

Osnabruck or Bust - The Gig That Never Was....

It was 1983 & Charisma had been in existence then for around 12 months, & although all of us were a veritable bunch of road worn musicians, we certainly weren't expecting the 'comedy of errors' which were about to befall us.

This is the 'gig of the century' lads, I've secured you a premier booking in Germany, uttered our agent, Mr Billy Pearce of RMA Entertainments, we so clearly recall.... yes, his "Harvey Goldsmith" moment had finally arrived.

The ferry, complete with a driver/roadie & van having been booked, courtesy of RMA, & the day for departure finally arrived. With the van arriving in readiness to load all the gear, driven by a guy called Lenny who revealed he used to be a roadie for The Kinks & wasn't this also the same guy who used to be the guitarist for the Dave Clark Five back in the 60's, none other than THE Lenny Davidson ? (wow -we are not worthy)...well if not he'd been cloned.

This turned out to be the first problem, as it was barely large enough to hold a weekly shop at the supermarket (more like a well shrunk Ford Transit) & certainly not built to carry the PA, lights, backline, keyboard, drumkit & guitars. Anyway, following a lot of huffing & puffing we managed to cram most of it in, with any remaining items being deposited in the boot of the drummer's VW. So off we jolly well went, "down the yellow brick road" with both vehicles travelling in convoy for Harwich (or was it Felixstowe ?)...the destination... Zeebrugge ! Just to add, that it became evident early on that the brakes on the van were far from being "suitable for purpose", especially with toting a ton of band gear... anyway more about that later.

Fast forward...now firmly ensconced on the high seas & sampling the ferry's 'beverages', some further interesting gems started to emerge.

Billy, the agent who decided to accompany us on the trip, introduced us to a female singer, who was going to perform in the Officers Mess & we, the band in the Sergeants mess.... yes, finally it was revealed we were booked to appear at the British Army Garrison at Osnabruck Barracks & then landed the blow that Roy, our keyboard player was to accompany the female singer. Roy recalls, *he was expecting me to do 2 gigs, one with the band & and the other accompanying the singer, a nightmare !!...Beam me up Scotty !*

It then also dawned on us that we'd have to endure a further lengthy journey from the port of Zeebrugge, a four hour, 216 mile jobbie... with a van that's an MOT away from a visit to the scrapyards.... deep joy !!

So we finally docked at Zeebrugge & hit customs & that's when the fun really kicked off. Almost immediately it was becoming evident that our paperwork wasn't quite in order. Apparently, there was a requirement for a particular type of insurance, a "green card" was it ? & due to the lack of this particular item, the Belgian authorities refused to let us go any further. In other words... 'bog off back to dear 'ol Blighty fellas' It then very quickly became apparent that any hopes of conquering Europe were now reduced 'in a blink of an eye' to severe disappointment. *"Thanks Billy as your outstanding organisational capability has really exceeded itself this time mate"*

With tails between our legs, the remainder of the day was therefore 'enjoyed' in taking in the sights (photographic evidence is featured on the web page), Zeebrugge being the onetime WW1 German submarine base, until a return ferry became available for the trip home.

So once back on the ferry 'drowning our sorrows' ensued with Lenny deciding to join in with the fun too. Trouble was of course he was responsible for transporting safely both the band gear & himself back to the sunny climes of Cambridgeshire. Pete recalls: *"Risky, but I was more concerned about the band gear getting back in one piece than my own welfare, so decided to journey back with Lenny in the van"*

With Ned guiding the way in his VW, & not before relaying to Lenny *"my brakes are mustard so keep your distance"* we then started for home.

It turned out to be a hair raiser of a journey as the brakes on the van were in a dire state by now, & more than once we narrowly missed remodelling the boot of Ned's motor. We eventually reached the entrance to

the M11 motorway & at which point Ned had grown tired of 'follow the leader' & sped off home, with John & Roy on board.

Lenny & Pete on the other hand continued to 'limp along' with the added misfortune of the van starting to lose power, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as further up the motorway, due to a lapse of concentration on Lenny's part, we drifted into the central reservation with the van 'conking out'. To cut this rather lengthy story short, following a few attempts the van restarted & we continued the journey, fortunately with it being the middle of the night & the road deserted, Lenny was somewhat relieved he hadn't had his collar felt.

Casey, who had recently just joined the band has since been greatly relieved & forever grateful that she was unable to join us on our very first European tour.

Transpired that Charisma never had the opportunity to venture beyond these shores ever again.... upon reflection, possibly for the best maybe.

