



“A Hell of A Year!”

As we pause for breath and wonder where 2011 went, we can look back on a very successful first full year for the band. The year has brought many highlights and many milestones...the band's sold out debut gig at the Citadel in St Helens, signing with Mrs Casey Records and the eventual release of our debut album "BLINK... and you miss it" in October. There were other special live shows like the band's appearance at the 'Off The Tracks' festival, the intimate Secret Gigs in St Helens and more recently the phenomenal response to the band at the Great British Folk Festival - you can read about the latter shows below. Things have gone about as well as the band could have hoped with a host of great reviews, radio play for which we were extremely grateful and a spate of enjoyable live radio sessions and Interviews.

“>Merry Hell 2<”

It may only be in the very early stages but work has started on the follow up to the critically acclaimed "BLINK...and you miss it". It would be safe to assume that audience favourites "Let The Music Speak For Itself" and "Bury Me Naked" are likely to feature, and "Build A Mansion" has of course been a regular in the live set, but there is a wealth of material to choose from. "Dreaming of the Time" is surely a contender and both Bob and Virginia have yet more new songs nearing completion. Following the hugely popular 'Gentle Man' Lee has finished another new song and is also writing with Bob.

“Benefit Gig”



A big band, semi acoustic >Merry Hell< line up will headline a benefit gig in aid of Clatterbridge Cancer Research. This will be on Saturday 3rd March at Widnes Rugby Union Club, Heath Road in Widnes. Tickets are now available from the shop on the >Merry Hell< web site or through www.WeGotTickets.com

>Merry Hell<

On The Road

Lymm Folk Club Thursday 12th January
(Full Acoustic Set) £6 Advance/ £8 on the door

Birmingham - Jam House

Wednesday 18th January (ADMISSION FREE)

Liverpool - Mello Mello

Thursday 19th January (ADMISSION FREE)

Darwen - Number 39 - Thursday 26th January

Wigan - The Press Room

Friday 3rd February (Acoustic Set)

SPIRAL AWARDS 2012

To cap off a great year >Merry Hell< are one of 4 bands nominated for the 'Band of the Year' Award on the Spiral Earth folk site. It would be great to win this award but we need your support so please take a moment to visit the site, simply pick Merry Hell from the list and click the 'Vote now' button.
<http://www.spiralearth.co.uk/spiralawards2012/Group.asp>

Thanks to many of you who we know have voted already but we need to keep up the momentum as voting runs until March so if you know anyone who hasn't voted yet - give them Merry Hell!

> Merry Hell < LIVE



GREAT BRITISH
FOLK
FESTIVAL

The band were a late addition to the bill but we were extremely pleased to be playing this popular festival! Taking place in the huge Centre Stage showbar at Butlins Skegness holiday resort the band arrived for set up and soundcheck just over an hour before the doors opened. With another venue also hosting bands at the same time we feared we might have to play to a handful of people rattling round inside this enormous room that must have been almost three times as wide as it was long. We needn't have worried! Within ten minutes of the doors opening the place was crammed full!

There was an electric atmosphere as the band trooped out. Phill began pounding out the beat to the now familiar 'Decree' before John hit the opening chords to 'Drunken Serenade' and things were up and running. 'Crooked Man' was next and it was clear the band were relishing the opportunity to play in front of such a large audience. If ever they picked a good night to deliver possibly their best performance to date then this was it. In true folk tradition the audience were attentive and quiet yet fully appreciative of the subtle side of the band with the likes of 'Rosanna's Song' and 'Lean On Me' eliciting a great response from the floor. They could sing a bit as well with Virginia leading the massed ranks on the chorus of 'Bury Me Naked' which everyone picked up on immediately.

It was a sign of how well things were going, when, during 'The War Between Ourselves', we had the first visitor to the merchandise stall some 25 minutes into the set. He had decided to pick up the CD "in order to beat the rush" he said. As it turned out this proved to be a very good move.

'One More Day', complete with a quick round of band intros, was the set closer as usual after which the audience erupted. We believe it isn't usually the case that support bands get an encore at this event but the crowd reaction was such that the band were only too happy to oblige with Andrew delivering a crystal clear 'As I Did Go' while everyone else plugged back in before the evening ended with an adrenaline fueled 'Up The Revolution'.

The merchandise stall was mobbed before the encore had even started and such was the clamour to get hold of the CD that reinforcements had to be summoned in the shape of, the one and only, Denise Kettle, to restore order and keep the queues in hand.

