

Chapter 1 –Blackburn before Acid House.

For this chapter, the research strongly suggests from the interviews obtained that people were fed up, there was high unemployment, a general attitude of apathy towards the work ethic, even those working described it as mundane. Recreation and entertainment seemed prescribed and limited as to what the town had to offer, and the culture of “drinking” alcohol being the dominant force at the time.

The research also suggests that before Acid House, Blackburns main forms of youth culture were the Football/Terrace culture,(also known as “*casual*”) with reference to the social and political right wing tendencies within these sub-cultures. Violence seemed to be normal activity within these sub cultures, and different gangs existed in the town of Blackburn. Elements of “racial tension” seemed very apparent within these groups of gangs. Blackburn was also described as being working class, with some of those interviewed choosing to work in the local industries the town had to offer.

Research also suggests an environment of people feeling restricted and certain parts of Blackburn being described as “*no-go*” areas. The research also suggests very little, if any, reference to drugs being evident until the era of 1985-87, where reference is given to a culture of electronic music and cannabis consumption. This combination does suggest a climate of change from the previous era. These examples from primary and secondary sources demonstrate the above mentioned (*please also see transcripts section*).

“When I think back to what Blackburn was like before acid house, there’s kind of an emptiness in comparison. Almost a dull bleakness, the highlights of the early 80’s for me, were going down the football on the Saturday following our local team – and an

almost certainty we fighting our rival supporters. For many and the many I knew, this had become the only excitement, that we could guarantee, and look forward to after a week at work” (*Transcript interview 1*)

“Well what exactly was there? Most of us just left school and went straight into town’s industries, most it was just meaningless manual work, like our parents had done with what I believe – as better working conditions. They had just started to phase out Thatcher’s youth training scheme, which was just a cop out to keep the unemployment rates down and give us some sense of security. There was not that much to do bar going out to your local and meeting up with your mates”. (*Transcript interview 2*)

“What exactly did we have to look forward to, for most of us in work at the time, we got the standard two weeks off in summer and then back to the grind. I guess when you look at any aspirations, what exactly did Blackburn have to offer. We kind of just had to get on with what was there. And there was not a right lot, in my opinion a large chunk of most that I knew, it was just work, out at the weekend, get drunk and back to work on a Monday”. (*Transcript interview 3*)

“Looking back it is quite grim really, left school and got a clerical job, you would go out at the weekend, what exactly was so great about Rick Astley and Jason Donovan? Going out in 86 especially with northern culture was’ent exactly exciting was it? You had the tail end of the punk rock scene, loads of the likes of Duran Duran, it was inevitable that something had to change”. (*Transcript interview 4*)

“Blackburn was kind of like anywhere else saturated by 80’s culture. The thing you have got to remember is 1985 was quite a pivotal time in youth culture – music, fashion and attitude were the domineering force.” (*Transcript interview 5*)

“Football hooliganism was at its peak, there was a heavy sense of hostility and rivalry, certain places were a definite no go. For example, most of the key places to go, entailed a criteria, mainly a sense of identity. If anything these forums, were exclusive and not inclusive, social status and personal political views counted” (*Transcript interview 6*)

“The casual movement was the culmination of many things. Working-class kids in expensive clothes were not new. Neither was football violence. But the casual movement created a look unique to the mod/spiv football hooligan. Mooching around in a Tacchini track suit and fighting in your local team's '*firm*' became the '*thing to do*'. All football clubs had a hooligan element. The casual uniform meant everyone could join if they had the right labels.”

(2005-Mark Elgin-<http://www.drugtext.org/library/articles/945108.htm>)

“Looking back, most of the towns youth cultures, were mostly dominated by the terrace culture, and the social attitudes that came with it, an extension of this was the right wing tendencies, a by-product was the ongoing conflict in nearby ethnic communities, mainly the Asian community in the Whalley Range part of Blackburn. It was common for white youths to be fighting with Asian youths and vice versa. Violence was a weekly occurrence and pitched battles were common”. (*Transcript interview 7*)

“It had become quite normal, to some extent, to be involved in some form of violent activity. Two of the towns more prominent gangs, namely Blackburn youth and Mill Hill, were constantly clashing, and this was no conflict with specific right wing politics, more of a territorial and power conflict. One thing is for sure, there was an air

resonating around Blackburn, that reminded me of the skin head boot boy mentality – wrong place – wrong time – and you were gonna to get it!” (*Transcript interview 8*)

“If you were young - especially if you lacked qualifications - there was a lot to be pissed off about, and crap pop music was the least of your problems. Career wise you were probably already on the scrapheap.” (9.2005-The sandman –Marque moon - <http://www.insanerantings.com/hell/marquee/>)

“There was also high unemployment and for some, the prospect of aYTS (youth training scheme) programme was considered a joke. For many that did not work in the towns various industries, a lot just got by on the dole, and subtle forms of criminal activity. What you have got to remember is that alcohol was more dominant within the weekend recreation. It was not until 1985–6, that cannabis made an appearance in a few other social circles”. (*Transcript interview 9*)

“One things for sure, at the tail end of 86 early 87, there was a definite shift in the way people were thinking, probably if not definitely, by the rise of pot culture and electronic music.Places occupied by the towns more dominate gangs, slowly started to become more accessible and less violent, there was a more social element contrasting to an era where violence went hand in hand” (*Transcript interview 10*)

Chapter 2. Drug Culture before the parties.

The dominant youth culture started experimenting, and recreationally taking drugs such as Lsd, Cannabis and Magic mushrooms. There seems a notable rise in these activities from 1985, there is a definite change 1-2 years before the acid parties begin and these cultures become more popular. The musical culture of this group is more sporadic as Hip-Hop and other forms of electronic music become more popular. This culture evolves and grows in Blackburn.

Other sub-cultures and drugs are mentioned, but these sub cultures are from different decades, with specific reference given to movements such as hippies, bikers, ex mod's and ex punks. It seems there is a more established culture of drug use and lifestyle of these people, and the age range does not suggest they are teenagers but people in their 30-40's. Opiate abuse is apparent, but is linked with an earlier generation from the Northern Soul scene. Availability of some substances indicates that the main supply of these substances comes from an older crowd who are not directly associated to the youth culture at the time. However the youth culture are influenced by the music ,fashion, and culture from the previous generations. Availability of Ecstasy is not apparent within this era.

“There was a very subtle shift in drug culture in the mid 80's namely 1986, I remember being sat in the beer garden at our local, and there was some activity going on in the bottom corner. I did not quite know what they were doing, I got introduced to one of them, and he passed me a spliff, that was the first time I smoked cannabis”.

(Transcript interview 12)

“We had always had an underground drug culture in Blackburn, nothing compared to the acid house thing, most of it was done very hush hush. A lot of the connections were mainly for drugs such as speed, hash and LSD, it definitely was not main stream. Most of the connections to get the drugs from, were old hippies and biker types, and most of them did not drink in your conventional pubs” (*Transcript interview 13*)

“Drugs were always there – you just have know where to find them. Connections from the old northern soul scene were scattered all around Lancashire, and although it was no where near the epidemic of the late 80’s, if you knew the right people – you could access any upper and downer you wanted”. (*Transcript interview 14*)

“Pick Up Bank Festival that happened on the moors of Darwen, was just an extension of the 60’s. You would have all these hippies and travellers come up once a year and have a small festival, this went on for quite a while from the 70’s to the early 80’s, so when I think drug culture, this was about as big as it got here, and once a year you would meet up for a week or so, have a get together and then back to your homes”. (*Transcript interview 15*)

“The first time we ever saw a spliff was, when we would be over at all dayers in Manchester, this was like 85, and it was not the kids that were puffing weed, but mostly people in their early twenties, that had connections with the soul scene, and their connections with the northern soul scene. Then you had the whole blues party and reggae vibe, and you was always gonna find nice hash there”. (*Transcript interview 16*)

“I would not say Blackburn had much if any exposure to black culture, I think there was like three black families that lived in the town from the 70’s to the mid 80’s.

