

# *The Old-Time News*

Friends of American Old-Time Music & Dance

Volume 1 Issue 1

Spring 1995



A double first was awarded in the banjo and fiddle contests to Robin Gillan, second right, from Wales, who won them both. He is pictured with judge Tom Paley and the other winners, from left, Steve Read (2nd in banjo), Steve Bearden (3rd fiddle), Dave Young (2nd fiddle) and Mark Wallace (3rd banjo). Picture: Trevor Halstead.

## **Gainsborough '95**

*It was the event of the Old-Time year and it got great coverage in the local press - here are some of the more controversial quotations!*

"Certainly the atmosphere was electric although, apart from the main Friday and Saturday night concerts, there wasn't an amp in sight ."

" One of the important things about Old-Timey is that the music is all, not the glory of the individual performers - it is ordinary people's music, not the stuff virtuosos are made of."

" Sara (Grey)'s voice is plaintive but defiant and her subtle rippling banjo miles away from hectic bluegrass."

" Now it's all over, Old-Timey has got to pull its diverse strings together so that the initiative Gainsborough started doesn't fade away."

*These were from Carrie Osbourne, whose article was accompanied by some wonderful pictures including the one of the competition winners above. (I hope they'll forgive us for borrowing it!).*

*Last but not least, from the Gainsborough Target:-*

" The (Trinity Arts) centre's sales and customer services manager Kate Sanderson said " We were absolutely amazed at how many people came to the festival but they were real enthusiasts. And everyone had such a great time we nearly ran out of beer." "

*(Shock, horror !)*

*On a more prosaic note:-*

## The U.K.'s answer to Galax?

Old-timey music now has its own association to promote the music and bring the players together. The Friends of American Old-Timey Music and Dance was formed at the country's first ever festival devoted entirely to Old-Timey music, and held at the Trinity Arts Centre in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. This event happened almost by accident, when Keith Johnson from Gainsborough visited the centre to talk about having a meeting there to set up an association.

A new convert to the old-time, he went to last year's banjo weekend in Rippenden and was struck by the absurdity of discovering that three players from Manchester had never met before, but lived virtually in neighbouring streets.

What Keith didn't realise when he first called at the Trinity Arts Centre was that the director David Popple already knew a bit about Old-Timey. Somehow a meeting grew into a weekend of concerts and workshops from February 24-26, with Tom and Ben Paley and Sara Grey booked to headline the event.

The Festival started on Friday night with an Open Stage for bands and six entered:- **Old Redeye** (Sheffield), **Borderline** (Cleveland), **Same Train Different Teapot** (Hants), **The Flying Pig String Band** (London), **Highly Strung** (Wales), **Downhill Racers** (Bristol) and **Luke Gazooks and the Zig Zag Ploughboys** headed the bill.

Saturday was busy with banjo workshops by **Tom Paley, Sara Grey** and **Guy Tucker**, fiddle workshops by **Ben Paley** and **Dave Wright**, a bass workshop by **Steve Reed**, banjo and vocals by **Sara Grey**, fingerstyle guitar by **Tom Paley** and Appalachian dancing with **Shredded Feet**.

The afternoon saw the inaugural meeting of the **Friends of American Old-Timey Music and Dance** which was surprisingly well-attended (people actually dragged themselves away from the sessions) and the following committee was formed: **Guy Tucker (chairman)**, **Keith Johnson (secretary)**, **David Payne (membership secretary)**, **Fiona Cameron (newsletter editor)**, **Stan Gee (treasurer)**, **Eve Morris (public relations)**, **John Les (PR and Art and Design)**, **Sara Grey (PR Scotland)** and **Mike Preston (Liaison with British Bluegrass Assoc.)**. An annual membership fee of £12 was decided on plus the basic aims of the association and, of course, its name! The evening finished with a concert with Tom and Ben Paley and Sara Grey and sessions, of course!

## The Old-Time News

Sunday, for those who were still up to it, included string band and dance workshops and in the afternoon there was a dance display by **Roughshod** (Stroud, Glos) et al ( who had a particularly hard weekend) accompanied by the **Cotswold Mountain Boys** et al (again !). Around 300 people attended the weekend from Bristol, London, Isle of Wight, Scotland, Cleveland, Manchester, Wales, Devon, et al (of course). *(Compiled from reports written by Carrie Osbourne and Keith Johnson)*

*And here are some more personal reflections by Maggie Gee from Redcar, Cleveland :-*

If you weren't there that weekend, you missed a treat . . . Saturday was spent rushing from one workshop to the next, trying to squeeze in a picking session between, and grabbing food on the run. I did a bass workshop with Steve Reed and can tell you that there is a whole new generation of bass pickers on their way, you have been warned ! The lunch-time session in the bar was well into its stride by the time I arrived. . . . . fast and furious was the order of the day . . . . .

