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Location: Left Bank, Hereford  
Source: Catcher Media Social CIC  
Interviewee: Lady Jan Falkiner (speaker, female)  
Interviewer: Marsha O'Mahony & Christine Earl  
(speakers, female)  
Camera & Sound: Richard Goldsmith (male)  
Producer: Julia Goldsmith  
Transcriber: Marsha O'Mahony  
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Bit rate: 22.2 mbits/s  
Frame rate: 25 FPS  
Aspect ratio: 16:9  
Width: 1920 pixels  
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File Size: 3.86 GB  
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Type: Audio  
Audio Format: MP3 audio  
Audio Sampling rate: 44.100 kHz  
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Summary Transcript with: Lady Jan Falkiner

Summary: Lady Jan married Kings Thorn baronet Ed Falkiner when she was a teenager. Between them, they set up the hugely popular jazz club at the former Race Course pub at the bottom of Widemarsh Street. It was THE place to be. Derek Evans took her photograph in the mid to late fifties.

0.00

MOM: As you said Jan, the jazz scene was regarded as rather alternative. I wonder if you could put that into some sort of context?

JF: Well, I suppose it's a bit hard to know what was going on in other places. Aside from going up to London, which we did quite often, I suppose it was all a bit inward looking, and I suppose the popularity of the club indicated that there was very little going on anywhere else. Looking back of course, we had a wonderful record shop, Hynes (ph. ??) in Broad Street and that was fantastic because I suppose the first time LPs first came in. I suppose at the time the club was on we must have moved from 78s to there being this wonderful thing being an LP. We all used to go off to Hynes. I remember that one of the first record that Ed and I bought was Johnny Dodds playing Piggly and Wiggly (???) and Forty and tights (???) it's amazing how you remember your first record isn't it. So, Hynes was wonderful. It sold pianos and it branched into records and all sorts of equipment to play them on and so on. But as if for what was going on in other places in terms of music, I would think the answer was not a lot. It's amazing that people who were in that band, some of them are still playing. Lenny Thwaites, so I understand, is still playing the double bass. In fact, I saw him last about five years ago. He lives in Ledbury and still plays as far as I understand. His brother, who was a drummer, he died probably about eight years ago, and Ed died in 1997 and Geoff Nuttall died interestingly after playing a Sunday morning gig at the Hen & Chicken in Abergavenny (laughing).

MOM: You describe Ed as being a bit of an anarchist, you had green hair. All quite daring for its time.

JF: Yes, well I suppose one got a bit of notoriety really

(laughing). I had a rather sedate job in a, working for a land agent, so I suppose I tried to keep fairly quiet the business of the jazz club because again they were people who were land agents and surveyors, people who were well known in the town, and so I used to keep it fairly quiet. But when Ed's parents went away we used to have parties at Kings Thorne House and the band would go up there and play. Yes, we kept that quiet as far as we could. But when they went away in the summer for various country pursuits, then that was the time to use the house, which was great.

MOM: Jazz parties?

JF: Oh, yes, jazz parties.

MOM: Come on, Jan, we need a bit more than that?!

JF: (laughing) well, some of these people are still around, though my parents-in-law are not. I remember once occasion when ... i suppose the problem was when lots of people came and you didn't know them and we had, in the end, be very careful because people would come crashing in and there were so many people you couldn't keep tabs on everything. And this is absolutely true story, I happened to be in the hall of the house at some point and noticed that there was a pile of silver cutlery on the floor, piled up forks and spoons against the sideboard on which the food was laid, and a person had put this stuff there to cart away. Fortunately, we discovered that he was doing that. So, nipped that in the bud!

My father-in-law Sir Terrance Falkiner, and it's an inherited baronetcy from 1777, an Irish baronetcy, but there's no money with it unfortunately (laughing)../

5.00

JF: ../so that's why Ed had to earn a living. In the end, after lots of jobs that never lasted for long, I suppose of his anarchical tendencies possibly, he suffered fools gladly, let's put it that way, shall we say. But in the end, he trained as a probation officer when he was 29 and had a career in that. So that was different. and we followed Geoff Nuttall to London in fact. Geoff moved the family up to Barnet and we followed on about six weeks after he had moved and we upped sticks and I'd got a job and Ed got a job and took it from there. so then blowing took place in London instead of Hereford.

MOM: Where did young people before your club?

JF: Well in the late fifties I guess there would have been dances perhaps at the college, where I had been training for a couple of years. That's one thing. But other than the village halls and the hops that were there, we had the Parkhall,

Wormelow dance hall, which was extremely popular. But a little way out and of course that was a bit of a problem. So you could cadge a lift with somebody. I had a boyfriend at the time a few years before I met Ed who had a motorbike so I got there on a motorbike. Aside from that it was difficult to get there. but there was also a sort of little ball room at Red Hill. But that had, unfortunately, a reputation there. you had to make up our mind if you wanted to be seen there or not! (laughing) So that was always a bit problematic. I think it was partially because people would say, there's a lot of squaddies up there, that would be the phrase, and so you were not supposed to be seen there. in addition, of course in Herefordshire you have you might call county house hotels. they would have dances as well, which one might go to as well as long you were sure you were in that bracket. It didn't suit everyone to go there.

