I. LIVERPOOL

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The Beatles seemed like such an entirely new and unique species of being in the 1960's that it was easy to believe they simply materialized, fully formed, from our collective imaginations. The band now seems almost a myth, passed down through the generations and unaffected by times, trends or even the mortal lives of the Beatles themselves. It is clear that the Beatles will live on through the ages, like Beethoven, Louis Armstrong, Hank Williams and the classic giants of every musical style. And just as it is hard to imagine Beethoven as a guy you might run into at the grocery store, it is difficult to imagine the life-sized Beatles when their music seems so eternal and untouched by human hands. Liverpool, then, is a reminder that Beatles really were from somewhere, with real lives to be lived and people and places that shaped their emotions and music. A trip to the Beatles' hometown brings the band back to human dimensions in wonderful ways, beginning with the unmistakable accents and vocal cadences of everyone you meet (they all sound like Beatles!) and the droll sense of humor and Beatle-esque group banter that animates conversation in the pubs and on the street. The eerie familiarity of the people is mirrored by a
thrilling sense of déjà vu as Penny Lane, Strawberry Field and other vividly imagined places become real, right before your eyes.

Liverpool takes the Beatles for granted as only a hometown can, accepting them in the same matter-of-fact way the Beatles accepted the enormity of their own success without developing outsized egos to match. Liverpudlians remain slightly baffled by the Beatles' endless appeal and more than a little amazed that something so universally loved could have come from Liverpool in the first place. A few diehards still resent the fact that the Beatles moved to London once their career took off, but Liverpudlians are generally quite proud of their most famous export and very welcoming to Beatle tourists. In turn, the people of Liverpool will bring the Beatles into better focus better than any book, building or museum.

In reality, the Beatles never left Liverpool too far behind. The unaffected and pretension-hating sensibilities of their hometown gave them a tough exterior for the hard times and kept them tethered to reality and unimpressed by the world's adulation at the height of their fame and drug-fueled explorations. The Beatles would often credit their Liverpool grounding—and each other—with keeping them sane through the most extraordinary of pressures and circumstances.

Liverpool remained down-to-earth in part because the world kept it there. The Liverpool of the Beatles' youth was viewed by most Britons as a remote outpost past its prime and on the fringes of British culture, identified mainly by its inhabitants' coarse accents, grinding poverty and leftist leanings. After the Beatle era, the city slid even deeper into decay and unrest, eventually losing half of its pre-War population and gaining blocks of boarded-up or burned out buildings and an aura of violence and danger. There has been a slow but steady rise in fortunes and pride since the 1980's, however—a civic renaissance reflected in Liverpool's designation as the 2008 "Capitol of European Culture," a distinction that would have seemed laughable not so long ago.

In its prime, Liverpool was one of the world's great port cities, a commercial colossus and the gateway to the New World for more than nine million people between 1830 and 1930. It also attracted a large influx of immigrants, from nearby Ireland—Liverpool is sometimes referred to as the Capitol of Ireland—and the far-flung corners of the world (the city has one of Europe's oldest Chinatowns). The city has a long history of racial, cultural and religious diversity, with all the attendant benefits and tensions. In its darkest incarnation, Liverpool was the corporate home to roughly half of the world's slave trade. In
the 18th century, hundreds of Liverpool ships sailed the infamous triangle to West Africa, America and back to Liverpool, trading English goods for human cargo that was, in turn, exchanged for sugar, cotton, rum, tobacco ("Curse Sir Walter Raleigh," as John Lennon put it) and other goods from the New World.

Two centuries later, a happily ironic legacy of that grim commerce brought a steady stream of black American R&B and rock & roll records into the Liverpool docks, where they were seized like exotic treasures and copied by bands intent on performing American music as faithfully as possible. Instead, they created a startlingly fresh hybrid, blissfully indifferent to the fact that John Lee Hooker, the Shirelles and Little Richard belonged to different musical universes. The city's relative isolation allowed a unique musical ecosystem to develop, where all music's were imports and cross-fertilization was inevitable.

It is often said that the Beatles "could only have come from Liverpool," and it is more than an empty cliché. As surely as Memphis and the American South produced Elvis and white boys who could sing the blues, Liverpool was an unlikely but ideal site for rock's rebirth, where even British kids could play real American rock & roll. Like Elvis, the Beatles burst into the national consciousness with their accents and working-class origins undiscguised: a "revenge against the class system," as Bono described them, though the geography was inverted and the Beatles' assault came not from the South but from the provincial North of England, and the sneers came not from northern Yankees but from the sophisticates of London and the South of England. They were a surprising jolt to post-war British lethargy, made all the more surprising by the fact that it came from, of all places, Liverpool.
Lime Street Station

**Roll Up, Roll Up**

Most visitors enter Liverpool via train at Lime Street Station, a familiar name to Beatle fans thanks to Dirty Maggie Mae. Lime Street Station was the site of many Beatle comings and goings in the years before their fame and wealth allowed for plane travel. Brian Epstein, the group's manager, was a regular on the Liverpool-to-London run in 1962 as he tried to interest record companies in his group. He signed the band to a management contract in 1961 at the nearby Britannia Adelphi Hotel, which is now the headquarters of the Beatle Week convention held every August. For many years the Adelphi was Liverpool's premier hotel, built next to the rail station to house rail and ocean liner passengers during the city's heyday as an international port. The Beatles stayed here when performing at the nearby Empire in the Beatlemania days, and Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones and many other sixties stars also stayed here when appearing in Liverpool. The Adelphi is a great place to stay for a taste of old-time style, but there are plenty of cheaper Bed & Breakfasts and youth hostels as well as more upscale and modern accommodations. In any case, allow enough time to absorb the sites and atmosphere. Too many people try to make Liverpool a daytrip, and it deserves much more.
Across the street from the Adelphi is the venerable Lewis's Department Store, where Paul McCartney was briefly employed following his return from the Beatles' first trip to Hamburg. The Beatles played, strangely, a pair of shows for employees in the top floor lounge the day they returned from London after recording their second single, "Please Please Me." The front of the store was a traditional rendezvous point for friends and couples heading into town from the suburbs, including John and Cynthia, who frequently met under the storefront statue of a nude man, erected when the store was rebuilt after the WWII bombings. Officially named "Liverpool Resurgent," he was affectionately dubbed "Dickie Lewis" by all, for fairly obvious reasons.

The Adelphi and Lewis's sit at the head of Ranelagh Street, which continues downhill into the large pedestrian area of central Liverpool, toward the Cavern District and layers of Beatles history. The central downtown area is bounded by Lime Street Station at one end and the River Mersey at the other. The iconic Liverpool waterfront is dominated by the "Three Graces": the Royal Liver Building, the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool Building, a trio of impressive structures built in the early 20th century to commemorate Liverpool's commercial might. The Liver Building is topped by two mythical Liver birds, the symbols of the city: one looking out to the sailors at sea, one looking inland, watching over the families at home. The headquarters of the White Star Line was across the street in the brown-and-white striped building where news of the Titanic's doomed maiden voyage was shouted down to the frantic families of the many Liverpudlians in the ship's crew.
Directly in front of the Three Graces is the Pier Head, the embarkation point for the ferries 'cross the Mersey immortalized in Gerry & the Pacemakers' 1964 hit. A ferry ride is an essential Liverpool experience, providing wonderful views of the city and a reminder of its identity as a port city. The ferries run regularly to points in Wirral on the opposite side of the Mersey. Simply stay onboard for a roundtrip back to the Pier Head, or book yourself on one of the more tourist-oriented sightseeing excursions. For a Beatle grounding, recall that Ringo worked for a time as a bartender on one of these boats, and that the Beatles gave four concerts on the Mersey aboard the "Royal Iris."

Just down the waterfront from Pier Head lies the massive Albert Dock complex, a renovated warehouse area that now houses shops, restaurants, galleries, tourist offices and the Beatles Story Museum, where one can wander through rooms dedicated to the various stages of the Beatles' career. Albert Dock is also where you embark for the National Trust tour of Paul and John's boyhood homes and a daily 2-hour "Magical Mystery Tour" of Beatle sites run by Cavern City Tours. The replica of the original Magical Mystery Tour bus is a pleasant if slightly eerie site as it meanders through Liverpool, and the tour is a good way to see
the major Beatle sites in a short time or to get your bearings for further exploration. There are many excellent Beatle guides who will take you on a personalized private tour if you desire, which is a good way to see some of the farther-flung sites and hear some engaging firsthand accounts of the Beatles' days as a local band.

Unhurried and on foot is the best way to get a real sense of the Beatles' world, and you can also navigate well with a rented bicycle and on the city buses. (Remember that John Lennon was a famous Beatle before he got his first driver's license.) With a guidebook and a good map you can roam the streets and commune with the spirits at your own pace, lost in your own Beatle reveries.
So much to see...

...and you never know who you'll run into  (Paul at the Walker Art Gallery, 2004)
Birthplaces

The Beatles were World War II children, born during the mid-century cataclysm that would cast a shadow over much of their youth. Liverpool paid a terrible price for its maritime prominence. Its docks were a vital link for supplies from America in the early days of the War and a prime target for Hitler's bombers, which decimated the city center and docklands. St. Luke's Church, at the head of Bold Street and Renshaw Streets, was left in its bomb-out state as a reminder of the grim war years and a memorial to the 4,000 Liverpudlians who died during the blitz.

St. Luke's Church, at the head of Bold Street

Air raids were frightfully routine in 1940, the year of the first Beatle births, though contrary to legend John Lennon was not born in the middle of an air raid but rather during a brief lull in the 18-month German assault. An especially savage week in May 1941 dealt a blow from which Liverpool never fully recovered. Rebuilding and rationing were matter-of-fact aspects of the Beatles' childhoods, along with a depressed economy that reinforced the sense of limited horizons for those born on the wrong end of class-bound British society.

John

John Lennon was born on October 9, 1940 at the Liverpool Maternity Hospital and spent his first years at 9 Newcastle Road, thus launching a numerical
fascination reflected in "Revolution 9" and "#9 Dream." (And when he died the night of December 8, 1980 in New York City, it was already the morning of the 9th back in Liverpool.) The Maternity Hospital on Oxford Street was the largest institution of its kind in Britain when it opened in 1926. The hospital closed in the 1990's but the building still stands, marked by a commemorative plaque stating "This Is Not Here," the whimsically surreal title of a 1971 exhibition of John and Yoko Ono's conceptual art. John's middle-name, Winston, was a souvenir of wartime patriotism that he rejected as his own pacifist politics evolved. He changed it to "Ono" after his 1969 marriage to Yoko.