Part of any black sub culture, entails small smoking weed, that's part of the whole blues party scene. I'm not getting into all that race and stereo type crap, my point is that any prolific subculture always has its roots with music, with music there is drugs. I'd even go as far as to say that Blackburn's first acid house party was its first blues party"

(Transcript interview 17)

"We first smoked weed in late 1985, over a period of the next two years, from various connections we practically knew someone for Hash, someone for Speed and someone for LSD. We also knew people ,that knew other people for substances like Heroin and Dicanol, this was before anyone from these parts had ever took ecstasy, all these different people that I come to know, somehow had connections with more prominent events musically, culturally and been active within them. People that were hippies, ex-punks, mods and rockers, people that had attended blues parties, heavy metal heads, and veterans of the northern soul scene. So most definitely I would say we had a drug culture before acid house". *(Transcript interview 18)*

"There was a big thing with solvents from probably 77 to about 83, I can't remember anyone I knew taking glue, gas, thinners or aerosols after that era, it almost diminished over night. I think it's interesting and kinda ironic, that by the time punk was over, Malcolm McLaren had brought out Buffalo Gals in 1982, and when you think of early British hip hop culture, there is no immediate association with drugs of any sort, most of the kids then, were in their very early teens, and it was not until breakdancing took a back seat in the mid 80's, that we had the soul all-dayers, and then from soul we had the early sounds of house. I would say it was these events that forged a new mindset, you have got to remember that the most defining youth culture in Blackburn at the time

was hooliganism, and you also had pockets of the hip – hop thing going off there. Now most of the heads at the time from Blackburn, were in Manchester either for the music or the trouble, and most of the older lot were smoking weed. Its these influences that had a big impact within Blackburn, Mick Jones’s band Big Audio Dynamite, were also big here, fusing punk – reggae with electronica. For many that had not experimented with drugs beforehand, this era in Blackburn was revolutionary, politically and socially things started to become more accessible, straying away from the conflict, a lot of people by now had got sick and tired, of the whole fighting thing”. (*Transcript interview 19*)

“Towards the very end of the 70’s, when the Wigan Casino finally closed its doors, there was a crew that gradually started taking downers and heroin, we would mainly travel over from Blackburn to Manchester, and occasionally Bradford. A lot of people got in and got out, however there was a few of us that stayed hooked and later went on to become registered heroin addicts with the Home Office – and prescribed methadone. It is not the sort of thing that everyone went looking for – however Blackburn did have an ongoing opiate problem, it was relatively small, but it was there”. (*Transcript interview 20*)

“Smack became a big problem in Manchester around 1979” (Walsh. P. (2003). *Gangwar*. Milo Books page 27)

“I think the magic of that scene was lost for me around 1979, when the drugs thing really got out of hand” (211)

“When the casino closed, it left a massive hole for me” (Winstanley. R (1996). *Soul Survivors: The Wigan Casino Story*. Robson Books- Page 159)

“We ended up scoring a weed from some hippies over in Darwen, it was 1987, I remember it quite clear, cos the hippies were on about the mushrooms season, we’d never taken them before, and just went and picked half a carrier bag full of them, dried them out and took them. This was my first experience with tripping out, not long after there were various batches of LSD doing the rounds in Blackburn. A lot of people were experimenting with LSD and mushrooms long before they organised any sort of acid house party in Blackburn, it was’nt massive but within a year before ecstasy arrived most of the people had either tried or continued experimenting with LSD or magic mushrooms”. (*Transcript interview 21*)

Chapter 3. Gang Culture-The start of the Parties.

Blackburn starts to hold its own Acid Parties, most people attending are from Blackburns varying gangs. Trouble and violence seems to dissipate overnight-and Ecstasy becomes available for sale in Blackburn at these events. These events start to become more intercultural from the growth of the different sub cultural groups attending and this evolving into the dominant culture. Previous limitations from class, race and social and political issues become inclusive and certain parts of the town, previously no go areas for some, start to become safer to frequent. There is an undercurrent of criminal activity within the gangs from Blackburn.

These events snowball from the hundreds to the thousands who start to attend the Sett End on a Friday/Saturday night. Media and police interest is minimal , but as the numbers grow , that interest becomes more apparent by the time “Live The Dream” a marquee event is staged in Blackburn. (*Please see the section from the Lancashire Evening Telegraph in appendix*) The police seem powerless to contain the problem, and law and legislation seem restricted as to what exactly they can do. Large parties start to take place in Blackburn every weekend.(*Please see location/dates section in appendix*)

“Two of the first venues that became forums for Blackburns acid house epidemic, were two very small clubs, called C’est la Vies and Crackers. At the very most the capacity must have been 150 people tops, most of the people that occupied the premises, were from some form of gang background. This was the first time – rival gangs mixed together in one space, as well as quite a relaxed atmosphere, violence was rare if anything non-existent. The common goal had become music and drugs – ecstasy was available –

but not everyone was taking it most of the people that I knew were mostly taking LSD, cannabis and alcohol at this stage ecstasy was going for £20 a tablet”. (*Transcript interview 22*)

“It is imperative to document this in the history of what happened next, because all of a sudden things had gone from an environment of mindless misdirected violence, to where most people were starting to get on with each other. I think most people were still in the process of acknowledging what was happening – for the first time you had people that used to be fighting with each other – actually getting on, this was pivotal in what happened next”. (*Transcript interview 23*)

“Two of the most dominant gangs in Blackburn being Blackburn youth and Mill Hill, both with a venomous rivalry. One of the interesting things that happened was the overnight amnesty that took place within political and class tendencies that were prevalent within these two groups. I think it is fair to say that most of the people involved at this stage, were politically either right or left wing, and these values were shared by both gangs. The interesting thing being that all of a sudden you had all these people in one place, at one time, and the ironic thing being that much of the music that was being played that forged the events to follow had its roots traditionally with black culture”. (*Transcript interview 24*)

“Even amongst all the gang culture that was going on at the time, any sort of intercultural interaction within any of these communities was minimal, or didn’t exist. Blackburn wasn’t like let say Manchester, Birmingham or London, where you had have pockets of multi cultural activities. The best thing that happened from these early events was it formed a catalyst of people that sent out a very concise message. Things are changing and

its an open invitation for all. If Blackburn did ever have a seminal blues party, then this was it”. (*Transcript interview 25*)

“As the weeks went on, there was something that started to become very tribal about it. Where at one point you’d had all these separate gangs and communities, and everything being inaccessible, you’d suddenly emerged into a new collective. It was an exciting time, rich in cross culture, everyone from scallies, potheads, ex breakdancers, a really important stage. Everything had changed overnight, and everyone was inviting everyone they knew to the next one. It spread by word of mouth, and more new people were coming down weekly”. (*Transcript interview 26*)

“Most of the people that were attending at this stage, were mostly from gangs, and involved in some form of criminal activity, there was also a small number of people that held down 9-5 jobs”. (*Transcript interview 27*)

“The first party that took place in Blackburn –which was not inside a venue or someone’s home, was at an old disused bike shop on Whitehead St. It was held in the heart of the Asian community, and there was no trouble, people were no longer interested in trouble, they were too busy getting on with the party. The interesting thing with the location of this event was only a couple of months earlier, this area would have been a no-go area - to many of the towns gangs, the people who were at that party were from different gangs, the party itself held in a no go area, I think that speaks volumes!”. (*Transcript interview 28*)

“Its from this point –that things started to come together, this small following of people were instrumental in finding the venues, getting the word out, and getting hold of the equipment to stage a party. At this stage the door tax was very low, I remember them

only charging £2 to get in, most of the money raised just went to cover the overheads, venue and equipment. The Djs would get a small wage, who always use the money to buy more vinyl to be played the next week. It all had a right DIY feel to it”. (*Transcript interview 29*)

“Over a period of 6 months, what started out as a stronghold of 150 people quickly transformed to a following of at least 4-500 ,we did have parties then, but there was no media highlight and little ,if no interference from the police, most of the parties we had then were in very small industrial units, and there was a few that went off, in the barn on Finnington Lane, not so far from where Live The Dream was staged.After Crackers and C’est la Vie, we ended up at a working mens club on Shadsworth Rd in Blackburn called the Sett End. The Lancashire Evening Telegraph went on to describe us as an acid mob. It was at the Sett End that this mob got bigger, this is the stage were the bigger parties started and the term warehouse came from, there was usually more people outside the club than in it !, the parties were not getting any smaller. By this point we had people travelling over, from all over the place, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham. Coming out of the club there at 2am, believe me it was pandemonium, absolutely mental, the police couldn’t do a thing”. (*Transcript interview 30*)

“Its at this stage, that things were really getting mad, the warehouses we needed got bigger, it started getting like a military operation, we had scanners on the go, people leading convoys, sound equipment being smuggled into the venues during the daytime. It started becoming quite comical, because the police were hellbent in trying to contain and stop it all, and to be upfront, they were losing the battle, I don’t think at that stage they

were even aware of what they were up against. It was at the Sett End that things got bigger!”. (*Transcript interview 31*)

Chapter 4. Manchester and The Hacienda.

Seminal sub cultures from Blackburn cite Manchester and the Hacienda as being prominent in influence. Various sub cultures namely the “*Casual*” culture have a fond affinity with Factory records, artists such as Joy Division and New Order being the flavour of the day. Manchester has a long history of culturally influencing all prominent previous cultures and sub cultures in the North West of England. Manchester and the Hacienda seem to have strong links with popular culture, and like all cities, these places contribute to the national and regional culture.

Older members from Blackburns various sub cultures, mainly involved with the “*Terrace/Casual*” culture would come over here and inherit the next new wave of fashion, music and attitude and hence, the younger generation from Blackburn become influenced by the older generation. The earlier breakdancing/hip-hop generation from Blackburn would also come over to Manchester regularly, and take back latest style and fashion and dance, people from these sub cultures were dominantly teenagers and not an older crowd.

The first batch of ecstasy to reach Blackburn was from Manchester, and other pastimes from the “*Casual*” culture suggest criminal activity in other ways. A growing number of people from Blackburn were regulars at the Hacienda, and people from the Hacienda also travelled to Blackburns Acid House Parties. Manchester was seen and valued as a seminal place that influenced every sub culture in the surrounding regions.

“Well Manchesters always been so influential on whatever I was into, you look at anything that was relatively cool or fashionable, and the Hacienda’s had its input. Even

before the acid house thing went off, Manchester and the Hacienda influenced so much, especially the outer regions such as Blackburn. Most of the sub cultures I was involved in, always had some sort of reference to what was coming out of Manchester”.