Sunday morning - hangover permitting - I headed for a dance workshop but was not able to take full advantage of the opportunity by reason of an all pervading headache ! . . . lunch over, and just prior to the fiddle and banjo competition, a display of dancing was given by Roughshod. Here is where all our endeavours come together. This music is made for dancing, and this dancing is more exciting a spectator sport than anything I've ever seen. More of this PLEASE !

## For Sale

Eve Morris has a great selection of **Old-Time recordings** from the U.S. - the whole Marimac Recordings list plus others. She can also supply catalogue listings for Rounder, Sugar Hill and Flying Fish. Contact her at 64, Alma Terrace, York YO1 4DJ Tel. 0904-632674

## Wanted

**Banjo tab** for "Mississippi Waltz" and "Young Guns and Miners". If you can help please phone Keith Johnson on 01427-613643.

**Bass player** in the London area - the Flying Pig String Band would give their eye teeth (or is it tusks?) for a bass player to join the band OR someone who is into Old-Time music and prepared to have a go at playing a washtub bass ! Contact Colm Daly on 071-281-2433.

## Sessions

**LONDON** Fridays at 9.0 pm The Hope and Anchor,  
Crowndale Rd, NW1 (Camden)

Sundays at 9.0 pm The Three Loggerheads, Virginia  
Rd, E2 (Shoreditch) Contact no: Colm/Fiona 071-281-  
2433

**YORK** Sundays The Golden Ball, off Bishop Hill,  
York.

Contact no: Eve Morris 0194-632674

**SHEFFIELD** (most) Fridays The Red House (*sorry  
no address*)

Contact no: Jim Pyecroft 0742-376989

**GAINSBOROUGH** 25th/26th March - Old Redeye  
from Sheffield will be leading sessions and workshops  
which will then be run on a monthly basis if they get  
enough support.

Contact no: Keith Johnson  
01427-613643

## Pigs Fly South

Last summer three quarters of the Flying Pig String  
band (Mark, Colm and me) decided to head for the  
Appalachian Mountains to see (or hear !) for ourselves.  
We opted for the **Swannanoa Gathering** near  
Asheville in North Carolina, which was recommended  
to us by the Cotswold Mountain Boys. It's what the  
Americans call a "Music Camp" - sort of like a week -  
long Gainsborough but with better scenery ! - and if  
you don't feel ready to plunge head-first into one of the  
big festivals like Galax, then it's a great way to start.

On our way there we went to a small music festival at  
Laurel Bloomery in Tennessee where we met and  
played with the **Roan Mountain Hilltoppers** and  
others, so by the time we arrived at Swannanoa it felt  
like we had stepped out of the backwoods and into  
summer camp! But once we found the beer and the  
session we started to settle in and it turned out to be a  
very easy-going place. Swannanoa only takes about  
100 students so it has a more relaxed and informal  
atmosphere than some of the bigger ones like Augusta,  
and the tutors and guest artists are a good mix of Young  
Fogies (revivalists ?) and Old-Timers. Also, it  
is based at Warren Wilson College which would be  
worth visiting just for the scenery !

The high spots for me were the slow jams - slow  
sessions led every evening by a different tutor and held

## The Old-Time News

outside (like all the sessions) with the sun going down  
over the mountains and time for the first cold beer of  
the day , plus, of course, **Ralph Blizzard's** Appalachian  
Long -Bow fiddle classes. We also borrowed some  
other players and played for some of the dances under  
the assumed name of the Groundhog Fam'ly - a bit of a  
cheek when we'd never actually seen a groundhog in  
3D. Groundhogs seem to be the hedgehogs of the  
southern states and the only ones we saw were flat !

At the end of the week we were invited to stay a couple  
of days with one of the tutors, **John Herrmann** who  
introduced us to the Shindig on the Green - a kind of  
open-air open stage for bands every Saturday night in  
Asheville - and persuaded us to get up and play. He  
also introduced us to Blondie, his One-Eyed Dog (who  
features on the cover of the tape he made with Tom  
Sauber and Dirk Powell ). Blondie is a real outdoor,  
backwoods dog and some of her little friends came with  
us when we left and had Colm scratching all the way to  
Nashville !

After Nashville and Memphis we went on down to  
Louisiana to get eyeball to eyeball with the alligators in  
the swamps and eyeball to highball (!) with the bars in  
New Orleans, but that's another story.