This could go down as a very important gig for the band. Although we saw a few familiar faces this was effectively a new audience experiencing the band for the first time and it was wonderful to earn such an enthusiastic reaction from so large an audience and to make so many new friends!

facebook

We would be grateful if those of you who have their own pages would please 'like' the band on facebook! We are always looking to raise our profile and this will really help to spread the word. For those of you who haven't discovered the joys of facebook it is a great way to keep up with the latest developments. Damian and several of the band do administer the facebook page so the news on there is as current as it gets!

Acoustic <Merry Hell>



Those of you who were lucky enough to be at St Helens Bowling Club on either of these very enjoyable nights will have relished the opportunity to see the band at such close quarters and in such an intimate setting. The six piece **>Merry Hell<**, complete with bass and keyboards, gave the entire "Blink...and you miss it" album an airing as well as throwing in other popular non album tracks and a smattering of Tansads favourites including fine versions of 'G Man', 'Iron Man' and of course, 'Horses', now demanded at most of the acoustic shows. It was great to hear the likes of 'Peace and Love', 'Won't Be Long', 'Pendle Hill' and the new, mellow arrangement of 'Lean on Me'.

The latter has been in and out of the set as the band didn't feel happy with the live version but the new more mellow arrangement works well and the band are comfortable with it. At the raunchier end of the spectrum 'Blink' and 'War Between Ourselves' still pack a punch acoustically and both were well received. 'War...' also boasts an audience participation section which has evolved over recent shows. 'Over The Border' still manages to stir the emotions in this acoustic format and indeed, it is testament all to the writers that, the majority of the songs can be stripped down yet still have the same impact as the full band arrangements.

All in all these were two fantastic evenings in a relaxed setting and for those who couldn't be there Steve Edwards and his trusty cameras were in attendance to capture the magic (See below). It was a nice touch during the encore when John introduced Steve and filled the audience in on the part Steve has played in the Tansads story.

Bass player Andrew Dawson and his wider family were the driving force behind the gigs. Everyone agreed that the hospitality and catering were first class so a big thanks to everyone involved behind the scenes! So successful were the shows that we are considering holding further events at the venue in the near future.

Coming Soon!

>The Secret Gigs<

Keep an eye on www.merryhell.co.uk in the coming weeks for official band footage from the Secret Acoustic Gigs in St Helens! Filmed by Steve Edwards and featuring the 6 piece **>Merry Hell<**

"Band on the Run" Incorporating "Damian's Digest"

As promised last newsletter a little more about our special running project. The idea behind **The Long Run** is that members and friends of the band will run the 127 mile length of the Leeds-Liverpool canal over the course of a weekend. The twist on what is a challenging yet popular fund-raising run is that the band will be looking to perform small 'gigs' at points along the run – mainly canal-side pubs. The scheduled date for the run is the **27th – 29th of April**.

The weekend will start with a gig at the Hebden Bridge Trades Club on Friday 27th. This is an established and popular venue and is reasonably close to Leeds - (it's also near a canal – although not the Leeds-Liverpool) - site of a legendary Tansads gig where people ended up sleeping next to the aforementioned canal.

The run itself will start on the Saturday morning at the Leeds end of the canal and continue throughout the day with a minimum of 2 runners at any one time plus a support person on a bicycle at all times.

Throughout the day the remaining members of the band will travel to pre-arranged locations and meet up with the running members of the band and perform 15 – 20 minute slots during at the canal-side locations during which collections will be made to support the charity. Non-playing members of the team will continue the run while the band are playing.

Originally the plan was to keep this relatively low key but since members of the band started to run at organised events for a national charity (and having the album played at the events) we are now intending to raise interest in, awareness of, and funding for the national charity.

In addition we have also had some interest from a major sportswear manufacturer who may well be offering support in a variety of ways.

Overall this is intended to be a fun event for the band members involved, to spend some time with people whose company we enjoy and to raise some cash for a worthwhile cause. We would hope to generate some publicity via the local and regional media.

We will be looking to fans of the band to get involved and also to raise some sponsorship cash either via individual donations or by prompting employers into giving some sort of donation.

That's the plan – let's make it work and please get in touch if you want to help. It would be useful if you can mark your e-mails 'The Long Run'.

Best wishes - Damian XX - Merry Hell



These men have just run 10 MILES!



"Order Stuff" To order CDs or T-shirts by post please send a cheque or postal order made payable to - **Peter Liptrot** to: *Peter Liptrot, 4 Wilson Avenue, Wigan, Lancs WN6 7HD*
Words - Jonah & Damian, Design - Jonah, Photos - Al Balmer, Denise Kettle & Jonah