(Transcript interview 32)

“I’d always been into the Factory scene, and some of the more obscure music , that was coming on their label. My older brother had been well into the whole mod/punk phase, and known all the older lot, with the terrace thing. Musically the Hacienda was somewhere we had started going for the love music and going out, it was just the whole vibe of going and seeing bands live, still is. We had the King Georges Hall over here in Blackburn, but it was nothing like going to the Hacienda. My older brother first took me there ,to see New Order in 1982”. (Savage, J. (2002) *The Hacienda Must Be Built*.

International Music Publications Page 75)

“It would be the generation above us who influenced us and educated us in fashion, style and attitude. Everyone that I knew were going over to Manchester to watch bands, get the vinyl, trainers and clothes. We loved going over there, there was loads to do, we were well into the lifestyle and it was happening there!”. *(Transcript interview 33)*

“One thing that Manchester’s always had is influence. All the people that we looked upto in Blackburn were always over there, I remember being 13 or 14 in 84 and hearing stories from my older brother. He was big into the terrace thing, and they were a right set of smart bastards, always dressed smart. Regionally Manchester was a massive influence, culturally there was more going on there, no surprise that all our top lads were going over there. What they were bringing back were all the latest accessories to style

and culture. There was a big thing back then in the 80's with the older lot travelling over abroad and robbing places like Switzerland. They didn't just end up there! Regular visits to Manchester forged connections, then connections and visits-influenced style and shared values. It was the nearest city to us, and it did influence us, and we were respected". (*Transcript interview 34*)

"In a town like Blackburn, if you want to stand out, you have got to make an effort to be different. They brought back clothes to the town, that you couldn't get anywhere else in England, never mind Blackburn. You would see kids from Blackburn who had nothing, who were signing on, but who would be dressed immaculately". (Wright, S.1999. *DAZED and CONFUSED MAGAZINE*. Article titled – A northern town Page 111)

"Its no coincidence, that by the time Blackburn had its first house party, that the ecstasy responsible for that party had come from Manchester. The connections responsible for the availability of the ecstasy were from Manchester, and them connections from friendships and criminal activity of the early 80's. Blackburn were regulars amongst the hordes in the Hacienda in 88". (*Transcript interview 35*)

"No matter if it was electronica, hip hop or very early house music that I was buying, we would always come to Manchester to buy it. Most of the records we bought, were already entwined with an established dance culture ,most of the artists we were buying, had either played there live-or been showcased at the Hacienda, everyone had played there, right from Kurtis Blow to Lloyd Cole and the Commotions". (*Transcript interview 36*)

“We were in the Hacienda in 1985, it was the only place in the north west that staged an event of that size. We would travel over to Manchester weekly, mainly to a place called the Ardwick, next to the Apollo. Stylistically this is where we would exchange dance moves and develop more elaborate moves for the battle the week after, we came over every weekend, it was very influential. I remember when the breaking thing finished, seeing the Foot Patrol crew doing their thing in the Hacienda-when the whole jacking thing went off”. (*Transcript interview 37*)

“We first went to the Hacienda in 88, that’s where I took my first E, and we only took half each. Throughout 88 we were over there weekly, and then onto the Kitchen over in Hulme. The whole thing about Manchester and the Hacienda was there was no where like it. Over a few months, between a few of us, we decided to put a night on back over in Blackburn, by the time we were at the Settle End, regulars we used to see in the Hacienda became regulars at our parties. The Hacienda even brought their club night over to Blackburn in the early 90’s”. (*Transcript interview 38*)

“There were parties, mini-raves, big raves, either the organisers or the people holding them, came to the Hacienda, and it all spread out from there”. (Savage, J. 2002. *The Hacienda Must Be Built*. International Music Publications Page 43)

“Very simply, if it wasn’t for the Hacienda, Manchester and ecstasy, Blackburn would never have had a party”. (*Transcript interview 39*)

Chapter 5. Law, Legislation and Other Problems.

With the evolving culture of the parties, and police attempts not proving successful in stopping them, the party organizers started to accommodate the thousands turning up at the weekend in bigger warehouses, and became more advanced in their efforts in how they orchestrated and actualized this. However as the parties got bigger, so did the problems. Criminals and gangsters from Manchester, often with guns, started to attend the parties at this stage. Media attention was growing and the parties were in the local tabloids weekly. Criminal Damage and the increase in offences committed became a weekly occurrence at the parties. The local media report more on this and increase the “*moral panic*”, things seemed to be getting out of control, at this point the movement was getting pretty hard to contain from the organizers point of view. This was also the opinion of the people attending and the police.

The police strategically stepped up their efforts and operation to stop the parties, roadblocks were set up to make it impossible to get to the Sett End in Blackburn. Blackburn council revoked the Sett Ends licence from the landlord and the club closed down. (*Please see Sections-Lancashire Evening Telegraph*) Graham Brights new entertainment bill was introduced, giving increased power in the form of higher fines and longer minimum imprisonment for holding unlicensed events. Blackburns Acid House parties had come to an end.

“Its like anything else, the parties started out like any small cottage industry, and week by week , the parties were getting bigger and bigger. The laws they had in place , before the introduction of Graham Brights entertainment bill which was imposed in 1990, were practically useless and had very little effect to try and contain what was happening with the warehouse parties. The only reason the parties stopped was the increase in risk of getting caught, and the police became more resourceful in stopping them”. (*Transcript interview 40*)

“They were up against a massive problem, one being the amount of empty obtainable industrial space that Blackburn occupied. Between 2 or 3 of us, we would spend most part of the week before the party, scouting about locations for where the party was going to be held the following Saturday. The worst case scenario, was in the eventuality of being caught, was a charge for commercial break in, which carried far less implications than a house break in, personally I was never caught”. (*Transcript interview 41*)

“As the parties began to develop to larger premises, so did our planning, we were very specific in our organization. We started to recruit people who were very good at what they did. We always knew the people to get the job done, we would usually meet up at the Vulcan pub in Blackburn , on a Monday after the party and review what worked and how we could improve it. We even had people on board for legal matters knowing exactly where we stood with the law, and how we could break it”. (*Transcript interview 42*)

“We had access to all of it, the doormen, the drugs, Dj’s, lighting and sound technicians, electricians, someone continuously monitoring the police airwaves, so as far

as controlling all this activity in our home town, we did. The real problems started when higher echelons of the criminal world started to attend our parties, and the introduction of the increased penalties with Graham Bright's bill, to be honest, the whole scene had started to completely move off in a direction that the parties weren't about, for me, enough was enough". (*Transcript interview 43*)

"The police must get tough with acid house anarchists. Enough is enough. This Acid House anarchy has got to stop.....How can it be that, as regular as clockwork, hordes of hooligans, bent on their own illicit pleasure, can descend on our areas, smash their way into private property, thieve, vandalise and destroy?". (*Lancashire Evening Telegraph 14/2/90*)

"Brights entertainment bill wouldn't create a new criminal offence or give authorities new powers, it would simply raise the maximum fines for unlicensed parties from £2000 to £20,000, and six months imprisonment". (Collin,M. 1997. *Altered States-Serpents Tail*- Page 112)

"We were there one night doing the door and things were going fine, and we noticed over a few weeks, a few faces that had never attended before. The numbers of these faces grew week by week and before we knew it ,some of the other doormen had been approached with guns, it had all started to get way out of hand ,turned out that these faces were from Manchester, namely a Salford firm". (*Transcript interview 44*)

"By the time the telegraph had unleashed the campaign against Smiths raves, you were dealing with a whole new ball game, the disused warehouses couldn't house the thousands that were turning up every weekend. The only places that could house the new droves were the big new industrial purpose built warehouses like the one used for the

party in Altham on the industrial estate. As the numbers grew, so did the problems, there was a new element to the parties, the arrival of the opportunist. These people weren't interested in spirit, freedom and the right to party or anything else, they were opportunists and fuelled by gain-monetry and personal gain". (*Transcript interview 45*)

"A gang of six or seven of us, and we'd ask who was running the rave, these big heavy doormen would be there, and they'd be looking at us confused, thinking who the fuck are these? So they'd say, why? who wants to know? All of a sudden the guns would come out and we wanted the whole nights takings. Raves were made for violent young criminals. Older heavies were not interested, they didn't know what was going on, didn't understand the scene at all. It was wide open for the football hooligans, the robbery gangs, the bodybuilders, and the scallies. On another occasion, twenty Salford turned up at a warehouse party in Blackburn and a petrified doorman stammered 'the moneys in the back room'". (Walsh, P. 2003. *Gangwar* . Milo Books page 67)

"What had started off as something quite organic and beautiful, soon became something quite ugly and violent, plagued with opportunists and commercial interests. Any true spirit of what the original parties started out as was rapidly becoming a thing of the past, increased door prices, moody atmospheres and people getting taxed. For a lot of people the party was over. For many that were just getting into it, their party had just begun, the warehouse scene was about to end and did end with the last party in Nelson – Lancashire. The next scene that unfolded was licensed events and the birth of rave, pretty contradictory really when you think, where's the freedom and spirit when the states in control?". (*Transcript interview 46*)

