

The Punks' Tale

DAVE & ALISON BANCROFT

Their punk wedding made the national Sunday papers. Then they did the most outrageous thing of all – settled down and had a baby. Dave and Alison are living proof that you can't judge a book by looking at the cover.

Alison: Me and Dave met at a band practice at Peartree Bridge. I was in a band called Ethnic Majority and Dave turned up and we've been together ever since that night. He was living at his sister's house in Tinkers Bridge.

Dave: That's right, because my sister was renting a house there. She was buying a house in Wolverton with her boyfriend so I persuaded her to let me and a mate to take it over, paying the rent in her name. It was great but it all fell to bits and we ended up getting evicted. The next door neighbour reported us to the Development Corporation as my sister wasn't living there anymore. We asked if we could keep the house but they wouldn't let us, so we ended up squatting it. The next door neighbour was a bit strange. He used to play classical music really loud at about eight o'clock on a Sunday morning. Once he came round and threatened to break Jamie's base over his head but we used to annoy him as well – Public Image with the speakers in the cupboards up against the wall and we borrowed Fictitious' P.A. for a while and played records through that. It was great fun – the summer of 1980. Anyway we stopped paying the rent and the electric had been cut off and eventually they came round to evict us, but we managed to stall them for a couple of days, bought a car and moved to Devon. Me, Alison and Jamie – and Tiggles came as well for the crack. My other sister had a council house in Devon so we went to stay with her. That was brilliant. We put disguises on. We dressed up as hippies because we had leopard skin hair and Alison had this huge Mohican and there was no chance of getting a house in Devon looking like that.

Alison: I put a headscarf on and wore a long dress.

I Dyed My Hair

Dave: And I dyed my hair black and borrowed winkle-picker boots and these really tight jeans and ended up looking like a bloody Spaniard. No wonder we never got a house – a Spaniard and a hippy! We moved back because we couldn't get anywhere to live and my sister was getting a bit pissed off with us in her house.

Alison: So we came back but still didn't have anywhere to live. Dave's dad was in America at the time so we stayed in his flat. I hadn't even met the bloke and one day he just came back to find we'd moved into his bedroom! So we moved into his front room on the floor.

Dave: It's quite a little flat too.

Alison: So how we came to get married was because we kept going to the council to explain the situation. Dave's Dad was so nice to us and wouldn't take any rent or food money but we had to pretend to the council that he was really horrible and about to kick us out so they'd find somewhere to live. The woman at the council was really nasty to us and said that she didn't know why we were bothering her as we weren't even married. I was so upset that I just said we might as well get bloody married then. We started thinking about it and it began to seem a great idea. We'd get somewhere to live, loads of presents and we could have a party. Nobody believed us until we actually did it. The wedding day was really good fun. It didn't seem like I was getting married really, more of an event that everyone would be at.

Dave: It was Bletchley Register Office and they said that no more than fourteen people were allowed in but it ended up with sixty people in that little room. It was great, people drinking beer and smoking joints in the Register Office.

Alison: I wore an army overall with all bondage straps and studs on it and I had my Mohican and Dave wore bondage trousers. On the car we had black ribbons and we were supposed to have a black wedding cake but the lady couldn't make it because she was ill.

Dave: It was in all the papers, Sunday Mirror and everything.

Alison: I told the reporters not to put anything stupid but they did as usual.

Dave: They put a little photo of my granddad with us in the paper. But they wrote about how he is wearing `what is known in old-wave circles as a tie`. And they put pathetic headlines like `Punk Love`.

Alison: We had a party afterwards at Peartree and Fictitious played. It was a good night but we still didn't have a house.

Dave: It was five months after we got married that we got the flat. We made sure that we either phoned up or made an appearance at the council offices every day. There wasn't much point because they always told us the same thing but it's good to keep on at them. They eventually used to say: "Ah, Mr Bancroft," when I went in. If you already live around here it's so hard.

Alison: Fern was born last February. A lot of people assume she was an accident but she wasn't. When I first told people I was pregnant they'd say: "Have you thought of getting rid of it?" Charming! No, It was quite upsetting at the time.

Dave: We lived in the flat for two years and Fern was born right at the end of that time. We'd been hassling for ages to get a house but it still took until two months after Fern was born to get one. We had letters from the health visitor because they said we shouldn't live in that flat with a baby. The back bedroom was full of Alison's brother's stuff because he was in the army and he'd been evicted from his flat, Anyway, we only had one bedroom effectively and sooner or later Fern was going to need a room of her own. All the walls were mouldy and it was generally horrible. The point is we notified them two months after Alison got pregnant and it took all that time for them to give us a house. They offered us one on Waterside which we went to have a look at. We got in because all the downstairs windows were smashed. All the kitchen units had been nicked, there was glass all over the floor and something had crapped in the kitchen. There were glue bags everywhere.

Alison: We went back and they said “Oh, of course we`d fix it up.” “Bloody right you would!” I said but it wasn`t on because they knew we`d got a kid. Then we asked for one in the crescent at Fishermead but they said in so many words that they didn`t want people like us living there as it`s a bit of a showpiece. But when we said we`d have one on the Conniburrow we got one in a matter of days because it`s three stories high and nobody wants to live there.

Dave: I`m doing an Open University degree which I applied for when I was on the dole because I knew they`d pay for it and I`ve been doing it for a couple of months now. After each course you complete you get a credit and six credits entitle you to a degree. But those six credits can be in any subjects. At the moment I am doing a Science Foundation course which is what I fancied the most but I might change and go on to do something else. It`s just to broaden your outlook on life.

Alison: People say we`re modern day hippies and that`s really what the punk movement has become. There was a lot of anarchist activity in the sixties, it`s not that different.

Dave: Again, it`s down to image. The main thing that goes against people is a violent image and I don`t think that applies to punk anymore. Most punk bands sing anti-war songs.

Alison: We`re totally non-violent. We`ve never had a fight in our lives. If there`s any trouble your best defence is always your legs.