### Tips for Survival

1. If you roll your own cigarettes be prepared to be sent  
off into the bushes - they'll probably think you're  
"bowl-huffin' ".
2. Don't assume that you can speak the language, drive  
an automatic car or follow the road signs - it took us  
three hours to find our way out of Charlotte when we  
arrived in the US, and that doesn't include finding out  
how to make the car go!.
3. If you take a fiddle, watch out - they don't take  
kindly to all the humidity and cross-tuning. We saw two  
fall apart in the week we were there.
4. Unless you're planning a career as a Circus Fat Lady  
steer clear of traditional southern food - grits, biscuits  
and gravy, candied yams etc - it's great but by the time  
I got home the only thing I could still get into was the  
pair of bib overalls I had the foresight to buy in  
Nashville (I am wearing them as I write!).

The Swannanoa Gathering Old-Time Music & Dance  
Week is from July 16th-22nd this year and costs \$250  
for tuition plus \$170 housing with meals. We have just  
received the current brochure and I see that **Bruce  
Molsky** and **Mike Seeger** have been added to the list  
of tutors for this year. If you want any more  
information, just give us (Colm and Fiona) a ring on  
071-281-2433 or drop us a line (see Editor's Note for  
address).

## Forthcoming Events

*N.B. For those who don't already know this, Old-Timey musicians get everywhere these days so don't assume that just because it's called a Bluegrass Festival it won't get more than its fair share of us !*

April 7th-9th '95

**Matlock**, Derbyshire - **Footloose Festival** of Appalachian music, dance and song. Includes dance and instrumental workshops, concerts, dances etc. Info: Dave Wheeler tel: 01629 734517

May 19th '95

**Court Sessions Folk Club** presents **Debbie McClatchy** at The Selkirk, Selkirk Rd. London SW17. 081 767 7093.

May 20th '95

**Wadhurst Bluegrass Day**- various workshops including on fiddle **Netie Vaandreger** and **Bob Winkvist**, on banjo **Debbie McClatchy** and **Ira Bernstein**, **Sue Mills** and **Rosie Davis** on Appalachian clogging, **Gerry Williams** on Carter style guitar and **Sheila Brain** on autoharp (*great selection!*). Contact Rick Townend for more details 0192 782 412.

June 2nd-4th '95

**Edale Bluegrass Festival** (Derbyshire) including Old-Timey band **Old Redeye** (replacing Luke Gazooks & co). Info: 0457 861789

June 23rd-25th '95

8th **Jackfield & Ironbridge Bluegrass & Roots Festival** (nr Telford, Salop). Info: tel 0195-505565

July 7th-9th '95

**North Wales Bluegrass and Old-Timey Festival**, Conwy - including Appalachian dance workshops and displays and these Old-Timey bands :- **Guy Tucker and friends**, **Luke Gazooks and the Zig Zag Ploughboys**, **Old Redeye**. Info: John Les and Gill Williams 01492-580454/515921 who also have this to say about it:-

Consistently over the years, the North Wales Bluegrass Festival has sought to give Old-Timey music an equal platform with Bluegrass Music. Last year, Guy Tucker and Eve Morris and many Old-Timey musicians formed a wonderfully energetic band and played on stage, towards the end of the Friday night concert with Sara Grey, much to everyone's delight. Saturday saw the Old-Timey musicians taking the stage in the Renegade Tent where they played virtually all day, non-stop. On Saturday evening, due to popular demand a ceilidh was held in the community hall, complete with

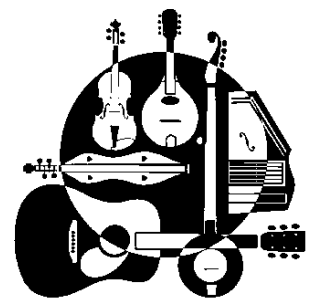
a caller, which went on until midnight; the band was again made up of Old-Timey musicians.

## Editor's Note

*Here it is then folks - the very first newsletter ! A lot of what is in this first one has come from committee members who are also area reps. But don't forget - it's your newsletter, so let's have your contributions. What's happening in your area ? Heard any good recordings lately ? Been to any good concerts ? Anything you want to buy or sell ? Any tips or advice for the rest of us ? Let's hear about it. I've put pen to paper personally this time with "Pigs Fly South", but I hope that in the future it will all be coming from you. So articles, letters, reviews, details of sessions, festivals, forthcoming events, buy & sell etc etc. Anything and everything (?) gratefully received by: Fiona Cameron, 16c, Almington St, London N4 3BP. (tel: 071 281 0832)*

*See you at Matlock!*

*John Les has produced some fine art work for a logo and also some samples (see below) which are elegantly produced on an assortment of stickers for your instrument case, your car, wherever.*



**Publisher:** Groundhog Enterprises. (This publication was produced under severe stress, leaving me in an emotionally delicate state of mind with my day job in jeopardy and relationships in ruins. This is my first ever publication, but having overcome most of the major technical and software problems it should be easier next time). *Colm*