Liverpool Maternity Hospital

John's childhood was marked by series of losses and abandonment that churned up a turbulent inner world that only began to settle toward the end of his tragically abbreviated life. John's father, Alfred Lennon, was away at sea when John was born, and was only in Liverpool for about three months during the first four years of John's life, due to the war and his service as a merchant seaman. John was raised, at first, by his mother Julia in her family home on Newcastle Road in the Penny Lane area. His father's long absences and Julia's interest in other men (she had a baby, fathered by a Welsh soldier, that was given up for adoption in 1945) led to the collapse of the marriage, though not before a horrific drama was played out during one of Alfred's visits home.
In an attempt to rekindle his relationship with his son he took John to Blackpool for a holiday and fueled his imagination with grand plans of emigrating together to New Zealand. Julia tracked them down and demanded that 5-year-old John choose between his parents. After deciding to "stay with Daddy," John watched his mother walk away and, seized with panic, ran crying to her. He would not see his father again for twenty years, until he was a rich and famous Beatle. In a cruel further twist John lost his mother anyway, as she was not up to the task of raising a son. She left him in the care of her elder sister, Mimi, and faded from the foreground of his life for many years.

Sir Paul McCartney was born on June 18, 1942 in Walton Hospital, where his mother Mary had been the head nurse of the maternity ward and ranked the luxury of a private room. The future Knight's first home was nearby at 10
Sunbury Road in the Anfield area, a few blocks from the storied Liverpool Football Club stadium. Mary's job as a nurse and midwife gave her rent-free housing but required frequent moves, and the McCartney family, including Paul's younger brother, Michael, lived in several locations before settling at the opposite, southern end of Liverpool in the Speke industrial estate, where they were living when Paul started school.

Paul's father, Jim, worked in music halls as a boy, selling programs, burning lime for the limelights and memorizing tunes that he would recreate on the piano back home. Between the Wars, while holding down a day-job as a cotton salesman, he led Jim Mac's Jazz Band, a semi-pro swing band that performed jazz and popular numbers at dances and other social events. Paul was raised on music and encouraged to pursue his musical talent, first on trumpet and then (when he realized he couldn't sing and play trumpet at the same time) on guitar and piano, though he was also encouraged to follow his father's example of keeping music a hobby that did not get in the way of real employment. Thanks to Jim, Paul was well-acquainted with the popular songs and styles of earlier eras. His love of older pop music coexisted happily alongside his rock & roll obsession and informed the authentic period feel of songs like "Honey Pie" and "When I'm Sixty-Four" and the unabashed schmaltziness of much of his solo career.
George

George Harrison was born at home on February 25, 1943, in a tiny "two up, two down" row house at 12 Arnold Grove in the Wavertree area. (He later used "Arnold Grove" as a stage name for guest appearances.) While something of a loner by nature, George grew up in a loving family that encouraged his musical ambitions and tolerated his teenage rebellions. He was also the only Beatle to visit America before 1964, thanks to an invitation from his eldest sister, Louise, who had settled with her husband in Benton, Illinois. George visited the small coal mining town in September 1963, thrilled to be in the land of his musical heroes and amazed by the drive-in movies, drive-in restaurants and nonstop pop radio. The Beatles were riding the first wave of Beatlemania in England but were still completely unknown in America, and one can only imagine how far away Liverpool and any dreams of making it in America must have seemed from George's vantage point in downstate Illinois. George sat in with a local band, the Four Vests, at a VFW Hall and made quite an impression with his note-perfect rendition of American rock & roll and country music. (Not to mention his soon-to-be famous haircut!) A mere five months later, George was on The Ed Sullivan Show and the Beatles owned America.

Arnold Grove
As the youngest of four children, George was well-prepared for his role as the youngest of four Beatles, for better and worse. Indeed, his resentment of Paul's condescending "older brother" attitude was a significant factor in the Beatles' eventual estrangement. Perhaps the role of slightly bossy older brother role came naturally to Paul as well, as he was the eldest of two boys and charged with great responsibility after his mother's death. John, typically, brought a more complicated familial roadmap into the band, with no direct siblings but two younger half-sisters who lived with his mother while he was left in the care of his aunt. His deeply imbedded insecurities led him to be the most ferociously devoted member of the band, the closest family he had ever known ("I need the others to see myself," he once remarked), before abandoning his Beatle home to enter adulthood with Yoko. It was left to Ringo to have the most unambiguously appreciative view of his Beatle family: "I was an only child, and suddenly I had three brothers."
Ringo

Ringo was born Richard Starkey on July 7, 1940, the son of Elsie and Richard ("Big Ritchie") Starkey. He was dubbed "Little Ritchie" by friends and family, then became "Ringo Starr" when he joined Rory Storm & the Hurricanes, the Beatles' biggest hometown competitors. Like George, Ringo was born at home, at 9 Madryn Street in The Dingle, a notoriously rough area of Liverpool. (He moved 2 blocks away to Admiral Grove after his parents divorced, and he remained a Dingle lad until he made the huge and sudden leap to Beatle fame and fortune.) Although the Beatles were often called "poor kids from the slums" after they'd succeeded in making working class roots a badge of honor, Ringo was the one truly impoverished Beatle. Ringo's father left the family when Ringo was three, making the lean wartime years even harder on his mother. His childhood was marked by near-fatal bouts of peritonitis and pleurisy and extended stays in the hospital, including a two-year infirmity that effectively put an end to his floundering academic career but launched another when he became the drummer for a makeshift hospital band. Ringo emerged from these traumas unscathed and with an unshakable good humor and grounding that the tumult of Beatlemania and superhero success could not budge. Ringo's attitude was underlined by a sense of gratitude at his mere survival, much less his good fortune at being recruited by the Beatles just two weeks before their first recording session. He was every Beatle's loyal best friend, with a deadpan wit and guileless sincerity and virtually no trace of ego in his personality or in his
generous drumming. Ringo always played whatever was best for the songs and the singers, providing an often underappreciated but always crucial and often wondrous support for the band's breathtaking creative changes.

Admiral Grove
After the chaos of his early years, John's life settled into some level of normalcy as he turned school age. He was raised by his Aunt Mimi and her husband George Smith in "Mendips," a tidy semi-detached home at 251 Menlove Avenue, a tree-lined boulevard in a pleasant middle-class neighborhood that became the source of acute embarrassment for the self-styled working class rebel. John was the only Beatle who grew up in a privately owned home, rather than government-subsidized housing, thanks to the income generated by a nearby dairy farm owned by the Smith family.

Uncle George was a kind and well-loved presence in John's life, and an effective balance to Mimi's harsh discipline and fastidious nature. His sudden death in 1955 left John without a father figure once again, and necessitated a succession of paying lodgers to keep Mimi from losing the house. The emotional blow of the loss was eased a bit by John's rekindled relationship with
his mother, who became a strong presence in his life once again as he entered his teenage years. Playful and fun-loving, Julia encouraged John's flights of fancy and love of music, taught him banjo and ukulele chords on the guitar and danced to the Elvis records he had to hide from Mimi. Julia was living with John "Bobby" Dykins (dubbed "Twitchy" by John) about two miles from Menlove Avenue and had two daughters with him in 1947 and 1949, though they never married as John's father refused to grant her a divorce.

"Mendips"

Julia was more of an eccentric aunt than a mother to John, a kindred free spirit, and John enjoyed the casual atmosphere at Julia's home on Blomfield Road and he was fond of his half-sisters, Julia and Jacqueline. Although the fact that he was still a visitor at his mother's home must have remained a sore point, John treasured his second chance with her. It turned out to be short-lived. In the summer of 1958, in yet another astonishingly cruel turn of events, Julia was run over by a drunk off-duty policeman on Menlove Avenue while walking to a bus stop after a visit with Mimi. John was at Julia's waiting for her to return when the news arrived. He and Twitchy found the worst confirmed after a frantic dash to Sefton Hospital, where John's son Julian—named in a tribute to his mother—would be born five years later.
Julia's death sent John into an extended alcohol-fueled rage and left scars that would be a lifetime in healing. He addressed his lost mother directly in his most intimate song, the White Album's "Julia," and in his wrenchingly revealing first solo album, which begins with "Mother" and ends with "My Mummy's Dead," sung as a bittersweet nursery-rhyme. Lennon seemed locked in a continual struggle with the world and with his own inner demons, his fierce confidence battling withering self-doubt, toughness warding off tenderness, depression undermining unprecedented success… The struggle itself shaped his life and colored his music, from the conflicted ambivalence of "If I Fell" to the harrowing confusion depicted in "Strawberry Fields Forever." Although he kept his pain hidden under a hard shell and a devastating wit, Lennon's life was driven in no small measure by the need to block out and, eventually, to come to grips with and express the traumas of his childhood and adolescence.

Aunt Mimi was the temperamental opposite of her late sister, proud of John's artistic abilities but appalled by his obsessive love for rock & roll and the open rebellion it seemed to inspire. She made him play his guitar in the glassed-in entryway of their home so she could be shielded from the racket, and she waged a valiant but doomed struggle to keep John on track at school and away from
bad influences and scruffy working class kids. After he—and three of those scruffy kids—became fabulously wealthy Beatles, John presented Mimi with a plaque engraved with the words he'd heard countless times: "The guitar's all right, John, but you'll never earn a living by it." Another plaque now adorns the exterior of the house, commemorating it as an English Heritage site. It is one of many blue plaques in England marking the homes of historic figures, but the first honoring a homegrown rock & roller. It was mounted on the home in 2000, the requisite twenty years after the honoree's death.

Mimi sold Mendips in 1965 after John purchased a new home for her in Dorset, on the Southern coast of England. After three decades of ownership by someone who never warmed to the unending stream Beatle fans gawking at his home, Mendips was purchased by Yoko Ono and donated to the National Trust. The house was restored to its 1950's appearance and opened for public tours in 2002.

Paul

The McCartney family lived in the industrial estate of Speke from 1947 until 1955, first at 72 Western Avenue and then at 12 Ardwick Road. The government-subsidized housing at the southern fringe of Liverpool was about eight miles from the city center but close to the huge factories for which the housing was constructed. There were woods and open fields nearby as well, next to what is now the John Lennon International Airport (officially christened as such in 2002). Paul credits his boyhood romps in the area for his lifelong love of nature and his ability to plausibly depict himself as a "poor young country boy" in "Mother Nature's Son."
While living in Speke, Paul went through primary school and began high school at the Liverpool Institute, which required an hour on the city bus each day, time usually spent talking about music with another Speke resident headed to the Institute, George Harrison. As Paul recalled, "We go way back. We both lived in Speke and he used to get on the bus one stop after me. We used to have half an hour on the bus to talk about guitars and music."

