

1970 - Northiam and Mick Taylor

I was first introduced to this little village in Sussex when I was invited by Mick Taylor to go down to the country for the weekend to stay with some friends of his, Ashley and Nita Kozaks. Ashley had been Donovan's manager until quite recently, but they had had a falling-out – it happened in the rock n roll business so very often, I was to find out; the artist who is “discovered”, and groomed for fame and fortune by a “manager” very soon thinks he can make it on his own without the guidance of someone who is increasingly resented for taking money off him and telling him how to run his life! Advice once so gratefully received, is spurned, and painful schisms occur. Everyone is most aggrieved, and what had been close relationships were so often spoiled by the clash of egos and greed on both sides. . I observe that it still goes on the same way, to this day!

I think that Ashley had designs on taking a management role with Mick Taylor; an almost irresistible temptation when the boy had just joined the Stones, and seemed quite naive and malleable; an innocent who needed protection in the big bad world of the Rock biz. Or so he appeared. Must have been that pretty face of his, for he was exceptionally angelic looking. I had certainly fallen for his pretty face and the glamour of his being part of one of the most famous Rock n Roll bands in the world; his guitar playing ability I had admired since seeing him with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers at the Manor House Pub several years before. On that occasion Mick had had a girlfriend who protected him fiercely against all other females – she was a Rottweiler, no-one got near him ; but she had been long gone by the time I caught up with him at the film premiere of Alice's Restaurant. He was not allowed to escape me again!

We arrived at Domons, the Kozaks' mansion; a beautiful house that had a history that stretched back to the Norman Conquest and before – mentioned in the Domesday Book, no less. I was most impressed by the grandeur of it all, though less enamoured of being told we had to share a room with a cockatoo with an open cage door! But there were enormous fireplaces with blazing log fires, fur rugs everywhere, rich velvet hangings and ancient tapestries, beautiful antique paintings and furniture, even servants quarters; and luxury of luxuries, a sauna room! And apparently the ghost of an Archbishop wandered the corridors..... Wow! We had a fabulous evening, with our hosts regaling us with stories of the music biz, plenty of dope to smoke, and music to hear and to play. Turned out Ashley had played the double-bass in a jazz band when he met Nita; she was a Greek fisherman's daughter who had sung her way to England in the 60's, and they had met and married then, before Ashley had spotted Donovan and they had become part of the success story of his fame and fortune. Nita had a great voice, and she played guitar to accompany her own songs. I remember being quite shocked to realise that she had a Christian faith of some strength and fervour; she sang songs that talked about Jesus as if he were a friend of hers. Not what I was expecting, but she made a deep impression on me, nonetheless.

The following day, Mick asked if I would like to see the house he had bought. It was just down the Private Lane that Domons was on; so we took a stroll down. As we turned into the drive of the Thatched Cottage, I was overwhelmed with a sinking feeling that I can never forget. I was very disappointed that it was far less grand than Ashley's pad, but I also had a premonition that Mick and I would never be happy here! Sad to say, I believe that was the truth; we never were. The happiest part of that visit was making love under the apple trees in the beautiful orchard that was part of the property. Soon that too, was to go. The orchard, that is.