



### "Thank You & Good Knight"



The big news in the >Merry Hell< camp is that we have a new drummer! The new face behind the kit is someone many of you will already know, another former Tansads drummer, the one and only, Andy Jones. Andy appeared on the final Tansads album, "Reason To Be", but also worked regularly with John on other studio projects in the years before the Tansads reunion. The band wish to place on record their thanks to Phill for his energy and enthusiasm and his invaluable contributions to both our first year of live shows and to making our debut album, "Blink...and you miss it" such a success. You can read Phill's statement below



### "Drunken Serenade - Video Shoot"

On 29th January the band gathered at a secret location outside St Helens to film a promo video for "Drunken Serenade" under the direction of Steve Edwards. The morning was spent filming multiple individual takes of the backline with Andy Jones first up on the drums. Andrew Dawson, Lee and Bob completed their individual takes as Steve filmed both wide angle and close up shots. John Virginia and Andrew arrived mid afternoon to do their parts which, for reasons of accuracy, also had to include whoever would naturally be in shot behind them. More takes then for Andy, Andrew D, Lee and Bob. Finally the whole band were filmed in multiple takes both from the floor and with Steve wandering the stage for some close ups and action shots. Even without dancing girls, fast cars and explosions an awful lot of work goes into even a relatively short stage performance video and a huge thanks to Steve who has condensed all those multiple takes into something that represents the band at their best!





# >Merry Hell< LIVE

## “Salford - St Luke’s Community Centre”

The band played this benefit gig for our old friends Dave & Pete at Salford City Radio in order to raise funds to take Pete’s play, “The Ring Of Stones”, to the Edinburgh festival. The gig was also notable as it marked the **>Merry Hell<** debut of new drummer, Andy Jones. Andy had minimal rehearsal time but managed to learn the set in just a week. We were delighted to see such a good crowd - a mix of Merry Hell regulars, locals and a few friends we’ve made on our two appearances at the nearby Wagon & Horses pub. ‘Cracked Flag’ and ‘Kingdom Lost’ warmed things up nicely with well received sets, both bands being well known to the locals.

**>Merry Hell<** kicked off with the Decree and the audience immediately came to life so it was evident we were going to have a great night. The atmosphere was pretty relaxed and John was able to sit dangling off the edge of the stage for “Rosanna’s Song” - so relaxed in fact that the band even auditioned a brand new sound engineer who did a fine job in such a cavernous and potentially echoey room! Virginia also managed to destroy a colander during “Blink” by knocking the base off, luckily no one in the front row was seriously injured and, as is usually the case on our visits to Salford, a good time was had by all!



## “Leigh - The Avenue”

The band made their second visit to Leigh’s premier music pub though it wasn’t just the locals who turned up. We were grateful that on a Sunday night people had also travelled from places as far flung as Wrexham Leeds, Chester & Blackburn and it was great to see so many regulars again. Your support means a lot to us!

It is always gratifying to get an audience who will keep quiet and listen to Andrew’s unaccompanied “As I Did Go”. Early on it was a case of the silence spreading back from the stage as the song unfolded but now the audiences are starting to listen as soon as it begins! Virginia continued her rigorous consumer tests on kitchen implements when someone in the audience remarkably produced an egg slicer to be beaten during the Blink solo and it managed to survive! “The War Between Ourselves”, complete with extended audience participation section, was particularly well received on the night, as was “Iron Man”. There was also a rare encore slot for “Butcher & The Vegan” before a boisterous ‘English Rover’ sent the crowd home happy!



## “Widnes Rugby Union Club” Clatterbridge Cancer Benefit

We were pleased to be asked to do this one for such a worthy cause and a full venue demonstrated that the public were also right behind the event. Greg Oldfeld warmed things up with an acoustic set before The Chimps set many feet tapping with some infectious grooves.

Some nights are a bit special and with a posse of **>Merry Hell<** regulars in attendance there was a great atmosphere from the start. As soon as the Decree gave way to “Drunken Serenade”, Merry Hell’s Belles, led by Laura, were up leading the community dancing as the band rattled through “Crooked Man”, the joyful “This Time” and another of Bob’s finest, “Fear of Falling”, only pausing for breath on “Rosanna’s Song”. The crowd were also in good voice for the “Bury Me Naked” singalong

The night also featured the full band debut of “Pendle Hill”. A hugely popular song from the album it hadn’t featured in the set so far but was played acoustically at the Secret Gigs in St Helens last November. Virginia was presented with tonight’s kitchen implement in a sparkly gift bag by one of our audience regulars and the cheese grater in question blended seamlessly into “Blink”. As the night progressed the floor in front of the stage got busier as the band went out on a high with crowd pleasers “Iron Man”, “Let The Music Speak..” and “English Rover”. Fantastic to hear that the night raised over £1,000 for the charity.

