

The Way It Was



The Way It Was

A Photographic Journey through 'Sixties Britain

David Lewis-Hodgson

Acknowledgements

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Dedicated to the memory
of stuntman John Bell
who died far too violently
and far too young for
the entertainment of strangers.

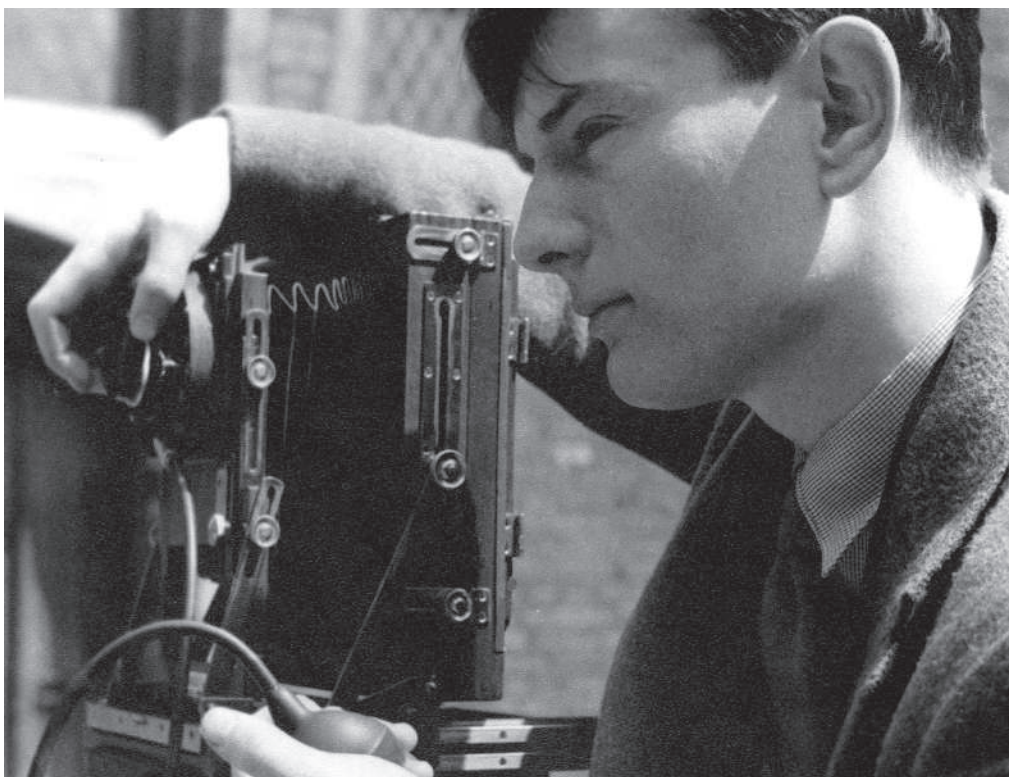




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Introduction – The Way It Was

When, in February 1960, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan told the South African parliament that 'the wind of change' was blowing throughout the continent, he might just as easily have been talking about the British way of life. During the next twenty years that wind of change would sweep away a social order that had endured for generations.

If you lived through that era this book will remind you of times gone by. If you did not you will discover a foreign country where, in the words of author LP Hartley, 'they do things differently'.

As the 'sixties dawned, high streets flourished and super-markets barely existed. Although package holidays abroad were becoming cheaper and more popular, most families still holidayed at home beside the seaside. Long-haul flights to exotic destinations were still reserved for the wealthy few. Tower blocks were being constructed and terraced houses in working-class neighbourhoods demolished in vast numbers as the answer to housing shortages created by bomb damage and a rising population.

After wartime independence, women were back in the kitchen, cleaning and raising children, while men went out to earn the family's income. High-status, high-pay jobs were the almost exclusive preserve of men. Families

spent far more time together, eating at least one meal a day around the dining-room table. Most also attended church together each Sunday, in some cases two, or even three times a day.

In all but a very few schools, boys wore uniforms – including caps and short trousers – well into their teens. They kept their hair short (often on pain of physical punishment) and were expected to behave deferentially towards all in authority. If they stepped out of line, they could legally be beaten at home or at school.

