

A TASTE OF HONEY

On Monday 3rd July I travelled to Liverpool to attend a conference to discuss ageism in the workplace. Having lived in Liverpool until I was nine and in Merseyside for much longer I was looking forward to the trip. The taxi from Limestreet Station took me past my old primary school in Hope Place and also past Princes' Park to the LACE conference centre on the edges of Sefton Park. As a young child I often walked along the cinder paths between Princes and Sefton Park.



The conference was opened by Rosie Boycott who also chaired the first session. This included two local women who had studied for degrees at Liverpool John Moores University in their fifties after having brought up their children. At the coffee break I almost pushed one woman out of her chair. I saw her a few minutes later in the conference hall and out of guilt started up a conversation, telling her that I used to live nearby to the conference centre when I was a child. She said that she lived on the Wirral and I replied that I used to live on the Wirral after I moved from Liverpool.

At this she looked at me a bit more closely and asked me whereabouts on the Wirral I had lived. When I answered 'Hoylake' she said 'Did you used to live in Alderley Road and is your name Chris?' Well the answer to both of those questions was 'yes' and looking closely at her name badge I saw that her first name was 'Valerie' and I realised that I had been reunited with my old school friend Valerie Honey after forty years.

Valerie and I both attended West Kirby County Grammar School for Girls, a school that was also attended by Glenda Jackson (a little before our time) and Jan Ravens of Dead Ringers (a little after our time). Valerie lived in West Kirby which is about one and a half miles from Hoylake. My best friends in school Wendy and Linda lived further away in Heswall and Parkgate so out of school I only talked to them on the phone. Valerie and I had a guilty secret. We liked playing with cut-out dolls –sometimes designing fashionable clothes for them. At twelve this could have been considered a little babyish so we didn't tell anyone else what we got up to in the evenings.



We went to see 'A Hard Day's Night' together at the Tudor cinema in West Kirby just before it was closed and turned into a bingo hall. I wore black patent and tartan kitten-heeled shoes and carried a Mary Quant black and white 'Op Art' bag. We screamed throughout most of the film so didn't really hear anything. Valerie's mum was divorced and they were staying at her sister's house in West Kirby. When we were fourteen Valerie moved away to Mold in North Wales and later to Oswestry. We wrote to each other for a little while but we gradually lost touch.

CHRISTEEN GEORGE