From Bad Boys to Old Boys?
Sixty Years of the Teddy Boy Movement

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Introduction

The depressed economic and social conditions of late 1940s and early 1950s Britain, out of which the Teddy Boy subculture grew, quickly changed. By the end of the 1950s, the new teenagers *'were spending £830 million [per annum] on clothes, cigarettes, records and cosmetics, in that order'*.[1] For many, motorcycles and scooters were becoming the focus of attention as symbols of status and attractiveness. More diversified forms of pop music had emerged from the strict rock and roll format, with the result that by the early 1960s drape jackets, greased hair and the rebellious, street-corner, bad-boy look had become institutionalised and finally passé.

Yet small pockets of Teddy Boys persisted: the 1970s and early 1980s witnessed a partial revival, adherents of which, though generally more showily and less sharply dressed than their fathers, adopted the same posture, delighted in 1950s rock and roll music and defended certain territories as their own in the tradition of street gangs. Today, British Teddy Boys and Teddy Girls regularly congregate in pubs and clubs, meeting up with others of all ages from all over the world at organised weekend reunions, where the emphasis is on the right 'look', rock and roll, and, not least, the shared satisfaction in the upholding of what has become a tradition. Teddy Boys are not simply weekend re-enactors: they are proudly committed to the perpetuation, not just the momentary revival, of a Golden Age. To the general public they appear extraordinary, spectacular, even quaint, but no longer shocking or menacing.[2] Does this mean that the Teddy Boys have changed? Or society's view of them? Or both?

This study follows the movement from its origins to the present day and attempts to establish what remains, what has been added or re-constructed and what has been lost of this peculiarly British youth movement, the first of its kind to establish teenagers as a consumer group in its own right, and the longest lasting. Its focus is predominantly on the Teddy Boys' perception of their own otherness and their label-cum-title, of a movement with its own lore and customs standing

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[1] Peter LEWIS, *The Fifties*, London, Heinemann, 1978, p. 142.
[2] These comments are loosely based on the few reactions gleaned from watching and listening to shopkeepers, publicans and people in the streets of Filey and Scarborough during the Ted Do reunion of October 2013 (see below, section six).

defiantly—almost monumentally—apart from the fashions and attitudes of the day. The reasons for this focus are firstly the growing corpus of online and printed documents and photographs produced by and for Teddy Boys, which provide an insight into their history and the way in which the mellowing of their original deviance-through-violence is perhaps threatening their identity. Secondly, the views of the general public beyond the condemnations of the judiciary and the much-quoted and largely vacuous articles appearing in the sensational press of the 1950s, which was content to demonise the Teddy Boys rather than attempt to analyse the phenomenon in terms of the sociology of the times, are today practically inaccessible.[3]

Teddy Boys in context

American President Harry Truman's abrupt discontinuation of Lend-Lease aid on 20 August 1945 removed hopes of a comfortable return to peacetime conditions for Britain, who was exhausted and economically on her knees at the end of the Second World War. The following nine years were characterised by a devaluation of the pound Sterling in 1949, chronic shortages of consumer goods and a rationing system in many respects worse than that imposed during the struggle.

Over four million servicemen were demobilised between June 1945 and January 1947.[4] Many had been prisoners overseas since Dunkirk or the fall of Singapore and were often shocked by the dirty and desolate scenes of what life had become during their absence. There had been sixty million changes of address throughout Britain since 1939, the divorce rate had almost quadrupled since 1935 and was to peak at 60,300 in 1947.[5] One of the effects of enemy bombing, in which more than 62,000 civilians had died and a further 86,000 had been seriously wounded, was a frequent lack of understanding of, and sympathy for the returning heroes.[6] Once the euphoria of homecoming was over, feelings of depression and restlessness beset many ex-servicemen, for whom the banality of civilian life and the disappearance of comradeship, rank, identity and excitement could be unbearable. The high-profile case of ex-pilot Neville Heath, hanged in 1946 for the brutal murder of two women was a true-life inspiration for a post-war preoccupation in British cinema and novels with the lurid misdeeds of brutalised men unable or unwilling to adapt to peacetime living.[7] It is interesting to note, however, that criminologist John Spencer, in his 1954 analysis of the startling rise in the incidence

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[3] The four people aged between 67 and 88 whom the author invited to talk about 1950s Teddy Boys had surprisingly little to say, beyond having been struck by the large concentrations of Teddy Boys in the city centres, particularly around cinemas, by their smartness and by their having a reputation for making a nuisance of themselves.

[4] David KYNASTON, *Austerity Britain 1945-51*, London: Bloomsbury, 2007, p. 97.

[5] Alan ALLPORT, *Demobbed: Coming Home After the Second World War*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009, p. 87.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

[7] See W. E. Johns' popular *Gimlet* novels, reminiscent of the post-First World War adventures of Bulldog Drummond, and the 1947 film 'They Made Me a Fugitive', dir. Alberto Cavalcanti. Interestingly, in the context of the Teddy Boy movement, the ex-RAF protagonist, Clem, is framed by his boss, Narcissus, for refusing to take part in drug-trafficking (see conclusion below).

of indictable offences involving violence (57,700 in 1938, compared to 130,000 in 1948) and of sexual assaults (5,018 in 1938, compared to 13,185 in 1950), '*found no compelling evidence at all of a post-war "veteran problem", other than that conjured up by the press*'. He also noted that the vast majority of violent criminals were not bloodthirsty front-line fighters, but rather men who had done dull and menial service behind the lines.[8] There were, of course, thousands of firearms and millions of rounds of ammunition in circulation, brought back as souvenirs of the war. One such firearm, in fact a service revolver of 1914-1918 vintage, was to figure prominently in the Bentley/Craig shoot-out of 2 November 1952 described in section three below. The upsurge in violent crime can be seen as a concomitant of the general social upheaval and unhappiness of the war and, in the years immediately following, a fascination with violence and weaponry among those who had been either too young or considered unsuitable to have taken part in the fighting. Added to this, many post-war adolescents, who had had little parental guidance during the war years were now confronted with fathers they hardly knew and whose disciplinary measures were possibly more suited to a military context than a domestic one.

Other factors which can be brought to the fore in an attempt to account for the Teddy Boy phenomenon fall into three approximate and inevitably overlapping categories: geopolitical, socio-economic and psychological. Geopolitical factors include the inescapable fact that Britain, no longer a world power and retreating from her empire, was committed, for better or for worse, to travelling the American road, one which, whatever its virtues, was ill-suited to the proportions, traditions and aspirations of the British Isles. In their 1954 book *Journey down a Rainbow*, J. B. Priestley and Jacquetta Hawkes coined the word *Admass* to describe what they saw as the soulless, empty uniformity of life in the US, whose advanced commodity culture appeared brash and vulgar: not something they wished to see copied in Britain, who had had more than a taste of the American way of life from the three million American servicemen stationed in Britain at some time during the war. The seal was put on alignment with America following the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia of February 1948, which cast world power into two antagonistic military camps: the Eastern Bloc and NATO, a situation exacerbated the same year by the blockade of Berlin and the resulting eleven-month airlift. The possibility of nuclear war fought out in Europe between two former allies loomed large over Britain no less than elsewhere. Meanwhile, compulsory National Service for all able-bodied British males over the age of eighteen ensured an ostensibly orderly retreat from empire, but achieved little else for Britain or for most of the 2.3 million men called up between 1945 and 1960, of whom 395 died alongside regular soldiers opposing Communist forces in Malaya between 1948 and 1960, and Korea between 1950 and 1953.[9]

Britain's unwilling dependency on the US made itself felt in the socio-economic dimension, where the crippling American debt led to ever more stringent rationing, sacrifice, daily queuing and, perhaps most humiliating of all, '*enforced*

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[8] Alan ALLPORT, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
[9] Trevor ROYLE, *National Service: The Best Years of their Lives*, London: André Deutsch, 2002, p. 164.

exposure to frequent displays of petty authority'.[10] The acute housing shortage left many working class people living in slums, while in 1946 some 40,000 people squatted a thousand or so disused military camps. Luckier young families were housed in uniform prefabricated bungalows, of which 157,000 were built between 1945 and 1949,[11] while others were gradually moved from inner city areas to vast new out-of-town housing estates, remarkable for their order and hygiene, but which came to be notorious for their lack of provision for a community spirit and engendering feelings of alienation among residents.[12]

The Archbishop's Committee on the Use of Modern Agencies for Evangelistic Propaganda, quoted by David Kynaston, reported in 1946 that '*90 per cent of our people seldom or never attend church. The church each week has five million attendances; the cinemas have forty million*'.[13] Organised religion had not benefited from the war and was losing its hold on the population.

