

Art & Architecture Liverpool Visit

National Trust Beatles Tour



On the Sunday afternoon of the A & A trip to Liverpool seven of us played truant from the programme. Instead of a visit to an old house we booked ourselves on a minibus tour of the childhood homes of Paul and John. The National Trust was gifted the house John was brought up in from the age of 5 until 1963 by Yoko Ono, who purchased it from the person who owned it after John`s Aunt Mimi moved away. Paul lived in six different houses while he grew up, apparently his mother, a District Midwife, was aspirational and she moved her family to a better house and location whenever she could. She earned £15 per week and Jim her husband earned £10. It was in this house that the group which became the Beatles began its existence. The National Trust bought this house.

John`s Home. John Lennon was born on the 9th October 1942 in Woolton a suburb of Liverpool. He was murdered on the steps of his apartment block in New York on the 8th December 1980. There is Blue Plaque on the wall of the three bed roomed semi-detached house where he spent his youth. When our mini bus pulled up at the outside of the house we had to wait for the large bus load who had been the tour before us to leave. It was pleasant house with a glass porch on the front which, because of the echo, was where John often played his guitar. John had come to this house at 5 years old. His Mother, Julia passed him over to the care of his Aunt Mimi and she and her husband George brought him up. His Father had disappeared when John was a baby and only reappeared in 1963 at the height of Beatlemania.

John did get to know his mother who lived not far away but she died when he was a teenager. Sadly, his Uncle George also died which may be why the house has a very feminine feel. There were many books in the house as well as china ornaments and bric-a-brac on every ledge and surface. The house had another owner when Mimi moved to a bungalow on the South Coast because of the intrusion of fans but people who knew Mimi helped to restore the house to what it was like when John lived there. The house had a garden front and back and the back garden looked on to the large grounds of a House called Strawberry Fields. John used to climb over the wall and enjoyed the large space where he was happily trespassing. I wonder what the owner felt when the song appeared on one of the L.P.s. As we left the house there was another bus load of people waiting to make their visit.

Paul's Home. As we arrived the previous tour were reluctantly leaving the three bedroomed terraced house which became the place the young men who became the Beatles practised and where Paul and John wrote their first songs. The piano in the sitting room is the one

all the McCartney family played. Paul did once have four music lessons but decided not to continue, he did rather well without the lessons I think.

Paul was born on the 18th June 1942 in Walton Liverpool. His Mother, Mary died when he was 14, six months after moving to the house she had so much wanted. She had decorated it in her own taste and style and Mike, Paul's younger brother has restored the house to look as it did when they all lived there. After his wife died Jim McCartney did not want his sons to be weighed down by sadness so he encouraged music and welcomed all their friends as well as his large family into the house. All the family had talent. Jim had played with bands when young and Mike, when not taking the photos which are all over the house, was a good musician. Mike did desert his love of photography for a short while to be part of 'The Scaffold' but the photos of the family and Paul in particular tell the story of a house full music, and although it was a small house this is where the group of young men, three of whom became some of the most famous people in the world gathered to practise. As well as music and photos this house also was full of books. Paul's ambition before he became caught up in the group was to be a teacher of English Literature. The front and back gardens of the house were small but in the back garden there is a replica of the deck chair Paul used to sit in while playing and writing. The drainpipe up the wall at

the back of the house also has its fame. Apparently sometimes Paul would forget his key and returning from a late session at the Cavern he would climb up the drainpipe to enter the house. Before leaving the house we were shown the beautiful carved wooden plaque Paul and Mike have placed in the hallway above the door. It is a dedication to their Mother and Father. Although the house had a spell being owned by another family after Paul relocated his father to a more private area on the outskirts of Liverpool when the Beatles became famous, Mike has made sure the house resembles the home he and Paul remember is true to that memory.

The National Trust did well to acquire these two houses. At the end of our visit the next tour group were waiting their turn to enter. Visitors are from all over the world and the stream is a constant flow which shows no sign of ceasing.

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