

ROB FENNAH AND HELEN A JONES: AUTHORS Q & A

Q. When did you first hear about Lennon's banjo?

Rob: As a lifelong Beatles fan I've always known that Julia Lennon taught John to play her banjo. What I didn't know was that it had been missing for over fifty years.

Q. How did you find out?

Rob: A dealer at a Beatles convention told me. I couldn't believe something that important could simply vanish into thin air.

Q. So what do you think could have happened to it?

Helen: That's the six million dollar question; nobody knows. Neither John's family nor any of the Beatles experts we spoke to could shine any light on its whereabouts.

Q. Perhaps the banjo was scrapped?

Rob: Of course that is a possibility, but I don't think so. Julia Baird (John's sister) told me the banjo had a beautiful mother of pearl inlay design on the back which only the very expensive instruments had. Besides, if it had been thrown out, someone would have saved it, either to sell or simply to keep for its ornamental value. Wouldn't you retrieve it if you saw it lying in a skip?

Helen: I agree. Musical instruments very rarely get destroyed. Even when they are unplayable people tend to hang them on a wall rather than scrap them.

Q. If it was found; what would it be worth?

Rob: A lot! One of John's piano's sold at auction in 2000 for one and a half million pounds; but Julia's banjo is in a completely different league. Without it The Beatles would never have existed. It was the catalyst that changed the world and that's what makes it so valuable.

Q. How do you know someone hasn't already found it?

Helen: Because, if they had, it would be hanging up in a museum somewhere and we'd all know about it.

Q. About the novel then; can you give us some idea of the plot?

Helen: It's the story of a Beatles tour guide who finds a letter written by John Lennon. The letter contains a clue to solving the greatest mystery in pop music – the whereabouts of the first instrument John ever learned to play. Although the story is a work of fiction, the plot is weaved around hard Beatle facts which we hope will inspire people to start searching their attics and cellars.

Rob: Julia's banjo is out there somewhere and, believe me, whoever discovers it won't have to worry about their day job anymore.

Q. So where would you start looking for the Holy Grail of pop memorabilia?

Rob: Read the book and you'll find out.