New Year... one of the many.

It was December 30th & one of the band's many gigs at Burwell Ex-Servicemans Club.

The drummer at the time, (we'll call him Mooney for the purpose), had bought his family along to the gig & throughout the evening took it upon himself to impress by undertaking impersonations of 'Carl Palmer' & the like. This was not however appreciated & especially not by our guitarist/vocalist & frontman John Ciborowski who through the course of the evening became increasingly unhappy with his antics, resulting in the coming of the 'red mist', not unusual for John, we might add. This culminated in Mooney being sacked at the end of the night, despite the band reminding John of the impending New Years Eve gig, the following night in Bury St Edmunds.

The band bid John goodnight & wished him all the very best in finding a suitable replacement at such very short notice. Lo & behold, being the ever resourceful chap that John is, a drummer was duly found at the 11th hour. Although the dep turned out to be not the most experienced, resulting in any beat with 16s slowing the song down as it progressed, the band got thru & survived the evening.... well just !!

The Big Bird Episode.

RAF Bawdsey, another very enjoyable gig, although doubt if one of the venues residents, who was of the feathered variety, ever recovered from our visit. It was a misty morning after the night before & we'd finished loading the gear into the vehicles, Ned the drummer, then precedes to move off for the journey homewards & totally out of the blue a rather large regimental duck appears from nowhere & decides to "get acquainted" with his Volkswagen Passat. Unfortunately, the poor bird came off worst & the last thing I recall was seeing it limping very painfully around the car park.... As to the duck's fate, we shall never know & can only sincerely hope that a local "bird doctor" managed to 'fix' the poor duck so it could resume it's military lifestyle.

Three Sheets to The Wind.

We always got treated extremely well on the RAF, Army & USAF base gigs. The food especially was a sheer joy to behold, with table after table being stacked full of every culinary delight one can imagine & with alcohol never ever being in short supply.

Mmmm.. Alcohol.... Goes without saying that the booze was always particularly well received, although not recommended when your faced with the task of having to play up to 3 one hour sets, when trying to remain in a vertical position & remembering all of your parts.

Our original drummer Graham 'Ned' Bishop certainly enjoyed a tippie or two, even though being the elder statesman of the band could still hold his booze.... well to a point anyway. Unfortunately, on this particular night he'd overdone it a tad & during one of the livelier numbers, got over excited & fell backwards off his drum stool, catching his cymbals with his feet & taking them with him.

Alcohol again played a big part.... probably 'thee part' in bass player Pete Willsher's misfortune during a rendition of Neil Sedaka's " Breaking Up Is Hard To Do" ...was it ? Always partial to the odd glass of champagne, but on this particular night 'odd turned into plenty' thanks to a waiter regularly replenishing the

glass, with the unfortunate effect of him totally losing the plot, forgetting where he was in the song & virtually collapsing on stage. He very vaguely remembers encountering 'Mr Plod' driving the short distance home from this gig.... a skin of the teeth job it sure was.

The Tesco & Royal Engineers gig's

Casey recollects: I do recall the acclaim that audiences sometimes gave us (and me I think) when they particularly liked a performance, I remember playing at Tesco's headquarters in Hertfordshire at their staff Christmas party and receiving a standing ovation for my rendition of the Whitney Houston/Dolly Parton song "I Will Always Love You".

I also remember the excess of catering at Army and Airforce gigs. One event at The Royal Engineers when the theme was "Hollywood" and the officers were in costume like stars of the screen and caterers had arranged slices of meat like the Hollywood Hills with the famous sign "Hollywood" across the beef, ham and chicken. It was so bizarre!

Community Spirit

Well the crowd were literally breaking the doors down to attend our appearance at Witham Community Centre in May 1985... yeh we wished eh! Transpired we outnumbered the punters by 5 to 4, so they ended up joining us on stage. Publicity was not one of our agent's strong points.

Anyone up for a Pub Gig ?

In the early days, we made good use of the local pub scene, always useful places to knock a new function band into shape & quite often very lively venues too. The usual fun & games normally ensued of course ie, "Customers, usually worse for wear, grabbing the mike & doing an Elvis, Ozzy or Tina Turner • Stealing the drummers kit to do a Keith Moon impersonation • Tripping over the speaker cables & knocking the PA cabs for six, on the way to the gents toilet • Depositing a pint of best bitter down the back your Marshall amplifier, & watching it go up in a puff of smoke".... the list is pretty endless.

