

>Merry Hell<

News - January 2013



First of all we hope everyone had a great Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all. We have good reason to look forward to 2013 and the small matter of the release of the 2nd >Merry Hell< album. Although we had initially flirted with "Bury Me Naked" as a title we have now decided that the album will be called "Head Full of Magic, Shoes Full of Rain". The title comes from the lyrics of one of Bob's new songs. The recording is complete and John spent the run in to Christmas in the studio refining and mixing the songs. The musicians and vocalists were on hand for retakes and tweaks but the album is now all but finished and sounds great. You will be pleased to hear that the style is very much what you would expect of this particular bunch of musicians but there are some interesting new ideas as the >Merry Hell< sound continues to evolve - look out for the banjo! Every song has really had to earn it's place on the album and the writers can be justifiably proud of the overall standard of the material. Of course brand new songs are always exciting but there are surprising new arrangements of a couple of well established live favourites to look forward to, not to mention contributions from guest musicians. We've already covered Dave Swarbrick's fabulous fiddle playing on "Morning After", which we are sure you will love but we can also reveal that medieval performance duo, Glynis and Brian Radford, better known as "Tapestry of Music" will also feature on the album lending their unique skills to a couple of the songs. Glynis and Brian are not only excellent musicians but have mastered an array of obscure medieval instruments and John knew they would be ideally suited to the approach he wanted to take with certain tracks. Click on the link below to see the duo in action demonstrating all manner of strange instruments, including the Hurdy Gurdy which will appear on the album. [Tapestry of Music](#)

We are pleased to have secured the services of designer / photographer, Brain Cannon, to work on the album cover. Brian is probably best known for his work on the Oasis and Verve album sleeves but also designed covers for the likes of Suede, Ash and Super Furry Animals to name but a few. One of the band recently spent an interesting day by the seaside with Brian, who also caught up with the band before

the recent Chester gig for the all important group photo... all will be revealed on the cover. Brian also took the photo heading up this newsletter. We did hope to unleash the album sooner rather than later but all manner of things have to be taken into consideration to give the album every chance to make the best possible impact. Promo for press and radio, reviews in the major folk magazines and of course the all important dates to promote the album. All this is currently being coordinated and plans are also being hatched for a special launch gig which we hope to tell you about next time. We are now expecting the album to be released in May and hope to bring you more information on the actual songs next time.

Now that the serious business of recording is over the band are currently hard at work arranging and rehearsing the new material and can't wait to play some of it live for you on the forthcoming "Crazy Angels" tour - and speaking of which, here is the first part of the tour.

The Crazy Angels Tour, 2013

SATURDAY 23RD FEBRUARY - BOLTON - DOG & PARTRIDGE

<http://www.liveatthedog.co.uk/>

THURSDAY 28TH FEBRUARY - DARWEN - NUMBER 39

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Number-39-Hopstar-Brewery-Tap/100163583416336>

SATURDAY 2ND MARCH - WIDNES RUGBY UNION CLUB

With The Chimps & Greg Oldfield

Benefit Gig for PAPHYRUS (Prevention of Young Suicide)

Tickets £10 from www.wegotickets.com

SUNDAY 3RD MARCH - LEIGH - THE AVENUE

<http://www.theavenuepub.co.uk/>

SATURDAY 9TH MARCH - SUN INN, LLANGOLLEN

<http://www.sunllan.com/>

THURSDAY 14TH MARCH - WAGON & HORSES, SALFORD

FRIDAY 15TH MARCH - ST HELENS - ZOO BAR

<http://www.zoocafebar.com/>

THURSDAY 28TH MARCH - RUTHIN FOLK CLUB

<http://www.ruthinallstylesmusic.net/>

Tickets for the Leigh gig at the Avenue and for St Helens Zoo bar are now available from the shop page on the web site. Anyone thinking of coming to the Zoo Bar should note that the capacity is less than that of the Citadel and it did sell out last time so you may want to book early!

It has been a while since we were last in touch so we need revisit 2012 to report on some of the highly enjoyable gigs from the end of the year. Without any of our regular reviewers in attendance it was left to Bob to report on the band's first visit to the country's biggest folk club in Birmingham.