As recent disclosures have shown, as well as physical abuses children were also being sexually abused by a whole host of adults. If they protested or spoke up, their stories were often either ignored or dismissed as fantasies.

Most people, 70% of men and 40% of women smoked with 'Embassy Filter' being the most bought brand. The health dangers were known by the end of the decade but the habit was kept alive by tobacco-funded campaigns designed to promote confusing and contradictory information'.

After proving hugely popular during the First World War, women's football was banned by the Football Association (FA) on the grounds that the game was 'quite unsuitable

for females'. It was not until 1969 that the prohibition was lifted and the Women's FA (WFA) was formed. Within three years the first Women's FA Cup Final and England women's internationals had been played.

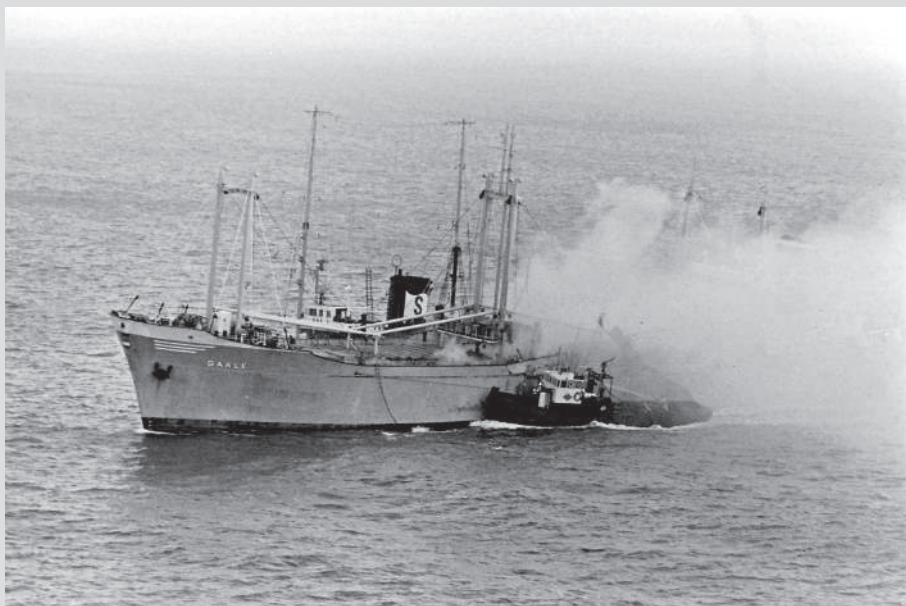
In that decade: murderers were hanged; those attempting suicide were jailed; abortions were illegal; divorce laws anachronistic and theatres heavily censored. Sunday trading laws meant most shops and places of entertainment were closed.

Health and Safety laws hardly existed. Political correctness was unheard of with racism, sexism and homophobia regarded as topics for TV comedies rather than censure. Sex outside marriage was condemned and babies born out of wedlock were derided as bastards. Homosexual acts were punishable by lengthy terms of imprisonment or chemical castration.

Far from being viewed as unreasonable or wrong, injustice, bigotry, xenophobia, race-hatred and prejudice were widely accepted as normal and natural. When the 'sixties dawned, challenges to what the majority regarded as the natural and normal order of things would most likely have been met with either perplexity or indifference.

That was just...The Way It Was.

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An Accidental Photojournalist

On my way to becoming a doctor I accidentally found myself becoming a photojournalist. Here's how it happened.

While at school, arts and science interested me equally but at the age of sixteen, I had to decide between the two since it was not possible to study both. The art master recommended the arts while my biology teacher advised science. With some hesitation ... I chose science.

Two years later I managed to get into a London teaching hospital, largely I suspect because I played rugby. The ability to kick a rugby ball, together with a smattering of Latin and Greek, were at that time (the late 'fifties) considered the most essential requirements for becoming a physician. I heard that at one medical school, a prospective medic had a rugby ball thrown at him (most applicants were male) immediately on entering the interview room. If he caught the ball the interview continued, failure to do so meant there was no interview! Those waiting outside could tell by the amount of time between a candidate's entry and exit whether or not the ball had been caught. After one young man emerged within seconds, others began to commiserate. Cutting them short with a smile, the student explained he hadn't bothered to try to catch the ball. He'd drop-kicked it into a nearby wastebasket and was immediately accepted!

