

# >Merry Hell<

...NEWS...

SEPTEMBER 2012



Widnes

## “The Gigs Go On...”

The band were up very early after Bury St Edmunds for the trip home and the “Rec’d For Terry” benefit at **Widnes** on 21st July. Hitting bad traffic on the way didn’t help but we made it in the end for a gig that will go down in >Merry Hell< history. After an exceptionally long day the band were still in fine form, following a host of bands who all contributed to raising almost £2,000 for the local hospice. In a very sweaty Queens Hall Studio, scene of many a Tansads gig way back when, the band played a rousing set, culminating in the first use of pyrotechnics at a >Merry Hell< gig, with the dancing crowd being showered with black and red confetti during the encore. Check out the rest of our web designer Julian’s spectacular photos from the gig on our facebook pages! The evening also marked the first ever performance of the “End Decree”, a short verse to close the show.



Oswaldtwistle

On Saturday it was time to pack up the splitter bus and head for **Nottingham**. The Riverside festival was in full swing when we arrived complete with fairground rides and food stalls as well as a big screen broadcasting the Olympics live. The band played outdoors to a sizable crowd, the audience sat on the semi-circular tiered steps in a sort of mini amphitheater setting. The crowd enjoyed a typical >Merry Hell< set and some spectacular fireworks to end the evening.



Widnes

Next up was the Unicorn in **Newton Solney** near Derby for the Music & Beer Festival where the band were headlining the Saturday night. We’ve already reported on the ice cream that the band were given but the set was equally delicious - and quite loud for a seemingly quiet village - Hope we didn’t keep anyone up!

We then embarked upon our mammoth three day gig marathon (3rd-5th August) starting at The Plough in **Oswaldtwistle**. Those who arrived early were surprised to find as many builders as there were punters. Amazingly the venue was in the midst of ongoing renovations and in places the plaster was still drying on the walls. The psychedelic decor of the stage must have had one or two people rubbing their eyes or checking the strength of their beer but a good time was had by all. The set notably featured all the Tansads songs in the band’s repertoire apart from “Satisfied” which tends to be more suited to the acoustic shows.



Nottingham

After a late night for some, everyone was up early displaying varying degrees of alertness as we set off for the fabulous **Wickham Festival**, deep in the picturesque Hampshire countryside. We were most impressed with the set up and organisation of the festival with everything being close to the main gig marquee. With the sun shining, a dressing room next to the Wurzels and our own drinks cooler we were certainly living the dream! We were also visited by The Oysterband who came in to say hello and to say how much they enjoyed our set at the Big Session. They didn’t have to but they did! Thanks guys!

Wickham



The set also went pretty well at **Wickham** and the audience response was certainly appreciative. Great versions of "G-Man", "Rosanna's Song" and "War..." were just some of the highlights. It was a rare day off for "One More Day", probably the first time it hasn't closed the proceedings but "Let The Music Speak..." ensured a lively finish and with the applause still ringing out the band took the opportunity to launch straight into the "End Decree" which, since it's introduction, seems to be a ideal way to close the show. Judging by the healthy crowds gathered at the CD stall when the band came to do a post gig signing, it had been another very successful appearance which bodes for next year's festival calendar! We arrived back at the studio at 11.30 on Sunday night, flagging a little by then but more than happy with the weekend's work!

## Acoustic <Merry Hell>

Wednesday nights aren't usually that exciting but on 9th August those who made the midweek trip over the border to Wales and to **Ruthin All Styles Music Club** were treated to a superb show by the 4 piece >Merry Hell<. Damian and I both agreed that this was simply one of the best acoustic gigs the band has done to date. With standing room only in the upstairs room of the Cross Keys I was grateful to club organiser, John, who gave up his regular seat which provided a great view so we could get some photos. Playing two sets the band threw in a few surprises, one being the live debut of Virginia's brand new song "Morning After". This will be a sure fire crowd pleaser and the audience



were singing along by the 2nd chorus. Nice to hear "Satisfied" and "Butcher & The Vegan" alongside the regularly featured album tracks. Closing the set were the upbeat trio of "Let The Music Speak...", "English Rover" and "One More Day" (the band being joined by the youngest member of the Kettle clan, Rowan, on vocals) before noisy demands for an encore. It was Andy Jones, in attendance as a punter, who shouted for "Pendle Hill". Whether it was penciled in or not the band obliged and delivered a flawless version before the night closed with "Revolution" and the recently introduced "End Decree".

### "Damian's Towersey Telegram"

A quick lesson in the reality of folk n roll as everyone assembled at 9.30 am at the studio to pack the tour bus for a gig at 11.15 pm that night. Fully loaded we arrived at Towersey for 3 pm to unload the gear, leaving us a little time to see why American outfit Larkin Poe are so widely celebrated, before our soundcheck at 4.30. All duties performed it was off to pitch the tents (for some) then enjoy a rare chance to take in the delights of the festival, of which there were many, including the crew catering and the chance to pass a little time with Edward II who would later play their usual blinder. As gig time approached we realised that this was a much different audience to the usual, with an apparent average age of around 18 and hanging over the crash barriers at the front, looking for a dance and a good time. Within a couple of songs all worries about our reception were dispelled as dancing and good times spread throughout the crowd. Young boys down the front were professing their undying affection for Virginia during the gaps between the songs and when she suggested a group hug at the end of War Between Ourselves, the love spread around the room like an onrushing tide. Other notable high spots in a very long set included a sing along to Bury Me Naked and the first full electric airing of Morning After, sadly without our guest star violinist (see story elsewhere).

