

The Ianesque Trails in Edinburgh Capital

By Lukas Was from Poland

"Spin me back down the years and the days of my youth..."

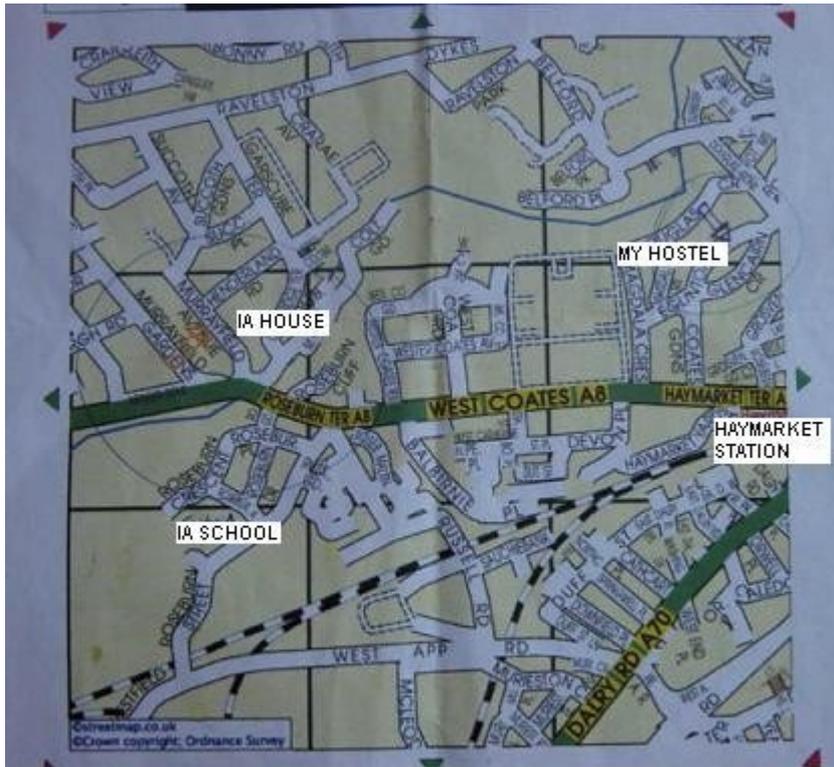
"Thick As A Brick", 1972

...58-year old Ian Anderson, born in Dunfermline, lived in Edinburgh Capital of Scotland until age of 12, when his family decided to move up to Blackpool in the North of England. "Athens Of the North", as Edinburgh used to be known, has lots of trails of the fluted guy's childhood. It's widely known that childhood is one of the most important times in progress of man. I managed to find certain shadows of Ian's Edinburgh period in history of his later life and some of Jethro Tull and his solo stuff...

Although Jethro Tull "strange" concert at the Edinburgh Usher Hall (mainly because of its bizarre format and boring set list) was direct reason of my visit to the city, it appeared very quickly that actually it wasn't highlight of the trip. With decent help of long time die-hard Tull fan Stuart (fabulous guy) and fantastic article from scottish *"Evening News"* gazette, titled *"I'm taking flutes back to my roots"** (some bits used in this material), I explored the Ianesque Places. It was inspiring, amazing, rare and unforgettable experience which I would like to share with you. Can I take you on journey right now?

During Ian Anderson solo acoustic show at Edinburgh' Corn Exchange in August 2004, Tull leader mentioned his old house address – the Murrayfield Avenue 54. It's why I was lucky to see it, with Stuart's assistance right after departure from the Edinburgh Airport.

Ian's parents owned a small hotel at the Murrayfield Avenue. I found it exciting that Ian's old house is only 1 kilometer circa far away from the Eglinton Youth Hostel where I stayed. I decided to come back there next day, as weather was definitely better. I wanted to make it more personal and longer...



THE IANESQUE TRAILS MAP

"I'd like to walk past my old house on Murrayfield Avenue, and I know I'd be sorely tempted to ring on the bell. But then again, I know I'd also bottle out of doing so. If someone came to my house saying they used to live there and asking whether they could look around, I'd find it quite uncomfortable and weird" - IA says in "Evening News". I also thought it could be bit rude, so didn't try to get inside.