As a teenager I had been fascinated by dissection, collecting any roadkill I came across and pestering the local butcher for brains, eyes, hearts and kidneys, all of which were readily available. To record my efforts with a scalpel, I persuaded my parents to buy me a simple

camera and some darkroom equipment, taught myself to process films and make black and white prints.

The medical school was located close to London's Charing Cross Road, then as now famous for its second-hand bookshops. One summer's afternoon during my second year, I was browsing through the bargain box outside one of these shops and, not finding anything of interest, I was about to walk away when a tattered book at the bottom of the box caught my eye: a drab brown jacketless book, whose faded title *People I Have Shot*, was only just legible. I was about to leave it unopened when, on impulse, I picked it up and began to read. The book was an autobiography by Fleet Street photographer James Jarché. In it he described his life in newspapers,



Left: The Saale a 2,155-ton cargo vessel with a 30ft gash in its hull after colliding with a 35,000-ton tanker. January 1967.

the assignments he had been sent to cover around the world, the famous people he had met and adventures he had enjoyed. I bought the book for a shilling (5p) and spent the rest of the afternoon and much of the night engrossed in it. That chance discovery changed my life.

In the early hours, I realised I had two life choices open to me. I could travel the globe, meet the great and famous, enjoy all kinds of wild adventures and experience life at first hand. Or I could continue with my medical studies which meant spending the next five years as an impoverished student to end up signing sick notes in some dreary consulting room.

No contest!

By accidentally stumbling across Jarché's book my life had been changed forever.

At 9.30 that morning I informed the dean my medical studies were at an end. At 2.30 I applied to the Regent Street Polytechnic's School of Photography and was accepted.

The two-year Polytechnic diploma course was rigorous, formal and old-fashioned even by the standards of the late 'fifties. For the first two terms, we never saw a roll of film or pressed a shutter. All the pictures, from portraiture to still life, were taken in a studio with half-plate (4.25" x 6.5", 108 cm x 165 cm) Kodak View cameras and involved seconds-long exposures. The process of taking a picture was simple. After setting the focus and aperture one simply removed the lens cap, silently counted down the seconds and replaced the cap.

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Even when we were finally allowed out of the studios we continued to use mahogany and brass Gandolfini plate cameras fitted with a between the lens 'leaf shutter' activated by an air-filled rubber bulb that you squeezed to take the picture.

Lectures on photojournalism started in the second year and we were encouraged to find and cover our own assignments. For my final year project I persuaded the *Mac Fisheries* company (they ceased trading in 1979) to allow me to go to sea on one of their trawlers.

We left Lowestoft on a bright March day having spent a couple of convivial hours in a pub, consuming a hearty lunch and downing several pints of beer with the eight-man crew.

Within an hour of leaving the protection of the breakwater I discovered two things about the voyage. First, I was no sailor and lunch and beers rapidly vanished into the North Sea. Second, winter is probably not the best time for a non-sailor to spend three weeks bouncing around on the Dogger Bank.

The next two weeks were memorable for daily bouts of sickness and a definite lack of appetite, especially for the crews' favourite between-meals snack. This consisted of flatfish fried in fat, then salted and dried to leather over the permanently blazing coke stove in the aft cabin. I came home with around 1000 photographs, some of which are in this book. These I was able to sell to a dozen or so trade, general interest and photo magazines.

On leaving photographic school, I approached all the major national newspapers confidently expecting my City and Guilds Diploma would make them eager to assign me

to their staff. At that time the *Daily Express* alone had sixty-four press photographers and all the other papers had similarly large photographic teams. In response, sometimes courteously but more often curtly, Fleet Street's picture editors made it clear that my services were not and never would be required.

