came out and when she saw me she said "Ohh Johnny, are you ok, you look green" with a smile on her face, I said "I feel sick Pat, can I have some water, we've just smoked a packet of fags between us" she gave me a glass of water, I never tried that again.

One summers evening me and a schoolfriend, Tony Randall, went to get some conkers from Camberwell old cemetery, we could climb over the fence in Underhill road, we had collected quite a load of conkers and went and sat down on a bench to count them, it was starting to get dark, I said "I've got loads here, how about you Tony", when I looked up he was nowhere to be seen, I was getting scared now, I stood up and called out "TONY, TONY, WHERE ARE YOU"? no answer, then I heard some twigs snapping, I started running towards the fence, I wanted to get out of there as soon as I could, as I was running away a voice shouted out, "John, Come back, it's me, John" I carried on running, chucked the conkers and shouted back, "GET LOST" I climbed over the fence and ran all the way down Underhill Road till I got home.

My Grandad Stacey died in 1964, he was just 65 years old, I was 12 years old, I remember my Mum called me in from the garden and said she had something to tell me, I think it was on a Sunday Morning, approx time was 11.00am, when she told me he had died I said "Oh no Mum", my Mum hugged me and said "C'mon John" I hugged her back and cried, she must have been really hurting inside, it was her Dad.

My Mum absolutely loved music, I think that is where I must get my love for it, she could hear a song once or twice and know all the words, she was always singing, I remember she would stand there in the front room of the prefab singing "Stop in the name of love" doing all the actions just like "The Supremes" did, putting her hand out in front of her when she sang "Stop in the name of Love", she also loved "You're Breaking My Heart by Keeley Smith, brilliant song, I still have a small reel to reel tape recording of my Mum & Dad singing in the Prefab in 1963.

At the age of Fourteen I started working in the Greengrocers shop in Underhill Road parade of shops, Friday nights 4.30pm - 6.30pm and Saturday all day 8.00am - 6.30am, I was paid twenty five shillings, in old money that equals £1.25, when I finished work Saturday night I

used to spend a lot of what I earned by buying some fruit from the shop I worked in, and then buying some sweets, and perhaps 5 Park Drive cigarettes, from the little cigarette kiosk along the road at the junction of Barry Road and Underhill Road, and perhaps I might get 5 Park Drive cigarettes while I was there.

One Saturday morning when I was coming out of Dulwich Library I went to the sweet shop to get ten cadet cigarettes, that was 1966, the year of the famous world cup against Germany, I went home and had a cigarette in the toilet and threw the dog end out of the window, I remember it was raining.

After I had smoked that cigarette I went out to my Mum and said I've got you a present Mum, ten fags, she said you shouldn't have done that, I told her I wanted to but when I got them there was no wrapping on them and one was missing out of the packet, how naive did I think my Mum was, she said to me "That's strange, don't worry when your Father comes Home I'll tell him" I said "No, no, don't tell Dad" too late, he was coming in the door, "Don't tell Dad what" ? he said, I said "Nothing" but my Mum told him what had happened, he then said to me "So you think it's clever to smoke do'ya" I said "But I haven't smoked" No, he said, "Well where did that fag end come from then outside the toilet window" I told him I didn't know, he then said "Do you want me to take you down the Police station" I said "No" I was really worried, He said "Well next time I will, now you can stay in for a week" I said "Oh not a week Dad, you can't do that" he said "No, you are quite right John I can't, it's now two weeks" I said "What" ? he said "You heard, and if you say another word John I will make it three weeks, and you know I will do it"

I had to come home from school and stay in, I wasn't even allowed in the back garden, when my friends came and called for me I had to tell them I couldn't come out, and some nights my Dad would say "Here come your friends John, go and tell them you're not going out" I told him "No, I didn't want to, please let me go out Dad" he said "No, now go and tell them" I just sat there quiet, he said "Not going to tell them, right" he opened the front door and said "Away you go, he's not coming out, and don't bother coming up here tomorrow night neither 'cos he won't be coming out then, he's in for another week" how embarrassing.