Education too, despite the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen in April 1947, satisfactory in the grammar schools and public schools, was inadequate in the new secondary modern schools, attended by the majority of children: '*the fact was that almost three quarters of teenagers entering the world of work [by the 1950s] were doing so in jobs without any craft or career training available*' while '*the technical schools, supposed to be one leg of a three-legged stool that also comprised grammars and secondary moderns, never began to get a proper head of steam behind them*'.[14]

One result of this was the emergence of a large, young, unskilled workforce trapped in monotonous and uninteresting jobs. Wages in the particularly gruelling and repetitive motor industry in Coventry were at least a third above the national average, '*and among the city's 60,000 or so workers in the motor industry were many newcomers, of many nationalities, living in hostels or an improvised shanty town of derelict railway coaches*'.[15] To this might be added the unfortunate fact that full employment did not encourage young people to invest in their future by seeking (relatively low-paid) apprenticeship to a recognised trade.

This was the age of mass entertainment, represented chiefly by football, drinking and cinema, and of mass markets for a restricted range of cheap brands of consumer goods, such as tobacco. By 1949, there were an estimated twenty-one million cigarette smokers in Britain, corresponding to 81% of the male and 39% of the female population.[16] Brands such as Wills' *Woodbines* and *Capstan*, Player's *Medium Navy Cut* and *Weights* and Gallaher's *Park Drive* together accounted for the

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[10] David KYNASTON, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 102 & p. 122.
[12] Michael YOUNG & Peter WILMOTT, *Family and Kinship in East London*, London: Penguin, 1962 (1957), pp. 131-146.
[13] David KYNASTON, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 461-462.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 492.
[16] Matthew HILTON, *Smoking in British Popular Culture, 1800-2000*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 124.

vast majority of cigarettes marketed, which were smoked less for pleasure than as a habitual (supposed) '*antidote to boredom, depression, anxiety and loneliness*'.[17]

The 1940s also witnessed the rise of the wide circulation popular press: the *Daily Mirror* rose from a circulation of two million in 1943 to three million in 1946 '*catering for short tea breaks and even shorter attention spans*'.[18]

Holidays were also a terrain for standardisation in the form of Pontin's, Warner's and particularly Butlin's holiday camps, launched in 1936 and greatly expanded after the war. The overall atmosphere of these mass recreation institutions is well illustrated in the 1947 film *Holiday Camp*[19] and later in the 1958 promotional film for Prestatyn Holiday Camp[20] which celebrates a bright new, post-austerity era of mass recreation.

Rationing had been in force since January 1940. Importantly, for the first dress-conscious Teddy Boys, clothes had come off the ration in March 1949. However, it was not until September 1953 that food rationing '*was informally if not yet officially ending*'[21] and came to an official end in July 1954. The familiar figure of the spiv,[22] the opportunist small-time black-marketeer, who had thrived on shortages, described by Kynaston as '*a well-known type: coat with wide lapels and padded out shoulders, tight collar on shirt, big knot in tie, hair parted in middle with wave on either side, pencil moustache, he was grudgingly admired, essentially disliked*'[23], would gradually disappear from view, but would not be forgotten.

Accompanying this long and dreary period of post-war austerity was an atmosphere, among the middle classes, of prim conservatism, as evidenced in the 1948 'Green Book' (the *BBC Variety Programmes Policy Guide for Writers and Producers*) which insists that '*programmes must at all costs be kept free of crudities, coarseness and innuendo*', with an absolute ban on '*jokes about lavatories; effeminacy in men; immorality of any kind, [or] suggestive reference to honeymoon couples; chambermaids; fig leaves; prostitution; ladies' underwear (e.g. winter draws on); animal habits (e.g. rabbits); lodgers; commercial travellers*'.[24] In the light of subsequent developments in what comes under the heading of 'entertainment', such a policy appears extremely repressive, and sadly out of tune with the experiences of most ordinary people, better reflected in the very popular music-hall-style songs of George Formby, such as 'Mr Wu's a Window Cleaner Now' or 'Fanlight Fanny'.[25]

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[17] Matthew HILTON, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

[18] David KYNASTON, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

[19] Holiday Camp, 1947, Gainsborough Pictures, dir. Ken Annakin.

[20] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zof_Nk0INEc.

[21] David KYNASTON, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

[22] The origin of the name is obscure, despite having been hypothesised as a back-slang rendering of *VIPs*. Its artificial origin is evidenced in the extreme rarity of English words ending in the letter <-v>, of which the recent coinage *chav* is another striking example.

[23] David KYNASTON, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

[24] Quoted in KYNASTON, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

[25] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w3X95uWv8A;   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02ViMh47F1E.

In the psychological dimension, the rapid spread of the Teddy Boy subculture suggests that there was prevalent 'mindset' among those who would become the teenagers of the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the light of the foregoing, we shall now attempt to characterise the general mood that produced the first Teddy Boys. The average sixteen-year-old urban working class boy in 1950 was likely to have experienced the deadening hardship of the 1930s, amply described in George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), parents' unemployment, very possibly violence and certainly corporal punishment at school, poor diet, poor clothes, fear of invasion, six years of haphazard parental control, air-raids and the squalid promiscuity of the shelters,[26] uniformity and displays of militarism, restrictions on personal freedom and mobility, newsreels showing scenes of suffering and destruction, possible evacuation and interrupted schooling and poor secondary education. More recently, he had seen and heard healthier, better-paid, better-dressed and apparently easygoing American servicemen in the streets, along with flashily-dressed spivs and racketeers, pimps and prostitutes and probably knew of several wartime extra-marital affairs among family and neighbours. Now, five years after the end of the war, he was still surrounded by bombsites and derelict buildings and was likely to live in run-down or temporary housing. Uninfluenced by organised religion, he had been exposed to lurid imported horror comics while his twice-a-week visits to the cinema had shown him opulence and wealth, adventure, the jitterbug and other exotic dances and, perhaps most significantly of all, the brash virility of gangster and western films. He had before him the grim prospect of two years' National Service, as reported by elder brothers and friends, beyond which lay years of dirty, noisy, monotonous industrial work. In the spring of 1949, an inquiry by the Social Medical Research Unit into the leisure activities of eighty-five 18-year-old boys revealed that most of the labourers and machine minders concentrated their future hopes on '*unrealistic dreams of becoming champion cyclists, football stars or dance-band leaders*' while '*the majority did not acknowledge the older sanctions of formal engagement and marriage*'. The overall picture was one of '*physically fit young men [in a state of] passive acceptance of the world around them*'.[27]

Here, then, was a large concentration of young wage-earners, without real responsibilities, living aimless and probably violent lives in a drab, dislocated and ill-functioning country which had lost its swagger in a world whose fate could now be decided by politicians discharging nuclear weapons. Looking around them, they were undoubtedly unconvinced by their parents' and grandparents' insisting on the virtues of the great British way of life they had fought to preserve, and somehow just didn't believe they were all that lucky to be alive in the modern world. Secondary education had not instilled in them any particular respect for the outmoded speech and values of middle-class conservatism and prudery. In short, there was a need for youthful excitement and ostentation and a sense of pride and identity that the two previous generations had in part derived from Empire and the world wars. The recent abolition of birching and flogging, the appearance in 1952 of the first coffee bars, the availability of better quality clothes, records, cosmetics and, for the first time, the money to be able to aspire to them, created a psycho-social climate that

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[26] See Angus CALDER, *The Myth of the Blitz*, London: Pimlico, 1992.