The Globe PH our third ever gig, witnessed one of the few real fisticuffs, between two elderly gentlemen over how one had insulted the other by calling him a grave digger instead of a council operative, Most likely it also had something to do with a female sat at the bar they'd both taken a fancy to.

Likewise, at the Racehorse, again on Newmarket Road, yes certainly lively, but also bordering on the downright dangerous, especially when the travellers were in town. T was more akin to playing in a Wild West saloon bar.... watch out for the flying tables, chairs & beer mugs....all for the princely total gig fee of £50... those were the days.

None of the aforementioned tales would have been at all possible without the contributions from Casey, Helen, Phil, John & chief band archivist Roy Stubbings... such a very big thank you everyone !

CHARISMA GIG SHEET: 1982 - 1987

1982

20th February	Fishermead Pavilion, Milton Keynes
3rd April	RAF Wyton
17th April	The Globe, Cambridge
21st May	Beaconsfield Hall, Cambridge
11th June	RAF Swanton Morley, Norfolk
24th June	Swynford Paddocks, Newmarket
25th June	The Racehorse, Cambridge
10th July	Glebe School, Girton
4th September	Halstead Boxing Club, Essex
24th September	Beaconsfield Hall, Cambridge
25th September	St Ivo Centre, St Ives (R.A.O.B)

2nd October	The Racehorse, Cambridge
23rd October	United Services Club, Dovercourt Essex
30th October	Haverhill Fire Station
6th November	Cambridge Rugby Club
11th November	The Maltings, Ely (Soham Rotary Club)
12th November	University Sports & Social Club, Cambridge
26th November	The Racehorse, Cambridge
27th November	Owen Web House, Cambridge (Pigeon Club)
3rd December	Linton Heights Junior School
11th December	The Welding Institute, Gt Abington
17th December	Sawston Village College
18th December	Babraham Conference Centre
31st December	City of Ely College

1983

15th January	Fishermead Pavilion, Milton Keynes
21st January	Frank Lee Centre, Cambridge
22nd January	Simmons Restaurant, Bishops Stortford
27th January	The Racehorse, Cambridge
12th February	RAF Brampton
19th February	University Sports & Social Club, Cambridge
5th March	Halstead Working Mens Club, Essex
10th March	The Racehorse, Cambridge
18th March	Village Hall, Fowlmere
9th April	USAF, Wethersfield Essex
16th April	Carver Barracks, Essex
22nd April	Saxon Inn, Harlow Essex
23rd April	RAF Alconbury
30th April	Baker Perkins Social Club, Peterborough
20th May	Haverhill Rugby Club, Suffolk
17th June	RAF Woodbridge Suffolk
23rd June	Tolly Cobbold Darts Finals, Guildhall, Cambridge
24th June	RAF Bawdsey, Suffolk
13th August	Fishermead Pavilion Milton Keynes
20th August	The Maltings, Ely
9th September	RAF Bawdsey, Suffolk
17th September	RAF Catterick, Nth Yorks
30th September	Drill Hall Cambridge, Ladies Ladies Summer Darts Finals
8th October	Comrades Club, Saffron Walden Essex
15th October	BP Club, Harlow Essex
22nd October	Royal Cambridge Hotel
29th October	Royal Cambridge Hotel
5th November	Royal Cambridge Hotel
12th November	Royal Cambridge Hotel
19th November	Royal Cambridge Hotel
26th November	Royal Cambridge Hotel
2nd November	Royal Cambridge Hotel
3rd December	Royal Cambridge Hotel
9th December	Waterbeach Barracks, Cambridge
10th December	Royal Cambridge Hotel
15th December	University Assistants Club, Cambridge
16th December	Plant Breeding Institute, Cambridge

17th December **RAF Stanbridge, Leighton Buzzard**
19th December **Elvedon Village Hall, Norfolk**
23rd December **City of Ely College**
29th December **University Arms, Cambridge**
31st December **N.C.I Club, Cambridge**