My Mum even said to my Dad a few times "C'mon Fred, let him out, I think he's learnt his lesson" my Dad shouted back "NO, I SAID HE'S STAYING IN AND I MEAN, HE'S STAYING IN, AND DON'T YOU LET ME COME HOME AND FIND YOU'VE LET HIM OUT"

One night I was so fed up I said "I'm going to sit in the kitchen, my Dad said "Don't you go out that back door John" I then said "Oh I'm going to my bedroom then" my Dad then said "And don't you get climbing out of that window neither" I went to my bedroom and climbed out of the window, went round the side of the prefab where my bike was and rode off, the front door come flying open and my Dad called out "GET BACK HERE NOW JOHN" I shouted back "NO" I was out and I carried on riding, I went to Piermont Green which was a little green opposite Peckham Rye Park, I sat there on the bike for a while, then I see two people walk by which looked like My Dad & Brother, I then rode in the opposite direction looking back at the two people who had just walked by, that is when I ran into a bit of bad luck, all of a sudden I was dragged off the bike with such a force, it was my Dad & Brother, I was

mistaken about the other two, my Dad shouted at me "NOW GET HOME, MOVE, YOU'VE DONE IT NOW" as we got home and I was about to go in the front door, my Dad picked up my Bike and chucked it over the roof of the Prefab, it was a big bike, 27inch wheels, that was the end of my bike riding for a while.

I went into my Mum & Dad's bedroom one evening and asked my Mum when could I smoke in the house, she had been unwell for sometime and spent most of her time in bed, she gave me her last cigarette in the packet, I told her I wouldn't take her last one, she said " I've got some more, sit on the bed and let me see you smoke it" so I did, she then said "Go on then off you go, I'll have a word with your Father" I said "Thanks Mum" and off I went.

Date: 26th July 1967 - Time: Late Morning - Weather: Very Sunny

Mum was in bed very ill, but none of us knew how ill, I was at home as I had left school at 15, Nan Stacey was there and so was Dad, he had called the doctor and came home from work to be there.

The doctor examined Mum and told my Dad that she had to go into hospital straight away, she was very ill, I went into to see Mum, knelt down on the floor on the left side of the bed beside her and cried, Mum reached out, put her hand on my head and said, "Don't Worry John", I told her I didn't want her to go into hospital, she said "I've got to go, but don't worry, everything will be alright", we had a cuddle but I couldn't stop crying, then the ambulance arrived.

Two ambulance men went into the bedroom and brought Mum out on a stretcher, they took her down to the ambulance, as they were putting her into the back of the ambulance my Mum looked up, gave me a big smile and waved, she was then taken to Dulwich Hospital, the thought never crossed my mind that this would be the last time I would ever see her.

In the evening Dad got himself ready to go to the hospital, my brother was taking him there in his car, I said to my Dad I would get my shoes on, he said "What for, you're not going anywhere" I said "I'm going to see Mum" he said "Not tonight John", I told him I wanted to go and see Mum, he then replied "I said not tonight John, tomorrow night, but not tonight" I said "But I wanna see her tonight", Dad said "Well you're not going to, just do the washing up and I'll see you later" I told him to give Mum my love.

When Dad came home I asked him how Mum was, He said "You're mother's not too bad, she was sitting up in bed, she had just had a cup of tea with a piece of cake and she gave me a bet to put on for her".

That night we went to bed as normal, around 4.00am a loud knock on the door woke me up, I heard a male voice say "Are you Mr Frederick Chinery, husband of Joan Chinery ? Can I come for a minute sir" ? I sat up in bed and tried to listen to what was being said, all I could hear was mumbled talk because the front room door was closed, then I heard Dad, "Oh No, Oh No" a little while later, the man, who obviously was a Policeman, was leaving, I then heard him say "Are you going to be ok sir" ? Dad shut the front door and came into our bedroom, he sat on the chair up against the wall at the end of my bed by the door, he put



his head in his hands, started crying and said "It's all my fault, It's all my fault" I said "What Dad, What is"? Dad looked up at me and said "It's your Mother, she's died" I said "What ? Oh no Dad no" I started crying, my brother woke up, looked across and said "What's a matter" ? I said "It's Mum, She's died", Dad kept blaming himself, I said "Don't Dad, It's not your fault", Mum passed away at East Dulwich Hospital on the 27th July 1967 aged just 40.

We moved out of our Prefab when I was 17 years old because of the damp, I loved living in that Prefab and just did not want to move, Dad was offered 9 Greendale Close, just off East Dulwich Grove, a three bedroomed semi detached house, it was brilliant, but not a patch on our lovely Prefab.

John Chinery (2016)