

# John Paddon a Celebration



With Brian Carrick & his  
Algiers Stompers  
At the  
New Orleans (Louth) Club  
16th August 2014

Salvete et Valete  
John Paddon

Many of you will have known John well, as a friend, bandleader or birder. For you this booklet will perhaps serve as a goodbye and a modest memorial. Others here will have known him little or not at all. For you this booklet may serve as a belated introduction to the man and perhaps give some insight into his deep commitment to New Orleans Jazz.

Some people would say that his jazz was in a time warp and that John did not accept progress. Others will say that he did his utmost to preserve and promulgate all that he believed was best within the genre and did it with some success. Brian Carrick said some while ago that there were no bigger bigots than himself and John Paddon when it came to New Orleans Jazz! This was said with pride; no hint of apology!

Musicians can be a difficult lot in many ways and to hold a band together for half a century, a band leader has to be a supreme diplomatist or something of a dictator. I would not presume to say which was John, but I think his staying power and the driving energy of total dedication to the cause were undoubted factors in his success.

One thing is beyond doubt, John Paddon's deep and lasting commitment to New Orleans Jazz has benefitted us all here today and given countless pleasure to audiences and musicians throughout the last 50 years. He did his utmost to ensure its continuance in the face of changing style and fashion and earned the respect of his peers; that is no mean achievement!

The following pages will perhaps give a little insight into John's earlier life and how he became involved with New Orleans jazz. I would also commend to you the archive pages on the Club's website: [www.louthjazzclub.org.uk](http://www.louthjazzclub.org.uk) John's pages for the band's 25th anniversary make particularly interesting reading.

John's family did not wish for a New Orleans funeral but with Brian and the Algiers Stompers, we can give him a proper New Orleans send off tonight. The best memorial we can give him will be to continue "preaching the gospel according to New Orleans..."

With respect.  
Pete Hayselden  
Chairman, N.O.L.C.

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Text from interviews with John Paddon, by John Marchant.

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## John Paddon — In his own words.

I was born half an hour before midnight on the 10th of April 1924 in the Radcliff Royal Infirmary, Oxford. It was not planned this way. I was not due for another two weeks and my mother had been taken to visit Blenheim Palace where the excitement had become too much, either for her or for me.

My father's family home was at Oxford. He was descended from the Rev. William Paddon (1745-1814) of Truro in Cornwall. My grandfather had started work in a tea warehouse in London and eventually became managing director of a chain of restaurants throughout the South and West of England. When the war started in 1914 my father was at the Inns of Court studying for the Bar and he hated it. As soon as he could he joined the Leicestershire Regiment and said goodbye to a legal career. After the war, but before he was demobbed, my father found himself in the Lincolnshire town of Louth. He was lodging in a house in James Street where he met Alice Balderston who was working in Lloyd's Bank and lodging at the same address.

The Balderstons were a Lincolnshire family descended in an unbroken line from Richard Balderston who was living at Stourton Grange in 1490. The Grange belonged to the Cistercian monks of Kirkstead Abbey who were heavily involved in the Lincolnshire wool trade. Many of the subsequent generations of Balderstons have been involved in livestock. Alice's father, Thomas, was no exception. He owned the Frithville Stud, which was the second biggest stud of Shire horses in England.

At the outbreak of war, Alice was in Melbourne, Australia earning her living as governess to the children of the well-known Menzies family of that country. She returned to England via Canada and New York, crossing the Atlantic in an American ship called the New York. She was coming home to her father's house in the village of New York in Lincolnshire.

Leslie Paddon and Alice Balderston were married in Frog Hall Church, Wildmore, on the 21st. of September 1922. "The bride was attired in a dress of golden brown satin embroidered in gold, and a cinnamon lace hat with ostrich feathers. Miss Fannie Leggate played the organ." After the

honeymoon on the South Coast, Mr. and Mrs. Paddon took up residence in South Norwood Hill, London.

On leaving the army, Leslie became a director in his father's catering business and, for a time, specialised in the art of tea tasting and blending. When Christopher John appeared on the scene the flat was a trifle inconvenient so we all moved to a house with a garden in Holmesdale Road, South Norwood. As I became more and more mobile, I enjoyed the garden, which was securely ring-fenced.

