

Outside the Atlantic Hotel in Newquay Leslie Cavendish is in the front, second from right

I ALWAYS THOUGHT of myself as the Beatles fan who won the lottery. People all over the world dreamt of getting close enough to John, Paul, George and Ringo to breathe the same air as them. I was only 20 when I began cutting their hair and it was the greatest thrill a Beatles fan could have.

It's all thanks to Jane Asher that I became their hairdresser. I was an apprentice at Vidal Sassoon in London and Jane used to come into the salon. I would wash her hair before one of the stylists cut it, but her hairdresser was always too busy to see her, so eventually she asked me to do it. We all knew she was Paul McCartney's girlfriend, though we never said anything. One day, when I'd finished her hair, she said to me, 'What are you doing this afternoon? Could you come and cut my boyfriend's hair at home?' It wasn't an offer I was going to turn down.

I thought it would be a one-hit wonder, but a couple of weeks later I was called back. After that I would go round once a month. This was early 1967 and the Beatles had stopped touring to write their next record. The world was waiting with baited breath to see what they would do next, and I had a front-row seat.

One day, I was at Paul and Jane's house in St John's Wood and asked - as casually as I could - if they were working on anything. 'Yes, we're recording at Abbey Road actually,' Paul said. 'Why don't you come down?'

I went along and sat in the box upstairs with producer George Martin and engineer Geoff



**George came upstairs and said, 'I fancy having my hair cut. Can you do something with it?'**

Emerick, while the Beatles worked in the studio. The band used to start recording at eight or nine at night and finish at seven in the morning. No girlfriends were allowed - though I do remember seeing Yoko there once and Paul didn't look best pleased about it. The album they were recording? *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

George came upstairs at one point and said, 'I fancy having my hair cut, could you do something with it?' I always took my hairdressing equipment with me, and so in a break from recording, I did George Harrison's hair.

It can be a very intimate thing, cutting someone's hair. I remember George closing his eyes

and, for that moment, he just relaxed. Then it was back down to the studio to record *She's Leaving Home*. Soon I was cutting all their hair (apart from Ringo, whose wife was a hairdresser). 'If it's good enough for him, send him in,' said Lennon, after I'd finished Paul's hair once.

One day, I was at McCartney's house and he said, 'What are you doing next week? There's a whole load of us, we've got this bus and we're going to drive down to Cornwall. We've got the Beatle fan club members coming, we've got a few actresses, why don't you come down as the hairdresser and be part of the crew?'

I thought: 'I don't believe this, I'm going on

tour with the Beatles.' They picked me up outside Madame Tussauds and off we went on what would become the *Magical Mystery Tour*, shown on BBC One on Boxing Day, 1967.

This picture was taken outside the Atlantic Hotel in Cornwall. There I am at the front with a cigarette hanging out of my mouth; 20 years old and having the time of my life.

Five years ago, Giles - George Martin's son - remixed the film's soundtrack and they showed it in glorious technicolour at the BFI in London. McCartney was there, and I hadn't seen him for years. After the screening, we caught each other's eye. 'Leslie!' he called to me. I always used to say to him: 'The good thing is, Paul, you'll never lose your hair.' He had good, thick hair. Walking out of the cinema I said, 'I was right then, you've still got all your hair.' 'So I have,' he said.

— Interview by Eleanor Steafel

## Magical mystery tour

Hairdresser and Beatles fan Leslie Cavendish remembers a trip to Cornwall with the Fab Four in 1967