OUTSIDE THE IAN'S OLD HOUSE

Please note the Victorian style of this block of flats, with its large windows. It's one of Ian's favorite architecture styles, which has its genesis in Ian's childhood. His current house in Wiltshire (South England, not far from Heathrow Airport, lives there since about 10 years) appears in Victorian style as well. It also has mentions in Tull/IA songs like "Journeyman" from "Heavy Horses" album (1978) ("*Sliding through Victorian tunnels where green moss oozes from the pores*") and "Sanctuary" from IA solo CD "The Secret Language Of Birds" (2000) ("*From time-warp Victorian zoos where staring ice cream gameboys play*").



IAN'S OLD HOUSE AT THE MURRAYFIELD AVENUE 54

IA: "I'm sure that the garden wall will look much lower to an adult, because when I was a kid it seemed enormous. It was an awfully long way to the ground if you fell off it." Yes indeed, it looks rather low to me.



THE MURRAYFIELD AVENUE

"I'M SURE THE GARDEN WALL WILL LOOK MUCH LOWER TO AN ADULT..." IAN ANDERSON

The Murrayfield Avenue is a quiet, friendly looking surrounding with lots of trees. It's only +-15 minutes from the city center by foot, but it looks like some sort of village. Who knows, maybe it's where and when Ian's love to quiet and pleasant lands actually began, which we can discover on folk-oriented albums like *"Songs From The Wood"* (1977), *"Heavy Horses"* and *"The Secret Language Of Birds"*? After many years of wandering through exclusive hotels, he moved to countryside in 1976, Scotland (Isle Of Skye) and still lives in rural area (Wiltshire, England).



THE MURRAYFIELD AVENUE

"WENT WALKING THROUGH THE TREES, YEAH!"

STAND UP, 1969

You need take only five minutes-long walk from the Murrayfield to come to Ian's old Roseburn Primary School...



IAN'S WAY FROM HOME TO SCHOOL

Ian Anderson spent countless number of days there in 1953 - 1958 period of time. It's where he formed his first skiffle band. Although I know that song *"Two Short Planks"* from IA solo disc *"Rupi's Dance"* (2003) refers mainly to the Blackpool Grammar School, I just heard it in my head while visiting the Roseburn one. Just treat it as piece about school in general.



THE ROSEBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL

"TWO SHORT PLANKS - TRY MY LUCK ON ANOTHER DAY..."
RUPPI'S DANCE, 2003

I don't know exactly why it was the Roseburn School's sports field, where tears almost poured out of my eyes... I just realized how lucky I am... Me, the 22-year old youngster from Poland. Coming to all these places, which I would never see in my life. Which not too many people escaped. Places which were (still are?) so important part of Ian's life.



THE ROSEBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL SPORTS FIELD

Tull Head-related places in Edinburgh, according to my knowledge, never been described and snapped to be used as publication, by any Tull fan or journalist, before. I hope I don't sound like fanatic. I just owe Ian Anderson so much. Like we all. Cheesy-sweet, some could say. But it's just true. I think I almost saw the young Ian...



IAN ANDERSON, AGE 8

You would not expect so many churches in area of Ian's old house and school. I counted five of them. Could be even more. It's not difficult to guess that sight of churches every day, during Ian's earliest years, took important role of forming his views about organized religion. Thoughts which he managed to share with us in certain lyrics from "*Aqualung*" (1971) and "*Roots To Branches*" (1995) albums.

I believe the Episcopal Church was place of Ian's Sunday School, referred in the song "*Wind Up*" from "*Aqualung*". Looks so big and scottish...