When I was five years old I attended Raiby Lodge School, which was located in a Cul-de-Sac almost opposite to our house.

In 1930, when I was six, my father's Head Office was relocated to Wine Street, Bristol. We purchased a house in Wanscow Walk, Henleaze, and my education was entrusted to St. Goar's School at the top of Westbury Road. The school was run by Miss Rose who was thin and Miss Peake who was fat. They were both at least a hundred years old, or so it seemed to us.

After five years at St. Goar's I progressed to Bristol Grammar School where I completed my schoolboy education. My best subjects were English Language, Art, Chemistry, Physics, Biology and Maths.

During the thirties, I spent much time cycling along the country lanes of Gloucestershire and Somerset in pursuit of my natural history studies. When the weather was too bad for this, I was engaged, in fierce competition with my friends, in the manufacture of bigger, brighter and louder fireworks.

St. Peter's Church at the bottom of our garden had a bell on top of the roof. This made a very tempting target for our homemade cannon and was instrumental in our discovery, entirely independent of Mr. Newton, that action and reaction are equal and opposite. While the cannon ball sped towards the church roof, the cannon sped backwards through the kitchen door. The door was shut at the time.

With the coming of 1940 there were people out there in the night sky making bigger bangs than we could ever hope to achieve. This led to the exciting new hobby of collecting shrapnel, nose cones, tail fins, bits of aircraft and even whole incendiary bombs.

The war put paid to my father's business and both my parents began to worry about the safety of their little boy. So, on Battle of Britain Day in September, 1940, we left Temple Meads Station and arrived at Paddington as the big fight was going on. Even at the height of the battle, the Grimsby and Cleethorpes Express left King's Cross on time and we sped northward towards the peace and safety of rural Lincolnshire in my grandfather's country house – right next to Coningsby airfield.

After a month or two at Argyle House, New York, we were offered the use of an empty farmhouse in Cannister Lane, Frithville, the village where my mother was born. We kept hens, ducks and a pig, and father travelled for a firm of veterinary chemists. I was given a job as assistant chemist in the laboratory of a canning factory in Boston.

After a couple of years in the food factory I was awarded an Engineering Cadetship, which enabled me to spend the next few years studying electrical and mechanical engineering at the expense of the War Office. Then, I was enrolled into the R.A.F. where they taught me all about the R.R. Merlin engine.

At this time, the war drew to a close and no one knew what to do with all these newly trained engineers. I was posted to Barkston Heath, which was completely devoid of aircraft. As there was not much to do, I was able to cycle home each Friday afternoon for the weekend.

I was eventually allocated to Transport Command spending most of the time at R.A.F. Lyneham where we were entrusted to maintain the daily diplomatic mail service from the Far East.



*The Greyhound Inn, Upgate, Louth was the first home for the South Wold Jazz Band and the Club. Upstairs was the 'Log Cabin' and this rare photo, thought to date from the late 1960s shows a young John Paddon on cornet*

Back in Civvy Street I took up poultry farming (for myself) and arable farming (for my mother's brother) and found the rural life much to my liking.

Eventually I went into Agricultural Engineering and spent the rest of my working life travelling among the farms of Lincolnshire as a Farm Machinery Consultant.

### **When did I first hear Jazz?**

This is a tricky question for two reasons. When I first heard what I may have thought to have been Jazz I did not know enough about the music to recognise whether it was indeed Jazz or not. Secondly, in order to be fully appreciated, and even slightly understood, Jazz has to be not just heard but also experienced.

One of the unique features of the music invented and played by the black musicians of New Orleans is the fact that, whatever the tune being played, it is performed in such a manner as to be appropriate and effective for that particular audience, in those particular surroundings at that particular time.

It must be obvious that if a particular performance was recorded and then played back to a different audience in different surroundings at a different time the magic would be gone. I will repeat because it is of great importance: To even begin to get a taste of the unique magic of New Orleans Music it is essential to experience it by actually being present at the performance.

I was watching a film in the local cinema when there appeared, in the background, a group of black musicians creating the most wonderful sound I had ever heard. I don't know what the film was or who the musicians were or what year it was, but I guess it must have been about 1938. I did not hear that sound again for several years until I came across Bill Russell's first recording of the Bunk Johnson band.

