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LOOKING BACK: Remembering Spirogyra - the cult acid folk band who formed in Bolton

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MARTIN Cockerham and Mark Francis were teenagers when they formed the folk duo Spirogyra in 1967 while both students at [Bolton School](#).

Martin, pictured here, had moved to the town aged 16, and soon found himself involved in Bolton's flourishing [music](#) scene with the pair playing gigs at Bolton's new Octagon Theatre.

"I was a typical hippy," Martin told writer Jeanette Leech of his teenage years in Bolton. "In my school I was probably the first hippie. But I used to get high grades so, because of that, I didn't get into trouble."

In 1969, Martin left Bolton to study at the University of Kent in Canterbury where he expanded the band to include fellow students Barbara Gaskin (vocals), Steve Borrill (bass guitar), and Julian Cusack (violin). They were soon spotted by student union entertainments officer Max Hole, who offered to manage them and got them a recording contract with B&C Records. Their debut album, *St. Radigunds*, was named after the street that their student house was on. It established them as a cult act on the underground club circuit, and sold respectably. Its follow-up,

1972's *Old Boot Wine*, appeared on Peg Records and showcased a harder-edged sound than their predominantly acoustic debut. After the release of *Old Boot Wine*, the band was pared back to the duo of Martin and Barbara, who were by now romantically involved.

Their final album, *Bells, Boots and Shambles*, appeared on Polydor in April 1973 and sold poorly. Widely regarded today as one of the classics of British 'acid folk' and is now incredibly rare and expensive if you're lucky enough to have an original copy on vinyl.

In March 1974, the band embarked on their last tour and they split up soon after. "It was depressing," said Martin. "This was a very good little band, and artistically I was very happy with how it was going." Martin left to live in Ireland, embarking on a journey with a horse and cart and becoming more deeply involved with spirituality and self-sufficiency. Barbara meanwhile, would go on to enjoy a number one hit in the UK in 1981, when she and Dave Stewart joined forces and recorded the hit single *It's My Party*.

Spirogyra reformed in 2010 and released an album in 2011, calling it *Spirogyra 5*, but sadly Martin passed away on April 5, 2018 after falling ill in Thailand.