

>Merry Hell<

News - October 2012



Welcome to the latest from the world of >Merry Hell<. With the mailing list growing ever larger and regularly busting the sending limit on Damian's account we have moved over to a mail service. We hope we have managed to migrate everyone across successfully but If anyone you know hasn't received their newsletter tell them to let us know or get them to sign up again through the web site.

Autumn Shows

The Summer is well and truly over and what a washout it was! Still, we will remember it for some superb festivals and outdoor gigs that we thoroughly enjoyed but its time to put the wellies away and move indoors for a series of exciting Autumn shows. We were really pleased to be asked to play the **Red Lion Folk Club** in Birmingham.

<http://www.redlionfolkclub.com/> This award winning club is not only the biggest folk club in the

UK but also regarded as one of Europe's finest. Organizers, Chris & Della, initially approached us after witnessing the band's storming set in the main marquee at the Big Session and we were delighted to be invited over. We are there on Wednesday 17th October and it could be well worth a trip down see to this one!

The Acoustic band will also be making its third visit to **Rhyl Folk and Acoustic Music Club** on Friday 26th October. <http://rhylfolkandacoustic.com/> We have already enjoyed two great nights on our previous visits to Rhyl which was the place the acoustic band played its first ever show. We hope to see many of you again - what better way to welcome the weekend than an evening with >Merry Hell<



Finally a reminder about one of the most eagerly anticipated gigs of the year. Tickets are now dwindling very fast for **St Helens Citadel** on Saturday October 27th, for an evening we are billing as >Merry Halloween< and it promises to be a fantastic night. Fancy dress is optional and should add a fun element to the proceedings though we have yet to discover whether any of the band and crew will be appropriately attired. Remember, there will be prizes for the best efforts on the night and the band will also be adding two old Tansads favourites to the set, as chosen by you, the audience! The gig is nearly sold out so if you want to be there book now to avoid disappointment! <http://www.citadel.org.uk/>

Damian's Small World Story

Now those of you who have read these things before will know just how much I like a small world story, so here comes another one..... I recently bumped into Kevin Smith, father of a young man who was at school with my daughter, albeit a couple of years older than her and I

asked how his son Franny was doing. It transpires that he is working in a studio in Boston (USA) and as the conversation developed it emerged that Kevin himself had been a musician for quite some time, having been a member of prog rock legends, Camel (beloved of newsletter co-author Jonah) before they were famous, then joining the British Country Rock band, Unicorn with whom he toured widely, playing with the likes of Fleetwood Mac, The Doobie Brothers and Linda Ronstadt in the USA, all of which is pretty impressive. It also turns out that Unicorn shared bills with Fairport Convention (see last newsletter) and were also signed to transatlantic records - as were The Tansads. However, the spookiest coincidence is that Unicorn released a song called Social Shirker, containing the immortal line "I'm a Shirker". For those of you who don't understand the significance of this, Merry Hell emerged from a band called the Tansads, who were at one time signed to Transatlantic, released an album called Up The Shirkers and many of the band's fans still refer to themselves as 'Shirkers' and even wear t-shirts to celebrate the fact.

For any of you intrigued by the sound of Unicorn, all their albums have now been reissued on CD, are available to download or listen to on Spotify - a particular treat for anyone looking for the missing link between Crosby Stills and Nash, Poco and an acoustic Barclay James Harvest. They also have a track "Country Roads" featured on the fabulous Electric Eden album, based on the excellent book about the development of folk music. It's a small world after all!

Recent Gigs



Matlock Bath

Back in early September the band played in Derwent Gardens, Matlock Bath as part of the illuminations. In one of the more unusual settings a 5 piece semi acoustic incarnation of the band (with Lee on keyboards) played in the evening on the bandstand by the side of the river Derwent. The first of two sets closed with the 2nd outing for the latest Virginia gem, "Morning After", which was performed in the fading daylight before dusk brought the interval and a parade of illuminated boats on the river. With the



Bispham, Parbold

15th September saw a thoroughly enjoyable night for our first ever visit to 'The Venue @ The End of The Universe' where the crowd witnessed a rare support slot from former Tansad, Ed Jones, whose reflective 5 song set and certainly held the audience. The highlight was probably a mellow, melodic number called "Wonderful Disaster". With another former Tansad, Guy Keegan, in attendance Ed had been reluctantly talked into closing with the old

bandstand also illuminated with a greenish glow, the band returned for a 2nd set and the usual selection of crowd favourites with "One More Day" closing the evening.