It was in June 1942 that Bill Russell and David Stuart found Bunk Johnson at his home in New Iberia and brought him to New Orleans to be recorded. As well as Bunk on trumpet, there was George Lewis on clarinet, Jim Robinson on trombone, Walter Decou on piano, Lawrence Marrero on banjo, Austin Young on string bass and Ernest Rogers on drums.



In spite of letters of introduction neither of the two professional recording studios in New Orleans would allow their premises to be contaminated by the presence of Negro performers.

Eventually a disc recording machine was borrowed and a space cleared in Grunewald's Music Store. On the 11th. June, 1942 Bunk Johnson and his band were recorded for the very first time. The result was listened to all over the world in utter amazement. The music which white supremacists had struggled to keep hidden for so many years had been let out of the bag. Having fallen in love with this strange music from New Orleans, I started to collect records as they became available. The invention of the tape recorder meant that a recording studio was no longer necessary to capture the sounds of Black New Orleans Music. One or two enthusiastic followers of the music, such as Sonny Faggart and Frank Demond, started their own record labels. The equipment they used was not the very best but an invaluable service was rendered in preserving the sounds of some of the older musicians while they were still able to play.

As I collected more records of Bunk Johnson, George Lewis, Wooden Joe Nicholas, Albert Burbank, Jim Robinson and others I became puzzled as to why I had never been able to find a white musician, either in England



*John, with (then) Club President, Michael White on reeds. July 1988*

or America, who was capable of playing anything like this wonderful Black music from Louisiana.

At the end of the war, the family purchased some land and built our bungalow. The chosen site had served as a searchlight camp. The bath house, cook house, etc. was a substantial brick building which remained in our garden as it was purchased by my father from H.M. War Office for ten shillings. With one or two minor alterations the building provided a garage, coalhouse, workshop, tool shed, store room and, right at the back, a den/music room for me.

I had decorated the den and installed some pieces of furniture, hi-fi equipment and a case or two of Gold Label Barley Wine along with my growing record collection.

As I sat in my den listening to the recorded trumpet of Bunk Johnson I could not understand why anyone with a sense of rhythm, melody and harmony could not learn to play in the same fashion even though the variable pitch, flexible timing and bending of notes in order to get the instrument to speak made even a simple tune incredibly complicated to play.

I was surrounded by compelling evidence that any budding musician who got into the clutches of a classical music teacher was forever precluded from playing Jazz, so I decided to conduct an experiment to test my theory.

For this purpose, and this purpose only, I acquired a trumpet and set about finding out how to blow it. I resolved not to accept any teaching or advice from anyone. I taught myself in the secrecy of my den to create the sounds I wanted. It has since struck me that this is a completely natural way to do things. A baby learns to talk by listening to its mother and copying the sounds it hears - not by learning to read first!

### **Musical training**

My first trumpet lesson came about as the result of a series of unforeseen events. Having studied the music and trumpet style of Bunk Johnson for a number of years I was able to sound like him although never having had a lesson from anyone.

When I managed to make my first trip to New Orleans it was quite natural that I wanted to visit Bunk's home town of New Iberia in the

Cajun country of southwest Louisiana. At this time, however, the British currency exchange controls were still in force and one was only allowed to take £300 out of England. The prospect of living for three weeks for £300 was bad enough, but finding spare cash to hire a car was very difficult. A visit to Hertz on Canal Street turned out to be quite educational. First of all came the news that one could not pay cash for a hire car. I happened to have my English Barclaycard in my pocket and enquired whether they meant something similar to this. The unexpected reply was "Yes, that will do nicely". So, surprisingly, the £300 limit was instantly multiplied by five.

On reaching New Iberia behind the wheel of a luxurious five litre Dodge the first port of call was the well preserved plantation home known as 'Shadows on the Tesche' which had been bequeathed to the Nation by its late owner, Weeks Hall. Weeks had befriended Bunk and often bailed him out when he had been arrested for being drunk. Bunk Johnson had spent a lot of time at the 'Shadows' in his later years and his favourite fishing



*John on cornet, with Brian Carrick (right) and Chas Hudson (left). On drums at the rear is Albert Bosberry*

hole was in the Bayou Tesche where it ran across the bottom of the garden. Weeks Hall's gardener/house boy had been retained by the National Trust to help look after the place and he was most interesting to talk to, as he had known Bunk well. Clemmie said that a trumpet player by the name of Harold Potier had been a member of Bunk's 'Banner Band' in New Iberia and he lived a couple of blocks away.