[27] David KYNASTON, *op. cit.*, pp. 368-369.

would spawn a new animal: the teenager. It seems very unlikely that those working class teenagers who became Teddy Boys and Teddy Girls were consciously making what it has become fashionable to refer to as 'a social statement'. They were not organised revolutionaries and probably had little awareness of their place in time and space. However, their attitudes and tastes were, as we have attempted to show, a wholly understandable reaction to the drabness and rapidly diminishing prestige of a country dominated by harping, retrograde middle class adults, whose branding of them as dangerous, subversive and criminal said as much—if not more—about the state of the country and their own feelings of envy as it did about the Teddy Boys themselves.

'We wanted to be as smart as possible. We lived for a good time.'[28]

There was nothing new about the armed, usually territorially-based and peer-influenced gangs in evidence at the end of the 1940s. Germanic war bands of the 1st century BC are described by Julius Caesar, who comments on a refusal to answer the call of the leader as being tantamount to desertion or treason and a sign of untrustworthiness.[29] Tacitus, writing in the following century, describes the more formally organised Germanic *comitatus* as consisting of a chief surrounded by armed youths who vie amongst themselves for his favour: '*It is [the chiefs'] dignity, their strength, to be always surrounded with a large body of select youth, an ornament in peace, a bulwark in war*'.[30] There are obvious echoes of the phenomenon, which is very unlikely to have originated as locally and as recently as the time of Julius Caesar, in, for example, the Old English heroic poem *Beowulf*, the Arthurian legends and in Tolstoy's *The Cossacks* (1863). In the mediaeval period, the Vikings and the crusaders fall into the loose category of young armed fighters, united as much by their thirst for adventure as by their loyalty to a chief or their belief in a principle.

The first Teddy Boys had been exposed to notions of fierce group pride and loyalty in the stories brought back from two world wars, in which regiments,[31] squadrons, ship's companies and battalions were units in permanent rivalry with one another over questions of smartness, courage, dash and kills. Cricket, rugby and above all football teams[32] provided another focus for local loyalty and identity, as

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[28] Frederick Peter Carroll, aged 74, interviewed in Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *Teddy Boys: A Concise History*, Preston: Milo Books, 2012, p. 48.

[29] '[Q]ui ex his secuti non sunt, in desertorum ac proditorum numero ducuntur, omniumque his rerum postea fides derogatur'. (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* VI 23.)

[30] '[H]aec dignitas, hae vires: magno semper electorum iuvenum globo circumdari in pace decus, in bello praesidium'. (Tacitus, *Germania* XIII.) See also D. H. Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 102-120.

[31] Recruitment into county regiments had been de-territorialised in 1916, not for reasons of rivalry, but in an attempt to mask casualty figures.

[32] The idolised footballer, ex-German paratrooper Bert Trautmann, who was the Manchester City goal keeper 1949-1964, presented supporters with something of a problem in terms of identification. However, his skill, sportsmanship and personality transcended all forms of initial prejudice.

did districts, individual streets, pubs and clubs. Humphries lists more than a dozen 19th- and early 20th-century street gangs, including *The Scuttlers* (Manchester, late 1870s onwards); *The Ikey Boys* (Manchester, early 1890s onwards); *Napoo*[33] (Ancoats, Manchester, 1916); *The Beehive* (Gorbals, Glasgow, 1920s) and *The Nudies* (all female, Gorbals, Glasgow, 1930s).[34] Given this very long—and no doubt world-wide—tradition, the dreary and violent post-war urban context and the absence of a national emergency to which energy and courage could be devoted, the formation of Teddy Boys into gangs (or was it more a case of existing gangs' adoption of the Teddy Boy look?) is easy to understand. Donald Thomas identifies the following 1950s London street gangs: *The Diamond Gang* (Islington); *The Eagle Gang* (Stepney); *The Brick Gang* (Bermondsey); *The Watney Streeters* (Stepney); *The Dagenham Boys*; *The Canning Town Boys*; *The Finchley Mob* and *The Mussies* (Muswell Hill).[35] There were doubtless countless others, named or not, throughout the country. Nor was the movement confined to Britain: Russia had its contemporary *Stilyagi* ('style-hunters'). German *Halbstarken* ('half-strong ones') came into evidence in 1955-1956, French *Blousons noirs* ('black jackets') first appeared in 1959 and Scandinavian *Raggare* ('shaggies') were a late 1950s calque on American hot-rod subculture. However, Britain's working class youths had taken the lead, presumably thanks to the peculiar circumstances Britain found itself in, as outlined above.

What prompted the particular costume and bearing of the Teds? Here, great care must be taken in distinguishing between the dress of the very first Teddy Boys and subsequent developments during the 1950s and particularly during the revival of the 1970s. Original Teddy Boys, now in their 1970s, interviewed by Ray Ferris and Julian Lord,[36] have very precise memories of their choice of apparel in the early 1950s and are at pains to stress the importance they attached to appearing smart. The 'New Edwardian' look was, at the outset, a late 1940s Savile Row style for the well-to-do, noticed and copied by working class youths all over the country who, by working long hours and saving, could afford to have Edwardian style fingertip-length drape jackets and high-waisted peg trousers with 15-inch bottoms (tight for the times) made up by local tailors using good quality material. Velvet collars or pockets were not part of the earliest four-button drape jackets, which were often dog-tooth grey or windowpane-checked or raindrop-flecked. They had to have a one-piece back and, in contrast to the relatively sober outer colour, a 'flash' silk lining, crimson being a favourite, with a breast-pocket handkerchief to match. Great importance was attached to a showy brocade waistcoat, often worn with a fob watch and chain, over a white shirt with a cutaway collar and a Slim Jim tie tied in a Windsor knot. White, yellow or pale blue socks were kept visible thanks to the trousers being made slightly short, while shoes were either highly polished lace-up or buckle brothel creepers with 1-inch crêpe soles, heavy brogues, chukka (fawn suede desert) boots or mud-guard slip-ons. In the early years, sideburns were no

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[33] *Napoo* is First World War military slang, being an approximation of the '*Il n'y a plus*' all too often heard in French and Belgian *estaminets*.

[34] Steve HUMPHRIES, *A Secret World of Sex*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1988, p. 142.

[35] Donald THOMAS, *Villains' Paradise: Britain's Underworld from the Spivs to the Krays*, London: John Murray, 2005, pp. 169-226.

[36] Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op cit*, pp. 41-53.

more than ear-bottom length, though hair was medium to long (by the standards of the times), Brylcreemed[37] and combed into a quiff and a D.A. ('duck's arse') at the back. The whole outfit could cost around £40, which, for a young lad earning less than £7 a week, represented a considerable outlay, and was a spectacular change from the late 40s, when '*the working class wore any sort of trousers and a muffler, whatever you could get, really*'.[38] Girls seeking to identify with the Teds also wore black or biscuit-coloured drape jackets and narrow, calf-length skirts (American circle skirts with stiff petticoats came later). The fact that there was never a really clearly defined female equivalent to the Teddy Boy is probably due to the fact that throughout the 1950s, a female industrial worker could still only earn on average 59% of a male worker's wage:[39] the expensive clothes so important to the boys were largely out of her reach.

The emphasis was clearly on a provocative display of quality and splendour, echoing the late Victorian and Edwardian figure of the *mashers*, flirtatious, dandified lady-killers, renowned, *inter alia*, for their showy waistcoats[40] and signalling an impatient rejection of the upper classes' monopoly of taste and the older generation's lack of awareness of the growing financial and social importance of people aged between 14 and 21. What was perhaps felt, rather than consciously thought, by older middle- and upper-class people as being deviant and subversive about the Teddy Boys was their flagrant arrogation of a style well above their social status, a move which threatened to disrupt a class system which had not changed significantly since the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. Other youths outside the movement might have been seen the Teddy Boys as 'flash', but any accusations of foppishness or effeminacy were forestalled by their frequent recourse to violence—something they had in common with all street subcultures. It was this blend of elegance and brutality—a sort of beauty-and-the-beast rolled into one—that suited them and gave them their special aura and guaranteed their place in social history. It is remarkable that the whole thing appears to have started up simultaneously in many cities, neither the brainchild of any one astute designer, nor the product of an organised fashion industry.