“Whilst the parties stayed relatively small, lets say with numbers between 500-600, the amount of problems we were encountering were relatively small. Most of the spaces we occupied at this point were disused industrial spots, barns and lock ups. There was no external pilfering going on within the immediate surroundings, Everyone knew everyone that was there, people just had the party, got the equipment in and out and went home. It was that straightforward. My point is that it contained itself, the police weren't all that bothered, and if there was something that was unacceptable within the party and the people –it would get sorted”. (*Transcript interview 47*)

“At first, the police were not very interested in a relatively small number of people engaging in the intake of illegal substances such as ecstasy, even though it was listed as a class A drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. It was only when thousands of people became involved, attending large social gatherings after the entertainment curfew of 2 am and seen to be enjoying themselves like the 'rich', that the social order was destabilised”. (Redhead, S. 1990. *Rave Off*. Aldershot Books Page 193)

“The local telegraph was making a right meal out of it. It had almost become a running joke on a Monday, with the same headlines, Acid yobs again-the parties started gaining a reputation now for mass pilfering and theft. Some people started to attend these events with these things specifically in mind, whilst the majority just danced into the early hours-others were out and about in the immediate surroundings helping themselves. I have also heard stories and conspiracies that undercover police were wholly responsible to network more panic into the local media and to generate more hostility towards the acid house movement. I remember talking to a neighbour of mine who had just been down to pick his telegraph up, this guy was completely freaked out, he was losing faith

with the system. I remember his comments-the law, legislation and the police are a complete waste of time-this is a mockery. The average joe public were starting to become disillusioned with the state of it all”. (*Transcript interview 48*)

“Lancashire police arrested more than 20 people after stopping hundreds of cars at six roadblocks in Blackburn in an operation to prevent acid house parties. A spokesman said the operation would be repeated for several weeks or months until the organisers give up”. (*The Guardian* 12/3/90)

“When they started clamping down, they did so with the same organisation, and precision as we did with the parties. They had identified all the main organisers, and by now they had extra resources, they were making it impossible to get into Blackburn. Any major route into the town was now getting road blocked and people were getting turned away, you couldn’t have a party without the people”. (*Transcript interview 49*)

“A combined intelligence unit drawn up from twelve police forces. The Home Office’s most powerful computer system. Sophisticated radio scanners. Monitoring of underground magazines. Light aircraft, helicopters, road blocks and arbitrary arrests. These surely are the hallmarks of a totalitarian state”. (Saunders, N. 1995. *E is for Ecstasy*. London Vertigo –Page 166)

“Me and Tony looked at each other and knew in each others eyes and hearts that something beautiful was being destroyed. We just disappeared, I went to America”.

(Collin, M. 1997. *Altered States-Serpents Tail*- Page 167)

Chapter 6. Drug Culture after the Parties.

Notable dramatic changes in general drug use in Blackburn occurred. Subsequent availability of various substances are described as increasing and more easily available. People, and the culture of the distribution of these substances becomes more popular. Drug use becomes so popular within the masses that it becomes acceptable, because most people are doing it and has become the norm in the new youth movement.

An increasing number of people are taking other class” A” drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine. Due to the parties being stopped by the police, new dance nights spring up in Blackburn in licensed and controlled premises. This culture now becomes the norm, violence at these events seems to be influenced by the rise in rival gangs/gangsters fighting for territory and control of the clubs doors and distribution of drugs inside these events and premises. The movement still develops and different forms of dance music start to branch out and evolve into other forms of dance music.

“By the time the police had stopped the parties in early 1990, the whole drug culture had changed. Practically everyone that I knew were smoking weed, it had dramatically changed within an 18 month time period from 1989. This new culture of drugs, set the pace for the wave of what came next in the 90’s. Everywhere was saturated with drugs, everyone could openly get them from a simple phone call. The network of people you had got to know from the parties was phenomenal, there was a lot of supply

and a lot of demand. For some the ultimate fashion accessory had become being a “dealer”, it had started to become comical. Its at his point that I remember the term “acid-bastard” being brandished about, it made reference to mainly the speed fuelled ravers clad in their hooded tops. (*Transcript interview 50*)

“There was a massive influx of people that had never took drugs, and overnight in a matter of months had took speed ,ecstasy, hash and cocaine. See when the illegal warehouse parties stopped, drugs by that point had become what alcohol used to be in the 80’s. It wasn’t just minority groups that were using them, everyone was using them. It became more widespread when the parties stopped, because of licensed events and the rise of dance culture affecting popular culture, everyone was into it. Where taking drugs was once considered deviant, it was considered more deviant now if you didn’t take drugs. It was absolutely huge”. (*Transcript interview 51*)

“By 1991 it was all commercial, there were no illegal events left, it was all controlled, licensed, and more of a commodity. The term “rave” might as well been the new “pop”, and people were getting into it big time. It had gone from something small, to something uncontrollable, to something that was controlled. Over the next few years, it had gone from rave, to more elite organisations like “Renaissance”, which spurred on the birth of the superclubs. It was almost like there was a separate sound and identity for every class system in England at the time. Dance and drug culture was everywhere”. (*Transcript interview 52*)

“If you look at how diversified the whole culture went from 1990 onwards, its phenomenal, for every different style of music that emerged, you had a social etiquette and criteria to fulfil. A big part of this was the drugs you used. There’s no way of getting

away from it!. Bands such as the Happy Mondays, the Stone Roses and all that indie/dance crossover, everyone and everything was influenced in one form or another. It had affected popular culture in such a way that it became popular culture. Whatever drugs you were taking went hand in hand with the lifestyle you were living or emulating”. (*Transcript interview 53*)

“By the end of the parties in Blackburn, a lot of people were getting switched on to substances like heroin and crack cocaine. From my personal experience , something like 60-70% of all the people I knew from the parties had ended up choosing to get roped up in this activity. At the end of the parties, Blackburn had a massive problem with it, and still has. The parties and drugs had filled that void for a lot of people, when the parties finished, there was a big empty hole to fill. Everyone had spent a considerable time going up and up and up, and for many they come down in this manner. Id even go as far too say that the heroin and crack problem of the early 90’s was partly responsible for the availability of tranquilizers such as temazepam, and the problems we encountered with these drugs in the mid to late 90’s”. (*Transcript interview 54*)

“In the end, the convoys of cars that blocked up the towns streets disappeared. The innocence of the scene was quickly lost as power, money and drugs became more important than the music. Nationally the establishment caught up with the scene and challenged it via statute. Locally, draconian club laws stifled any chance of a legal all night club scene. The beginning of the 90’s were dark days, not just for acid house, but for Britain in general, for many energised by the towns parties now went on a downer, a lot of hard drugs got hold of the town, these were grim times” (Wright, S. 1999. *DAZED and CONFUSED MAGAZINE* Article titled – A northern town Page 112)

“While some cut down or dropped out of the scene, the chemical extremists cranked up the buzz, wolfing down more pills, speed or cocaine, and they soon found out that palliatives were necessary to return from orbit and manage the crushing comedown. Some of them did it with booze and spliffs, others with prescription tranquilizers like tamazepam, a few with heroin”. (Collin, M. 1997. *Altered States-Serpents Tail*- Page 287)

“Another spin off-from the drugs culture after the parties stopped was violence. As most of the culture evolved into legitimate licenced premises, so did the need for who controlled the door and the drugs. There was various nights that sprung up in Blackburn after the illegal parties had stopped, and it was getting more common where people were starting to get taxed, sporadic bouts of violence and regular brawls with the doormen, mostly rival gangs were responsible for these incidents. We had a situation, there was an individual from Blackburn selling ecstasy who’d taxed a Mancunian for drugs he was trying to sell in a Blackburn club. The repercussions were immense. A firm turned up from Manchester in Blackburn the following week, found an accomplice of the culprit from Blackburn, held him hostage, and threatened to cut off his fingers. They set a deal up, where they wanted re-imbursing for the pills that got taxed, and a time for when that money should be there for them, for every minute the money arrived late, they threatened to cut off a finger, the money turned up and the issue was resolved. Things were getting and spiralling more out of control, it was all getting a bit too much. Manchester had now been termed GUNCHESTER by the nationwide tabloids, and Manchester had its problems, as the gangs turned to gaining control of all the clubs doors”. (*Transcript interview 55*)

“This is June 1990, this is a different day, its like America, the way the ghettoes of America were flooded with crack and coke, and so where the ghettoes of England, and the gangs and guns are going to come”. (Brown, Ian. 1990. *Manchester University Article –Manchester University Student Newspaper*)

“The house movement has been herded into a capitalist kraal, club culture used to talk a lot about “freedom”. Its turning out to be the freedom to be farmed”. (Booth and Clibborn. 1995. *Highflyers*. London Page 156)

Chapter 7. Cultural influences - Intercultural.

Ecstasy was pivotal in uniting people, the use of this drug allowed people to mix and socialize more easily and freely. It broke down barriers between people, no other drug prior to ecstasy seems to have the capacity for what it did in Blackburn and the people participating with the immediate warehouse culture. Dance drugs become more popular, peoples cultural/social/ political values changed as ecstasy and the warehouse party culture grew. The events from 1988-1990 contributed regionally , nationally and globally in the evolving dance culture of the 1990's. Different musical influences now start to merge with dance music and sampling different music became more popular.