After many years on a waiting list, the McCartney family moved up the housing ladder in 1955 and left Speke for the Allerton area, which was much closer to the city and school (though still on the same #86 bus line, so Paul and George could continue their guitar-based friendship). Their new home at 20 Forthlin Road was another modest government-subsidized "council flat," but it was a step up from Speke and Paul's mother was especially happy about the improved environs for her two sons. Sadly, Mary McCartney died of breast cancer in October of the following year, an appalling blow that left father Jim to raise Paul and Michael, with the help of a supportive extended family. Their mother's death came as a terrible shock, as they had been shielded from the full extent of her illness until a heartrending final visit in the hospital at the very end. Among her last coherent words were, "I would so have liked to have seen the boys grow up," confided to her sister-in-law Joan.
One can only imagine how many times John and Paul must have wished their mothers had lived to see their sons become the most famous entertainers on earth. Paul evoked his mother's memory in one of his greatest songs, where Mother Mary appears as a calming presence in the midst of the Beatles' disintegration. In those dark days of 1969, when he and John were drifting apart like feuding siblings, Paul recalled the words his mother used when he and his brother Michael were fighting: "Let it be, boys, let it be…"

Like John, Paul dealt with the loss of his mother by plunging headlong into a musical obsession that mirrored John's the way his left-handed chords literally mirrored John's finger formations in early photos, including a classic shot Paul's brother took at Forthlin Road of the budding writers hunched over a piece of paper, guitars in hand, writing "I Saw Her Standing There." That photo now hangs in 20 Forthlin Road, along with many other photographs taken by Mike McCartney hanging in the spot they were taken. The home was purchased by the National Trust in 1995 and opened for public tours, enhanced by audio commentary from family members and memorabilia donated by Beatles.
biographer Hunter Davies. The former McCartney residence was the first home of such modest means to be purchased by the National Trust, which is more accustomed to preserving fine old manors. The meticulously detailed period recreation provides a glimpse into the lives of many post-War Britons and is quite interesting even beyond its Beatle connection.

20 Forthlin Road and John's home on Menlove are combined into a single tour that departs from Albert Dock, forming a nice John-Paul link in perpetuity and a vivid illustration of the world of difference between Paul's council flat and John's decidedly middle-class home. Class distinctions aside, the two homes share a suburban world of parks and green open spaces that are a nice surprise to anyone expecting only the grim and black & white Liverpool of the old Beatle documentaries and newsreels. It is, in fact, a short and thoroughly pleasant hike from Forthlin to Menlove, tracing Paul's route to Mendips through a golf course and scattered woods. (Somehow golfing doesn't spring immediately to mind when you imagine John and Paul's teenage world, but they did sneak onto the course for a round now and then.) An even shorter walk in the opposite direction takes you to Julia Lennon's home on Blomfield Road, where Paul was a frequent visitor during the year between his meeting with John and Julia's death on Menlove Avenue.

Forthlin Road was often jammed with Beatle fans hoping for a glimpse of Paul as the Beatles rose to local, national and international fame. In July 1964, in great secrecy in the middle of the night, Paul moved his father across the River Mersey to Heswall and a more elegant and private home that Paul still owns and stays in during his visits to Liverpool.

**George**

Meanwhile, back in Speke, George's old home is not likely to be purchased by the National Trust any time soon (nor is Ringo's Dingle abode). Still, it was considered a move upward when the Harrison family moved from George's birthplace on Arnold Grove to a more spacious home at 25 Upton Green in Speke in 1950, after 18 years on a waiting list. George's father, a bus driver, and mother provided a childhood that was happily free of the tragedies that marked John and Paul's early years. The Harrisons were also the most encouraging and tolerant of Beatle parents. They put up with the fledgling band's noisy rehearsals, and when the fan mail started to arrive George's mother read and
responded to every letter until the sheer volume became too overwhelming. John and Paul often wrote songs at Paul's house while his father was working, but most band rehearsals took place in distant Speke at the Harrison home.

George formed his first band with his brother Peter in 1957. The Rebels played a grand total of one show, consisting of the two skiffle songs they knew, played over and over when the main band failed to show up. George recounted his triumphant debut to Paul on the bus to school the next day, and the wheels were set in motion for George's eventual transformation into a Beatle.
In similar fashion to the McCartney's flight from Speke, the Harrisons were given the chance to move to a newer home in a nicer area in October 1962. The pleasant semi-detached duplex at 174 Mackets Lane in Hunts Cross was the Harrison home for an extraordinary period. The family moved in the same month that the Beatles' first single, "Love Me Do," was released, and they endured three years of cresting Beatlemania and intrusive fans before relenting to George's desire to move them to a home of their own away from the madness. He purchased a home for them near Warrington, between Liverpool and Manchester, in 1965.

Ringo

Emspress Pub, at the head of Admiral Grove

Ringo's parents divorced in 1943, and though his father lived just doors away on Madryn Street he was not able to contribute much to Ringo's support. To make ends meet, Elsie Starkey moved with her son to smaller quarters on nearby Admiral Grove and took a job as a barmaid. (Ringo's "local," the Empress Pub, sits at the head of admiral grove and was immortalized on the cover of Ringo's first solo album, Sentimental Journey.) Elsie was remarried in 1953 to Harry Graves, who Ringo adored and called his "stepladder," as he felt "stepfather" sounded too severe. Harry worked as a painter at a United States Air Force base near Liverpool and brought home a steady stream of American comic books and other imported rarities. Ringo's fascination with all things American was shared by many in his generation. England seemed small and moribund compared to the wide open spaces of American popular culture and
its seemingly endless and unrationed supply of consumer goods—Cokes and candy, telephones and televisions—that were simply not a part of daily life in Britain. The vast landscapes of the Hollywood Western movies and the self-reliance of their cowboy heroes epitomized America at its imaginary best. The arrival of rock & roll and the Ultimate Cowboy, Elvis Presley, was as liberating and perfectly-timed in England as it was in its homeland. If anything, British teenagers were even more enthusiastic in their response, with distance lending a sense of wide-eyed wonder to the thrill and the unhinged—and distinctly un-British—physicality of the music and musicians.

Ringo never lost his love for all things American, especially the Wild West imagery and Country & Western music, which colors many of his Beatle vocals: think of "Act Naturally" and "Honey Don't," or his first composition, "Don't Pass Me By." In fact, Ringo's fixation with America could have derailed the Beatles if his emigration inquiry to the Houston Chamber of Commerce had received a more encouraging response. As it turned out, the little two up, two down at 10 Admiral Grove was Ringo's home until he moved to London in 1963. Elsie and Harry remained, incredibly, until 1965, when they finally gave in to Ringo's prodding and the pressures of Beatlemania and consented to move, though unlike the other Beatle parents they insisted upon remaining in Liverpool. The Admiral Grove home was occupied by Ringo's aunt for several years, and for the past three decades has been home to Margaret Grose, legendry in Beatle circles for the warm welcome she extends to fans. She is
likely to invite you in for tea and for stories of Ringo and the days when fans used to jam the tiny street in front of the Admiral Grove row houses.

**Brian Epstein**

Brian Epstein came from a world very different to Ringo's Dingle. The Epstein family home on Queen's Drive was a mansion by Beatle standards, and the source of awe and intimidation when Brian took his young charges to meet and gain the official approval of his mother, Queenie, after some bolstering at a nearby pub. Queenie Epstein disapproved, in any case, of her son's interest in managing the shabby little band, but allowed it on the condition that it not take too much time away from his real job of running the family record shop. Epstein was 27 when he signed the Beatles in 1961, a professional adult but still a troubled boy in his mother's eyes, though even she didn't realize the full extent of his inner torment.

![Epstein home, 197 Queen's Drive](image)

The Epsteins were a wealthy Jewish family—owners of an expanding empire of furniture and music stores—in a city with a strong streak of anti-Semitism. Brian was viewed with some suspicion by the Beatles' wary families, but his gracious manner charmed away most of their misgivings, while his family...
connections to the music business made him an obvious, if unexpected, choice to manage the group.

Brian was also gay, which added a deeper insecurity to his already fragile emotional psyche. Until 1967, it was literally illegal to be in a homosexual relationship in Britain, and Brian had to live with blackmail threats and a constant fear of exposure and the damage it would do to the innocent mop-top image he had fostered for his beloved Beatles. His devotion to the group was not always returned in equal measure. His vulnerability made him an easy target for stage-whisper snickering and callous jokes, often coming from John's direction—a reflection of John's own insecurities and, perhaps, his discomfort at his own close connection with Brian. While there may or may not have been a brief a physical relationship (depending on who you choose to read and believe), John was definitely the Beatle closest to Brian, and each wielded a strong emotional power over the other.

It has often been suggested that Brian's plight provided the inspiration for John's "Do You Want To Know a Secret?" and "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away." The use of the latter song as the backing for the tribute to Brian in the Beatles Anthology video seems a tacit acknowledgement from the Beatles' circle. The connection to "Do You Want To Know a Secret?" seems equally plausible in light of the fact that it was written in Brian's "secret" flat on Falkner Street, an apartment in the university area of Liverpool that he kept for clandestine encounters while he was still living with his parents. When John married Cynthia Powell in August 1963, best man Brian loaned them the apartment for their honeymoon and let the couple live there for the first months of their marriage, during the time when John would have written the song.
In Brian, John had found yet another father figure with whom he would have a confused and ultimately tragic relationship, as Brian's death in 1967 seemed further proof that no male authority figure could ever be a reliably permanent part of John's life. (The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi would prove to be similarly disappointing, as would Allen Klein, the man hired, at John's insistence, to make sense of the Beatle's financial chaos after Brian's death and the ill-conceived creation of Apple Corps.)

Meanwhile, the one truly stable—and formidable—presence in John's life, Aunt Mimi, was furious about John's marriage and the unplanned pregnancy that forced the issue. She refused to condone or even attend the wedding, saying she couldn't bear to watch history repeat itself. John and Cynthia were married in the Mount Pleasant Street Registry Office, the same place where John's parents were married 25 years earlier. Mimi feared a similarly unhappy end for the new union, and she turned out to be right. The marriage ended five years later and John was largely an absentee father, as his own had been, amidst the chaos of the Beatlemania years.