BOB DOES BIRMINGHAM

October 17th, 2012. >Merry Hell< went down to the legendary Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham. The city traffic made our progress to the venue slow and, if truth be told, a little tense [scurrilous rumours that this wasn't helped by Bob forgetting to bring the Sat Nav have neither been confirmed nor denied by our mandolin player]. Nevertheless, with our reputation for punctuality still more or less intact, we arrived to the warmest of welcomes from the organisers. The dressing room at the Red Lion is truly awesome. Although admittedly on the small side, it's perfectly formed. Artists are not only treated to generous helpings of performance enhancing substances (tea, coffee, and chocolate biscuits) – but, also, the walls are literally papered with Folk history. Posters of those who have graced the stage in years past – Roy Harper,

Dick Gaughan, Maddy Prior, Martin Simpson and many more – fill every visible inch. We felt truly honoured to be sharing the space with such illustrious company. It was great to see some familiar faces in the audience – our intrepid traveling supporters were joined by many midlands Merry Hellions. Truth be told though, the majority of members didn't know us from Adam – which made the rapturous reception we received for our two acoustic sets all the more satisfying. If you find yourself in Birmingham on a Wednesday, >Merry Hell< recommend that you check out the Red Lion. It may not be the largest venue you've seen, but it has a glorious pedigree and a massive heart.

We should also mention that Bob squeezed in a solo set at the Cadence Cafe in Tyldesley in late November, the bill also featuring the poetry of the one and only Laura Taylor. Bob's set included some of his best loved songs as you would expect - "This Time", "Over The Border" and "Fear of Falling". Also aired were "Peace & Love" and to close proceedings, "Lean On Me". There were a couple of surprises with a welcome cover of Lindisfarne's classic "Winter Song" and a brand new >Merry Hell< song "I've Never Loved Anybody Like I Love You" - this being the song from which the title of the new album has emerged!



>MERRY HELLOWEEN< 27/10/2012



The annual St Helens Citadel show proved once again to be something special. The crowded bar, with the masses attired in all manner of halloween costumes, was certainly a sight to behold. From the moment that Count Von Liptrot swept from the stage with the grandest of cloak twirls, it was obviously going to be a night of surprises and so it proved. John strolled out in the semi darkness and to the delight of a packed house opened the show with "Horses", the cue for a mass audience singalong which set the tone for the evening. Driving straight into "Drunken Serenade" the already charged energy levels rose another notch. "Over The Border" prompted a mass audience sway along which continued into "Bury Me Naked:" The epic "Pendle Hill", normally featured as a set closer or an encore, made an earlier than usual appearance as the band completely turned the set list on its head. "Lean On Me" and "Rosanna's Song" then allowed the audience a breather and a chance to appreciate the lighter side of the band. A glimpse of the new album followed with the duo of "Morning After" and "Lay Your Head Down". Anyone who has seen the band recently will already be familiar with both songs. Andrew then donned the guitar for an unexpected Halloween treat, a solo version of "Jolly Captain" by the late, great Jake Thackray. In the song the Jolly Captain's dying wife threatens to claw and scratch her way up from the grave and to "haunt him vexatiously" should he marry when she dies. In the punchline the Captain reveals he has buried her face downwards. Andrew pulled off the song with expert comic timing saving the final laugh for Virginia's appearance as the Captain's wife at the very end of the song. You can watch the full song here [Jolly Captain](#) and a selection of clips from the evening here [>Merry Helloween<](#)

>Merry Hell< are a band looking to the future with new songs they are justifiably proud of but are happy to pay homage to their past and next up was a full section dedicated solely to the Tansads era. This powerful set of classic anthems undoubtedly transported many back to the heady days of the 90s as one crowd pleaser followed another... "Fear of Falling", "G Man", "Cobbly Back Yard" - winner of the web site vote for the song most wanted to see performed, "Iron Man", "English Rover" and "Up The Revolution". The crowd responded enthusiastically with some of the finest audience singing heard at any >Merry Hell< gig to date. There was one final surprise to close the section. After thanking the sound and road crew John asked for the help of the audience on a solo acoustic rendition of "John John". The section surely met with the approval of Tansads devotee, Paul Hewitt, proudly displaying this very tasteful body art on the night!



The set eventually closed in the usual fashion with "One More Day" followed by an encore that started with another Tansads era favourite, "Satisfied" and ended with balloons raining down on an already lively audience for a rousing rendition of "Let The Music Speak". All that was left was for the band to gather at the front of the stage for the end decree. For those of you who haven't already seen it please check out the excellent review by Paul Arris on the [Louder Than War](#) site. Some of you with long memories may recall that Paul reviewed the band's first ever show, also at the Citadel, in a very early newsletter.



MORE GIGS





Rhyl 26/10/2012

Rhyl Folk & Acoustic Music Club (to give it its full name!) became the first place anywhere in the known universe to host a 3rd gig by the ever shifting acoustic incarnation of the band. As ever we enjoyed a great night with an attentive and appreciative audience - and we always appreciate being fed during the course of the evening. Being the night before the Citadel those lucky enough to be there were treated to a sneak preview of Merry Halloween. No one would begrudge Andrew a rehearsal of Jake Thackray's "Jolly Captain" before the big night and it worked superbly. The comedy began as Andrew strummed an introductory chord only to be interrupted as he was about to sing by a loud, show stopping creak as John sat back in his chair. Andrew's disparaging look was priceless. "Cobbly Back Yard" also got an airing with the band joined onstage by audience member, Robert, supplying some impromptu percussion on shaker.



