



The former Pink Floyd star's chair and hand-painted bikes are among items up for auction this week

# A chair, two bikes: last of Syd the Sixties star

■ John Elliott

THERE is little but the odd lick of psychedelic colouring to hint that it is the bric-a-brac of a 1960s rock star rather than any suburban DIY enthusiast and amateur painter.

The personal effects of the Pink Floyd founder Syd Barrett, who died in July, range from pictures he painted to a modest stereo with green circles daubed on the speakers, a pink kitchen chair and a sheaf of notes about the weather.

The items are to be auctioned this week in his home town of Cambridge, where he had lived alone as a recluse for more than 30 years in a pebble-dashed semi.

Barrett will be further remembered this Christmas. David Gilmour, the Pink Floyd guitarist, is to release a three-track single in his memory featuring a live version of the Barrett classic Arnold Layne. The track was recorded by Gilmour and David Bowie at the Albert Hall in May this year.

The items likely to attract the highest bids in the auction on Wednesday and Thursday are nine paintings by Barrett, a keen artist who usually destroyed his pictures after photographing them. They include a child-like Cambridge landscape that suggests Monet, and an abstract of the nearby Gog Magog hills.

A statement from Cheffins, the auctioneers, said: "Syd always considered himself more an artist than a musician and the family would like Syd to be remembered in the future not only as a talented musician but also as someone whose love of art was with him most strongly in his final days."

Still *Life with Lemons and Green Bottles* and a *Shelf* is signed "RB Jan 06" – Barrett's real first name was Roger – and may be his most recent surviving painting. Barrett trained at art school in Camberwell, south London, before achieving fame with Pink Floyd, whose ground-breaking psychedelic rock took the *Swinging Sixties* by storm.

After leaving Pink Floyd in

1968, his mind apparently damaged by LSD use, Barrett pursued an erratic solo career before quitting music in 1972 and retiring to Cambridge.

His peace was disturbed by little except when determined fans managed to find him. He died of pancreatic cancer aged 60.

There are few hints of rock star life in the sale. Two bicycles may recall *Bike*, the song on *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, Pink Floyd's first album, which includes the line: "I've got a bike, you can ride it if you like, it's got a basket, a bell that rings and things to make it look good." Cheffins said: "Both his bikes, which he had used every day in Cambridge for visits to local shops and the pub, were hand-painted by Syd."

Barrett's scrapbooks offer a tantalising glimpse into his thoughts. Ring binders of notes are subdivided into sections such as "the weather", "British cities" and "radio amplification".

Barrett's fondness for DIY is shown in a modified side table, the legs of which he extended by

screwing on and gluing extra bits of wood. He seems to have been satisfied with his Ikea bookcase, though: the auction catalogue notes it is "one of the few pieces of furniture that he did not modify in some way".

Other items of furniture have received licks of paint – such as the desk lamp Barrett painted blue and a kitchen chair he painted pink – while into a "modified pine bedside chest of drawers ... Syd has driven a large screw through the side from the inside, which serves no apparent purpose."

He clearly spent much of his time in a cream leather reclining armchair, which has a dark stain where his head would have rested, perhaps reading his books such as *The Oxford Companion to Decorative Arts*, *The Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry* or *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.

Barrett left £1.2m, naming his two sisters and two brothers as beneficiaries. His family plan to give some of the proceeds to train artists. In September Cheffins sold the house for £300,000.

Barrett in the 1970s before he quit music and became a recluse