There was no one at home at Harold's house and a neighbour said that he had gone to visit his friend, Mr. Charles, who lived in the small town of Parks near St. Martinville. I decided to call on this Mr. Charles on the way back to New Orleans to see if I could meet Harold who, no doubt, could tell me a lot about Bunk Johnson. Having found Mr. Charles' house in Parks, I knocked on the door, which was answered by a charming white haired old lady who informed that Harold had left and was on his way home. I apologised for disturbing her and explained that I thought that Harold could give me information about Bunk Johnson as he had known him. What happened next left me standing literally speechless.

Mrs. Rose Charles suggested that I might like to talk to her husband as he would know more about Bunk Johnson than Harold Potier. I was a bit surprised at this but when Rose led me in and said, "Here is someone to see you, Hippolyte", I froze in amazement. In that instant, I remembered that one of the finest musicians in New Orleans in the years before the First World War was a trumpet player by the name of Hippolyte Charles. As the old gentleman held out his hand to greet me, my mouth opened and shut a few times but nothing came out. I apologised for my state of shock and explained that there was a very famous trumpet player many years ago with the same name. He smiled and said, "Yes, that was me."

Hippolyte Charles was born in Parks, Louisiana on the 18th. April, 1891. His father, August Charles, played baritone horn in the town band. The Parks Brass Band was coached by Peter Carey who would come over from Lafayette in his buggy to teach the band.

(Peter Carey was the elder brother of Jack Carey whose band created the tune Tiger Rag from a French quadrille. Mutt Carey was the other brother.)

When young Hippolyte was a schoolboy, it was his job to be there when Peter Carey arrived and look after the horse and buggy while Peter was



teaching the band. One day when Peter arrived in Parks, young Hippolyte was nowhere to be seen, but coming from the shed was the sound of the most beautiful tenor horn playing that Carey had ever heard.

Hippolyte had sneaked into the shed to amuse himself on his father's horn. Peter Carey was so impressed with the young lad's beautiful tone that he put him in the band, although he was still in short pants.

In 1906, when Hippolyte was only fifteen years old, he was leading a band which played for social functions in the area. This was when Jazz was being invented and Hippolyte was part of the process. In 1908 he went to New Orleans and continued his musical training under Eugene Moret and then Manuel Perez, the leader of the 'Onward Marching Band'.

So here I was, face to face with this legendary giant of music who had long since been forgotten by most of the world. My education regarding the birth of Jazz and the early bands began there and then, with some surprises.

Hippolyte pointed to a photograph on the wall and explained that it was his first band in New Orleans. This was the Silver Leaf Band with Hippolyte on cornet, Sam Dutrey Sr. on clarinet, Honore Dutrey on trombone, Phil Nickerson on guitar, Albert Baptiste on violin, Willie Carter on drums and Jimmie Johnson who for many years had been Buddy Bolden's bass player.

This was a pretty impressive line up but Hippolyte said that the band had a weakness - the drummer could not read music. Now to someone who had been led to believe that these ignorant negroes had learned to play their crude music by ear from tribal dances and plantation songs this opening remark was a bit of a shock. It soon became obvious that the musical skills of these black bands were far superior to anything that white musicians could attain. (I learned later that the first symphony orchestra in the U.S.A. was composed of coloured musicians.)

Hippolyte's next band was the 'Mapleleaf Orchestra', which played mainly for the grand society balls, of which there many in those days in New Orleans. This band could play any sort of music including all the old time dances and they could, and did, play selections from the operas at first sight with a result that was better than the best New York pit orchestras.

Along with many other musicians of the time, Hippolyte played with the marching bands and also with the smaller dance bands where Jazz was born, so he had to have mastered at least three distinct styles of playing.

Remembering that I had never had a trumpet lesson of any description, when Hippolyte invited me to return the next day with my horn I conceded that here was a man that I would be willing to accept as a teacher.