'*There was fighting, lots of it*'[41]

Juvenile delinquency was not a new phenomenon,[42] but it had come to the fore during the war years, opportunities for armed robbery, vandalism, looting and hold-

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[37] Brylcreem was a pomade brought out by County Chemicals of Birmingham, UK in 1928. Its popularity among RAF personnel and in particular fighter and bomber pilots, led them to be referred to as *Brylcreem Boys*. The later ample use of it by the Teddy Boys was perhaps an unconscious attempt to recapture something of the glamour of war heroes.

[38] Frederick Peter Carroll, aged 74, interviewed by Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

[39] David KYNASTON, *op. cit.*, p. 573.

[40] Eric PARTRIDGE, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970 (1937), p. 511.

[41] Joe Goulding, aged 77, interviewed in Ferris and Lord, *op. cit.*, p. 43: 'There was fighting, lots of it. I used to carry a "clever stick"; it was a cosh, either slung around my left shoulder on a loop of string or in an inside pocket. You didn't go into town less than three-handed.'

ups presenting themselves to unsupervised and de-schooled youths and children.[43] East-End London saw repeated post-war attacks on younger boys attending clubs by gangs of up to seventy sixteen-to-seventeen-year-old boys and girls armed with hammers, razors, knives, knuckledusters and bicycle chains. Violent crime, often unmotivated by robbery and involving young offenders, some of whom were under sixteen, was increasing at the rate of nearly 30% per year, while punishment was often relatively light, despite the controversial severity of the Lord Chief Justice, Baron Raynor Goddard, who set out to curb the juvenile crime wave by handing out longer sentences in compensation for the abolition of corporal punishment in the unpopular Criminal Justice Act of 1948.[44]

The use of firearms between rival teenage gangs was first reported in April 1950, following a street brawl in Kilburn in which an eighteen-year-old was charged with attempted murder. Yet the motivations for the new brand of street warfare seem to have been the bid for superiority over other gangs, possession of territory and the fun of vandalism and violence—all reminiscent of the legitimised perks of wartime—than particular financial gain. Rightly or wrongly, murder came to be associated in the public mind with Teddy Boys as a result of the shooting of a police constable and the wounding of another, apparently by the sixteen-year-old Christopher Craig, embittered younger brother of a man nicknamed 'The Velvet Kid' recently sentenced to twelve years in prison for armed robbery. Dressed as Teddy Boys, Craig and his accomplice, the nineteen-year-old mentally retarded Derek Bentley, had set out one Sunday evening, without any burglar's equipment or a specific target, to commit a break-in in Croydon. Their fatal encounter with the police was reported in the *Daily Mail* of 3 November 1952 under the sensational and wildly inaccurate headline 'Chicago Gun Battle in London—Gangsters with Machine Gun on Roof Kill Detective, Wound Another'. Amid national protest, on account of his sub-normality and his having already been apprehended when the shooting occurred, Bentley was hanged on 28 January 1953. Craig, too young for the death sentence and who had subsequently thrown himself off the roof in a spectacular suicide attempt, served a ten-year prison sentence. The case was fraught with ambiguities and controversy and bore the marks of a demonstration of unbending severity in the face of growing juvenile delinquency. Among the results of this were a public discrediting of the Lord Chief Justice, further call for the abolition of the death sentence, the elevation, in some quarters, of Bentley to the

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[42] An illustration of street gang warfare of the type recalled by Ferris and Lord's interviewees is given by Clarence Rook in his entertaining—if doubtfully authentic—account of the activities of a young street-wise, small-time East-End criminal. Alf, the protagonist, recounts the following, just before showing the narrator the 'handy-looking chopper' he has brought along, in readiness for 'a bit of a street fight': 'The Drury Lane Boys were coming across the bridge, and had engaged to meet the boys from Lambeth Walk at a coffee stall on the other side. Then one of the Lambeth Boys would make to one of the Drury Lane boys a remark which cannot be printed, but never fails to send the monkey of a Drury Lane boy a considerable way up the pole. Whereafter the Drury Lane boys would fall upon the Lambeth boys and the Lambeth boys would give them what for'. (Clarence ROOK, *The Hooligan Nights*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979 [1899], p. 12.)
[43] Donald THOMAS, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-170.
[44] Flogging was, however, still permitted as a punishment for mutiny and serious assault by convicts (*ibid.*, p. 175).

status of folk-hero and, most damaging to the reputation of Teddy Boys, a reinforcement of an abusive popular conflation, encouraged, and arguably created by the press, of Teds, spivs, thugs, low intelligence juvenile delinquents and murderers.[45] It seemed as if post-war Britain had found the scapegoat for its ills. The question now was one of whether or not Teddy Boys would fall into the role attributed to them by increasingly resorting to extreme violence amongst themselves and in their confrontations with authority.

Later that year, the well-known Clapham Common fight between members of two rival gangs resulted in the stabbing to death of seventeen-year-old John Beckley, but no conviction was made, owing to confusion as to who actually inflicted the fatal wounds in the mêlée. In the subsequent debate on the growing menace from juvenile delinquents, the educationalist G. A. Lyward portrayed them as 'under-individualised' and 'confused conformists',[46] both of which labels hint at a form of abdication or surrender of the personality, with a concomitant insensitivity to the suffering of others. One striking fact about all subcultures, be they of the politically engineered variety, such as the German *Hitlerjugend* and the Chinese Red Guards, the fashion variety, such as Teddy Boys and Skinheads, or the machine-oriented variety, such as Rockers and Scooter Boys, is the prevailing conformity in appearance, tastes, posturing, speech and activities among group adherents. It seems probable that the increasingly extreme costume of the 1950s Teddy Boys and their violence were at one and the same time a cause and a consequence of their being ostracised. The so-called Notting Hill 'riots' in the late summer of 1958 were in fact an eight-day violent confrontation between white youths—predominantly Teddy Boys—and members of the West-Indian immigrant population. The extensive press coverage and the stiff sentences of up to five years' imprisonment for causing grievous bodily harm, rioting and the possession of offensive weapons that were handed out in the aftermath did not improve the Teddy Boys' reputation or their own love of authority.

The numerous instances of shocking, gratuitous Teddy Boy violence during the 1950s described by Thomas[47] leave little room for sentimentality, suggesting as they do that the portrayal of the group as a social menace had come to be at least partially justified. The question of whether the violence would have erupted in any case, had the Teds not existed is impossible to answer. However, it should be remembered that, parallel to the ascendancy of the Teds, premeditated crimes of a much more sinister nature were being committed by increasingly powerful and vicious gangs such as those of Billy Hill, the Richardsons and the young Krays. The fact remains that the Teddy Boys did not slip *en masse* into organised crime, preferring the more romanticised, popular, sulky-rowdy, rebellious Marlon Brando-image. Moreover, in contrast to the professional criminal gangs, for whom extreme violence was part of their stock-in-trade, the Teddy Boys were very numerous,

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[45] The unfortunate, ongoing confusion of spivs and Teds is evident from photographs of 1954 Teddy Boys labelled *spivs* in Adrian HORN, *Juke box Britain: Americanisation and Youth Culture, 1945-60*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009, pp. 120-121.