Mimi softened a bit with the baby's impending arrival and invited the couple to move in with her so she could help Cynthia with baby Julian during John's increasingly frequent touring absences. For one last time, John made 251 Menlove Avenue his home, and in the familiar confines of his old bedroom he wrote "Please Please Me," the song that signaled the beginning of Beatlemania and the end of the Beatles' days as a Liverpool band.
Schools

Public education in 1950's England was roughly parallel to the American system of free primary and secondary education, with compulsory attendance from ages 5 through 15. An exam at the end of primary school, the "eleven plus," determined one's direction through the British equivalent of junior high and high school. Success with the exam led to acceptance at a grammar school while a poor showing led to a lower-rung "secondary modern" school and vocational training. Although none of the Beatles were stellar students, John, Paul and George all did well enough in to gain entrance to rather prestigious grammar schools. Ringo, on the other hand, was consigned to Dingle Vale Secondary Modern, though he missed more days than he attended due to his extended illnesses. He left school for good at the age of 15. No one at the school could even remember him when he requested a reference report to help in his job hunting, though the school's memory did sharpen once the Beatles became famous and they could charge fans for the thrill of sitting at "Ringo's old desk."

Primary School

St. Silas Primary School
Ringo had a better experience in his younger years at the St. Silas Primary School, just around the corner from his home on Admiral Grove, though here, too, his education was disrupted by illness when a case of appendicitis developed into peritonitis and sent six-year-old Ringo into a weeks-long coma and a missed year of school. Ringo's health problems did not end after his school years. An attack of tonsillitis and pharyngitis forced Ringo to miss most of a world tour in the summer of 1964. (He was replaced by drummer Jimmy Nicol, whose stock reply to any inquiry—"It's getting better"—inspired a song on *Sgt Pepper.*) The removal of Ringo's problematic tonsils led to a ten-day hospital stay in December 1964, accompanied by frequent press updates for the distraught fans, while stomach troubles forced him to abandon the Beatles' meditation training after only a week in India in 1968. Another bout with peritonitis led to major surgery in 1979, and a long-running battle with alcohol led to six-weeks in a treatment center in 1988.

John began school on an appropriately sour note. He was asked to leave Mosspits Lane Infants School before the end of his first year, launching a highly successful career as a relentless tormentor of teachers and headmasters. He was moved, in May 1946, to Dovedale Infants and Junior School, where his artistic and literary talents were in early evidence alongside his stubborn rebellious streak. He felt a special affinity for the mischievous young hero of the Just William books, and found a special delight in the Lewis Carroll fantasies that would come back to add a whimsical color to his psychedelic period. George Harrison attended Dovedale School as well, though the future Beatles were unaware of each other due to their three-year age difference.
Located near Penny Lane, Dovedale School was convenient for John and not too far from George's home on Arnold Grove, but attending Dovedale required a long journey for George once his family moved to Speke in 1950. Paul, likewise, was forced to make a lengthy commute to Joseph Williams Primary School in Belle Vale after overcrowding forced him out of his neighborhood school, Stockton Wood Road Primary, which had become the largest primary school in all of Britain. The sheer number of baby "bulge" children from the war and postwar years resulted in many inconvenient commutes for children like Paul and George, who remained at their distant primary schools through their Eleven Plus exams.
The Liverpool Institute

While George and John went through primary school oblivious to each other's existence, George and Paul were schoolmates and friends in their high school years. To the delight of their respective families, they each earned entrance to the Liverpool Institute for Boys, the oldest and most prestigious grammar school in Liverpool. Paul began at the "Innie" in 1953, George a year later, and the Speke boys soon discovered that they shared more than the same school uniform and bus route. They formed a fast friendship built around their mutual love of music and obsession with guitars. Otherwise, the two were quite different in their response to school. George bluntly dubbed his Innies days the "worst time of my life." He resented the repressive institutional atmosphere and made a swift transition from sweet little boy to rebellious teenager in full Teddy Boy regalia: D.A. haircut, drainpipe trousers and loud shirts that made a mockery of his school uniform. He approached his schoolwork with utter indifference, and finally dropped out of school at 16 with no credentials—no degree—and began work as an electrician's apprentice. Paul McCartney, on the other hand, was a natural charmer, in school as in the rest of his life. He was an inquisitive kid who could do reasonably well in his studies without too much effort, and he was certainly the best student amongst the Beatles. He passed enough of his "O Level" exams to move on to Sixth Form, a pre-college program, in 1958, but from there his interest in school waned dramatically as John Lennon and rock & roll pulled him further from his studies.
Paul carried on in school to avoid work and please his father, but his academic career came to a merciful end when the Beatles were booked for an extended stay in Hamburg in August 1960. Paul retained an affection for the Innie, however, and he came to its rescue three decades later. The Liverpool Institute was closed and was slated for destruction in 1985 after an illustrious 150-year history. Depressed at the thought of his old school meeting such a fate and, in retrospect, appreciative of the literary and artistic lessons he'd learned there, Paul helped launch a drive to turn the building into a school for the performing arts. He made an enormous monetary donation to launch the idea and used his Beatle clout to give it momentum. The Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts opened to great fanfare in 1996, officially christened by the Queen and the Beatle. LIPA now offers instruction in all facets of the performing arts, including lighting, set design, audio technology, promotion, management and other behind-the-scenes aspects. The music curriculum leans toward pop, rock and techno ensembles, rather than classical music, and boasts the George Martin Studio, a state-of-the-art recording studio that would have been beyond the wildest dreams of the Beatles and their producer as they labored to create *Sgt. Pepper* on 4-track tape recorders. Paul regularly attends the graduation ceremonies and periodically serves as a guest lecturer. The school is one of the happiest of Liverpool Beatle legacies, and a nicely ironic one, as it teaches all the real-world lessons the Beatles had to leave school to learn.

Paul McCartney Auditorium, LIPA

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Quarry Bank School

John entered Quarry Bank Grammar School in the Fall of 1952. The elegant old Quarry Bank building borders on the huge and beautiful expanse of Calderstones Park and the Liverpool Botanical Gardens, which John crisscrossed daily by foot or bicycle. Beyond being a convenient route to school, Calderstones was something of an enchanted forest for John, a wonderland to explore as a child and a great haunt for all kinds of teenage activities with his gang and girlfriends. Like his home on Menlove Avenue, John's school and surroundings may come as surprise to those expecting to find nothing in Liverpool but blighted urban decay. John's inner tumult was more than enough to offset his idyllic youthful surroundings, however, just as it would undermine his enjoyment of fame and success. He had been abandoned by most of the adults in his life, and he made his teachers and any other authority figures in his path the targets of his vengeance. He was a class cut-up and hopelessly inattentive student from the start, in spite of his obvious intelligence. By the time his Uncle George died in 1955, John was in an open, defiant rebellion. His two remaining years at Quarry Bank sealed his reputation with the faculty, who despised him, and his fellow students, who were split between contempt and admiration. He was infamous, a world-class troublemaker, and his dismal report cards and exasperated teachers' reports are now the stuff of Beatle legend.
John's time at Quarry Bank was not without creative achievement, even if his teachers did not recognize it as such. John amused his friends with the "Daily Howl," a homemade newsletter that combined surreal and wickedly funny drawings, weather reports ("Thursday will be sunny, unless it rains") satiric character sketches and fake news reports with an inspired lunacy that now seems a prescient foreshadowing of the leaps of imagination he would take in his songwriting and, as the "literary Beatle," in his published books. He also formed his first band with a group of schoolmates, appropriately dubbed the "Quarrymen," a name that would stick long after John had left the school. It had always been important to John to have a group of friends around him, perhaps because of the lack of cohesion and male figures in his family life. Tough on the outside but sensitive within, he knew he was faking the role of Teddy Boy hoodlum. The Quarrymen, then, formed the perfect outlet for both his self-image as a gang leader and his artistic sensibilities.

John left Quarry Bank without passing any subjects, and would have been heading straight for the docks or the dole if his Headmaster, sympathetic against all odds, hadn't recommended him for art college. John began his studies, to use the term loosely, at the Liverpool College of Art in October 1957, the same month that Paul McCartney played his first show as a Quarryman. It should have been a fatal blow to the fledgling band and partnership, as Paul was still in high school while John was entering college. As fate would have it, though, half of the Liverpool Institute had been appropriated in 1890 to create the Liverpool College of Art, so John and Paul went to school in adjoining buildings and it became even easier to get together. They made a habit of skipping school to write songs, and once George joined the band, would hold practice sessions and give shows in the art school's basement canteen.

**Art College and Stuart Sutcliffe**

Art College offered a loophole for British teenagers, a way to opt out of an otherwise strict career or educational path. It postponed adult responsibilities and provided a window of time for the type of youthful experimenting and freedom that American college students take for granted. Eric Clapton, Pete Townshend, Ray Davies, Keith Richards, Jeff Beck, David Bowie, all of the members of Pink Floyd and many other Brits of the Beatles' generation, including filmmakers, artists, photographers, painters and designers as well as musicians, benefited from the free time and creative atmosphere of art college and brought a youthful arty flair to the swirling world of Swinging London.
The phasing out of the National Service draft in the late-1950’s was crucial as well, as it would have decimated the fledgling bands if it had continued.

Liverpool College of Art

John's attitude toward school did not improve in art college, and it took a dramatic dive after his mother's death in 1958. John's brusque exterior hardened even further, bolstered by a withering sarcasm he used to keep the world and his own insecurities at bay. Still, he did form several important new relationships while at art college. His future wife Cynthia Powell was a fellow student, as were Bill Harry and Stuart Sutcliffe, two kindred spirits who blanched at the formalism of the school training and launched, with John, an alliance dedicated to creating a distinctly Liverpudlian style of writing, art and music that would not look to America, or even London, for its models. It all made for long, absorbing conversations into the night at their local art college hangouts, Ye Cracke and the Philharmonic, two wonderful pubs that still retain their original feel. Their bravado was naïve but based in genuine talent: Bill Harry went on to found Mersey Beat, an important music newspaper that chronicled the Liverpool music scene and helped to fuel the Beatles' ascent, while Stu Sutcliffe had already proven himself the most talented and original artist at the art college. And, of course, John proved to be a musician of some distinction.
Stu was an enormously important influence on John. He opened his eyes to the world of abstract art, foreign film, avant-garde aesthetics and modern poetry, reciting Kerouac and Ginsberg and taking John on enthusiastically guided explorations of the world-class Walker Art Gallery (which has since held several Sutcliffe retrospectives). Most of all, Stu encouraged John's creative and sensitive side and helped him find a way to be both tough and tender, a balance he would rework continually through the rest of his life. In 1959, John moved into Stu's apartment at 3 Gambier Terrace, just a block from the art college. The flat was John's first home away from Mimi and his first chance to really live a Bohemian student life of night-long ravings and candlelit talks with girlfriends or with Stu, the first male with whom John was able to drop his emotional guard. Their flat and starving artists existence was featured in a 1960 tabloid article exposing Britain's "Beatnik Horror" to a horrified respectable public, none more horrified than Mimi.