After several fruitless weeks of letter writing I found a job with a small North of England news agency. I remained there long enough to pick up some tips on selling and then headed back south to set up as a freelance press photographer. For the next eighteen months, I supplied pictures to the two main local newspapers, the Brighton based *Evening Argus* and the *Sussex Express & County Herald*.

For each published picture I received a guinea (£1 5p) and on a typical Friday or Saturday night might have to cover twenty events, driving over sixty miles within a three hour period. Not surprisingly, I quickly became adept at grabbing a shot and being on my way again in as little time as possible. On arrival at, say, a darts tournament or village play, I would leap from the car, run into the pub or local hall, line up the bemused players or cast members (even if in mid-play), take a couple of pictures, write down the names and hurry off to the next job. The technique was to get as many faces into my pictures as possible. Every face meant an extra sale for the paper and a happy editor. So much for the rigour and formality of my photographic training!

There were, of course, more interesting stories. In 1965, I scaled Nelson's Column and, standing precariously on his Lordship's bicorne hat, photographed the still unpaved pedestrianised and virtually car free streets around Trafalgar Square (see page x).



Lord Nelson's hat provided me with the opportunity to obtain a panoramic view of Trafalgar Square (see page x).

I took other steps to further my career as well, such as learning to fly so that I could take aerial pictures, especially of shipping disasters, such as the image of a blazing cargo vessel shot twenty miles off the South Coast.

I also trained as both a SCUBA and a sky-diver so as to be able to take on assignments out of reach to most photographers.

After a year or so of this I moved first to London and then to Paris where I supplied pictures to a number of agencies and started to receive commissions from magazines such as *Paris Match*, *Oggi*, *Stern* and *Life*.

I started to receive an increasing number of commissions from those same Fleet Street picture editors who had turned down my job applications only a few months earlier. My pictures started to appear in newspapers such as the *Mail*, *Mirror*, *Telegraph* and *Times* as well as top selling magazines of the day, *SHE*, *Weekend* and the Sunday supplements.

These enabled me to meet other newsmen, learn some of Fleet Street's secret ways of working and begin building up my network of contacts.

I also formed friendships with some truly amazing individuals. People like Joe Weston Webb who ran the astonishing and astonishingly dangerous *Destruction Squad*.

In 1969 I joined a features agency based in Gough Square, just off Fleet Street, and was sent to Belfast. A civil war, euphemistically known as *The Troubles*, had just broken out and over the years I witnessed many horrific sights of friends I had made and people I had met being killed,



bombed, burnt out or forced to flee – on both sides of the sectarian divide.

As the 'seventies came to a close I decided the time had come for me to close this chapter of my life and move on. I no longer wanted to photograph conflict, murder and sudden death, but instead, try to make sense of what I had experienced by retraining as a clinical psychologist.

During my twenty-year career, I had photographed much that was good, much that was not so good, and a great deal that was ugly. I had caught on film events that were joyous, strange, funny, tragic, dangerous and downright silly. This book is a record of some of them.



Above left: Surfacing from a dive with my Nikonos submersible camera.

Left: Posing for a colleague in my cramped apartment on the Left Bank in Paris.



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Children of the Troubles

On 12 August 1969, members of the Protestant Orange Order and the Apprentice Boys descended on Derry's Bogside carrying cudgels and shouting, 'Kill the Fenian bastards.' Residents fought back and Northern Ireland was set ablaze. On 14 August, with civil unrest and sectarian violence on the increase, the British government under Harold Wilson, sent in troops for what they claimed would be a 'limited operation'. It was the start of twenty years of conflict, bombings, murder and destruction that took more than 3,000 Irish lives, spread to the UK mainland and came, euphemistically, to be known as 'the Troubles'. By the early 'seventies, shootings and bombings were a daily occurrence. In the first two weeks of December 1971 alone, seventy bombs exploded, thirty people were killed and scores more were injured.

Initially welcomed by the Catholic community as a safeguard against Protestant violence, the soldiers soon came to be viewed as a hated army of occupation. By the early 'seventies, and especially after imprisonment without trial was introduced in 1975, 'the Troubles' had developed into a bitter civil war – a war fought as much between the Provisional IRA (the 'Provos') and British troops as between the two religious communities. While Protestant groups such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) occasionally attacked British soldiers, their violence was mainly directed against Catholics.