[46] Quoted in Donald THOMAS, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 219-239.

disorganised and widely dispersed, with a particularly violent and sadistic minority achieving national prominence, mainly thanks to the sensational press, while the majority indulged in sporadic fighting in dance-halls and in the street, as youths always have done. Things might have got a lot worse, but for the fact that the attention of the essentially fun-loving Teds was distracted by a new form of demotic music, which provided a (relatively) harmless outlet, not only for youthful high spirits and sexual energy, but also for violent tendencies and gave expression to the overwhelming desire to break away once and for all from the attitudes and inhibitions of the foregoing generations. The mix of Teddy Boys-cum-folk-devils plus this new music would scandalise many observers and lead to more sensational media coverage. In fact, the pop-music industry was gearing up in 1955-1956 to hand the Teds—at a price—a gigantic pacifier in the form of rock and roll.

'Elvis set us free'[48]

The music of the late 1940s and early 1950s dance-halls was principally that of the big bands such as those of Ted Heath and Joe Loss or their imitators, while records of crooners such as Johnnie Ray, Frankie Laine and homespun balladeers such as Dickie Valentine, Ronnie Hilton and Ruby Murray were all that was available on the popular music market, of which, Lewis says that '*it was a reassuring world of sentimental conformism that was presented to the young, for the most part by singers old enough to be their fathers. [...] The music was too languid to support anything but a slow smoochy fox-trot or occasionally a stiff-tempo quick-step*'.[49]

Britain was initiated to American rock and roll music via the cinema: the opening credits and opening and closing scenes of Richard Brooks' film *Blackboard Jungle*, released in March 1955 were accompanied by the throbbing drumbeat and bass, saxophone and electric guitar of Bill Hayley and his Comets playing 'Rock around the Clock', a previously released, though not particularly successful, B-side number. Through its association with rebellious, violent, disaffected, urban working class youth portrayed in the film, rather than its own merits, the song, which like all rock and roll was a hybrid of country music and black rhythm and blues, shot to the top of the charts and remained there for five months, selling twenty-two million copies over the following two years. The first showing in London's Trocadero cinema the following year prompted instant rioting, vandalism and dancing inside and outside the cinema, in all of which Teddy Boys and their girls were prominent. The scenario was repeated, leading to the banning of the film in many cities throughout the UK. It was from this moment on that 'Edwardians' and 'Edwardian clothing' started to be systematically banned from cinemas and dance halls in major British cities. Teddy Boys had found the raw, immediate, loud music that gave voice to their frustrations, and, despite the enormous press coverage given to the vandalism and rioting, which often consisted of nothing worse than the ripping out of cinema seats and scuffles with the police, a commercialised space into which their aggression, so alarming to some, could be safely funnelled. The music provided a

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[48] Frederick Peter Carroll, aged 74, interviewed in Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
[49] Peter LEWIS, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

vigorous soundtrack for a new, easily-learned dance routine reminiscent of the GIs' jitterbugging of the war years, in which the man controls and manhandles his partner, revealing her thighs and her underwear: doubtless another reason for its appeal in the highly male-oriented (whereby conventional) world of the Teds and yet another reason for their popular portrayal as sexually promiscuous renegades.

Although Bill Hayley, when he visited Britain in 1957, did not match up, either physically or in age, to the excitement of his music, he had opened up what was to become a huge, if short-lived European market and had laid the trail for Elvis Presley, declared in Des Moines as 'morally insane'[50] to the delight of his fans worldwide. For the first time, here was a potently attractive male singer whose unique cocktail of glamour and earthiness could drive audiences wild, and was the perfect model for the Teddy Boys. It was from then onwards that they began to grow their sideburns longer and consciously or unconsciously Americanised their own image under the influence of Elvis and others, the most prominent of whom were Gene Vincent, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Little Richard, Eddie Cochran and perhaps the most authentic rock and roll performer of all, by virtue of his ethnicity and colourful off-stage life, Chuck Berry. The British music industry managed to corner its share of the market by producing home-grown singers such as the talented and independent skiffle artist Lonnie Donegan, the quietly rebellious Billy Fury, who suffered poor health and was to die at the age of forty-three, along with Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard, both of whom became all-round entertainers and were seen by the Teds as having sold out to the establishment.

The precipitous decline of rock and roll at the end of the decade was brought about by a constellation of factors including the early deaths of Buddy Holly (1959) and Eddie Cochran (1960), Gene Vincent's injury and abrupt retreat to the US, the return from military service of a corpulent Elvis—apparently no longer a bad boy (which he never had been off-stage)—with the avowed intention of becoming a 'family entertainer' (1960), which cleared the stage somewhat. Meanwhile, the 'payola' system of bribing American disc jockeys to play certain records was exposed in 1959, discrediting, among others, the man who claimed to have invented the name *rock and roll*, and had contributed greatly to its promotion: Alan Freed. Inevitably, the stereotyped and rigid twelve-bar, three-chord structure of rock and roll prevented it from evolving without losing its essence, hence the need, felt by the record companies and the majority of fans worldwide, after four or five years of the same, for a change of paradigm. There was a return to folksy, sugary ballads in America and in Britain, featuring names like Paul Anka, Pat Boone and Ricky Nelson. There was also a flurry of popular interest in jazz, brought to the fore by performers such as Dave Brubeck, Humphrey Littleton and Chris Barber. However, the Beatles (formed in 1960), the Rolling Stones (formed in 1962) and a multitude of other British pop groups were soon to occupy the stage and set the musical tone of a world in which standard rock and roll and the Teddy Boys were decidedly old hat. Ferris and Lord speak sadly of the Teddy boy 'slump'[51] of the 1960s, during which the flag was kept flying by much reduced, isolated groups in South Wales, London and the Black Country. The new fashions, centred on Carnaby Street, were

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[50] Peter LEWIS, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
[51] Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

unpalatable to the remaining Teddy Boys, who now found themselves rivalled by the new Mods and Scooter Boys. Until what came to be referred to as the great Teddy Boy revival of the 1970s, the future looked grim musically and sartorially for the Teds, some of whom, it might be added, were becoming disenchanted with their own lack of purpose, given the gradual disappearance of the social conditions which had precipitated their appearance ten years previously. Richard Hoggart, coming himself from a working-class background in Leeds, describes his perception of the mood in 1957 of what he calls the Juke Box Boys,

> *those who spend their evening listening in harshly lighted milk-bars to the "nickelodeons". [...] Many of the customers—their clothes, their hairstyles, their facial expressions all indicate—are living to a large extent in a myth-world compounded of a few simple elements which they take to be those of American life. [...] They have no aim, no ambition, no protection, no belief. [...] From their education at school they have taken little which connects with the realities of life as they experience it after fifteen. Most of them have jobs which require no personal outgoing, which are not intrinsically interesting, which encourage no sense of personal value, of being a maker [...]. They are ground between the millstones of technocracy and democracy; society gives them an almost limitless freedom of the sensations, but makes few demands on them—the use of their hands and a fraction of their brains for forty hours a week. For the rest they are open to the entertainers and their efficient mass-equipment.*[52]

Hoggart has never been noted for his optimism, as is borne out in his 1995 appraisal of contemporary British society: *The Way We Live Now*.[53] However, his view of the Teddy Boys does appear to be particularly negative. What is striking is that he sees them as essentially the passive victims of soulless mass entertainment which has created for them a garish and intrinsically unsatisfying dream-world to compensate for the grinding monotony of their working lives—a theme picked up and accurately portrayed the following year by Alan Sillitoe in his novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.[54] There is no evidence of this stultifying boredom from Ferris and Lord who, on the contrary, emphasise the fun, the excitement and the glory of the times. One of their interviewees, aged 70, concludes with the words: '*They were unique times, when Jack was as good as his master and the records were unsurpassable*';[55] another, aged 74: '*To me, the Teds, the Ted style, it was the flag of freedom. I am proud to have been a Ted. I am a Ted*';[56] and another, aged 65: '*We were an elite*'.[57] It should be noted that while Hoggart's contemporary description of what he called the 'Juke Box Boys' was that of an outsider, the unsurprisingly roseate reminiscences are those of insiders, who, with the experience

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[52] Richard HOGGART, *The Uses of Literacy*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958 (1957), pp. 203-205.
[53] Richard HOGGART, *The Way We Live Now*, London: Pimlico, 1995.
[54] Alan SILLITOE, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, London and Harlow: Longman. 1968 (1958).
[55] Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

of sixty years are still proud to be called Teds. It seems unlikely that an observer as astute and down-to-earth as Hoggart had completely misread the evidence. However, he may have been the unconscious victim of his choice of label, which, like all labels, reduces and simplifies, producing, and—by the simple virtue of its use—legitimising an elliptical and conditioning view of the referent. In short, without the perspective of time, and without becoming a Ted himself, he could only guess at what it meant—and still means—to be one. We shall attempt, in the following three sections, to discover what it was exactly that he was missing.