I returned to Parks in the morning with my cornet and found Hippolyte, having discovered that I had used the recordings of his friend Bunk Johnson as my guide, eager to hear what I sounded like. He told me to start at the bottom and go up the C scale. I went up the scale – all one and a half octaves – and Hippolyte asked me why I had stopped. I informed him that that was as high as I could get. He smiled and said that I did indeed sound like Bunk. Would I like him to show me how to do it properly?

When I said, "Yes please", he pointed out that apart from the fact that I was holding it wrong, blowing it wrong, fingering it wrong and breathing wrong; I was not doing too badly! It appeared that my experiment of avoiding English music teachers had been successful. When my training session finished I was easily spanning, not one and a half, but two and a half octaves, and I was able to switch between a pure orchestral tone and a black Jazz tone with little effort.



*John, with Sammy Rimmington at the Club in 1985*



*John cutting his 85th birthday cake at the Club in 2009*

I shall be ever grateful that I was lucky enough to have been taught to play my instrument by one of the original creators of Jazz music. That was the start of a learning process that was to cover the next fifteen years.

Hippolyte Charles played with the Mapleleaf Orchestra until August 1925, when he suffered a ruptured spleen after which he was not allowed to play again. In 1940, he returned to Parks to run his father's grocery store and to harvest pecan nuts from the several acres of land attached to his house.

I began to discover that there are many things to learn apart from being able to play an instrument. The trumpet or cornet player in a band is usually the one who has the responsibility of playing the lead melody so he is generally the band leader. In order to do this he must learn how to set out his band on the stage, how to read his audience and select numbers and tempos appropriate to the occasion, conditions and mood prevailing at the time and, in my case, never forgetting to preach the gospel according to New Orleans.

### **Harmony and chord structures used in Jazz**

I was taught mainly by Alton Purnell (Bunk Johnson's and George Lewis' pianist) and Paul Crawford (trombonist with the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra) but one could learn something all the time while watching, or playing with Sing Miller, Sweet Emma Barrett and Sadie Goodson. Spending a month in New Orleans each year for fifteen years, I was learning from everyone that I met. Through my friendship with Louis Nelson I was able to gain the valuable experience of playing with many of the City's finest musicians. Nelson and Sue Hall would organise a party in the courtyard each year while I was in New Orleans. Naturally there would be a band playing. I would be on cornet and Nelson would be on trombone. Nelson would say, "Who do you want in your band this year?" and I was allowed to pick the musicians. The great thing about all of these New Orleans musicians is that, when they discovered that I was trying to learn how to play their music, they were all willing to help and offer advice. It is thanks to them that I acquired the ability to speak their musical language.



## Ten things you didn't (or perhaps you did) know about

### John Paddon

(A light-hearted interview with John Paddon, conducted by John Marchant in August 2010)

John was the leader and the driving force behind the South Wold Jazz Band for close on fifty years. In this short interview, he answered some serious questions and some not so serious ones, too.

1. When did you start to learn to play Jazz?  
*About 1950, I should think.*
2. How long did it take you to learn?  
*I'm still learning!*
3. Why did you start playing?  
*I had always had an interest in New Orleans music though I'd only heard recordings at that stage and I wondered why no British musician could play the music. I got an instrument, taught myself and found out how to play like Bunk Johnston. I also came to the conclusion that anyone who had classical, military or brass band education found it impossible to play jazz music. Jazz is the ability to express emotion. Orchestras and military bands just can't do that.*
4. How do you know all the pieces you play?  
*You learn a lot of tunes when you spend a month in New Orleans every year for 15 years.*
5. What do you do to relax and unwind?  
*Play New Orleans Jazz. There's nothing better.*
6. Jelly & ice cream or crumble & custard?  
*I hate crumble!*
7. BBC or ITV?  
*Hmm, I don't think either of them are much good except for the nature programmes.*
8. Davina McCall or Cheryl Cole?  
*Sorry!?!.....What the hell are you talking about?*
9. Elvis or Cliff?  
*Cliff Richard is a disaster but Elvis, he got some of the way because he picked up his singing from a lot of genuine jazz players.*
10. Bunk Johnson or Charlie Parker?  
*What do YOU think?*



**John Paddon**  
**1924 – 2014**