These images formed part of a photo essay on the lives of Belfast's children in the Catholic Falls Road area in late 1969.

Left: Despite their poverty, the hardships they faced on a daily basis, the children of the Falls Road were as friendly, enthusiastic and curious as kids anywhere.

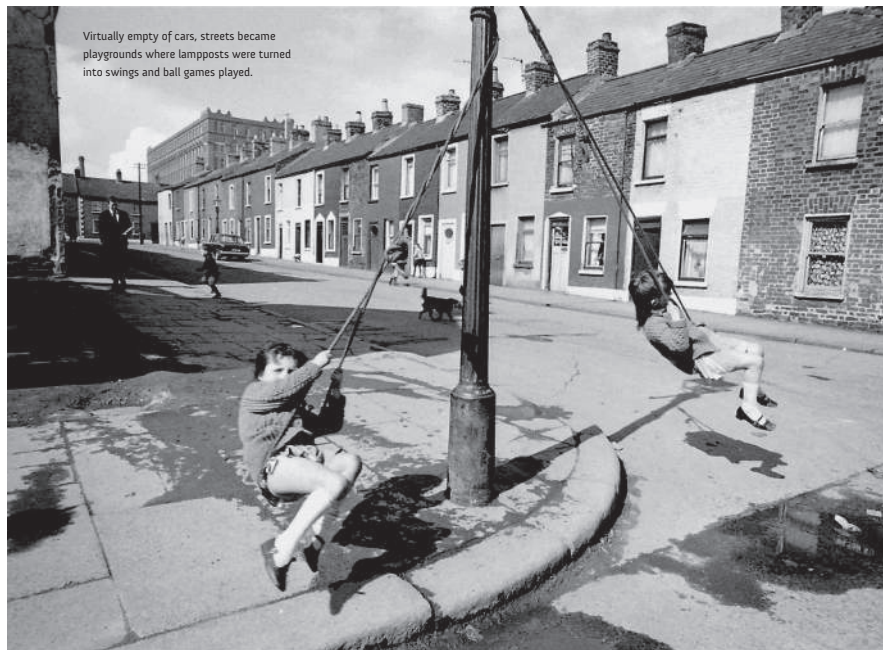


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Right: While living conditions for many Catholics were appalling, not every house was as depressing as this kitchen of the one on the left.





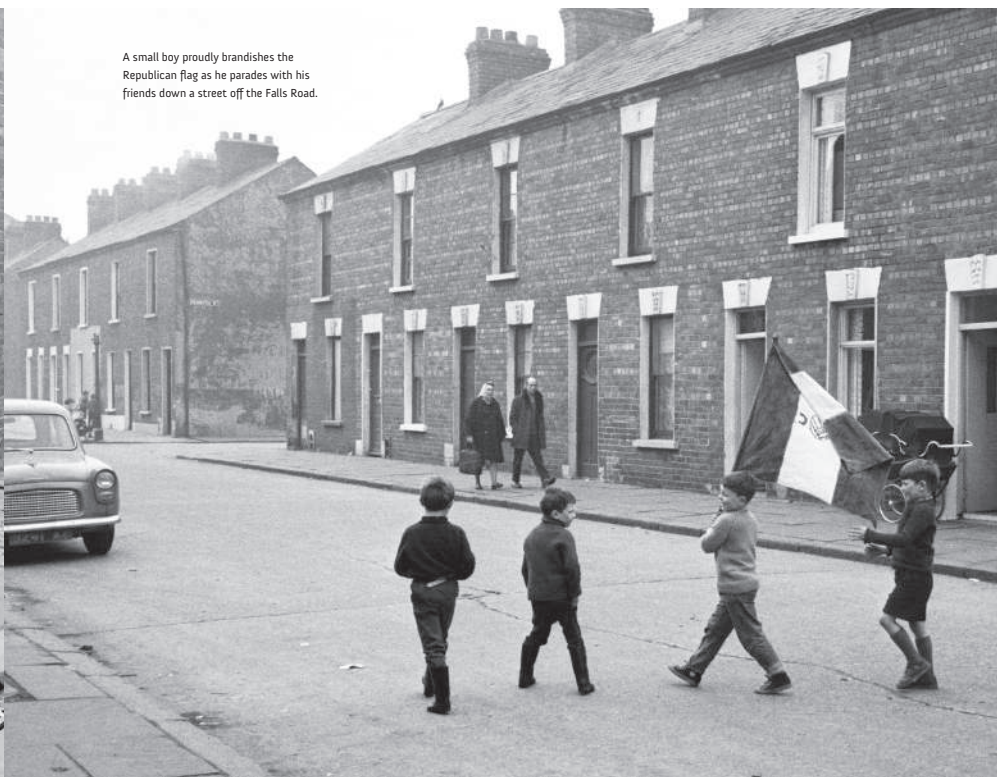
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A girl attempts to earn a little extra money for her family by selling secondhand clothes in the Falls Road area.