'The Rockabilly movement ruined the Ted scene'[58]

The so-called 'slump' of the 1960s had nonetheless produced enduring in-house Teddy Boy rock and roll bands such as Crazy Cavan and the Rhythm Rockers, Flying Saucers, Matchbox and the Riot Rockers. These are seen by Ferris and Lord[59] as having contributed, along with the re-release of two classics, Bill Hayley's 'Rock around the Clock' and Buddy Holly's 'Peggy Sue', the well-timed comeback of a slimmed-down Elvis, the release in 1971 of George Lucas' film *American Graffiti* and, perhaps most influential of all, the big 1972 Wembley rock and roll revival concert,[60] to a reversal of the decline and a renewed—albeit manifestly commercially-driven—interest in the popular music and styles of the 1950s.

Juvenile violence, increasingly drug-related, during the 1970s was even more prevalent than it had been in the 1950s and 1960s, thanks partly to the proliferation of new subcultures. The principal enemies of the Teds were the Skinheads, the Perry Boys,[61] the Soul Boys[62] and the new Punk Rockers,[63] whose shabby imitation and deliberate downgrading of Teddy Boy clothes led to violent confrontations in which the punks, usually younger teenagers, came off worst.[64]

The Teddy Boy movement was beginning to have its own internal tensions. Instrumental in the revival of interest in the 1950s were recently-formed pop groups such as the Rubettes (formed 1973) and Mud (formed 1966) and the eight-piece Leicester-based Shawaddywaddy (formed 1973), who produced, in addition to original music, glam-rock-influenced covers of rock and roll classics. These very successful bands dressed in a very showy version of Teddy Boy clothing, and their

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[58] Brian Lewis Stuart, aged 71, interviewed by Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

[59] Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

[60] Some 50,000 people, many dressed as Teddy Boys, were entertained by, among others, Bo Diddley, Bill Hayley, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry.

[61] The Perry Boys, who claimed to be an offshoot of the Northern Soul scene, were, loosely, 1970s football casuals from Salford and Manchester. Their main focus of interest was their casual designer-label clothes and trainers.

[62] Northern soul, which reached its peak throughout the Midlands and the North of England in the late 1970s, covered music originally inspired by 1960s Motown music and combined soulful voices with flamboyant and athletic dancing. Inasmuch as it was a development of the 1960s Mod trend, it could only be seen as a natural enemy of the Teddy Boys.

[63] The expression *punk rock* is thought to have been the coinage of Ed Sanders, co-founder of the overtly trashy and provocative New York 1960s band *The Fugs*.

[64] Ray FERRIS, & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

numerous young fans, who had no prior knowledge of the movement, were viewed with mistrust by many established Teds, who were apt to dismiss them as '*plastics*', by which they meant uncommitted, unschooled part-timers. Ferris and Lord comment: '*A "plastic" or a "plastic Ted" is the worst thing one Ted can be called by another*'.[65] Nonetheless, this multitude of new rock and rollers served to keep the movement alive, albeit in a modified form: tattoos were much in evidence, hair was longer, quiffs exaggerated, bootlace ties, often worn round the neck inside the coloured and/or printed-pattern shirt, whose collar was turned up, were as common as Slim Jim ties, while brothel creepers, often of suede or with a lacquer finish of all colours, had crêpe soles that were as much as two inches thick. Drape jackets and waistcoats were still the principal garments, but came in practically any colour, the gaudier the better.[66]

A view of what the Teddy Boy movement had become towards the end of the decade can be seen in Curtis Clark's 1979 documentary *Blue Suede Shoes*, a film of the International Weekend Hop, held at Caister holiday camp, Great Yarmouth.[67] This remarkable document, from which older Teds are practically absent, reveals the extent to which the fast rockabilly style of music, accompanied by Confederate flags and, on the part of the singers, adopted drawling American accents, had overtaken the original 'made-in-Great Britain' feel of the 1950s protagonists. Gone is the studied elegance of the original Teddy Boys: the atmosphere is rough and raucous, and the bands, with the exception of the immaculately dressed Bill Hayley and the Comets, go out of their way to encourage rowdy and exuberant audience participation. The growing presence and influence of the rockabillies[68] and their offshoot the hepcats[69] left the Teds at best unimpressed and at worst disgusted. Things were getting out of hand: those who had been the original rebels now saw themselves cast in the role of upholders of tradition: '*During the seventies, the great style of the early New Edwardians had become so bastardised and distorted that, with hindsight, this breakaway movement was bound to happen. There were simply*

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[65] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[66] *The Teds* by Chris STEELE-PERKINS and Richard SMITH (Stockport: Dewi Lewis, 2002) contains many photographs illustrating the untamed look of the 1970s Teds and their girls.

[67] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ni_6QfBIXnI. The film includes footage of Bill Hayley and the Comets; Ray Campi and his Rockabilly Rebels; Matchbox; Freddie Fingers Lee; Flying Saucers and Crazy Cavan and the Rhythm Rockers.

[68] Rockabilly music, the name being a blend of *rock* and *hillbilly*, and synonymous with Memphis country rock, differing from the Bill Hayley-style Northern band Rock and roll, by its looser rhythm and the absence of saxophones or any chorus singing, first emerged as one of the five distinctive styles of rock and roll during the years 1954-56. Thanks to the entrepreneurial skills of Sam Phillips, owner of the Sun label in Memphis, rockabilly exponents like Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis and Conway Twitty went on to gain enormous popularity, practically taking the market out of the hands of the original black singers (Gillett, 1983: 26-30). Its wholly American image was what appealed to the British rockabillies of the 1970s.

[69] The name *hepcats* appears to originate from the 1930s American jazz scene, a hepcat being a jazz fan, in-the-know (i.e. *hep*) about the emerging subculture and likely to use drugs. Otherwise, etymology is obscure. The movement is, in any case, closely related to rockabilly and hot-rod subculture.

too few original Teds left to educate the seventies generation into the ways of the true style of the early new Edwardians.[70]

Clearly, the Teds were in a quandary: should the movement be allowed to evolve freely, in ways influenced and even dictated by external forces such as the fashion and music industries, a development which could hardly be considered 'natural'? If so, should they allow themselves to be carried along with it? Or, should what had become the older generation reassert its accumulated wisdom and its authority by refusing the changes? There was an obvious risk of its becoming an isolated and ageing group of antiquarians, the quaint monuments to bygone days within an evolving movement. What was in question was whether being a Teddy Boy was simply a leisure activity and a form of entertainment open to all-comers, a look, a posture and a way of consuming, or whether there was, beneath the drape, a heart that beat in a special way, and behind the quiff a particular way of thinking that transcended and resisted all socio-economic vicissitudes. The inescapable fact was that, by 1980, Teddy Boys had existed in one form or another, for thirty years: a very long time for a mere fashion. One constant was the tendency to violence. Many 1970s Teds had done time in detention centres and borstals for violence, damage to property and rioting, one notable example of which was an evening gig in 1977 at the Astoria Ballroom in Leeds during which around 500 Teds, who had come from all over the North, felt that they were being made fun of by the band. A general brawl broke out, resulting in multiple arrests and injuries. Interesting, from the point of view of Teddy Boy identity and the right to bear the title, is the comment: '*many Teds still bear the scars from police-dog bites to prove they were there*',[71] a point to which we shall return in the conclusion. This violent outburst may be seen as a spontaneous re-assertion of original Teddy Boy values and the determination of a considerable number of hardliners to resist any attempt to make light of their otherness. Notice again that theirs was not a 'social statement'. It was action.