“There was that many different things going on at the time, that it would be hard to conclude exactly what contributed to the explosion in 1988. However, in my opinion, it was ecstasy that was at the hub of all activity, ecstasy was the central cog in the wheel, with the spokes representing the sub-cultures , and the new cultures that spun off it”.

(Transcript interview 56)

“If you look at all the cultural influences that Britain had going on at the time, there wasn't a single culture or drug that did what ecstasy did. Of course you had prominent sub-cultures, but nothing had the same overall impact. Ecstasy changed a lot of things”. *(Transcript interview 57)*

“Almost all recreational users saw MDMA, ecstasy, as a *people drug*. A social lubricant to be shared. They typically cited reduced inhibitions and enhanced

communication and closeness with others as the primary interpersonal attributes of the drug” (Beck, J. 1994. *Article on the pursuits of Ecstasy*-State University Press-New York.

“See I’d spent most of the 80’s travelling all over England fighting with rival football firms. The first time I had E-it was a serious wake up call!. It challenged my very being, for the first time I started to question my social, political and human values. I looked back at my previous history and felt quite ashamed, with my superiority of ignorance, racial contempt and unfounded beliefs. Ecstasy made me feel more accessible. A far cry from my sentiment with acts of mindless, unprovoked alcohol fuelled violence of the 80’s. It changed my life”. (*Transcript interview 58*)

“Dance drugs are the dominant youth culture of the 1990’s and, at time of writing, estimating that approximately 2 million people had taken dance drugs at raves, and that use had spread into most social groups”. (Hamilton, A. 1996. *Article on trends and recommendations on peoples drug use in Glasgow*. Crew publishing)

“Its like everything that was culturally influential got put in the equation with ecstasy the surest thing about it all was something else spawned from that equation. It was the most natural progression in the process” (*Transcript interview 59*)

“A by product of ecstasy use has got to be the mindset that people developed overnight. Id even go as far to say that it contributed to my new found political stance and the way I participate in the national election”. (*Transcript interview 60*)

“Ecstasy brought people together, its fact, it changed Britain full stop. The implications its had on the moral fibre of our country is immeasurable and not reversible. Its changed a mindset from the decade of the 80’s and influenced just about everything

ever since. Its funny when you think back to Thatcher's rule and how you'd had the culture of things being so separatist, and in contrast how inclusive things became in the 90's. Any sort of intercultural has dramatically improved Britain over the last 13 years, and that can only be a good thing". (*Transcript interview 61*)

"When you think about the latest laws that have been passed with cannabis, they haven't just arrived at that conclusion its been heavily influenced by the drug culture of the early 90's. The whole drug culture affected the whole of England and the countries attitude towards them issues. Would the government of been that lenient in 1985? Exactly! So when you think back, acid house and ecstasy are partly responsible for that shift, you would be a fool to think otherwise". (*Transcript interview 62*)

"It would be fair to say that the events of 89-90 evolved and contributed to the globalisation of dance culture. Its mad when you think back that the whole house music thing, and "X" drug culture , as it was known over there, was dominantly an American thing. From various British activity, it evolved and we were exporting back musical styles and scenes that evolved out of the acid house thing. The culture of 91-92 was responsible musically, for the birth of breakbeat, prototype jungle and raga, all infused with hip hop and dub influences". (*Transcript interview 63*)

"We would never of had "superclubs", if it wasn't for the dance culture of the late 80's and early 90's". (*Transcript interview 64*)

"Musically there was loads going on, and we were constantly influenced, you just had an eclectic mix of everything back in 86. Down our local you just had a combination of punks, rockers, bikers, hippies,s callies the odd rasta and maybe a handful of ethnic backgrounds. The menu of the day being alcohol and hash, it would be a melting pot of

musical affinity artists such as Pink Floyd, Marley, Led Zeppelin, Durutti Column, The – The, see when I think of culture and cross culture, this was a right web of fusion”.

(Transcript interview 65)

“Acid house was quite a mad era, musically and culturally there were that many different spin-offs, that you could probably write a book on it. I remember hearing that “strawberry fields forever”, the first time I heard that ,I thought “what the fuck – incredible”. They’d took a classic psychedelia tune and layered it over a slowed down sample of “James Browns-Funky Drummer” it sounded amazing”. *(Transcript interview 66)*

“Look at the whole sampling culture, much is owed to pioneers like the legendary Dj Kool Herc, who teased out the breaks from the favourite parts of the tracks. Then you had the whole thing with electronic drum machines. Arthur Baker producing New Orders “Confusion”, then the advancement of the very early house sound, then the acid house era. Now that’s just to name a few. Everyone was culturally influenced. People are still producing things today that still have reference points to the last five decades”. *(Transcript interview 67)*

“People are still putting on small one-off parties, and talking about the spirit of 89-90. That era is still valued, and when you go to parties, people still reference what was so good about the spirit of that era. Ive lost count to the amount of times people have mentioned Blackburn and the Hacienda”. *(Transcript interview 68)*

Conclusion.

Whilst undertaking this project it has become apparent that the contributing factors/influences in the evolution of the Blackburn Acid House/Warehouse parties are a combination of several factors for the events taking place in the town. The catalyst of these factors/influences indicate high unemployment, an apathy towards the work ethic, provided recreation and entertainment not being sufficient to the towns youth, people feeling restricted, Thatchers role in the 1980's contributing to social exclusion and disaffected youth, and the growing culture of violence acceptable within these sub cultures.

Within these immediate youth cultures, gangs are the most dominant, with specific reference given to the climate of football violence. Smaller pockets of other activity for the youth of Blackburn included the growing culture of Hip-Hop and previous Breakdancing subcultures. Within these subcultures, the research suggests multicultural activity either increased or decreased depending on the politics and social values shared by these groups.

Drug culture in Blackburn was identifiable within this era, but was underground, and not part of the lifestyle of the prominent youth cultures at the time. The variety of the drugs were used by an older crowd in different sub-cultures. In 1985-86 other factors/influences started the ball rolling. Various other sub-cultures and movements started to evolve in different directions due to a combination of previous sub-cultures, music, fashion and politics .Research does reveal a subtle change in drug use for the

youth of the town with experimentation and recreational use of drugs such as cannabis, LSD and magic mushrooms. Use of these drugs is linked with the rise of electronic music and a fusion of previous UK based trends/movements and the rise of Hip Hop music.

These influences and factors combine and evolve into the very early stages of the acid house movement in Blackburn. A lot of these early influences are shaped by various sub-cultures exposure and participation with events held in Manchester and specifically the Hacienda. There is a diverse range of these sub- cultures and the research pertains to Manchester being valued as a place where culturally it has a lot to offer and historically Manchester is described as seminal in influence in the variety of more prominent forms of Blackburns various youth and other sub –cultures. Connections to various criminal activities can also be linked to Manchester.

I would argue that from my findings and research, that the apparent reasons for the parties taking place in Blackburn in this era, are due only to the actions of the various people from Blackburn organising parties and the availability of accessible/empty industrial space to hold the parties in. I could find no other reasons given the time and resources to establish or suggest otherwise. A wide variety of drug use is sporadic and things dramatically start to change, aided by the social and recreational properties of the drug ecstasy.

The growing number of people attending the parties spiralled weekly. The police seemed powerless in combating the problem and the parties evolved into thousands of people attending Blackburn on a Saturday night in search of the warehouse party. The local tabloids coverage increased as did the interest of the police. The events became uncontrollable. Availability of drugs in the town and surrounding towns increased and the

now evolved sub-culture started to become more prominent, parties and drugs becoming the dominant recreation of the towns youth. As the parties flourished, there was added illegal commercial interest from various Manchester underworld figures. Gangsters start to attend the warehouse parties. The atmosphere and vibe of the parties started to change, and violence and firearms become more incidental.

As this movement grew, new laws were introduced from parliament that gave the regional police more resources to tackle the problem, and courts heftier fines and lengthy long term sentences for the organisers if caught. The police launched an operation to halt the parties and were successful in this task, it became very difficult to get into Blackburn on a Saturday night. The local council from Blackburn also revoked the licence for the Sett End nightclub. There was a growing culture of sporadic class A drugs being used in the Town. The warehouse parties ended, however more events took place, but in licensed and controlled legal clubs. From these events, new sub-cultures were born and different musical movements evolved within dance culture.

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APPENDIX AND TRANSCRIPTS.

Transcripts from Interviews nos 1 -67.

“When I think back to what Blackburn was like before acid house, there’s kind of an emptiness in comparison. Almost a dull bleakness, the highlights of the early 80’s for me, were going down the football on the Saturday following our local team – and an almost certainty we fighting our rival supporters. For many and the many I knew, this had become the only excitement, that we could guarantee, and look forward to after a week at work”

Transcript interview 1

“Well what exactly was there? Most of us just left school and went straight into town’s industries, most it was just meaningless manual work, like our parents had done with what I believe – as better working conditions. They had just started to phase out Thatcher’s youth training scheme, which was just a cop out to keep the unemployment rates down and give us some sense of security. There was not that much to do bar going out to your local and meeting up with your mates”.