AFO Conference - Nottingham 17/11/2012

it was perhaps a sign of the band's growing popularity that they were afforded the opportunity to play a showcase gig at this particular event. The conference was open to the public later in the evening but was mainly aimed at promoters, agents and other festival services and traders. With only 20 minutes to play with the band were determined to seize their chance and



Standish 17/11/2012

The band returned to the Unity Club for the 2nd time in less than a year for another fundraiser in aid of the Coppull Folk Weekend. A drummer-less line up played to a packed house and crammed in all the usual favourites including new tracks "Morning After" and "Lay Your Head Down". John was also hounded back onstage after the encores for a rabidly demanded performance of "Horses". There was one unexpected event on the night. After numerous requests and hints had fallen on deaf ears at previous gigs, Virginia was somewhat surprised to be presented with a pack of the infamous tropical juice drink, Um Bongo, by Merry Hell regulars, Colin & Chrissie Jones. The last time Virginia looked this pleased was at Newton Solney when the band were given a tub of Bluebell Farm Ice Cream!



Great British Folk Festival - Skegness 01/12/2012

We mentioned this one last time and were made up to be on the bill for the 2nd year in a row! Admittedly our late night spot appeared to have "graveyard shift" written all over it, especially as we had to follow the Oyster Band who went down a storm. Thanks to a plug from the Oysters on our behalf we were relieved to see that people did stick around to see us and created a fantastic atmosphere in the huge venue. From the moment the audience clapped along with the Decree it was obviously going to be a good night. The uptempo 40 minute set mellowed out just a couple of times with "Rosanna's Song" and "Build A Mansion" but by the time the band launched into "Music Speak" the folk equivalent of a mosh pit had broken out in front of the stage with our old friends from Panjenix visible in the thick of it! Another great night and fantastic exposure for the band in front of a sizeable crowd. Thanks to everyone who stayed up late and helped to make it a special night for us! As it turned out not only were the audience impressed but we were delighted to see a

to demonstrate to the movers and shakers of the folk industry just what they could bring to any festival bill. They made every second count with a quickfire set comprising of the Decree, "This Time", "Drunken Serenade", "Bury Me Naked", "War Between Ourselves" and Let The Music Speak". Things seemed to go very well and we did have quite a few visitors to the >Merry Hell< information stand after the show. Damian stayed over and was last seen networking well into the early hours to spread the word on all things >Merry Hell<

tweet from none other than Gordon Giltrap singing the band's praises! We were also mentioned on Gordon's web site!



Preston 08/12/2012

The band played a well received support slot opening for "The Lancashire Hopots" at Preston's 53°. As the venue sits within the University of Central Lancashire campus there was a large student faction in attendance which made for a sizeable audience. Making the best possible use of their 30 minute slot the band delivered a cheery, upbeat selection. The Decree led into "Drunken Serenade" then came a surprisingly early run out for "One More Day" followed by "Bury Me Naked", "Bink" and "War..". The band made the most of the splendid LED lighting and dry ice and delivered a performance that had surely won them many new admirers among the partisan Hotpots audience by the time "Music Speak" gave way to the end Decree.

Wallasey 08/12/2012

The 4 piece acoustic >Merry Hell<, with Virginia resplendent in seasonal Santa hat, marked their first visit to Wallasey Folk Club with a half hour set. As well received as the opening salvo of "This Time" and "Drunken Serenade" were, it was on "Rosanna's Song" and "Bury Me Naked" that the crowd started singing along. "Crooked Man" provided some mid set muscle before "Build A Mansion", with more audience participation, "One More Day" and the end decree closed proceedings. We had a very pleasant evening, made even more enjoyable by an exceptional half time buffet which would not only have graced any occasion but contained possibly the finest egg mayonnaise sandwiches we've ever tasted! Needless to say we are looking forward to our return visit!

Telfords, Chester 29/12/2012

The band ended the year in style at Telfords Warehouse. The venue was packed to the rafters with people crowding around gaps in the wall to the adjoining room to get a good view. With many of us jostling for position in the main room those locals in the know were settled comfortably upstairs in the bar watching the action unfold on a large video screen! We hope packed houses will become a regular occurrence and it was heartening to discover that some of the people making up the audience had traveled from places as far flung as Milton Keynes, Leicester and Barrow to be there! Thanks to everyone who traveled to see the band throughout last year! Do come out and see us on the latest dates for your first chance to hear some of the brand new material!

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