'*The Teds are a legend, a legend in our times*'[72]

During the 1980s, the feeling that infiltration of the movement by hepcats, plastics, part-timers and even glue-sniffing punk rockers led many more traditionally-oriented Teds to 'hang up their brothel-creepers', and abandon a scene which was turning into a gaudy parody of itself. At the same time, an all-pervading rap-inspired street culture and increased circulation of drugs among teenagers seemed to be hastening the twilight of the Teds, who, to make matters worse, were now confronted with a new kind of interloper, the *jive bunnies*,[73] intrinsically harmless, but fundamentally 'square' weekend rock and roll fans, who came to clubs to jive, '*some of whom dress up in garish Ted drapes and circle skirts that look as if they were bought from fancy dress shops*'.[74] Though this influx, as did earlier ones, arguably kept the demand for rock and roll clubs going, it was not in any way what

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[70] Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[72] Brian Lewis Stuart, aged 71, interviewed in *ibid.*, p. 94.

[73] The name *jive bunnies* comes from the early 1990s series of compilations *Jive Bunny and the Mastermixers*.

[74] Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

the Teds welcomed. The future was again looking bleak. Paradoxically, given the increasingly conservative outlook of the relatively few remaining diehards, it was state-of-the-art technology that was to be their salvation.

The internet was the means by which active and former Teds could get in touch with each other. The organising of reunions and weekenders, such as the bi-annual *Ted Do* and *Valentine Rockin' Weekend*[75] had become less laborious, which facilitated national coverage of what had previously been local pockets of support, focused on pubs such as The Northern (Bradford), The Railway (Stockport) and The Midland Hotel (Didsbury). This development, in the view of Ferris and Lord, '*continued to help reaffirm the Teddy Boy foundations as a coherent movement and lifestyle*'.[76] Elaborate and well-researched websites, such as the Edwardian Teddy Boy[77], subtitled '*The home and premier site of the British Teddy Boy*' along with Ray Ferris and Julian Lord's book, significantly entitled *Teddy Boys: A Concise History*, to which this study is greatly indebted, have, over the last decade, stimulated interest, this time from an overtly diachronic perspective, in a second Teddy Boy revival. The proposed return to Edwardian roots runs the obvious risk of creating among today's Teds a schism between on the one hand purists who advocate a renaissance of the crisp and (relatively) sober splendour of the Teddy Boys of the early 1950s,[78] and, on the other hand, a more liberal faction, who reject what they see as incipient elitism, claiming that anyone who enjoys rock and roll has a right to interpret the Teddy Boy legacy in a way that suits them. Ferris and Lord are keenly and sadly aware of the dangers of internal conflict. While unambiguously venerating '*these older originals [who] look superb with their greying or pure-white hair (or even bald heads!) and always turn up immaculately dressed in razor-sharp Edwardian suits. They are a credit to the movement*',[79] they appreciate the right to enter the movement of younger people in search of an alternative to 'an endlessly repeating, worldwide monoculture', pointing out the underlying similarity between some teenagers and traditional Teds who, from different standpoints and perhaps for different reasons, nonetheless deplore the social situation in Britain today. As they stand, Teddy Boy weekend events[80] are open to all and consist essentially of concerts, provided by a progression of a dozen or so bands,[81] 1950s records, possibly with talent spots and best-dressed Ted and dancing competitions and stalls

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[75] Organised by 1970s Teddy Boy Stuart 'Rockin' Stu' Hardy.

[76] Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

[77] http://www.edwardianteddyboy.com, piloted by 1970s Teddy Boy John 'Nidge' van Rheede Toas.

[78] The initiative for the return to the original style is credited, on the Edwardian Teddy Boy website, to a young Ted in the 1980s called Paul Culshaw of Aldershot. In 1992, The Edwardian Drape Society (T.E.D.S.) was founded, with the aim of re-establishing the original 1950s style.

[79] Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

[80] An interesting documentary film of the Brean Sands holiday camp Teddy Boy 2010 weekender entitled 'Oh, Sweet Mystery of Rock' can be seen on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRT61XYyKc4.

[81] By way of illustration, the bands booked to play at the 2014 Valentine Rockin' Weekend are: Lucas and the Dynamos; Metrotones; Bopcats; Downtown Daddyos; Fantoms; Wildcatz; Sharptones; Doggone Daddys; Neutronz; Hi-Aces; Vincent and the Invaders; Pick Ups; TBA.

selling mostly vintage clothing, a hairdresser[82] and a tattoo-artist. There is plenty of laughter, embracing, beer-drinking and happy exchange between Teds (and Teddy Girls), vying with each other for smartness and/or extravagance. A special welcome is given to Teds who have come specially from abroad: among the so called Euro-Teds attending the *Ted Do* of September 2013 were (mainly young) people from Germany, France, Spain, Holland, Norway and Finland, and others from Japan and the US. The overall atmosphere was noisy and friendly, without any outward manifestations of tension or violence. The sheer spectacle of around a thousand Edwardians, rockers, 1970s Teds and Teddy Girls and young Teddy Boys, the youngest of whom was aged 8, all enjoying themselves in their own way, was an unforgettable experience.[83]

Conclusion

The view emerging from Ferris and Lord's very informative in-house book, the 2010 founding of the Manchester Peacock Society and websites such as edwardianteddyboy.com is largely that of a celebration of the Teddy Boy subculture. The question of violence is not at all played down. However, the movement is proposed as an important and unique contribution to 20th century popular culture by virtue of its originality, its British-ness, its resilience to change, its freedom from drug abuse and perhaps, most importantly of all, its determination to defeat all its enemies in the ongoing struggle to preserve its identity. The question is: how can that identity be precisely defined? Ferris and Lord point out that '*being a Teddy Boy is not about music, hairstyles, clothes or dancing. It is about "being". Such things, although not unimportant, are merely the external facets reflecting an internal state of mind*',[84] thereby disassociating Teds from the opportunism of the spivs and from what they refer to as '*later fashion fads and crazes*'.[85] The wish to '*appear to be outside the norms of the socially accepted values*'[86] in terms of dress is still evident today. The claim, when applied to the lifestyle of middle-aged Teds who have settled down, raised families and worked steadily all their adult lives is less convincing to an outside observer. What can safely be said is that their leisure time is largely taken up with perpetuating a show of defiance which also provides entertainment and the camaraderie of like-minded people. The nearest thing to a Teddy Boy credo comes in the following form:

> To [Teddy Boys], well-rounded males do not do drugs, they settle their differences one-to-one, are clean and smart and will do their duty if called upon to pay the ultimate sacrifice by their country. They will, however show no fear in doing their own thing, living life the

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[82] Among the hairstyles favoured by the Teds: the Tony Curtis; the Flat Top; the Elephant's Trunk; the Slick Back; the Pompadour; the Jelly Roll; the Executive Contour; the Flop, and for the neck: the Boston; the D.A.; the Taper.
[83] The author of this study was present.
[84] Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

way they choose to, and if society and its laws prevent these freedoms, then the law and society is an ass.[87]

This unremarkably British stance, which juxtaposes smartness, self-reliance, male posturing, patriotic feeling and disrespect for authority, is reminiscent of the mindset of young men doing National Service, two years of which, let us remember, were the lot of the vast majority of 1950s and early 1960s youths, either prior to, during, or following their time as Teddy Boys. The allusion to patriotism, coupled with these authors' repeated use of military terminology throughout their book, particularly when describing encounters with adversaries,[88] suggests that the mainspring of the original Teddy Boy subculture may have been a distorted mirror image of National Service, a fairground or carnival atmosphere, from which rank and hierarchy were banished.[89] Uniformity was parodied by the drape, while the military-style virtues of comradeship, devotion to duty, physical courage, self-discipline, cleanliness and smartness were preserved, coupled with the conscript's lip-service to authority and his elaborate, institutionalised system of skives, scams and dodges.[90] This mindset appears still to be active today. Meanwhile, although it is not actually stated, one suspects that the fact of having participated in battles with the police or other youth groups, including rival Ted gangs, is an important part of being a true Teddy Boy. Ferris and Lord are dismissive of those who claim to have taken part in certain known encounters, when their age in fact prohibits it, whereas the fact of some Teds still bearing the scars from the Astoria Ballroom fight is seen