Transcript interview 2

“What exactly did we have to look forward to, for most of us in work at the time, we got the standard two weeks off in summer and then back to the grind. I guess when you look at any aspirations, what exactly did Blackburn have to offer. We kind of just had to get on with what was there. And there was not a right lot, in my opinion a large chunk of most that I knew, it was just work, out at the weekend, get drunk and back to work on a Monday”.

Transcript interview 3

“Looking back it is quite grim really, left school and got a clerical job, you would go out at the weekend, what exactly was so great about Rick Astley and Jason Donovan? Going out in 86 especially with northern culture was’ent exactly exciting was it? You had the tail end of the punk rock scene, loads of the likes of Duran Duran, it was inevitable that something had to change”.

Transcript interview 4

“Blackburn was kind of like anywhere else saturated by 80’s culture. The thing you have got to remember is 1985 was quite a pivotal time in youth culture – music, fashion and attitude were the domineering force.

Football hooliganism was at its peak, there was a heavy sense of hostility and rivalry, certain places were a definite no go. For example, most of the key places to go, entailed a criteria, mainly a sense of identity. If anything these forums, were exclusive and not inclusive, social status and personal political views counted”.

Transcript interview 6

“Looking back, most of the towns youth cultures, were mostly dominated by the terrace culture, and the social attitudes that came with it, an extension of this was the right wing tendencies, a by-product was the ongoing conflict in nearby ethnic communities, mainly the Asian community in the Whalley Range part of Blackburn. It was common for white youths to be fighting with Asian youths and vice versa. Violence was a weekly occurrence and pitched battles were common”.

Transcript interview 7

“It had become quite normal to some extent, to be involved in some form of violent activity. Two of the towns more prominent gangs namely Blackburn youth and Mill Hill were constantly clashing and this was no conflict with specific right wing politics, more of a territorial and power conflict. One thing is for sure, there was an air resonating

around Blackburn, that reminded me of the skin head boot boy mentality – wrong place – wrong time – and you were gonna to get it !”

Transcript interview 8

“There was also high unemployment and for some, the prospect of aYTS (youth training scheme) programme was considered a joke. For many that did not work in the towns various industries, a lot just got by on the dole, and subtle forms of criminal activity. What you have got to remember is that alcohol was more dominant within the weekend recreation. It was not until 1985–6, that cannabis made an appearance in a few other social circles”.

Transcript interview 10

“One things for sure, at the tail end of 86 early 87, there was a definite shift in the way people were thinking, probably if not definitely, by the rise of pot culture and electronic music.Places occupied by the towns more dominate gangs, slowly started to become more accessible and less violent, there was a more social element contrasting to an era where violence went hand in hand”

Transcript interview 11

“There was a very subtle shift in drug culture in the mid 80’s namely 1986, I remember being sat in the beer garden at our local, and there was some activity going on in the

bottom corner. I did not quite know what they were doing, I got introduced to one of them, and he passed me a spliff, that was the first time I smoked cannabis”.

Transcript interview 12

“We had always had an underground drug culture in Blackburn, nothing compared to the acid house thing, most of it was done very hush hush. A lot of the connections were mainly for drugs such as speed, hash and LSD, it definitely was not main stream. Most of the connections to get the drugs from, were old hippies and biker types, and most of them did not drink in your conventional pubs”

Transcript interview 13

“Drugs were always there – you just have know where to find them. Connections from the old northern soul scene were scattered all around Lancashire, and although it was no where near the epidemic of the late 80’s, if you knew the right people – you could access any upper and downer you wanted”.

Transcript interview 14

“Pick Up Bank Festival that happened on the moors of Darwen, was just an extension of the 60’s. You would have all these hippies and travellers come up once a year and have a

small festival, this went on for quite a while from the 70's to the early 80's, so when I think drug culture, this was about as big as it got here, and once a year you would meet up for a week or so, have a get together and then back to your homes”.

Transcript interview 15

“The first time we ever saw a spliff was, when we would be over at all dayers in Manchester, this was like 85, and it was not the kids that were puffing weed, but mostly people in their early twenties, that had connections with the soul scene, and their connections with the northern soul scene. Then you had the whole blues party and reggae vibe, and you was always gonna find nice hash there”.

Transcript interview 16

“I would not say Blackburn had much if any exposure to black culture, I think there was like three black families that lived in the town from the 70's to the mid 80's. Part of any black sub culture, entails small smoking weed, that's part of the whole blues party scene. I'm not getting into all that race and stereo type crap, my point is that any prolific subculture always has its roots with music, with music there is drugs. I'd even go as far as to say that Blackburn's first acid house party was its first blues party”.

Transcript interview 17

“We first smoked weed in late 1985, over a period of the next two years, from various connections we practically knew someone for Hash, someone for Speed and someone for LSD. We also knew people ,that knew other people for substances like Heroin and Dicanol, this was before anyone from these parts had ever took ecstasy, all these different people that I come to know, somehow had connections with more prominent events musically, culturally and been active within them. People that were hippies, ex-punks, mods and rockers, people that had attended blues parties, heavy metal heads, and veterans of the northern soul scene. So most definitely I would say we had a drug culture before acid house”.

Transcript interview 18

“There was a big thing with solvents from probably 77 to about 83, I can’t remember anyone I knew taking glue, gas, thinners or aerosols after that era, it almost diminished over night. I think it’s interesting and kinda ironic, that by the time punk was over, Malcolm McLaren had brought out Buffalo Gals in 1982, and when you think of early British hip hop culture, there is no immediate association with drugs of any sort, most of the kids then, were in their very early teens, and it was not until breakdancing took a back seat in the mid 80’s, that we had the soul all-dayers, and then from soul we had the early sounds of house. I would say it was these events that forged a new mindset, you have got to remember that the most defining youth culture in Blackburn at the time was hooliganism, and you also had pockets of the hip – hop thing going off there. Now most of the heads at the time from Blackburn, were in Manchester either for the music or the

trouble, and most of the older lot were smoking weed. Its these influences that had a big impact within Blackburn, Mick Jones's band Big Audio Dynamite, were also big here, fusing punk – reggae with electronica. For many that had not experimented with drugs beforehand, this era in Blackburn was revolutionary, politically and socially things started to become more accessible, straying away from the conflict, a lot of people by now had got sick and tired, of the whole fighting thing”.

Transcript interview 19

“Towards the very end of the 70's, when the Wigan Casino finally closed its doors, there was a crew that gradually started taking downers and heroin, we would mainly travel over from Blackburn to Manchester, and occasionally Bradford. A lot of people got in and got out, however there was a few of us that stayed hooked and later went on to become registered heroin addicts with the Home Office – and prescribed methadone. It is not the sort of thing that everyone went looking for – however Blackburn did have an ongoing opiate problem, it was relatively small, but it was there”.

Transcript interview 20

“We ended up scoring a weed from some hippies over in Darwen, it was 1987, I remember it quite clear, cos the hippies were on about the mushrooms season, we'd never taken them before, and just went and picked half a carrier bag full of them, dried them out and took them. This was my first experience with tripping out, not long after there

were various batches of LSD doing the rounds in Blackburn. A lot of people were experimenting with LSD and mushrooms long before they organised any sort of acid house party in Blackburn, it was'nt massive but within a year before ecstasy arrived most of the people had either tried or continued experimenting with LSD or magic mushrooms”.

Transcript interview 21

“Two of the first venues that became forums for Blackburns acid house epidemic, were two very small clubs, called C’est la Vies and Crackers. At the very most the capacity must have been 150 people tops, most of the people that occupied the premises, were from some form of gang background. This was the first time – rival gangs mixed together in one space, as well as quite a relaxed atmosphere, violence was rare if anything non-existent. The common goal had become music and drugs – ecstasy was available – but not everyone was taking it most of the people that I knew were mostly taking LSD, cannabis and alcohol at this stage ecstasy was going for £20 a tablet”.

Transcript interview 22

“It is imperative to document this in the history of what happened next, because all of a sudden things had gone from an environment of mindless misdirected violence, to where most people were starting to get on with each other. I think most people were still in the

process of acknowledging what was happening – for the first time you had people that used to be fighting with each other – actually getting on, this was pivotal in what happened next”.

Transcript interview 23

“Two of the most dominant gangs in Blackburn being Blackburn youth and Mill Hill, both with a venomous rivalry. One of the interesting things that happened was the overnight amnesty that took place within political and class tendencies that were prevalent within these two groups. I think it is fair to say that most of the people involved at this stage, were politically either right or left wing, and these values were shared by both gangs. The interesting thing being that all of a sudden you had all these people in one place, at one time, and the ironic thing being that much of the music that was being played that forged the events to follow had its roots traditionally with black culture”.

Transcript interview 24

“Even amongst all the gang culture, that was going on at the time, any sort of intercultural within any of these communities, was minimal – or didn’t exist. Blackburn was’nt like let say Manchester, Birmingham or London, where you had have pockets of multi cultural activities. The best thing that happened from these early events, was it formed a catalyst of

people that sent out a very concise message, things are changing and its an open invitation for all. If Blackburn did ever have a seminal blues party, then this was it”.

Transcript interview 25

“As the weeks went on , there was something that started to become very tribal about it, where at one point you’d had all these separate gangs and communities, and everything being inaccessible, you’d suddenly emerged into a new collective. It was an exciting time, rich in cross culture, everyone from scallies, potheads, ex breakdancers, a really important stage, everything had changed overnight, and everyone was inviting everyone they knew to the next one. It spread by word of mouth , and more new people were coming down weekly”.