Gambier Terrace sits in the shadow of the magnificent Anglican Cathedral that dominates the city skyline in tandem with the modernist Catholic Cathedral that sits at the opposite end of, appropriately, Hope Street. It is the largest Anglican
Cathedral in the world and features a renowned boy's choir, for which Paul failed an audition in 1953. In a nicely turned bit of poetic justice, the cathedral was setting for the 1991 premiere of McCartney's *Liverpool Oratorio*, featuring a prominent boys choir. A decade earlier it was the site of a "Festival of Peace," Liverpool's official memorial service for John Lennon. McCartney's "serious" side came to include painting as well as classical music composition, and the Walker Gallery mounted a major exhibition of his works in 2002. Directly across from the Walker Gallery is St. George's Hall, a beautiful 19th century building with a large open plaza where 10,000 people gathered in December 1980 to pay tribute to John Lennon after his assassination. Past and present, and John and Paul, seem eternally linked in Liverpool.
Like Paul, John left school for good when the Beatles embarked on their first engagement in Hamburg in August 1960, with Stu Sutcliffe now in place as the Beatle bass player. Stu was not a musician but he was attracted to the rebel rocker image and purchased an electric bass in January 1960 after a painting of his was accepted by the prestigious John Moores Exhibition and then purchased by Moores himself. He became the Beatle bassist more on the basis of his friendship with John than on any hopes that he might develop much musical skill. Paul and George, feeling younger than ever, could do little but accept the new member and his position as John's best friend and confidant. Stu remained in the band into early 1961 before surrendering the bass guitar spot to Paul, an inevitable move as the band improved and music became a potentially serious career.

Stu returned to painting but was denied readmission to the Liverpool Art College, in part because the Beatles had "liberated" the PA system the school had purchased for the band's shows at the school. He moved permanently to Hamburg to study art and be with his new love, Astrid Kirchherr, but remained in close touch with John via a series of intensely personal letters. Stu's death from a brain hemorrhage in April 1962, at the age of 21, was another dreadful installment in John's ongoing personal tragedies. Although he married Cynthia in 1962, and forged an even deeper musical marriage with Paul McCartney, John continued to dream and write, in songs like "In My Life," of a soulmate to replace Stu and his mother Julia, the two people he would have most wanted to witness the Beatles' absurd level of success. The arrival of Yoko Ono, a partner in both love and art, fulfilled the dream and relegated all others—even the Beatles—to the margins of his attention.

Lennon's adult life was marked by drastic mood swings and emotional upheavals and a long search for an inner peace that fame, adoration, wealth, drugs, politics, psychotherapy and religion had all failed to provide. His marriage to Yoko and his second chance at fatherhood, with Sean Lennon's birth in 1975, finally provided some sense of that peace and inner purpose. His death in 1980 was an ironic and awful final chapter in a life too often marked by tragedy and loss.
Quarrymen

"World War II didn't end until 1954. That was the end of rationing… I think this is why England had such a brilliant explosion of rock & roll. There was this incredible exhilaration, this feeling that life might be worth living. The world went from black & white to color in 1956." - Keith Richards

British teenagers of the 1950's embraced rock & roll with a fervor that equaled and even surpassed that of their American counterparts. They seized on the young, rebellious new music as an antidote to Britain's postwar lethargy and a possible escape route from paths preordained by their social class. The British assumption that one's lot in life was fairly well set at birth was a stark contrast to America's celebration of Abe Lincoln's humble log cabin and the cherished belief that "any child can grow up to be President." Elvis' journey from a shotgun shack to Graceland was an updated version of the boundless possibilities that America seemed to offer. From an ocean away, Elvis and rock & roll seemed utterly fantastic, an unrestrained emotional charge with a swagger and abandon that was uniquely American. Indeed, the very notion of "British rock & roll" seemed as absurd as "white rhythm & blues" had seemed before Elvis conjured it up. A sense of real national pride, then, was layered onto Beatlemania as the homegrown band conquered America, the very home of rock & roll, and unleashed a vibrant new youth culture that made England the center of the sixties universe, just as the postwar baby-boom generation came of age.

Skiffle

British teens lacked the round-the-dial, round-the-clock access to popular music that American fans took for granted. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) would stoop to playing small slices of teenage music amidst their more proper programming, and a shortwave radio might pull in Radio Luxembourg if the atmosphere was right, but that sense of rock & roll as distant forbidden fruit only added to its allure (just as Buddy Holly used to travel out to a rise in the west Texas landscape to try to pull in rhythm & blues from a distant station beyond the Bible Belt). This distance also gave the British fans a wider appreciation of the music and, as it turned out, a talent for creating inspired combinations and musical hybrids. In fact, England produced a hybrid all its own with the "skiffle" craze that
hit simultaneously with rock & roll. Popularized by Lonnie Donegan's 1956 recording of an old Leadbelly song, "Rock Island Line," skiffle was an odd mixture of folk, blues, jug-band music and novelty songs played singalong-style on acoustic guitars, washboards, single-string tea-chest basses and anything else that was handy. Skiffle's great appeal lay in the fact that it was homemade music for amateurs—no musical training or expensive instruments required. Any teenager could find a place to fit in a skiffle group, and in short order there were literally thousands of them across the country, laying the foundations for a grass-roots live music scene and the template for the self-contained guitar-based bands that seemed so new to Americans in 1964. As the skiffle wave receded toward the end of 1957, many of the groups bought electric guitars and played rock & roll, which proved to be equally adaptable to untrained but energetic hands and voices. One of these groups was the Quarrymen, John's gang of high school buddies.

John formed the Quarrymen toward the end of 1956 after finally succeeding in convincing Aunt Mimi to buy him a guitar. His first recruit was his best friend, Pete Shotton, and they soon had a full lineup of Quarry Bank classmates eager to make noise and impress girls. By the Spring of 1957 they were playing anywhere they would be tolerated, mainly small parties at friends' homes. They made a semi-official public debut in June 1957 during a citywide celebration of Liverpool's 750th anniversary, playing for a neighborhood party on Roseberry Street on the back of a coal truck. The same month, the Quarrymen made a sudden and dramatic leap in venues with an audition for impresario Carroll Levis' talent show at the Empire Theatre, Liverpool's premiere venue, though their performance was dismal and they failed to make it past the first round. Who could have imagined that John Lennon would return to the Empire a national hero in not so many years, thanks in large part to a new friend he was about to make.

"That was the day, the day that I met Paul, that it started moving."

On July 6, 1957, at a small festival at St. Peter's church in the village of Woolton, a world-altering chain of events was set in motion. The first meeting of the world's greatest songwriting team is commemorated by a small plaque outside of the church hall. The Beatles' story seems all-the-more miraculous from the vantage point of such an unremarkable little spot, where history turned on a chance meeting of two teenagers.
St. Peter's was John's parish church, reached from his home on Menlove Avenue by a pleasant walk through tiny shopping streets and along a narrow path that drops dramatically on either side into old quarry sites now filled with homes. (The distinctive reddish sandstone from this area was used in the construction of many Liverpool landmarks, including the Anglican Cathedral and Quarry Bank School). It was something of a forced march for John, as Mimi made him attend church and participate in the church choir, youth groups and bell-ringers, which he took about as seriously as he took his schoolwork. He did enjoy the parties at the church hall, however, and it was the one place the fledgling Quarrymen could play with any regularity. As the default "church band," it was not so unusual that they would be part of the youth entertainment at the annual village festival, though their inclusion was seen as something of a small local victory for rock & roll.
The Quarrymen made an abbreviated and somewhat disastrous appearance on the back of a truck as part of the Rose Queen parade through Woolton that inaugurated the festivities. After regrouping on solid and stationary ground they set up on the church green behind the graveyard where John's Uncle George is buried, next to the games booths, maypole and refreshment stands. They played two afternoon sets, alternating with more traditional selections by the Band of the Cheshire Yeomanry and a display by the City of Liverpool Police Dogs.

Paul McCartney showed up at the suggestion of Ivan Vaughan, a mutual friend of John and Paul, to scope out the band and local girls. The Woolton girls may not have been especially memorable, but Paul was intrigued by the skiffle group and the reaction they received from the girls. He was especially struck by the lead singer's stage presence and quick-witted ability to conjure up funny lines in place of lyrics he couldn't recall. Most of all, he was impressed by the sheer fact that John had a band and was onstage, making something of it.

The Quarrymen were also scheduled to appear that evening in the church hall for a nighttime dance. While they carted their equipment down the street, Paul rode his bicycle home to retrieve a guitar he could "just happen to have" when he was introduced to John. (Being left-handed, he couldn't simply borrow one.) The fateful meeting took place on the church hall stage as the Quarrymen set up for the evening show. Paul seized the opportunity to impress John, careful to do so in a casual and offhand way that wouldn’t seem too pushy—his famous charm already well-tuned. It was overkill nonetheless, as John was impressed by the mere fact that Paul could tune a guitar, much less play it so well. He also took note of the fact that Paul could remember the words to songs he kept forgetting, and was grateful when Paul agreed to write them out for him. Paul was obviously auditioning for the Quarrymen, and he walked just the right line between confidence and cockiness, impressing John without putting him off.
Paul didn't have to wait long for a response, though the decision was not as obvious as it might seem. From John's perspective, it was a momentous choice: whether to keep the band unchanged, with him as the clear leader of his group of Quarrel Bank pals, or to add a prodigiously talented newcomer with whom he would need to share the spotlight, dim as it still was at that point. John knew that letting Paul join the group would end his days as the unquestioned leader of the Quarrymen—that Paul had to be accepted as an equal, despite the two-year age difference between them. To the world's great fortune, John's desire to make the band stronger outweighed his ego, and the united group dynamic of the future Beatles was set in motion. Although John would always be the band's center of gravity, Paul was a full partner from the start, with a voice, talent and ambition that matched John's at every turn.

**Paul and George with the Quarrymen**

The first Quarrymen performance with Paul did not take place until October 18, 1957, an indication of how sporadic their bookings remained. He was at a summer camp when the group played a show in August at the Cavern Club, which the Beatles would later make synonymous with Liverpool (though in August 1957 they were told to "cut out the bloody rock," as it was a jazz club), and John's attentions were momentarily diverted by his entrance into art college the same month as Paul's Quarrymen debut. The new partnership was finally unveiled at the New Clubmoor Hall, tucked away inauspiciously on a Norris Green alleyway. Paul almost blew his opening shot with a highlighted guitar solo that went horribly awry, but he redeemed himself at the next show and his place was never again in question. The first photo of John and Paul together was taken at a return engagement in Norris Green a month later. It shows them standing as equals at the front of the band, like little Everly Brothers, wearing string ties and sport jackets to set them apart from the rest of the group.
The Quarrymen were eager to play as often as they could, and while paying jobs in established venues were very rare they did perform for a variety of youth club dances, private parties and family gatherings. The group returned to the St. Peter's church hall on several occasions and also played the church hall (now called Dovedale Towers) of Paul's parish church, St. Barnabas, by the Penny Lane roundabout, where Paul joined the choir after his unsuccessful audition at the Anglican Cathedral. It is important to remember that the Quarrymen were merely a little teenage band, made up of dwindling cast of old Quarry Bank classmates who made way for Paul and, in February 1958, for Paul's Innie friend George Harrison, who auditioned for John on the upper deck of a city bus. His version of "Raunchy" was impressive enough to secure a spot in the band as a lead guitarist, despite John's reservations about having a 15-year-old join the band that he was now leading as an art college student.

