

## Style

I always wore a jacket. Coats were not cool. It didn't matter if it was pouring down, the jacket was on and the collar was turned up. Jackets were not very practical for Belfast weather. They only had three buttons and you had to hold the top of them closed around your neck to stop the rain soaking your shirt. I was extremely glad when fashion changed and the Parka came in. They were warm and even had a hood.

Wrangler jeans were all the rage. We all bought them in Frazers, in Castle Street. We never had money for taxis or buses. We walked into town. If you were really well off you had Levis but I always thought they were not a strong enough fabric. When Loons came out in the early 1970s we were all into them. I had two pairs, one green and one beige. They were much cheaper than Wranglers and after a few washes they showed it! Mine had a sewn V near the kneecap, possibly to allow for the flared bottoms to be attached. It didn't take long for the stitching to wear and holes appeared. They were still cool.

I recall my first pink shirt vividly. I managed to talk mum into buying it for me just before we went off to Bray on holiday. It had long sleeves that I always kept buttoned. My uncle Pat was mortified that I wore it in Bray. I think I wore that shirt till it fell off my back with age!

We didn't usually buy shoes for style. Shoes were made to last. I particularly liked Oxford Brogues. All black leather uppers with fancy perforations in the top layer that were laced up. Most boys wore them, except my friend Eugene Morrissey. He wore Chelsea slip-on black boots.

Long hair was in. Not just for girls. The Beatles had long hair, so had the Rolling Stones, TRex, The Faces and of course Rod Stewart. Long hair gave you street cred. It made you one of the good guys and naturally it attracted the girls – or so we thought.

The only problem with my hair was it was red. Not roaring ginger red like our Dermot and Fergal, but red none the less. So the longer my hair got the redder I became. The other thing was, like all teenage boys, my hair was greasy. Now that was fine if I kept it washed. Mum however refused point blank to buy us boys any shampoo or conditioner. Washing the hair with soap soon dried it out and split the ends. So a mop of greasy red hair with split ends was not a good look.

Add to that I had a middle parting and absolutely no shape to my mop, (unlike Ciaran Brannigan or Sean White – who both had 'feathered cuts',) really set off a bad look. Mum and dad were always on at me to get my hair cut. They wanted to send me back to Uncle Alfie, who had taken over from Grandpa as the go-to barber for all the boys in the family. Mum used to threaten that she would cut my hair when I was asleep. As my hair got longer I started to believe that she might indeed cut it in the

night. So, I started wearing woolen balaclavas to bed! When she came up to check on us one night before going to bed herself, I nearly frightened the life out of her as I lay in bed with my balaclava on, she thought it was a burglar or IRA man!