A small boy proudly brandishes the Republican flag as he parades with his friends down a street off the Falls Road.



Left: A seventeen-year-old boy shows the stitches in his head caused, he claimed, by a truncheon blow from a member of the B Specials. These were one of three branches of the Ulster Special Constables, created in 1920. Part-time and unpaid volunteers, they undertook 'occasional duties' and were especially loathed and feared by the Catholic Community. Many regarded them as Protestant thugs in uniform. The Specials were disbanded in 1970 and replaced with the Ulster Defence Regiment.

Right: In 1969 more than 2,000 Orange Order marches were held in Northern Ireland with what Louis MacNeice described as 'the voodoo of the Orange bands, drawing an iron net through darkest Ulster.'

John Brown, a historian of the Order, summed up their importance: 'On 12 July and other occasions the Orangeman marched with his lodge behind its flags and drums to show his strength in the places where he thought it would do most good. Where you could walk you could dominate and other things followed.'

A small boy at the head of this marching band appears somewhat less impressed







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A 'Sixties Childhood

For most children the 'sixties offered the best and worst of childhoods.

With the dislocations and shortages of the '40s and '50s fading into memory, children had more freedom and greater opportunities than their parents and grandparents. Food rationing had ended in 1954 and shops were filling up with ever more goods, including toys, games and sweets.

The baby boomers' war-weary parents, having nothing when children, showered their offspring with the best they could afford. In the words of Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, most youngsters *'had never had it so good.'*

Children of all ages were not only allowed to take risks they were actively encouraged to do so. At the same time childhood meant the restrictions imposed by the law of the land, by middle class notions of respectable behaviour and, for many, by grinding poverty. Sunday was, for most children and many adults, the dreariest day of the week. The Lord's Day Observance Act, passed in 1780, made it an offence for *'any premises to which the public paid for admission to be used for public entertainment or amusement on Sundays'*. Cinemas and theatres remained closed as did most shops, the exception being newsagents whose opening hours were strictly limited. For most youngsters the day involved going to church in your best clothes, often on two or three occasions, and sitting quietly through endless sermons. In many homes, not just especially religious ones, boisterous games were forbidden and quiet reflection the order of the day.

Right: Away from his martial arts training (see page 20), Sean Rodgers appears at fairs around the country where he displays some of his feats of strength and endurance, including having paving slabs smashed on his head by his sledge hammer wielding father.



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Fred Rodgers taught his 10-year-old son Sean to fight 'like a man,' in order to defend himself against any form of attack. Sean was able to smash roof tiles with his head and throw an adult twice his size. Using a training regime so tough that many might today regard it as child abuse. Kung-Fu master Fred claimed in 1972 to have created the toughest little boy in Britain.



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Major Monkman's Blackshirts

The 'Major', who described himself as a 'firm disciplinarian,' believed gruelling assault courses, no holds barred combat training, long route marches and unquestioning obedience could transform 'long-haired yobs' into 'respectable citizens'. 'Before I get them they are misfits', he said. 'Now they've had their hair cut short, dress and move sharply, call me 'Sir' and obey me instantly.'