Having put so much into the gig, Andrew's voice was the cause of some concern overnight, as having retired to tents or hotel room at around 2.30 it was up with the (rather tardy) lark at 8.00 to get the gear to a different stage for a performance at the decidedly un-rock n roll hour of 12 noon. Playing to a very different and seated audience the level of applause grew during the first few numbers until a generally good time was had by all concerned. A shorter set with Andrew's voice back to its magnificent best for a stirring rendition of Rosanna's Song. After finishing with the new End Decree and having loaded the gear back up into the van we once again enjoyed the luxury of a few hours relaxation, chatting to friends old and new, sampling the wide variety of food and other stalls plus the music that is omnipresent. Particular mention should be given to Nancy Kerr and James Fagan who delighted many of us just outside the marquee in what can only be described as blazing sun - a novelty at festivals this year. Our first visit to Towersey but having enjoyed the experience from start to finish, hopefully not our last. If we do go back then we hope to have the time for a trip on Ken Bruce's London Routemaster bus which ferries festival goers to and from the site.



## “On the Fiddle”

For those of you who have been wondering and to judge from the emails that is quite a few of you, then recording of the new album is now under way. With the release slotted in for either March or May next year, “**Bury Me Naked**” promises to follow on from the very high standard set by BLINK...

When it was decided that the recording of Virginia’s new song “**Morning After**” needed the sound of a violin there was only really one man for the job and we were delighted that, after listening to a demo version of the song, he agreed to provide just such a part. Ladies and gentlemen, on fiddle, please give a very big >Merry Hell< welcome to the legend that is .....  
**Dave Swarbrick!**



For those of you that may not know their history, “Swarb” is the man credited in many circles with altering the sound of the highly influential band Fairport Convention before the recording of their classic album, “Liege and Leaf”, thus giving rise to folk-rock from which all good things flow.

Besides his long stint with Fairport, he has released a number of solo and collaborative albums, frequently tours with guitar maestro Martin Carthy and has even survived the premature announcement of his death in the Daily Telegraph. For those of you who want more information, make a cup of coffee, pull up your computer and put aside a bit of time to check out Dave Swarbrick’s Wikipedia entry – it’s a long read!

All credit to our drummer Andy who made the first approach through his facebook friendship with Swarb and the whole band feel nothing less than privileged to have him contribute to our next album. When John heard the part that he has contributed to “Morning After”, he declared it ‘delightful and perfect’ and we are sure that you will agree once the new album is released.

>**Merry Halloween**<

## The Citadel, St Helens 27/10/2012

The Citadel in St Helens is always a special night on the gig calendar and one that everyone looks forward to. As previously announced we are hoping to make it even more special this year. The band will add two old Tansads favourites to the set especially for the show. The most popular suggestions have been whittled down to a short list of 5 which is now up on the home page of the web site where you can vote for the song you want to hear. In keeping with the Halloween theme we have decided to make the evening optional fancy dress. It would be great to see an assortment of witches, warlocks, vampires ghosts and ghouls - or whatever else you can think of - in the audience. It should add a fun element to the evening and we’ll also be awarding prizes for some of the best efforts on the night. A special mail out to follow soon.

## “Mailing List Competition”

Congratulations to **Dai Jeffries** who has won our mailing list competition this time around simply by becoming the 1000th person to ‘like’ our facebook page as he is also a member of the mailing list. This is great news as Dai writes for R2 magazine - a great read fully recommended by the band and in fact wrote a fabulous review of BLINK... so a nice bit of karma here! Dai was also at the Tansads reunion gigs - so if you stick with us then good things are bound to happen eventually!!

## “Lay Your Ed Down”

Be sure to get down early for the forthcoming gig at the Farmers Arms, Bispham near Parbold where the semi-acoustic >**Merry Hell**< will be supported by none other than original Tansads bass player, Ed Jones! Ed will be hitting the stage for the first time since the Tansads reunion gigs in 2010 and will hopefully be treating us to a couple of his own Tansads compositions.

## “Diggin’ in Wigan”

Saturday 8th September saw one of Bob’s occasional solo sets at the “Wigan Diggers Festival”. Earlier in the day we had the pleasure of witnessing a set from a good friend of the band, Pauline Blackburn and there was also a set from ‘John The Baptist & The Second Coming’ featuring former Tansad, Chris Atherton, on drums and Volunteers guitarist, Paul Bibby.



The non-musical side of things featured a no nonsense poetry reading from Laura Taylor and 3 monologues written by one half of our merch stall team, Julie McKiernan, these being performed on the day by actor James Quinn of Shameless / Early Doors fame. With a host of other musical acts, speakers and poets scheduled throughout the day someone had to keep things running smoothly and not content with keeping >Merry Hell< in order it was **Damian** who not only oversaw the organisation backstage but also managed to act as compere introducing all the performers. Well done to all concerned on a splendid day!



Bob’s all too brief set opened with “Fear of Falling” and “Over the Border” before he donned the ‘gob iron’ for “This Time”. Next up was a cover of Leon Rosselson’s “The World Turned Upside Down”, performed as a tribute to the Diggers, before the set ended with a welcome airing of “Peace and Love”. If anyone gets the chance to see Bob then do take the opportunity. It is interesting to hear these songs as they were originally conceived before being given a studio sheen and the full band treatment.

“**To Order Stuff**” To order CDs or T-shirts by post please send a cheque or postal order made payable to -  
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