Bunbury Mill

A 5 piece acoustic >Merry Hell< appeared at this intimate venue as part of a fund raising drive for Bunbury Mill. The villagers of Bunbury had just bought the Mill and museum and the band were happy to help out with this benefit show. A few of the Merry Hell regulars had made the trip but the crowd was mostly a local one though we did win a few people over as we believe people from Bunbury came to the Whitchurch gig at the end of September. We did create a bit of amusement when "Crooked Man" was performed. Unknown to the band there was a banker in the audience who was given some serious ribbing by his companions. The band were yet again well received by a new audience and it was satisfying to see new people buying the album at the end of the night.



Tansads B-Side, "Gelignite" which was predictably well received. Merry Hell were a five piece with Andy making his acoustic debut on a single snare drum and brushes. The crowd were treated to an epic set with all the usual favourites and all the Tansads songs in the band's repertoire including "Satisfied". Ed joined the band on stage for the encore of "English Rover" and "Revolution" which lead to an outbreak of dancing down at the front as the previously seated and well behaved audience finally lost their inhibitions.



Darwen - Bar 39

The band made their 2nd visit to Bar 39 on 15th September. The first show was packed to the rafters with a newly appointed Andy Jones in the crowd witnessing his first >Merry Hell< gig but tonight he was behind the drums and with Andrew Dawson returning from honeymoon the band were at full strength and firing on all cylinders. What a night it was! Some nights everything just clicks, the band are on fire, the sound is perfect and the crowd generate a special atmosphere and this was definitely one of those nights, a show that will live long in the memory of those who were there. From the opening decree through to the end decree everything went swimmingly. Even when Virginia accidentally punched the overhead light during "Revolution" the song continued flawlessly - the knuckle print we believe is still embossed in the metal lampshade. A great night and the Alien Rain tasted as good as ever.

I've Grown Up & Tied the Knot....

We are sure all of you will join us in sending our congratulations to the newly married Mr & Mrs Dawson! Andrew & Claire tied the knot at the end of August before heading off on an extended honeymoon which saw them traveling around Venice, Florence and Rome, to name a few of the places. The happy couple thoroughly enjoyed it and threw their 3 coins in the Trevi fountain to make sure that they would be going back. Many of you will have seen the photos of the Wedding on Facebook. Guests went to the reception on board a vintage double decker bus which showed impeccable taste, especially as the vehicle's destination was none other than the town of Leigh, always a local hotbed of support for the Tansads and now for Merry Hell.

More Tansads...

Speaking of the old band....The very welcome possibility of us getting some more Tansads material released has raised it's head. The planned "Rough & Ready II" project we have mentioned in previous newsletters is on the agenda once again with a view to approaching a label or two to see if there is any interest. The other possibility would be a self produced limited pre-order via the web site. Among the treasures earmarked for inclusion are "Scottie", which was performed live on the odd occasion, another uplifting Bob tune, "Storm Song" and an interesting French cover version. Much of the material we are looking at spans the "Flock" and "Drag Down The Moon" eras, a period in which >Merry Hell< favourites like "Pendle Hill" and "As I Did Go" had their beginnings so no doubting the quality. There are some great songs languishing in the vaults that need to be heard and loved!

Final Snippets

With Damian in India and myself unable to be there we can't tell you a great deal about the Liverpool Acoustic gig except that it involved a lot of sweat and strain to hump the gear down the pedestrianised Matthew Street area and up many flights of stairs. Those that did attend tell us it was well worth the effort!

The band are once again in demand on local radio having appeared on both Radio Merseyside (on Billy Butler's show) and on Radio Shropshire (Genevive Tudor's Folk Show) in recent weeks. For those who missed them, both shows featured interviews with the band and a live session. With Andrew unable to make Radio Merseyside the Virginia lead session consisted of "Build A Mansion" and "Bury Me Naked" while Radio Shropshire enjoyed "This Time, "Bury Me Naked" and "Drunken Serenade" as well as an off the cuff jingle written especially for Genevive and extolling the virtues of the show.

After our incredible reception last year the band is really looking forward to playing again at the Great British Folk Festival at Butlins, Skegness on December 1st. It marked a real step up for the band and gave us invaluable exposure. We are sure that after such healthy CD sales following the set then more people will be aware of us this time! Before then we hope to see some of you at the Birmingham and Rhyl shows if you can make it and for those locally who still haven't booked - the Citadel is nearly sold out!

Jonah & Damian