The Quarrymen made their first "record" in the summer of 1958. It was merely a one-copy demo disc made in a home studio, featuring John singing lead on Buddy Holly's "That'll Be the Day." The flipside was an original song by Paul and George called "In Spite of All the Danger," the only McCartney & Harrison song in the Beatles catalog. Paul was especially keen to record an original number despite the fact that their live act was made up exclusively of cover versions of hits from America. They were still a cover band when they recorded their first album in 1963, but there, too, half of the songs were originals, and they fought especially hard to see that only originals were issued on their singles. The Beatles dreamed of being the next Elvis, but Lennon & McCartney dreamed of being the next Rodgers & Hammerstein, or Leiber & Stoller, aware that Elvis, like most pop singers, never wrote a song of his own. They were pop songwriters in a rock & roll band, which helps explain their unique sound as their special affection for groundbreaking singers like—Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins and Buddy Holly—who did write their own material.

Buddy Holly was still alive when the Quarrymen recorded "That'll Be the Day," a reminder that the Beatles were very much first-generation fans. In fact, Buddy Holly and his group, the Crickets, were probably the most direct model for the Beatles: a self-contained band, with the classic Beatle line-up of two guitars, bass and drums, that recorded original songs in which the band arrangement played an integral role inseparable from the song itself. Holly's experiments with overdubbing and unconventional instruments anticipated the Beatles' studio work with George Martin, while Holly's blend of pop melodies and innocent love lyrics with a strong rock & roll band backing formed the basic Beatle approach. "She Loves You," for example, echoes Holly's pop-rock blend
with an arching pop melody layered over a huge rock beat, while the vocal twist on "Well I saw her yesterda-ee-aay" sounds like an homage to Holly's trademark vocal hiccups. When it came time, in 1960, to finally ditch the Quarry Bank connection and come up with a new group name, they were inspired to choose a "bug name" in honor of the Crickets, one with a double-meaning, as "cricket"—the bug and the sport—would have in England. Hence, Beatles, with an "a," though John's famous explanation that the name came from a vision of a man on a flaming pie is a good deal more colorful...

The Casbah Club

The group very nearly vanished without a new name or any need for one. The Quarrymen played no booked dates between January and August of 1959 and had, for all intents and purposes, broken up. Paul and John continued to see each other and write songs, and continued to flounder in the Art College and the Liverpool Institute, but George had quit school, gotten a job and had begun playing with another band, the Les Stewart Quartet. The future was saved by a last-minute rift within the Les Stewart Quartet on the day they were supposed to play for the opening night of a new club. George quickly rounded up Paul and John and the Quarrymen came to the rescue and opened the Casbah Club on August 29, 1959, seven years to the day before the Beatles' final concert appearance, at San Francisco's Candlestick Park (the last stop on the 1966 tour, seven years and several lifetimes later).
The Casbah Club was opened by Mona Best in the basement of her rambling family home on a quiet street in the distant suburban village of West Derby. It was a highly unlikely setting for a teen club and coffee shop, but it was crucial for the Quarrymen. Their opening night appearance went over well enough to secure them weekly Saturday night bookings into the Fall of 1959, saving the group from oblivion and giving them a much-needed boost of morale and experience. They would recruit Mona's son, Pete Best, to be the group's drummer a year later, on the eve of their first trip to Hamburg. In the meantime, the tiny low-ceilinged club kept the Quarrymen/Beatles afloat and deserves a spot alongside the Cavern as the Beatle clubs in Liverpool.

As their local fame grew, the crowds spilled over into the backyard and onto the long driveway, with no hope of getting into the club but hoping to hear the band through the doors and windows. The Casbah Club closed in the summer of 1962 and was sealed and preserved like an Egyptian tomb. It is still owned by the Best family and is open for tours by special arrangement, and stars painted by John Lennon and a rainbow painted by Paul still grace the ceiling and wall where they helped decorate the new club, nearly fifty years ago.

The group returned to the Empire Theatre in the Fall of 1959 for another Carroll Levis talent audition, billed for this occasion as Johnny & the Moondogs, perhaps to dim memories of their previous failure as the Quarrymen. This time they placed well enough to move on to the next round in Manchester, but they could not afford to stay overnight and had to catch the last train back to Liverpool and miss the audience applause meter that determined the winners at the end of the show end. They did, however, manage to "relieve" a rival group of one of their guitars to replace John's pawned instrument as they left. As the Beatles, they returned triumphant to the headline at the Empire in 1963, but at the end of the 1950's they were still a struggling band stealing guitars and PA equipment to stay afloat. Ten years later, the Abbey Road album was out and the Beatles had broken up, though not before John got in a last laugh, captured in Let It Be, at the end of the Beatles' last public performance, expressing a mock-earnest hope that they had, at last, "passed the audition." Indeed.
Clubs and Concert Venues: Liverpool and Hamburg

Stages where the Beatles once performed are scattered around Liverpool, from downtown to the furthest outskirts. During their 5-year run as a local band, the Beatles were part of a thriving live music scene in a city that has always played hard—a working class city where nights out are enjoyed with an almost frantic abandon. Clubbing is still serious sport in Liverpool, supporting an extensive network of venues that sustain new bands just as the clubs and dancehalls of the early sixties provided a crucial outlet for the Beatles, Gerry & the Pacemakers, Rory Storm & the Hurricanes, Derry & the Seniors, the Searchers, Swinging Blue Jeans, Roadrunners and scores of other Merseybeat era bands, along with jazz bands, society orchestras, traditional folk musicians and even a large number of Country & Western bands. (Liverpool was known as the "Nashville of the North" in the 1950's, which helps account for the Beatles' uncanny knack for country and rockabilly stylings.) The Beatles balanced their time in Liverpool in the early sixties with extended residencies in Hamburg, Germany, a brakes-off port city that made Liverpool seem quaint. In the two year run-up to their first nationwide hit, the Beatles had an ideal combination of time away to experiment and time at home to regroup and reconnect with their local following. In that short time they rose to become the biggest band in both cities, poised to take on London and the world.

The Quarrymen were largely confined to basements and church halls in the 1950's, but their fortunes changed dramatically with the new decade, after a few false starts. As the 1960's dawned, the Quarrymen had a new member, John's art college friend Stu Sutcliffe, and were searching for a new name, the connection to Quarry Bank School long gone. They settled on "Silver Beetles," en route to "Beatles," and debuted their new post-Quarrymen incarnation at a show at the Lathom Hall on May 14, 1960. Stu was being badly beaten outside the hall at the end of the night, an incident that has been suggested as a possible cause of his eventual demise. In any event, it was not uncommon for members of bands to get into post-show brawls with local gangs or drunken jealous boyfriends—it came with the job and the territory, or turf. Even Paul's charm was not always enough to ward off the trouble John was so good at causing, though Paul's diplomacy did salvage many potentially touchy situations, as it would throughout the Beatles' career.
The group also acquired their first manager in 1960. Allan Williams ran a coffee bar at 23 Slater Street called the Jacaranda, a popular hangout for art college students. He let the Beatles rehearse and play on the tiny stage in the basement club, where murals painted on the walls by Stuart Sutcliffe are, amazingly, still intact: some restored, others left in their original decaying state. Williams began to make bookings for them and arranged for them to audition for a coveted spot as the backing group for Rory Storm, Liverpool's first pop star. They ended up with a consolation prize, hired as the backing band for Johnny Gentle, a considerably lesser light in impresario Larry Parnes roster of Liverpool singers. The Silver Beatles' backed Gentle in their first "professional" tour, a dismal, ill-equipped and under rehearsed 8-day slog through Scotland in May 1960. Back home in Liverpool and thoroughly disheartened, the band hit rock bottom with a summer engagement at a small striptease club run by Williams, where they provided the musical accompaniment for a stripper who brought along sheet music for her chosen numbers, unaware that none of the Beatles could read music. (They never did learn, and never needed to.) It is an amazing spectacle to ponder, knowing what the rest of the 1960's held in store.
When it seemed things couldn't get any worse, Allan Williams came through with a booking at a club in Hamburg that proved to be the real turning point for the band. The Beatles, with Pete Best now on drums, played a four-month residency through the Fall of 1960. They returned to Hamburg several more times and spent a total of ten months there between August 1960 and December 1962. The Beatles went to Hamburg as a rather inept and unpromising amateur group. They returned a powerhouse rock & roll band, after immersing themselves in music and in the raucous red-light nightlife of Hamburg's Reeperbahn. While hardly naïve beforehand, their time in Hamburg was a baptism by fire into the world of sex, drugs ("Prellies," or uppers) and rock & roll. Suddenly plunged into a foreign world, they could re-imagine themselves at will and go wild onstage ("Mak Schau") in a way that would have been impossibly embarrassing in their hometown, in front of their high school friends. Forced to compete with the sex shows next door for an audience, the Beatles' live act became more aggressive and outrageous. John, especially, loved to come unhinged onstage. In one memorable instance he played with a toilet seat around his neck while giving "Sieg Heil" Nazi salutes to the German audience, a mere 15 years after WWII, to everyone's outraged and drunken delight. Imagining these raucous nights it isn't hard to understand why the Beatles, and Lennon especially, were never comfortable in the cuddly moptops.
image that Brian Epstein crafted around them, or why they reacted to fame with such a finely-tuned sense of irony.