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

"HE'S NOT THE KIND YOU HAVE TO WIND UP ON SUNDAY..." AQUALUNG, 1971

There are so many mentions of trains in his lyrics, with song "*Trains*" from Ian's first solo experimental album "*Walk Into Light*" (1983) as the most spectacular example. The Haymarket Station, more or less 1,5 kilometers far from the Murrayfield Avenue, is where Ian used to observe arriving and departing trains. He used to do it almost daily, as his parents were already rather old while he was born and his older brothers already left the family nest. He spent the most of free time in his own company. Trains were his close friends. Please remember that these were days of steam engines.



THE HAYMARKET STATION

***"IN THE SHUFFLING MADNESS OF THE LOCOMOTIVE
BREATH..."*** **AQUALUNG, 1971**

Tull leader used to spend his childhood's weekends in charming Cramond village, in North of Edinburgh, near Firth of Forth coast (North Sea). Just take over 30 minutes long ride by Lothian Bus No. 24 or 41 from the city center and you're already there. Ever wondered about (one of) real genesis of marine feel of Tull longplays like *"Stormwatch"* (1979), *"Broadsword And The Beast"* (1982), *"Rock Island"* (1989), as well as song *"Panama Frighter"* from *"The Secret Language..."* album?



THE CRAMOND

***"BUILDING CASTLES BY THE SEA, HE DARES THE TARDY
TIDE TO WASH THEM ASIDE..."*** **THICK AS A BRICK, 1972**

The Edinburgh Capital itself has much medieval feel which suits so well to mood of old Tull chestnuts like *"A Passion Play"* (1973) and *"Minstrel In The Gallery"* (1975)...



THE EDINBURGH CASTLE

"DO YOU STILL SEE ME EYEN HERE?"

A PASSION PLAY, 1973

The city is located at seven hills, with Arthur's Seat being the most famous one. I had some windy time there, but it was worth to reach because of it's stunning views at Edinburgh area and there are so many "hills" in Ian's lyrics, especially on *"Heavy Horses"* and *"Rock Island"* albums.



THE ARTHUR'S SEAT AREA

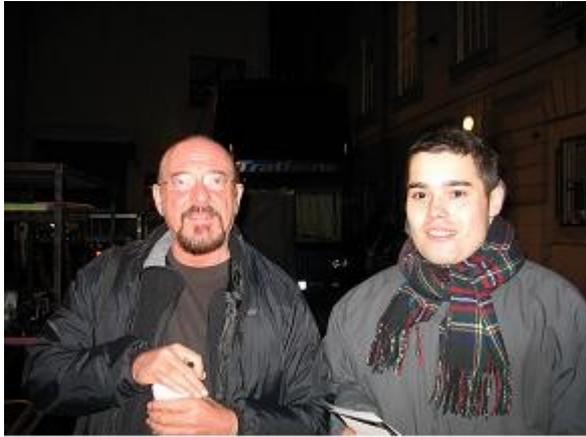
"THAT REFLECT THE TINS OF AUTUMN FROM THE HILLS..." J-TULL DOT COM, 1999

(Please don't take a notion at word *"autumn"* in this quote below the picture. Though I have been there in late Winter time, it still may look like Autumnn!)

"There are places in Edinburgh especially that I need to walk around and have some time to explore just to see whether the memories I have are real or not" - Ian admitted in the article mentioned before, while wondering about his plans for a "day-off" (February 28th '06) between Tull shows in Perth (February 27th) and Edinburgh (March 1st), on their *"The Aqualung Tour"*.

"I'd half-planned on going to wildcat sanctuary in the Highlands to see the work that goes on there. But then I realised I'd never really had a chance to have a full day in Edinburgh. Every time I've performed there, it's been such a rush to get everything sorted out and running smoothly. How odd is that? I grew up there until I was 12 and have a lot of hazy memories of the place, but I've never had the chance to properly rediscover it as an adult. But as I can't do both things, I've got a difficult choice to make."

After the Perth gig, Stuart asked the master about his definitive decision. *"I've got some business to do in Edinburgh"* - the man answered. I told him about my trip after the concert at the Edinburgh Usher Hall. I wish you would see look on his face.....



IAN ANDERSON WITH THE AUTHOR

(c) Lukas Was, 2006

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