Transcript interview 26

“Most of the people that were attending at this stage, were mostly from gangs, and involved in some form of criminal activity, there was also a small number of people that held down 9-5 jobs”.

Transcript interview 27

“The first party that took place in Blackburn –which was not inside a venue or someones home ,was at an old disused bike shop on Whitehead St.It was held in the heart of the asian community,and there was no trouble, people were no longer interested in trouble,they were too busy getting on with the party.The interesting thing with the location of this event,was only a couple of months earlier, this area would have been a no-go area - to many of the towns gangs ,the people who were at that party were from different gangs,the party itself held in a no go area, I think that speaks volumes!”.

Transcript interview 28

“Its from this point –that things started to come together,this small following of people were instrumental in finding the venues,getting the word out,and getting hold of the equipment to stage a party. At this stage the door tax was very low, I remember them only charging £2 to get in, most of the money raised just went to cover the overheads,venue,and equipment. The Dj’s would get a small wage, who’d always use the money to buy more vinyl-to be played the next week.It all had a right DIY feel to it”.

Transcript interview 28

“Over a period of 6 months, what started out as a stronghold of 150 people, quickly transformed to a following of at least 4-500, we did have parties then, but there was no media highlight and little, if no interference from the police, most of the parties we had then were in very small industrial units, and there was a few that went off, in the barn on Finnington Lane, not so far from where Live The Dream was staged. After Crackers and C’est la vies, we ended up at a working mens club on Shadsworth Rd in Blackburn called the Sett End. The Lancashire Evening Telegraph went on to describe us as an –acid mob. It was at the Sett End that this mob got bigger, this is the stage where the bigger parties started and the term warehouse came from, there was usually more people outside the club than in it!, the parties were not getting any smaller. By this point we had people travelling over, from all over the place, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham. Coming out of the club there at 2am, believe me it was pandemonium, absolutely mental!, the police could’ent do a thing”.

Transcript interview 29

“Its at this stage, that things were really getting mad, the warehouses we needed got bigger, it started getting like a military operation, we had scanners on the go, people leading conveyors, sound equipment being smuggled into the venues during the daytime. It started becoming quite comical, because the police were hellbent in trying to contain and stop it all, and to be upfront –they were losing the battle, I don’t think at that stage they were even aware of what they were up against. It was at the Sett End, that things got bigger!”.

Transcript interview 29

“Well Manchester’s always been so influential on whatever I was into, you look at anything that was relatively cool or fashionable, and the Hacienda’s had its input. Even before the acid house thing went off, Manchester and the Hacienda influenced so much, especially the outer regions such as Blackburn. Most of the sub cultures I was involved in, always had some sort of reference to what was coming out of Manchester”.

Transcript interview 30

“I’d always been into the Factory scene, and some of the more obscure music, that was coming on their label. My older brother had been well into the whole mod/punk phase, and known all the older lot, with the terrace thing.

Musically the Hacienda was somewhere we had started going for the love music and going out, it was just the whole vibe of going and seeing bands live, still is. We had the King Georges Hall over here in Blackburn, but it was nothing like going to the Hacienda. My older brother first took me there, to see New Order in 1982”.

Transcript interview 31

“It would be the generation above us, who influenced us and educated us in fashion, style and attitude. Everyone that I knew, were going over to Manchester to watch bands, get the vinyl, trainers and clothes. We loved going over there, there was loads to do, we were well into the lifestyle, and it was happening there!”.

Transcript interview 32

“One thing that Manchester always had is influence. All the people that we looked up to in Blackburn were always over there, I remember being 13 or 14 in 84, and hearing stories from my older brother, he was big into the terrace thing, and they were a right set of smart bastards, always dressed smart. Regionally Manchester was a massive influence, culturally there was more going on there, no surprise that all our top lads were going over there.

What they were bringing back, were all the latest accessories to style and culture. There was a big thing back then in the 80's, with the older lot travelling over abroad, and robbing places like Switzerland. They didn't just end up there! Regular visits to Manchester forged connections, these connections and visits influenced style and shared values. It was the nearest city to us, and it did influence us, and we were respected”.

Transcript interview 33

“It's no coincidence, that by the time Blackburn had its first house party, that the ecstasy responsible for that party, had come from Manchester. The connections responsible for the availability of the ecstasy were from Manchester, and these connections from friendships and criminal activity of the early 80's. Blackburn were regulars amongst the hordes in the Hacienda in 88”.

Transcript interview 34

“No matter if it was electronica,hip hop or very early house music that I was buying, we would always come to Manchester to buy it.Most of the records we bought, were already entwined with an established dance culture,most of the artists we were buying, had either played there live-or been showcased at the Hacienda,everyone had played there, right from Kurtis Blow to Lloyd Cole and the Commotions”.

Transcript interview 35

“We were in the Hacienda in 1985,it was the only place in the north west that staged an event of that size.We would travel over to Manchester weekly,mainly to a place called the Ardwick, next to the Appollo.Stylistacally this is where we would exchange dance moves and develop more elaborate moves for the battle the week after,we came over every weekend,it was very influential.I remember when the breaking thing finished, seeing the Foot Patrol crew doing their thing in the Hacienda-when the whole jacking thing went off”.

Transcript interview 36

“We first went the Hacienda in 88,that’s were I took my first E,and we only took half each.Throughout 88 we were over there weekly, and then onto the Kitchen over in Hulme.The whole thing about Manchester and the Hacienda was there was no where like it.Over a few months, between a few of us, we decided to put a night on back over in Blackburn, by the time we were at the Sett End, regulars we used to see in the

Hacienda,became regulars at our parties. The Hacienda even brought their club night over to Blackburn in the early 90's".

Transcript interview 37

"Very simply, if it wasn't for the Hacienda, Manchester and Ecstasy-Blackburn would never of had a party".

Transcript interview 38

"Its like anything else, the parties started out like any small cottage industry, and week by week , the parties were getting bigger and bigger.The laws they had in place , before the introduction of Graham Brights entertainment bill, which was imposed in 1990,were practically useless and had very little effect to try and contain what was happening with the warehouse parties.The only reason the parties stopped was the increase in risk of getting caught, and the police became more resourceful in stopping them".

Transcript interview 39

"They were up against a massive problem, one being the amount of empty obtainable industrial space that Blackburn occupied.Between 2 or 3 of us, we would spend most part of the week before the party,scouting about locations for where the party was going to be held the following Saturday, the worst case scenario,was in the eventuality of being

caught-was a charge for commercial break in,which carried far less implications than a house break in, personally I was never caught”.

Transcript interview 40

“As the parties began to develop to larger premises, so did our planning,we were very specific in our organisation, we started to recruit people who were very good at what they did. We always knew the people to get the job done, we would usually meet up at the Vulcan pub in Blackburn , on a Monday after the party and review what worked and how we could improve it. We even had people on board for legal matters knowing exactly where we stood with the law, and how we could break it”.

Transcript interview 41

“We had access to all of it,the doormen,the drugs,Dj’s,lighting and sound technicians,electricians someone continuously monitoring the police airwaves,so as far as controlling all this activity in our home town-we did. The real problems started when higher echelons of the criminal world started to attend our parties, and the introduction of the increased penalties with Graham Bright’s bill, to be honest , the whole scene had started to completely move off in a direction that the parties weren’t about,for me enough was enough”.

Transcript interview 42

“We were there one night doing the door, and things were going fine, and we noticed over a few weeks, a few faces that had never attended before, the numbers of these faces grew week by week and before we knew it, some of the other doormen had been approached with guns, it had all started to get way out of hand, turned out that these faces were from Manchester, namely a Salford firm”.

Transcript interview 43

“By the time the telegraph had unleashed the campaign against Smiths raves, you were dealing with a whole new ballgame, the disused warehouses couldn't house the thousands, that were turning up every weekend. The only places that could house the new droves, were the big new industrial purpose built warehouses, like the one used for the party in Altham on the industrial estate. As the numbers grew, so did the problems, there was a new element to the parties, the arrival of the opportunist. These people weren't interested in spirit, freedom and the right to party or anything else, they were opportunists and fuelled by gain-monetry and personal gain”.

Transcript interview 44

“what had started off as something quite organic and beautiful, soon became something quite ugly and violent, plagued with opportunists and commercial interests

any true spirit of what the original parties started out as-was rapidly becoming a thing of the past,increased door prices, moody atmospheres,and people getting taxed, for a lot of people-the party was over.for many that were just getting into it,their party had just begun,the warehouse scene was about to end and did end with the last party in Nelson – Lancashire.The next scene that unfolded was licensed events and the birth of rave,pretty contradictory really when you think where’s the freedom and spirit when the states in control”.

Transcript interview 45

“Whilst the parties stayed relatively small, lets say with numbers between 500-600, the amount of problems we were encountering, were relatively small,most of the spaces we occupied at this point,were disused industrial spots,barns and lock ups.There was no external pilfering going on within the immediate surroundings, Everyone knew everyone that was there, people just had the party,got the equipment in and out and went home,it was that straightforward. My point is that it contained itself,the police weren’t all that bothered,and if there was something that was unacceptable within the party and the people –it would get sorted”.