MOM: going back go your club, could you describe it, where it was etc.:

JF: so, in terms of where it was it was near at the end of Widemarsh Street, the Racehorse Pub. And On the side of it was the skittle alley, which was slightly separate, but still connected to the pub. So, you had to clear way the skittle alley stuff that was packed to the side. And then I set up my table and the cash box and people started pouring in. It was very hot, very smoky, very long and narrow obviously as a skittle alley and you got you your drinks from the pub, went next door to the pub and came back in with your beer.

And in terms of what people wore, well I suppose we were still rather affected by rationing and the Second World War and all that stuff. Though it had been years before, it still went on in the fifties; still affected by it all. So I suppose we weren't frightfully smart in general because clothing was not such a thing as it is today I suppose. And dancing, yes, there was lots and lots of dancing, if you could move, just about, on the floor.../

10.00

JF: .../ And we had ????? (indecipherable) because it was a venue then we would get other musicians who would once. And it was great if we had someone come from London. That was very exciting. And that would be really boosted night if you had a good visitor coming.

MOM: was it the hip place to be>

JF: Oh it certainly was the hip place to be. As I indicated, there was not much on. Certainly, not music like that. It was nothing like a folk club. I mean aside from going to a dance hall and having Victor Sylvester type stuff, there was nothing like what we had. Very exciting it was.

I must say because it was so popular, 'cause I was on the door, you were very engaged in that. And I, looking back on it actually, I never had anyone to help me. I think it was half a crown or something to go in (laughing). I can't quite remember now. Half a crown sounds right. So I would be doing it and giving change, would be chatting and so on, but trying to shove their way in because I can tell you it was absolutely sardined tin time because it was very packed. Particular friends of ours were Mick and Rosemary Charity, and we went round as a foursome. And Mick worked for Derek Evans. He started out as an apprentice and that's how we got to know Derek through Mick really. So we had lots of fun together. Used to go up to London together to clubs, seeing the sights and so on, and used to go up for the weekend, in a Morris 8, following an Austin 7, chugging away along the Cotswolds.

MOM: Did Derek take you photograph once?

JF: Yes, he took some photographs of me when I was 17. Although the photos were in black and white, I was in a very tasteful cotton swimsuit. About the only fabric you could have aside from wool. I remember it had a cuffed top and it was green. And he took some photos. There were other pictures aside from the swimsuit. I remember various hats and so on. And I know the singer in the band, Jean, there are various photos she has.

Derek Evans did come to the club occasionally because he and Mick got on very well together.

Jiving was the thing then. Unfortunately, because Ed had had polio, there was never any chance of jiving with him. You wouldn't have been able to do it in the club really because it was always so packed. Shoulder to shoulder really.

MOM: Did you know of any budding romances started at the club?

JF: I think Mick and Rose may have met at the club actually. Right early on. And then subsequently we gelled as a foursome very quickly. We were each other's bridesmaids. We were both married in Herefordshire.

CE: Where was Ed's family's house?

15.00

JF: It's at Kingsthorpe, about five miles outside Hereford.

CE: What was the name of Ed's band?

JF: Well it did have different names. It was called the Ed Falkiner's Easy Riders. Because Geoff Nuttall figured using Ed's name would be more of a draw because Ed was quite well known in

Hereford.

CE: Was there much collaboration between you and the record shop?

JF: There was some, but at the beginning, when LPs first came in, you really had to order what you wanted from a catalogue. You wouldn't have vast displays and just go and pick something. At the beginning you had to order your stuff and eagerly wait for it to arrive. Eventually we followed Geoff to London leaving the club behind because very quickly I suppose we outstripped the musical possibilities in Herefordshire. We went to London but came back regularly. Ed was very keen that the club did keep functioning. WE came back at least once a month and endeavoured to have a gig somewhere, it wasn't always at the club, but at pubs around Herefordshire, try to spread it around.

We were 17 when we set the club up and did that for two years, and was 19 when we went to London.../

20.00

JF: .../then came back two years later, got married, got married here that's all, we didn't come back here to live. I didn't come back to live here until 2001. But it's amazing that when you do talk about the club how many people do remember it and how influential it was.

CE: I've seen lots of jazz photos that Derek took. Some in Bristol I believe. Did you ever go there?

JF: Oh, yes, thank you for mentioning Bristol. The jazz scene in Bristol developed quite quickly. And Cardiff as well. And from London, Ed and I would go there for gigs, because you could get there quite quickly from London. Ed played a lot with Geoff over the years. Ed was still playing right up until his death in 1997.