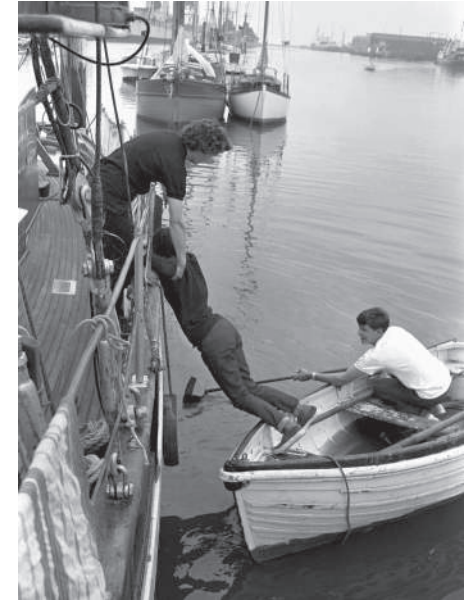
In 1968 his troop of black uniformed youngsters brought back unwelcome memories of Nazi storm troopers to many who had lived through the war.



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If the boys can't go to a mountain, then why not bring the mountain to the boys? That was the philosophy of the headmaster of a Seaford preparatory school when, in 1962, he constructed a 50ft high artificial mountain on the playing fields for teaching students how to climb.



The Ocean Sailing School offered young people sea voyages on a traditional sailing craft. Modern parents might be shocked that none were wearing buoyancy aids.



Eccentric Inventions

Not all inventions in the 'sixties proved practical. Indeed, many were downright eccentric.

The autogyro was designed and flown by Wing Commander Ken Wallis, a former RAF pilot, in the early 'sixties. He had hoped it might help commuters beat rush-hour congestion, but only a few were ever flown privately, most by Ken himself. In 1967 he piloted an autogyro named Little Nellie in the James Bond film *You Only Live Twice*.

Another unlikely form of transport was a transparent, box-shaped car developed by French-Vietnamese designer and engineer Quasar Kahn and produced in limited numbers between 1967 and 1968.

Other 'sixties inventions were even more bizarre. They include sunglasses with wiper-blades to cope with unexpected downpours, a radio-controlled tortoise for the child who had everything and a fake nipple fitted with a radio.

Left: The battery-driven electric spaghetti fork invented by Richard Paul and being tested by diner Tricia Tilley in 1973, turned out to be more of a mess maker than a time-saver. Undeterred, Richard went on to invent the sunglasses fitted with wiper-blades (page 122) and the radio-controlled tortoise shown on page 124.





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Animal Crackers

Although the English's reputation as animal lovers is sadly sometimes unwarranted, some do form a powerful emotional bond with creatures ranging from horses to hippos and lions to elephants.

Right: Twenty-year-old keeper David Flower from Chessington Zoo developed an attachment with Delilah, the giraffe. It is unusual for any giraffe to let people get too close to them. Delilah was so aggressive with other keepers that they refused to go near her. But with David it was love at first sight. "She's all over me", he said, "sllobbering and showering me with kisses. I can't think of another keeper in the country who actually gets into the giraffe house and pets one."

Left: Chessington Zoo keeper Mark Duggen formed such a close bond with hippo Sally she allowed him to take care of her dental hygiene by opening really wide.



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Left: When it comes to getting the lion's share at feeding time, Lulu the lion cub knew a trick or two, as one-year-old Nicky Dellar found out to his cost in 1969.

Right: At Windsor Safari Park in Berkshire, Ramu, the two-ton killer-whale, allowed his trainer Doug Cartledge to scrub his teeth clean underwater. He even let Doug stick his head inside his mouth for a close-up look at his dental hygiene.



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Left: Oscar, a black-and-tan rough Griffon Bruxellois, learned to visit a nearby butcher and carry home a bone on the roller-skate cart devised by his owner Elizabeth Wright.

Below: Few cats would let a dog push them around, even when they are pets in the same family. But Lisa, a ten-month-old lioness and Plug, a terrier, formed a close friendship from the moment she arrived in the home of Mr and Mrs Leslie Clews in 1968. Each night Lisa slept in their living room but wouldn't settle until Plug had fallen asleep on her back.



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