

Roll: **19750420-6400**

Film: **Ilford FP4**

Camera: **Zorki4 ZO4**

**Subject:**

First days with the Zorki.

**Notes:**

In 1974, me and Maggie moved in together and were living in the attic flat on the third floor of 110 Gough Road, in the leafy suburb of Edgbaston.

I had foolishly split up with Janet Seiboth during the summer of 1972. We had been fruit picking in Hereford. I was wrestling with my sense of angst, while stoned and lying on a wooden bridge which spanned a small stream where we had been bathing. I was trying to express my sense of disconnection with the world. I said that she, Janet, "could be anybody". I could still shoot myself for that, Janet was so distressed.

At the start of term I went back to Birmingham by myself. When I next returned to Nottingham, I found she had, in part at least, moved on. I went to the Salutation, where Janet was working, to meet with her after the pub closed and I saw her through an upstairs window in a clinch with some bloke.

Back in Birmingham, I lived at first in a garage equipped as a bedsit. It was horrible and a rip off, so when the opportunity arose to move into 110 Gough Road, where Greg Fox, Colin Spence and Martin Durham lived, I jumped at the chance.

I moved onto the 1st floor with Chris Lambert and Terry Conn. They were a couple of long haired dope heads who had developed their own excruciatingly slow disconnected mode of dialogue. "Chris"... "Chris"... "Yes Terry"... "Do you want a blow on this Chris?"... I had my own room but we shared bathroom, toilet and kitchen. I hated it. The kitchen was always piled high with dirty crockery and cooking equipment. It took half an hour to clean up before I could start to cook anything.

In the third year, 73/74, I moved downstairs to the ground floor bedsit. I was was living there when I met Maggie. I had noticed Maggie before, she was married to Barrie Hughes. Barry was on the Politics course with me, they were married and they lived at the top of Gough Road. Maggie had a rabbit fur coat and I remember stroking it while she, Barry and Denis Cosgrove played Bridge.

Maggie and I were both heading down Gough Road one evening to catch the bus along Bristol Road. We started talking, we caught the same bus and sat together at the front, upstairs. We talked constantly until, Maggie I think, got off the bus near Birmingham University, I was on my way to see Dave Kemp. Maggie and I then continued to meet, at first covertly, for coffee during the day. Vic Minnikin, the tutor for the politics of sub-saharan new states some how became an ally in our developing relationship. He took a bunch of us to a mop which may have been at Rednal. I remember there was a hog roast. And I remember we engaged in some heavy petting on the journey back. When Maggie wanted to stay the night for the first time, I insisted that she must first tell Barry.

Maggie came back after talking to Barry and from there we didn't look back. The conversation never stopped. We were still talking nine years later when we took the decision to split up.

Our cultural life amazes me now. We seem to have seen every theatre performance, main stream or fringe, that was available in Birmingham. We went to late night film showings, often double bills, ate out frequently and drank heavily and often.

At the beginning of 1975 my diaries show that I was having problems with with a committed relationship, my lack of career progress, teaching recalcitrant day release students at Hall Green and an often dissolute life style.

I bought my first camera on Saturday 5th April 1975 from Kandid Kameras in Birmingham. The camera needed to be dismantled, overhauled and have a faulty shutter repaired. It would then be reassembled and checked.

Maggie bought carpet pieces at 5p each and a bolster on the Thursday. That evening, we rearranged the room and laid out an "*almost fitted carpet*". I built a shelf under the window and did some wiring.

Greg Fox and Barbara phoned on the Friday, they were up in Birmingham from London, where Greg had gone to do a PhD on the Hegelian dialect at the LSE. We met in the Windsor and then went to the Beer Keller. Me and Maggie went to the House of Calcestephus for a meal. "*Not their usual high standard and as a consequence of excessive drinking I could not eat very much of it.*"

Saturday we rose early and went shopping in town. We tried to get more carpet pieces and bolsters without success. Then we went to Kandid Kameras where the camera was ready, a Zorki 4, Russian built, with Carl Zeiss Jena 50mm Leica screw lens. The cost was £11 plus VAT and included a 1 year warranty and a free film. VAT was introduced in 1973 at 10% but had been reduced to 8% in July 1974 by Denis Healey. Around £86 at today's prices (April 2023) it was a fair old investment.

*"Greg came round with some acid (we had) a 1/4 each. Very good, very smooth, very light. Was the way I had concluded acid should be. No hassle with Maggie disconnection or anything. Went (to the) Firebird. Played pinball. Climbed the BISON. (A huge tower crane on a building site near Bristol Road.)*

*Fish and chip shop. Acid & drunk very complimentary but no admixture. Barbara freaking when returned. Frightened of Maggie. Started in pub - poured coffee over (once before we got there) kicked one out of Maggie's hand on to my foot, wouldn't listen to or obey Greg. Seemed to want me. All this "non transferable", bed screwed, pictures - all good.*

*Sunday early rising, chicken liver, mushrooms, egg. Pub - pinball, tensest ever been 4 score replays and lucking in one game 68,000. Bit of sanding, Lot of experimenting with camera. First few shots."*

On the morning of Wednesday 16th April I picked up my degree from the annex of the School of Planning, where we sometimes had psychology seminars in the first year at Birmingham Poly. In my diary I note that it was "a somewhat ignoble end to the saga." I must have walked from there along the canal system to work, as I note that I was

*"snapping some shots at the top of the Aston Flight when a barge came by. Think it could have been a good session except for inadvertent moving of the aperture."*

Recent research suggests this was at Aston Junction, the canal on the right being the Digbeth Branch Canal. After work (I was working at the Aston UBO on the New Earnings Survey) I bought a light meter and a developing tank in the Great Western Arcade. I must have been seriously struggling for the four days I'd spent without a light meter, but wouldn't you know it, that picture of the longboat at Aston Junction is among the very best I have ever taken.

Saturday 19th I tried but was unable to buy a photographic thermometer, but went ahead anyway and did the developing without one on Sunday 20th.

*"Results far more successful than I had imagined they would be - now regret taking insufficient care."*

#### **Dates:**

Confirmed by diary entries and equipment receipts. The night shot dates confirmed from Maggie's diary.

#### **Frames:**

13:04 20:00 : **Album Sleeve.**  
 13:04 20:05 : **Album Sleeve.**  
 15:04 08:00 : **Sleepy head.**  
 16:04 10:10 : **Narrowboat entering the Aston Flight.**  
 16:04 10:12 : **Narrowboat entering the Aston Flight.**  
 24:04 10:00 : **Gardens from an attic flat window.**  
 24:04 23:00 : **Army.**



ZO4-A0015 - Working longboat