In Hamburg, away from home and together night and day, the Beatles forged the airtight us-against-the-world bond that would preserve their sanity through the years to come. They also made a musical quantum leap, thanks to the sudden shift from widely scattered dates and random rehearsals to a grueling performing schedule of seven hours a night, six nights a week, first at the Indra Club, several blocks from the Reeperbahn, and then closer to the action at the Kaiserkeller. They gained invaluable stage experience in Hamburg and improved both individually, as singers and players, and as a band, developing a group telepathy that had them playing as a single organism: a "four-headed monster," as Mick Jagger would later dub them. Their range and repertoire expanded exponentially as well, to fill the time and to please the diverse crowd of drunken sailors, rowdy Germans, curious tourists, off-duty hookers and anyone else who happened to wander in from the night. Among the regulars were a group of German art students, would-be beatniks who became fascinated with the Beatles and the liberation they seemed to embody, just as the Beatles had been fascinated by Elvis, and Elvis by the black rhythm & blues singers. These young Bohemians called themselves "exi's"—existentialists—and they were desperate to create an alternative world of personal freedom and expression that could blot out their Hitler Youth memories. They were a foreshadowing of the wide appeal of the Beatles, from intellectuals to teenyboppers, and among their number were three important figures in the Beatles' lives, familiar to all Beatle fans: Astrid Kirchherr, Klaus Voorman and Jurgen Vollmer. Astrid's doomed romance with Stu Sutcliffe is the stuff of heartrending legend, and the subject of the 1994 movie Backbeat, while her haunting photos of the band are a remarkable documentation of a group that had not yet even made a record. Klaus Voorman remained in the Beatles' orbit as
the designer of the Revolver and Anthology album covers and as the bass player for George and John's early solo recordings. Jurgen Vollmer, another photographer, took the famous "doorway" shot that John used for the cover of his 1975 Rock 'n' Roll album, chosen as the best evocation of his pre-fame rock & roll heart. Vollmer is also credited with introducing the distinctive Beatle hairstyle, borrowed from the euro-art crowd in Paris, that would introduce male hairstyles and hair length as an issue a tremendous social importance in the 1960's.

The Beatles' first rampage through Hamburg was interrupted when 17-year-old George was deported for being underage and Paul and Pete Best were arrested for "attempted arson" in a condom burning prank. (Both were acts of revenge from a club owner they had abandoned, accepting a better offer from one of his rivals.) They returned in March 1961, after George turned eighteen, with Stuart cheering them on from the audience and sitting in only occasionally on bass, having decided to remain in Hamburg with Astrid and return his attention to art, studying with Eduardo Paolozzi at the State School of Art. John was reluctant to see his best friend leave the line-up, but Paul was only too happy, knowing, rightly, that he would be a far better bass player than Stuart and that the band would be tighter and better without him.

The Beatles made their first professional recordings during their Spring 1961 Hamburg residency, backing singer Tony Sheridan on a record meant only for German release. Recorded on the stage of a school auditorium in Harburg, the single from the sessions, "My Bonnie," would come back to haunt them many times in years to come. By this time the Beatles had worked their way up to the Top Ten Club and had established themselves as a major act in Hamburg (and no longer in need of the services of Allan Williams, who made a rather embittered career out of being The Man Who Gave the Beatles Away). In the
Spring of 1962 the group moved to the top of the Hamburg ladder as the house band for the Star Club, the Reeperbahn's newest and biggest venue, though the triumphant return was marred by the appalling news of Stu's death, just two days before their arrival. They returned to the Star Club for a final run of shows at the end of the year, and their last set in Hamburg—on New Years Eve 1962—was recorded and immortalized on an amateur tape recorder. These recordings, too, would come back to haunt and irritate the Beatles, but they are essential listening: a crucial live document of the raw and fierce beauty of the Beatles in their original incarnation as a rock & roll bar band. By the time of that final Hamburg show, "Love Me Do" had been released, "Please Please Me" had been recorded and the Beatles' trajectory was about to pitch dramatically upward. Hamburg already belonged to another era, one that the Beatles would all look back on as their peak as a live band, before their live sets shrank to 25 minutes and the larger venues and screaming fans overwhelmed the music they made on stage.

**Litherland Town Hall...**

**the "Birthplace of Beatlemania"**

**Liverpool**

The Beatles didn't fully appreciate the leaps they'd made in Hamburg until they had a chance to regroup back home in December 1960, first in the friendly confines of the Casbah Club and then, on December 27, 1960, at the Litherland Town Hall. That night, on the northern fringes of Liverpool, the opening wail of "Long Tall Sally" was echoed by an even louder high-pitched shrieking sound… The Beatles would soon grow accustomed to the sound of screaming girls, but this first spontaneous outburst of Beatlemania caught them by surprise. Any lingering doubts about the band now vanished. The Beatles were fully committed to a career in music and promoters were now eager to hire
them. They quickly developed a large following at dances and "jive hives" held in dancehalls and in ballrooms in town halls, private clubs and neighborhood social centers, including the Aintree Institute, near the famous Aintree Racecourse, where they began a run of 31 shows January 1961. They also took up residency at the most famous of all Beatle venues, the Cavern Club, at 10 Mathew Street in downtown Liverpool. On February 21, 1961 they began an incredible run of 274 appearances at the Cavern Club, many of them lunchtime sessions that left them free to play the ballrooms at night.

The Aintree Institute

Aintree Institute stage

The Cavern Club is holy ground for Beatle fans, synonymous with the Beatles for the world and for the lucky hometown fans who saw the pre-fame Beatles in their own element, before the world took them away. In the early sixties, Mathew Street was a dingy side street of warehouses and bemused dockworkers watching the young girls and sharp-dressed boys queuing up to cram into the basement club. This was the Beatles' hometown base through 1961, 1962 and into 1963, though by then they inspired such a frenzy that they risked being literally crushed to death and were forced to abandon the Cavern, an old underground wine cellar with no escape route. The Beatles played their last show at the Cavern on August 3, 1963, but it remained an important venue for local and visiting bands, including the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, the Kinks and many other important British bands. (A later surprise Beatle show for old time's sake was nixed for safety reasons; plans to drop in at the Star Club during a 1966 tour of Germany were similarly scrapped, though John and Paul did sneak down to the Reeperbahn for a look at their old haunts, four years and several lifetimes later. Paul did return to the Cavern for a special televised show in 1999 to reconnect with his roots after losing his wife Linda to breast cancer.)
The Cavern Club today is a major tourist attraction, but it is actually a replica... sort of. The original was demolished in 1973 in one of the great civic planning blunders of all time. The increasing hordes of Beatle tourists convinced the city fathers of their mistake, and a rebuilt Cavern was opened in 1984 in roughly the same spot, built to the roughly the original dimensions with "many of the original bricks." It is hard to forgive such a blunder, but it is still a moving experience to stand in the surprisingly small, brick-arched tunnel and dream of being that close to the Beatles and realize how exciting and loud the sound must have been, with Paul's bass amplifier positioned behind the drums so that the bass and kick drum fired like a cannon into the crowd. The Beatles were a ferocious bar band in Liverpool as in Hamburg, hammering out Chuck Berry songs for their hometown fans and creating their own version of the impossibly distant America they were about to conquer. It must have been amazing.
Brian Epstein and Ringo

Brian Epstein was certainly impressed. His family's record shop was located at street level on Whitechapel, literally around the corner from the Cavern Club. As manager of the shop, he took pride in honoring all customer requests and in keeping up with the local music scene, even though his own tastes ran toward light classics and show tunes. Frequent requests for "My Bonnie," a single on a German label, piqued his curiosity, as did the frequent mention of a group called the Beatles in Bill Harry's Mersey Beat newsletter. He finally put the two together in his mind and went to see for himself on November 9, 1961. He was overwhelmed by what he heard and saw and was determined to manage the group. They agreed, in hopes that Epstein's music business connections offered a way to get beyond the clubs of Liverpool and Hamburg and into the Big Time of London and recording contracts. Indeed, one of his first efforts on their behalf was to land them an audition for Decca Records in London on New Year's Day 1962. They failed. Six months later, however, producer George Martin signed them to his EMI subsidiary label, Parlophone. The rest is history, and a protracted nightmare for Decca…

The Beatles were first captured on film on August 22, 1962 by a Granada Television crew sent from Manchester to document the exploding Liverpool music scene. The priceless Cavern Club footage features John and Paul singing "Some Other Guy" in powerhouse unison, just inches from the front row of fans. It also captures the beginning of a new era, with neat Epstein-mandated outfits replacing the leather jackets and a new member playing drums. Ringo had joined the Beatles four days earlier, and his sudden appearance triggered a near riot at the Cavern by irate Pete Best fans. Although he was arguably the best looking and most popular member of the band (always referred to as
"mean, moody and magnificent"), Pete Best was a merely adequate drummer. He never quite fit into the musical or, more importantly, the personal chemistry of the band, remaining somewhat aloof in a band where the personal and musical bonds were inseparable. George Martin's plans to use a studio drummer on the Beatles' records convinced the band that Pete had to go, despite his two years of indispensable service in the musical trenches.

There was little doubt about who Pete's replacement would be. The Beatles alternated sets at the Kaiserkeller with Rory Storm & the Hurricanes in 1960 and became fast friends and drinking buddies with their friendly rivals' drummer. Ringo's personality and sense of humor was a mirror of their own, and he was a better fit as a drummer as well. Their sound seemed to tighten and toughen whenever Ringo sat in, though the Beatles were in no position, yet, to steal a drummer from another group, and not unhappy enough with Pete to force the issue. It took nearly two years for this final piece of the Beatle puzzle to fall into place. Ringo joined the Beatles in August 1962, just two weeks before the group's first recording sessions at Abbey Road. Photos of the occasion show George with the black eye he received defending Ringo in a scuffle at the Cavern(!) Soon enough all agreed that Ringo was the true Beatle drummer—all except Pete Best, who had to endure unimaginable torment as he watched the band conquer the world while he remained a mere footnote to their story. Pete would not achieve any real financial reward for his Beatle work for three long decades, until the release of the first Beatle Anthology CD generated royalties for his drumming on the band's Decca audition tape and the recordings with Tony Sheridan.

**Mathew Street**

Across Mathew Street from the Cavern Club is Liverpool's first official civic tribute to the Beatles, a rather macabre Mother Mary figure holding three babies (Paul fell off) commemorating the "Four Lads Who Shook the World." Erected in 1974, the statue, along with the "Lennon Lives" cherub that was added after John's death, has provoked decades of incredulous reactions—"This is the city's tribute?"—but the quirky strangeness and small scale of the tribute seems somehow appropriate for Liverpool. (The nondescript little streets, miles from any possible tourist route, that the city chose to name after the Fab Four are similarly underwhelming in an endearing sort of way.
Another odd tribute sits a block over on Stanley Street: a statue of "Eleanor Rigby" sitting on a bench, missing the face that she keeps in a jar by the door…

A few doors down from the Cavern on Mathew Street is The Grapes, a pub where the bands would unwind with something stronger than the coffee served at the Cavern. There is a photo of the Pete Best-era Beatles hanging in the spot where it was taken—a good spot to relax with a Guinness and daydream, and perhaps lament that one can revisit the places but not the times. The lucky ones have their firsthand memories of those days; daydreams will have to do for the rest of us.
Mathew Street is Beatles Central for tourists, especially during the annual festival in August, when the tiny street is jammed and the clubs fill with Beatle bands and fans of all ages. The Beatle Shop sells everything from postcards to rare memorabilia, and Beatle-themed enterprises regularly appear and vanish. The shops, pubs and clubs make the area a great place to shop in the daytime and party at night.