1984

7th January **Post House Hotel, Ipswich**
21st January **Great Wilbraham Sports & Social Club**
10th February **RAF Bawdsey, Suffolk**
17th February **Frank Lee Centre, Cambridge**
18th February **RAF Brampton**
17th March **Rose & Crown, Haverhill Suffolk**
23rd March **Rhodes Hall, Bishops Stortford**
30th March **The Pavilion, Soham**
31st March **Linton Infants School**
17th April **Bassingbourn Barracks**
21st April **Gog Ma Gog Golf Club, Great Shelford**
28th April **Normandy Barracks, Leconfield East Yorks**
4th May **University Arms, Cambridge**
5th May **Moat House Hotel, Harlow**
14th May **Meadow School, Balsham**
12th May **Blacksmiths Arms, Epping**
19th May **Comet Club, Mildenhall**
25th May **Saffron Walden Golf Club**
26th May **Fishermead Pavilion, Milton Keynes**
9th June **RAF Catterick, Nth Yorks**
18th June **May Ball, Clare College Cambridge**
22nd June **Cambridge City Rugby Club**
23rd June **Saffron Walden O.C.C**
29th June **RAF Bawdsey, Suffolk**
7th July **RAF Brampton**
12th July **Swynford Paddocks Hotel, Newmarket**
17th July **Waterbeach Barracks, Cambridge**
14th July **A.R.C Social Club, St Ives**
7th September **Barrington Social Club**
15th September **The Maltings, Ely**
22nd September **RAF Honington**
12th October **Moat House Hotel, Harlow**
13th October **Comberton Village College**
19th October **The Maltings, Ely**
17th November **Chatteris Working Mens Club**
30th November **The Star, Waterbeach**
13th December **St Ivo Centre, St Ives**
14th December **Plant Breeding Institute, Cambridge**
15th December **Alanbrooke Barracks, Topcliffe, Yorks**
20th December **University Arms, Cambridge**
21st December **Slepe Hall, St Ives**
22nd December **Brandon Community Centre, Norfolk**
24th December **Birchanger Working Mens Club, Essex**
27th December **University Arms, Cambridge**
31st December **Electrolux Social Club, Luton**

1985

No records exist for the months, January – March of this year.

Rumour has it that Roy (our keyboard player & chief band archivist) had been placed on 'garden leave' for this period.

We are pleased to say that he eventually returned due to popular demand.

6th April	War Memorial Insitute, Harlow
11th April	RAF College, Cranwell, Lincs
20th April	Wales', Gamlingay
4th May	War Memorial Insitute, Harlow
11th May	Witham Community Centre, Essex
8th June	Elsworth (Farm)
14th June	Rotary Club, Village Collge, Soham
15th June	Burnt Mill, Snooker & Social Club, Old Harlow Essex
13th July	Comberton Village College
20th July	Soham Village College
7th September	Saffron Walden Rugby Club, Henham Essex
28th September	Burnt Mill, Snooker & Social Club, Old Harlow Essex
3rd October	Wales', Gamlingay
26th October	Ex-Servicemans & Working Mens Club, Long Melford
2nd November	Beach Social Club, Waterbeach
9th November	Meridian School, Royston
16th November	United Servicemans Club, Gamlingay
6th December	Memorial Hall Newmarket (Newmarket FC)
7th December	Alanbrooke Barracks, Topcliffe, Yorks
13th December	Waterbeach Barracks
14th December	Lakenheath British Legion Club
20th December	Saffron Walden Town Hall
21st December	Fulbourn Hospital Social Club
31st December	RAF Brampton

1986

14th February	Garden House Hotel, Cambridge
15th February	Beach Social Club, Waterbeach
22nd February	Montagu Club, Huntingdon
8th March	British Legion Club, St Ives
22nd March	Cambridge United Supporters Club
29th March	July Race Course, Newmarket
19th April	United Servicemans Club, Gamlingay
27th April	Beach Social Club, Waterbeach
16th May	Turner Hall, Newmarket
26th May	Landbeach Marina
31st May	Dover House, Bartlow, Cambs
14th June	Witchford, Cambs
19th July	Comrades Club, Soham
16th August	Cambridge United Supporters Club - (4 Piece)
23rd August	Beach Social Club, Waterbeach
30th August	Burwell Ex-Servicemens Club
5th September	Comrades Club, Soham
6th September	Saffron Walden Rugby Club, Henham Essex
4th October	Littleport British Legion
25th October	Balsham School
1st November	County Council Employers Social Club, Harlow

15th November	Colville School, Cherry Hinton
29th November	Harlow Football Club
13th December	Ely Caravan Club, City of Ely College
19th December	Girton College, Cambridge
20th December	Barnham Village Hall, Suffolk
24th December	Beach Social Club, Waterbeach
31st December	Soham Sports Centre

1987

3rd January	Burwell Ex-Servicemens Club
5th January	Corn Exchange, Cambridge
17th January	Comrades Club, Soham
13th February	Gonville Hotel, Cambridge
14th February	Cambridge United Social Club

At This point Roy's five year tenure with the band came to a close & sadly of course he took his archival talents with him. The remaining years up to New Years Eve 1994, were unfortunately never documented.