## “Phill Signs Off...”

Hi everyone, Finally sat down a month after making my decision to leave the band and say goodbye to a project that for me began in earnest 3 years ago. Happily intoxicated at Damian's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party I kidnapped the Volunteers' snare drum and bullied Bob into playing English Rover with me, a truly awful rendition if memory serves me right but yet made all the more memorable with Oz stage diving on us both throughout. With half the Tansads in the room it was the unlikely catalyst that snowballed into three amazing reunion concerts, leading to the formation of Merry Hell, a new album with a commercial release and a nomination in Spiral Earth's Best Group category. A fitting tribute to the members' hard work and the dedication of both band and management to date.

I am immensely proud to have been involved and to be given the opportunity to ply my beloved craft upon the wealth and diversity of the songs presented to me. Providing passion as standard, creativity when required and a good deal of spontaneity thrown in I believe has gone some way in setting a respectful standard and feel for the band's debut album. I have learned a great deal and my work with the band has enhanced and developed me as a player in a way that is only really possible when working with such great songs, writers and musicians. I wish each and every one of the band every continuing success.

There are so many reasons for leaving the band at this time, both personal and professional but this is my stop and egress from the big red and black bus is what I must do. 25 years now as a drummer and there are still many more challenges and goals for me to attempt as both player and teacher, now is the time to pursue them.

To the last but most definitely not least and that's you guys. You see the band is really just one half of the equation. Your energy and enthusiasm were as important to me as Ying is to Yang and I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for your kind words, enthusiasm and commitment. Life is indeed short ...Blink and you'll miss it... vote Merry Hell **Love Phill xxx**

## “It Won't Be Long”

For all the romantics among you, time to look forward to the next newsletter and a story that will bring a tear to your eye and a flutter to your bosom as we bring you the true story of a fireman and a nurse, whose true love, separated by continents, will finally be resolved when their hearts are joined in the blissful union of eternal love with the help of >Merry Hell<. Now even the most hard hearted amongst you cannot resist that - but you will have to wait for the next edition when we hope to bring you confirmation of a happy ending!



Things are falling nicely into place for our exciting charity run and gig-a-thon - Band On A Run (newsletters passim Eye fans). We have had volunteer runners sign up at the recent Widnes show but anyone who feels as though they can lend some support over the weekend 27th to 29th of April should get in touch via the facebook or the usual email address - please mark your e-mails “Band on A Run”. It is not just runners that we need but general support of varying kinds. If anyone knows of any friendly pubs along the Leeds Liverpool canal that will let us busk for around 15-20 minutes and collect money then please let us know.

Don't forget that we will be playing a full band gig at the Trades Club in Hebden Bridge on the Friday night to mark the start of the event and closing proceedings with a gig at Mello Mello in Liverpool on the Sunday night - all audiences most welcome.

## “Walking In Your Company”

Followers of the band on facebook and the website will have noticed that an increasing number of radio shows have been picking up on the band and are featuring BLINK..with varying degrees of prominence. As always, the support that we receive is much appreciated by the band and all friends of Merry Hell are encouraged to listen to the online broadcasts and podcasts (where available) to show support for those who support us. To borrow a phrase from one such supporter - use them or lose them (thanks Jamie!).

However, there is an additional delight besides the thrill of hearing Merry Hell over the airwaves and that is to listen to the company we are keeping. It is endlessly fascinating to see which artists and songs are played immediately before and after Merry Hell as the DJs work to produce an interesting and entertaining mix of music. In the recent past, tracks from BLINK.. have ushered in or followed Led Zeppelin, Roy Harper, Lindisfarne, Show Of hands, The Albion Band, the Levellers and Fairport Convention, esteemed company indeed but none more so that when 2 presenters have seen fit to follow MH with a Bob Dylan track, musical heaven and a guarantee that our dreams will always be joyful.

# >Merry Hell<

## On The Road

**Bolton - Dog & Partridge**  
Friday 10th March

**Sun Inn Llangollen -Friday 16th March**

**Derby - The Flower Pot**

**St Patrick's Day - Saturday 17th March**

**St Helens - The Zoo Bar**

**Friday 23rd March**

**The Engine Rooms - Skelmersdale**

**Folk-Punk against Facism - Saturday 7th April**

**Standish Unity Club**

**Friday 13th April - Coppull Folk Fundraiser**

# Acoustic <Merry Hell>

The acoustic band in it's various guises has been as busy as ever visiting folk clubs and playing intimate acoustic sets to attentive audiences. More recently the band has expanded to become a semi acoustic 6 piece with Andrew Dawson and Lee joining John, Bob, Virginia and Andrew.