It is a short walk from the Cavern to the Liverpool Town Hall and the balcony where the Lord Mayor presented the Beatles to the throngs gathered to celebrate their homegrown heroes before the Liverpool premiere of *A Hard Day's Night* in July 1964. A few blocks and many light-years from the Cavern, the event fulfilled every possible fantasy of a triumphant hometown return. The Beatles gave only two more performances in Liverpool after that, in November 1964 and December 1965, both at the grand Empire Theatre. They had outgrown Liverpool's clubs and, finally, Liverpool itself. By August 1966, they had outgrown playing live altogether and quit touring to concentrate on their work in the studio. Their days as a live band ended just six years after they packed their amps into a van and headed off for Hamburg and an unimaginable future.
Graves

"Some are dead and some are living..."

That key line from "In My Life" would seem odd and overly dramatic coming from most 25-year-olds. Sadly, John had endured more than enough loss to write it honestly, and it is hard to not think of Stu and Julia when he sings it.

The graves of Paul's mother, Mary, and John's mother, Julia, in Yew Tree and Allerton Cemeteries, are both unmarked and unpublicized (though Yoko did allow Julia's grave to be shown in a video made fairly recently for John's song "Working Class Hero"). They are poignant reminders of the shared loss that linked John and Paul and drove them headlong into music together, creating a new and intensely strong bond in the process.

Stuart Sutcliffe is buried in the cemetery of Huyton Parish Church, where Stu had been a choirboy. Although some early Beatle books stated that he had been buried in Hamburg, where he died in April 1962, he was actually brought back home and buried in a quiet spot that gives no hint of the high drama and unfulfilled promise of his short life.
Stu's final resting place is poignantly peaceful. Brian Epstein's, on the other hand, seems as lonely as much of his life had been. In spite of his incredible success, Brian lived with an inner despair that seemed to vanish only when he was fully immersed in Beatle-related plans and activity. He seemed to lose his way whenever he was apart from the Beatles for too long, and those dry spells grew longer and more frequent after the Beatles quit touring in August 1966. Brian was left with relatively little to do when the group turned its full attention to the recording studio, which was George Martin's domain. In the end, he did not quite last a year after the Beatles' final tour. While the Beatles were creating their masterpiece, *Sgt. Pepper*, Brian's life was unraveling with alarming speed, accelerated by a series of turbulent romantic episodes and an increasing dependence on drugs. His father's death in July 1967 was a final destabilizing blow. Brian died the following month of an accidental overdose, one of many sixties casualties who simply didn't wake up one morning after one too many reckless nights. He died on August 27, 1967, just two days shy of the anniversary of the Beatles' final show.

Brian Epstein's grave, Liverpool Jewish Cemetery

Brian and his father are buried in the Liverpool Jewish Cemetery on Long Lane, next to the massive Everton Cemetery in north Liverpool. They are now joined by Brian's brother, Clive, and his mother, Queenie, who suffered the terrible
fate of outliving both of her children. The cemetery itself is always locked and deserted. No one seems to visit, not even Beatle fans, and he seems almost forgotten: a cautionary tale, in death as in life, about the limits to the happiness that fame and fortune can actually bring.

John's uncle, George Toogood Smith, is buried in the churchyard of St. Peter's Church in Woolton, just yards from the church green where Paul first heard John and the Quarrymen perform in 1957. Another grave in the same cemetery marks the resting place of a certain John Rigby and members of his family, including Eleanor Rigby, who died a year before John was born. Paul has always claimed that it is a complete coincidence. If so, it is a happy one indeed.

St. Peter's Church Cemetery: Uncle George grave …and Eleanor Rigby

The Linda McCartney Play Area, a children's playground in Calderstones Park near Quarry Bank School, is a touching memorial to the memory of Paul's beloved wife, who died in 1998 of breast cancer, the same disease that claimed Paul's mother. Paul attended the 1999 dedication and planted an oak tree nearby in Linda's memory.

Linda McCartney Play Area Julia Lennon's grave
John’s original lyrics for “In My Life,” on display at the British Library.

Donated to the nation by Beatle biographer Hunter Davies.
Penny Lane and Strawberry Field

John and Paul returned to the world of their shared youth in 1967, at the peak of their creative powers and a mere, and amazing, decade after their first meeting. It seems appropriate that the first single of the Beatles' new post-touring era was "Penny Lane" and "Strawberry Fields Forever," a double-sided evocation of the past built around two spots within walking distance of St. Peter's Church. It is a near-mystic experience for any Beatle fan to roam from one side of pop's greatest single to the other, from the Strawberry Field Salvation Army Home on Beaconsfield Road to the shelter in the middle of the roundabout at Penny Lane, through the lush expanse of Calderstones Park, under blue suburban skies.

Penny Lane is a small street that runs a short distance from its beginning near Sefton Park to the famous roundabout, where seven streets and several bus lines converge, including the buses the Beatles would take on their way to the city center from their suburban homes. Penny Lane also lends its name to the surrounding shopping district and residential area, which was home to John Lennon during his early years on Newcastle Road. John referred to Penny Lane specifically in the original version of "In My Life," as one of the special "places I'll remember" from the past. That first draft—on permanent display at the British Library in London, next to the Magna Carta—was set as a lovingly detailed remembrance of a bus ride from his Menlove home into town and the "Dockers Umbrella that they pulled down," a reference to an overhead railway that was demolished in 1957. In the end he dropped the specific Liverpool references and made the song more general, and better, and left it to Paul to recreate Penny Lane in the world's imagination.
Paul's Penny Lane exists in a sunlight reverie suspended between the past and present, and his recollection is jaunty and upbeat. He captures a slice of Liverpool life as if imagining a play or a piece of musical theater, presenting vivid descriptions of the characters and their quirks before throwing them unexpectedly together in the final scene. The imagery is as concrete as John's original vision, but it is presented with the wide-eyed wonder of a child, or a drug, where events as mundane as someone running in from the rain become amazing, "very strange" and inexplicably thrilling. The song's backdrop feels completely real, and it is: the old bus shelter still sits in the middle of the roundabout and the barbershop and bank are still there, too. The firehouse is now gone, but nurses still sell poppies on Remembrance Day to raise money for veteran's organizations, just as Paul's mother used to do. Musically, "Penny Lane" was the culmination of McCartney's quest, begun in 1965 with "Yesterday," to blend the immediacy of modern pop and the artistry of classical music. The song brilliantly lives up to his assertion that "pop music is the classical music of now," complete with a piccolo trumpet solo inspired by a Bach Brandenburg Concerto—quite a distance from skiffle and Little Richard! It is arranged brilliantly, with the classical instruments woven into the texture as seamlessly as the drum and guitar fills in "Please Please Me."

While the sound of "Penny Lane" is as clear as the song's skies, "Strawberry Fields Forever" exists in a murkier, more unsettling sound world colored with exotic and mysterious instruments. A sad, dreamlike opening atmosphere sets the scene then gives way to a bigger and scarier brass-and-strings backdrop. The finished recording was actually a combination of two radically different versions, but the sound is so surreal from the start that the sudden switch, at the beginning of the second chorus, seems like simply another step through the looking glass.
The lyrics are equally surreal and unnerving. John also began a journey in 1965, with "Help," a song he would later refer to as his first truly autobiographical statement. John's songs had grown increasingly introspective since his discovery of Bob Dylan and the realization that songs could be a vehicle for genuine personal expression. This inspired a dramatic turn inward and a lifelong journey of introspection and self-revelation that made his fans feel such a close and personal bond with him. The two songs sum up the complementary but very different personalities of the two writers. Musically and poetically, Paul looks out and back while John evokes an internal landscape riddled with the type of self-doubt that never threatened Paul McCartney's self-assured inner world.

"Strawberry Fields Forever" was written in the Fall of 1966 in Spain, where John was acting in a movie (How I Won the War) and agonizing about his future—and reexamining his past—in the unsettling wake of the Beatles' decision to stop touring. It was the first time in many years that he had been separated from the other Beatles, the closest family he had ever known, and the
song seems to call out from a lonely and anguished state of mind. As he had before, in "In My Life," for example, and in "Help!" ("When I was younger…") and "She Said She Said ("When I was a boy everything was right"), John looked to the past for reassurance, but in "Strawberry Fields Forever" the past offers no clarity and, instead, seems as veiled in self-doubt and confusion as the present. Only an expression his Aunt Mimi used to calm him down ("It's nothing to get hung about, John") offers some vague reassurance amidst the crumbling reality and dread.

Although the title refers to a specific locale, it is hardly the cheery and bustling setting of "Penny Lane." Strawberry Field was a Salvation Army home for destitute children and orphans, a heartbreaking choice of metaphor. John's father and uncle were raised in an orphanage, and his own terrible losses must have given John a special affinity for the children of Strawberry Field.

In John's youth, Strawberry Field was an imposing Gothic structure surrounded by deep woods that bordered on the road behind John's house. The woods were a favorite haunt and hiding place of John's, and its choice as a central image is not necessarily as bleak as it might seem, though the palpable dread of the lyrics makes it clear that the choice of the orphanage as an emblem of his past was not made lightly. Disturbing and painfully honest, "Strawberry Fields Forever" is one of the great statements of a tormented artistic soul.

John paid most of the cost for the construction of a new building for Strawberry Field in 1970, and he and Yoko continued to support the home and its residents until his death, and John's will included arrangements for continuing support. To her credit, Yoko has never disclosed the final resting place of John's ashes, as it was John's wish to avoid the circus atmosphere surrounding Elvis' grave at
Graceland and the unseemly mobs that regularly deface Jim Morrison's tomb in Paris. The Strawberry Field gates have taken on the role of John's unofficial memorial, with a steady stream of fans coming to pay their respects, leave notes and flowers and connect with John's spirit. The Salvation Army closed Strawberry Field in 2005, leaving some doubt about the fate of the iconic red gates. They are said to be under a protection order, but it is a sad irony in any event: Strawberry Fields are not forever after all…

John spent the last decade of his life in America. He was planning a return to England in 1981 to show his son Sean the sites of his youth, a trip that Yoko and Sean ended up making without him. Yoko chose "Strawberry Field" as the name for the memorial to John created in New York's Central Park, across from their Dakota Building home on West 72nd Street, a choice he would no doubt have appreciated.

The Dakota Building, New York City  Strawberry Field, Central Park