Transcript interview 46

“The local telegraph was making a right meal out of it,it had almost become a running joke on a Monday-with the same headlines-acid jobs again-the parties started gaining a

reputation now for mass pilfering and theft. Some people started to attend these events with these things specifically in mind, whilst the majority just danced into the early hours-others were out and about in the immediate surroundings helping themselves. I have also heard stories and conspiracies that undercover police were wholly responsible to network more panic into the local media and to generate more hostility towards the acid house movement. I remember talking to a neighbour of mine who had just been down to pick his telegraph up, this guy was completely freaked out, he was losing faith with the system. I remember his comments-the law, legislation and the police are a complete waste of time-this is a mockery. The average joe public were starting to become disillusioned with the state of it all”.

Transcript interview 47

“When they started clamping down, they did so with the same organisation, and precision, as we did with the parties. They had identified all the main organisers, and by now they had extra resources, they were making it impossible to get into Blackburn. Any major route into the town was now getting roadblocked and people were getting turned away-you couldn't have a party without the people”.

Transcript interview 48

By the time the police had stopped the parties in early 1990, the whole drug culture had changed. Practically everyone that I knew were smoking weed, it had dramatically changed within an 18 month time period from 1989. This new culture of drugs, set the

pace for the wave of what came next in the 90's. Everywhere was saturated with drugs, everyone could openly get them from a simple phone call. The network of people you had got to know from the parties was phenomenal, there was a lot of supply and a lot of demand. For some the ultimate fashion accessory- had become being a "dealer", it had started to become comical. It's at this point that I remember the term "acid-bastard" being brandished about, it made reference to mainly the speed fuelled ravers clad in their hooded tops.

Transcript interview 49

"There was a massive influx of people, that had never took drugs, and overnight in a matter of months had took speed, ecstasy, hash and cocaine. See when the illegal warehouse parties stopped, drugs by that point had become, what alcohol used to be in the 80's. It wasn't just minority groups that were using them, everyone was using them. It became more widespread when the parties stopped, because of licensed events and the rise of dance culture affecting popular culture, everyone was into it. Where taking drugs was once considered deviant, it was considered more deviant, now if you didn't take drugs. It was absolutely huge".

Transcript interview 50

"By 1991, it was all commercial, there were no illegal events left, it was all controlled, licenced and became more of a commodity. The term "rave" might as well

been the new “pop”,and people were getting into it big time,it had gone from something small, to something uncontrollable to something that was controlled.Over the next few years , it had gone from rave, to more elite organisations like “Renaissance”,which spurred on the birth of the superclubs.It was almost like there was a separate sound and identity for every class system in England at the time.Dance and drug culture was everywhere”.

Transcript interview 51

“If you look at how diversified,the whole culture went from 1990 onwards , its phenomenal, for every different style of music, that emerged-you had a social etiquette and criteria to fulfill , a big part of this was the drugs you used, theres no way of getting away from it!.Bands such as the Happy Mondays ,The Stone Roses and all that indie/dance crossover,everyone and everything was influenced in one form or another,it had affected popular culture in such a way-that it became popular culture.Whatever drugs you were taking,went hand in hand with the lifestyle you were living or emulating”.

Transcript interview 52

“By the end of the parties in Blackburn, a lot of people were getting switched on to substances like Heroin and Crack cocaine,from my personal experience , something like 60-70% of all the people I knew from the parties had ended up choosing to get roped up in this activity.At the end of the parties, Blackburn had a fuckin massive problem with it, and still has.The parties and drugs-had filled that void a for a lot of people,when the

parties finished, this was a big empty hole to fill. Everyone had spent a considerable time going up, and up, and up and for many they come down in this manner. I'd even go as far too say that the Heroin and Crack problem of the early 90's was partly responsible for the availability of tranquilizers, such as Tamazepam, and the problems we encountered with these drugs in the mid to late 90's".

Transcript interview 53

"Another spin off from the drugs culture after the parties stopped was violence. As most of the culture evolved into legitimate licenced premises so did the need for who controlled the door and the drugs. There was various nights that sprung up in Blackburn after the illegal parties had stopped, and it was getting more common were people were starting to get taxed, sporadic bouts of violence and regular brawls with the doormen, mostly rival gangs were responsible for these incidents.

We had a situation, there was an individual from Blackburn selling Ecstasy who'd taxed a fellow manunian for drugs he was trying to sell in a Blackburn club, the repercussions were immense. A firm turned up from Manchester in Blackburn the following week, found an accomplice of the culprit from Blackburn, held him hostage, and threatened to cut off his fingers. They set a deal up, where they wanted re-imbursing for the pills that got taxed, and a time for when that money should be there for them, for every minute the money arrived late, they threatened to cut off a finger, the money turned up and the issue was resolved.

Things were getting and spiralling more out of control,it was all getting a bit too much.Manchester had now been termed GUNCHESTER by the nationwide tabloids,and Manchester had its problems, as the gangs turned to gaining control of all the clubs doors”.

Transcript interview 54

There was that many different things goings on at the time,that it would be hard to conclude exactly what contributed to the explosion in 1988.However in my opinion,it was Ecstasy,that was at the hub of all activity,Ecstasy was the central cog in the wheel,with the spokes representing the sub-cultures , and the new cultures that spun off it”.

Transcript interview 55

“If you look at all the cultural influences that Britain had going on at the time.There wasn’t a single drug-that did what Ecstasy did,of course you had prominent sub-cultures, but nothing had the same overall impact ,Ecstasy changed a lot of things”.

Transcript interview 56

“See I’d spent most of the 80’s, travelling all over England,fighting with rival football firms,the first time I had E-it was a serious wake up call!.It challenged my very being,for the first time I started to question my social,political and human values,I looked back at

my previous history, and felt quite ashamed, with my superiority of ignorance, racial contempt and unfounded beliefs. Ecstasy made me feel more accessible, a far cry from my sentiment with acts of mindless, unprovoked alcohol fuelled violence of the 80's. It changed my life".

Transcript interview 57

"It's like everything that was culturally influential got put in the equation with Ecstasy, the surest thing about it all, was something else spawned from that equation- it was the most natural progression in the process".

Transcript interview 58

"A by product of Ecstasy use has got to be the mindset that people developed overnight. I'd even go as far to say, that it contributed to my new found political stance and the way I participate in the national election".

Transcript interview 59

"Ecstasy brought people together- its fact, it changed Britain full stop, the implications it had on the moral fibre of our country is immeasurable and not reversible. It changed a mindset from the decade of the 80's and influenced just about everything ever since. It's funny when you think back, to Thatcher's rule and how you'd had the culture of things

being so separatist, and in contrast how inclusive things became in the 90's. Any sort of intercultural, has dramatically improved Britain over the last 13 years, and that can only be a good thing".

Transcript interview 60

"When you think about the latest laws that have been passed with cannabis, they haven't just arrived at that conclusion, it's been heavily influenced by the drug culture of the early 90's. The whole drug culture affected the whole of England and the country's attitude towards these issues, would the government have been that lenient in 1985?, exactly!, so when you think back acid house and ecstasy are partly responsible for that shift- you would be a fool to think otherwise".

Transcript interview 61

"It would be fair to say that the events of 89-90 evolved and contributed to the globalisation of dance culture, it's mad when you think back that the whole house music thing and "X" drug culture, as it was known over there was dominantly an American thing. From various British activity, it evolved and we were exporting back musical styles and scenes that evolved out of the acid house thing. The culture of 91-92 was responsible musically, for the birth of breakbeat, prototype jungle and ragga- all infused with hip hop and dub influences".

Transcript interview 62

“we would never of had “superclubs”, if it wasn’t for the dance culture of the late 80’s and early 90’s”.

Transcript interview 63

“Musically there was loads going on,and we were constantly influenced, you just had an eclectic mix of everything,back in 86,down our local,you just had a combination of punks, rockers,bikers,hippies,scallies the odd rasta and maybe a handful of ethnic backgrounds.The menu of the day being alcohol and hash,it would be a melting pot of musical affinity artists such as Pink Floyd,Marley,Led Zeppelin,Durutti Column,The – The,see when I think of culture and cross culture-this was a right web of fusion”.

Transcript interview 64

“Acid house was quite a mad era, musically and culturally there were that many different spin-offs, that you could probably write a book on it.I remember hearing that “strawberry fields forever”,the first time I heard that ,I thought “what the fuck –incredible”.They’d took a classic pyschedelia tune and layered it over a slowed down sample of “James Browns-Funky Drummer” it sounded amazing”.

Transcript interview 65

“Look at the whole sampling culture , much is owed to pioneers, like the legendary Dj Kool Herc, who teased out the breaks from the favourite parts of the tracks. Then you had the whole thing with electronic drum machines. Arthur Baker producing New Orders “Confusion”, then the advancement of the very early house sound, then the acid house era, now that’s just to name a few, everyone was culturally influenced. People are still producing things today that still have reference points to the last five decades”.

Transcript interview 66

“People are still putting on small one-off parties, and talking about the spirit of 89-90. That era is still valued, and when you go to parties, people still reference, what was so good about the spirit of that era. I’ve lost count to the amount of times people have mentioned Blackburn, and the Hacienda”.

Transcript interview 67