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[87] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[88] There are several references to *recruits and recruitment* (e.g. p. 59 & p. 87); Rockers are said to be 'like their Ted brothers in arms' (p. 39); 'plastics' are regarded as 'traitors to the cause' (p. 61); faced with the punk rockers 'Teds […] felt duty bound to defend the honour of the drape, and the war was on' (p. 75); the account of the 1982 battle with the Perry Boys outside the Lakes Hotel in Manchester has it: 'The Teds, around thirty strong, went outside, formed ranks and waited […]. A general melee of hand-to-hand fighting […]. The Perry Boys got completely battered and were eventually totally routed. This revealing and entertaining passage, including its description of the conspicuous bravery of one particular Ted (not quoted here) could almost have been lifted from War Diaries or eye-witness accounts of front line combat.

[89] The larger-than-life, controversial, publicity-seeking Welsh-born Ron 'Sunglasses' Staples-Fahey, 1944-1997, appointed himself 'King of the Teds'. His funeral at Edmonton Crematorium was attended by between 500 and 1,000 mourners and given press and television coverage. This is apparently a rare claim to national leadership of the Teddy Boy movement. One *in memoriam* comment made on the Edwardian Teddy Boy website is 'the fact that he contributed himself was in itself a good advertisement for the fun and friendliness of the Teddy Boy and Rock 'n' Roll scene. He was a benign ambassador for all that was best in the music and its fans. He had no successor and it is inconceivable to think that there will ever really be one' (http://www.edwardianteddyboy.com/page35.htm). *The Teds (op. cit.)* contains a good photograph of him in characteristic pose. Interestingly, Donald THOMAS (*op. cit.*, p. 231) mentions a twenty-five-year-old self-styled 'King of the Teddy Boys' in the 1950s. This previously convicted man, known as 'Mad Charlie' was sentenced to six months imprisonment in September 1956 for assaulting a police inspector.

[90] This view is somewhat countered by that of ex-rifleman George Savage, 1st Bn. Royal Ulster Rifles, who was clearly a Teddy Boy prior to, but not following his period of National Service: 'I have sometimes wondered how different I'd have been without the discipline of National Service. I mean, what did a Teddy Boy graduate to?'. (Trevor ROYLE, *op. cit.*, p. 244.)

as a mark of distinction (see above, section five). In short, one senses something of the atmosphere of an old comrades' association, born of the Teddy Boys' readiness to defend, first a neighbourhood, and later a social space. The military undertones suggest that the emergence of the Teds in the 1950s was principally and specifically an—albeit unconscious—answer to the reflected glory of two world wars and, in particular, Britain's atypical recourse to conscription, being only marginally a reaction to the other conditions of the post-war period described in section one above. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the last conscript was demobbed in 1963, around the time when the original Teddy Boys' numbers were dwindling in the face of the decidedly more female-oriented fashions of the new decade. Young working class youths of the 1950s, who had been or who were about to be trained in the use of weapons in the brutalising, oppressive, uninspiring, all-male atmosphere of National Service, had something to rebel against and parody, and they had the money to do it. Perhaps National Service simply summed up all that was wrong with Britain at the time.

The violent facet of the Teds' way of life appears to be dormant at present, despite having peaked again in the 1970s, with the result that they do resemble the proverbial 'rebels without a cause' whose principal concern is the preservation of their right to be what they are in an increasingly standardised and monitored world (cf. the mass-market culture outlined in section one above). The knowledge that '*all the old gang rivalries of the past between the various factions and even between individuals of the movement have long since disappeared and most Teds are on very good terms with each other today*'[91] is cosily reassuring. However, if the potential for violent defence should disappear, amid the current vogue of environmental friendliness and political correctness, then an integral, if not to say a vital, part of the Teddy Boys' identity will have been lost. There is the risk, in the event of hostility from new rival movements, once the authentic, hardened veterans of street-fighting and reformatories mellow into old age, that the loose outer shell of enthusiasts and wannabes will not be in a position to fight for their cause or have any taste for doing so.[92]

Outside observers who might be tempted to compare today's Teddy Boys with, for example, Morris dancers or re-enactors should be reminded that whereas the latter two groups are temporarily *shedding* or *disguising* their true identities by dressing up and staging performances outside their own experience, authentic Teddy Boys would undoubtedly claim to be *maintaining* and *proclaiming* their identity by continuing to look and behave as they have always done. Today's Teds can hardly be considered seditious or menacingly deviant as a group, nor would such labels as *cranks*, *play-actors* or *weirdoes* be at all appropriate. The labels first applied to them by the popular press of the 1950s, chronologically: *Edwardians*, *Teddy Boys*, *Teds*, were welcomed and quickly became titles to be borne with pride, a process similar to that of the surviving soldiers of the Old Army proudly calling themselves *Old*

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[91] Ray FERRIS & Julian LORD, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.
[92] Ferris and Lord are silent on the question of possible conflict with authority or rival groups today.

Contemptibles during the Great War.[93] One explanation for the Teds' durability is the inherent charm of their label-title; another is their uncompromising fidelity to a past anterior to their own lives, which gives them a timelessness denied to such groups as Mods, Skinheads, Perry Boys and Punks, each of which is associated with the time of its own particular adolescence. Yet another is the pride they take in having been the (unwitting?) vectors of social change by breaking out of the working class mould, through their deliberate short-circuiting of class-bound sartorial conventions, not through words but through action. Deviant in the 1950s perhaps, they are not seen as such today precisely because, partly thanks to their initiative, not only was the 1960s extravaganza[94] and subsequent teenage trends made possible, but also British society has become more tolerant than its predecessors of diversity and perhaps less smugly content to perceive itself in terms of a mythical mainstream surrounded and threatened by labelled minorities. We have practically reached the point now where it is considered deviant to be intolerant of deviance.

As correctly observed by Robert Cross,[95] the swaggering, dancing, preened male body has always been central to the Teddy Boy phenomenon, the body being the vehicle of ostentation and provocation, the focus of identification, admiration, prejudice, comment or derision from without, the target of physical attack and finally, the means of defence. The truculent, and despite all, endearing pride of the early Teds is still very much in evidence, arguably more so today, with the current back-to-basics trend, than during the highly Americanised, exaggerated costume period of the 1970s. Whatever the changes in fashion and whatever the socio-economic conditions of the 21st century, provided the movement is able to continue to recruit (to borrow the military term) young hardliners in sufficient numbers who are prepared to perpetuate *and defend* its traditions, then there is no reason why the peculiarly British cocktail of rebellion and conservatism, of exuberance and poise and of nostalgia and pugnacity that has always been the essence of the Teddy Boy movement should not have a bright and fulfilling future.

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[93] Cf. the often unflattering nicknames of British Army regiments, adopted and proudly upheld, e.g. *The Cherubims* (The 11th Hussars); *The Dirty Half Hundred* (The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment); *The Devil's Own* (The Connaught Rangers). For a complete list, see Edward FRASER & John GIBBONS, *Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases*, London: George Routledge and Sons, 1925, pp. 170-209.

[94] One of the fullest and most penetrating accounts of youth in the 1960s is that of Christopher BOOKER, *The Neophiliacs: The Revolution in English Life in the Fifties and Sixties*, London: Pimlico, 1992 (1969).

[95] Robert CROSS, 'The Teddy Boy as Scapegoat', *Doshisha Studies in Language and Culture* vol. 1, n° 2, 1998, p. 275.

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