Back in January the band continued their quest to introduce the >Merry Hell< sound to local folk clubs. The first of these shows at "Bar 39" In Darwen was supposed to be a full band gig but with Phill's sudden departure it became an acoustic gig. Maybe that was for the best as the pub was absolutely packed with standing room only and there was barely room to fit the band, let alone the drums in. Not many would have spotted the returning Andy Jones in the audience as he got a taste of what he was about to let himself in for! It was a great atmosphere and the band went down a storm, as did the selection of excellent real ales including the fabulously named 'Alien Rain'!

Next up was Lymm Folk Club on 12th January. The usual favourites from the Blink...and you miss it album were played and a fair number of Tansads classics. The 2nd set was notable for the inclusion of a new, unaccompanied vocal

number from Virginia which was called "Bloodlines" and led nicely into "Butcher & The Vegan".

After closing with the ever popular "Iron Man" and then encores of "Build A Mansion" and "Let The Music Speak.." there was still time for a Tansads double with club organiser, Bernard Cromarty, joining the band on accordion for a very folky version of "English Rover"

The band made their 2nd appearance on Salford City Radio's Folk Show on 2nd February when John, Virginia, Andrew and Bob were interviewed and played 4 live tracks - 'This Time', 'Lean on Me', the live radio debut of 'One More Day' and 'Drunken Serenade'. They were then joined by Andrew D and Lee later at the Wagon & Horses pub where the band played an acoustic set to a packed room.

Then it was on to the 'Bear & Billet' pub in Chester where Chester Folk Club are currently based. The band were entertained by some high quality acts before playing two separate sets of their own and the musicianship on display was of the highest order. There was a great range of ages with some fine young talent playing their own songs - fully realised and fully appreciated. It was suggested that, statistically the Raven Folk Club has, on average, the fastest fingers in the folk world and we were both humbled and delighted in equal measure by the likes of resident house band, Full House (Chris, Dave & Nick), Pete Jones, John Barber, Pete Baston, Fliss, Owen Chamerlain and Paul on the whistle!

## Tansads Retro (1)

When we first started out as >Merry Hell<, we were hoping that we would bring along as many old Tansads fans to the party as possible. Now it appears as though the opposite is happening. As new people discover the delights of >Merry Hell<, they are then investigating our history, as seen by an increase in both the sales of, and indeed prices of, Tansads material on eBay and Amazon. Some of the prices being asked are high to the point of being frightening but at least it is nice to know that someone somewhere is making money out of the Tansads as we can show you a lot of people who never quite managed it!

For those of you that are looking to broaden your Tansads collection, it is a good idea to widen your search as reasonably priced copies of albums - particularly Flock seem to be available from European sellers as well as UK based outfits. We would love to see the old albums re-release eventually but it is not down to the band members and at present there are no plans to do so - not even as downloads.

## "Come The Revolution..."

For Tansads completists everywhere comes the exciting news that there may at last be a new release. Our old friend Geoff Davies at Probe Plus records is looking to include an unreleased version of Up The Revolution on a compilation album featuring the cream of the folk-rock artists that have been released on Probe Plus over the years. The version of Revolution was one of several songs recorded at Amazon studios in Liverpool in the early days of the band and features the addition of a fiddle player which gives it a quite distinctive sound from other Tansads releases. There is no definite release date but it is absolutely one to look out for as other bands that may feature include John Peel favourites and Darwen's finest the Levellers 5, plus the mighty Gone To Earth and the Onset, featuring ex members of the La's. More info as and when we get it.



## Tansads Retro (2)

We have made a few new additions to the Tansads Archive on the web site including a new T-Shirt gallery. We thought we would collect all of Simon Collett's distinctive T-Shirt designs - and indeed the later ones - together for your viewing pleasure but we also need your help. Jonah still possesses most of the actual T-shirts photographed for the gallery and still has others to add but it is far from complete. If anyone has decent quality photos of themselves or friends in Tansads T-shirts we would love to add them to the gallery. We promise to remove any identifying features unless you expressly wish to appear in all your glory! Among those we are looking for are the Flock & Roll T-shirt, the white T-shirt with the early logo in black (or was it blue?) and the triangular guitar logo T shirt. If you don't see it in the gallery and you have a photo we are interested in including it!



## "One More Day - Two More Gigs"

In our attempt to become the James Browns of Folk-Rock, this Saturday, the **10th of March** will feature not one but two >Merry Hell< gigs! Starting early afternoon we will be playing an outdoor gig in **Wigan town centre** as part of the annual Food and Drink Festival. For those who may not be familiar with Wigan the stage will be at The Piazza, The Wiend and we will be on just before the more epicurean related Lancashire Hotpots. After that it will be a short dash over to the **Dog and Partridge** in Bolton to set up for the evening gig. Our last gig there was packed and we are hoping for nothing less this time around. We will be onstage around 10pm but get there early in order to see some old friends of ours who will be providing excellent support - more details on the website.

**"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*  
*This issue - Words - Jonah & Damian, Design & Photos - Jonah*