

## 50 years folking about: Dave Henderson



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5 miles from my home, it involved a bus but none ran on the way back....so a walk or a hitch. I was trying to grow my hair and wore a slightly oversize RAF coat. Not many people stopped! So, first time in the club and it was like the beginning of my musical education. Old boys taking me under my wing. 'Have a listen to this. Have a listen to this! Do you know who Martin Carthy is? Do you know who Robert Johnson is? To list who I saw would be impossible: certainly Barbara Dickson and a Manchester duo I loved called Therapy,

I won their album in the raffle and wandered up to claim it trying to belie the number of Newcy Brown's I had had. Another burgeoning part of my education.....

In 1970 , I went to Manchester, Didsbury College of Education, to be a teacher but then Music really unfolded. I helped with the college folk club and there were just so many people to book who, at the time, I was sadly unaware of their talents. Mike Harding sang weekly in a pub in the village and he was a fount of artists , many of whom kipped on his floor. Christy Moore came, bringing with him his sister – wonderful - and we didn't really appreciate it. Keith Christmas came and played, a week after he had done Whistle Test. He kipped in our student house overnight.....and stayed for 6 weeks! The Ian Campbell Folk Group and so many more.

There were clubs in Manchester, where you weren't allowed in carrying a guitar cos it wasn't trad folk you were going to play. Yep, the Folk Police were about. Then of course the weekends at the Manchester Uni Union scratching my other itch with bands like Free, Humble Pie, Edgar Broughton, Vinegar Joe, Steppenwolf etc for the princely sum of 50p and a curry at 2 in the morning on the walk home. Bands like the Incredible String Band and Deep Purple at the Free Trade Hall. Music is just music.

In 1969 , I sat on the floor of my bedroom with my trusty Dansette and played a borrowed album from a mate at school and heard the Fairport's playing A Sailors Life it was a Damascene moment. I loved that band; Sandy's voice, RT's guitar, Swarb's fiddle and DM's drumming (which literally made folk rock possible) and of course Mr Hutchings which led to seeing Lark Rise and the Mysteries at the National Theatre and finding John Tams. So.....for the next 40 years , I was a fan of whatever folk/folk-rock is. Lots of gigs, festivals, regular yearly visits to Cropredy and a lifelong urge to discover new stuff.

I love crossovers, experimentation, the Afro Celts, Lau, Peatbog Faeries, Jim Moray, False Lights, Imagined Village, Rails, Blackbeards Tea Party and so many more. Put music under glass in a museum and it dies, as did the folk clubs of the 50's and 60's revival. Music has to grow and morph. And then in my retirement from my proper job I found myself, by serendipity, playing with a very good folk/folk rock band, way out of my class.....but it makes you work and learn.

As a real bonus, I started to meet my heroes. Playing a festival and sitting and eating back stage with Phil Beer, Steve Knightly, Miranda Sykes, Chris Leslie, Maddy Prior, PJ Wright, Joe Broughton....I thought what on earth am I doing here and they are talking to me as if it is a perfectly normal thing to do! In 2015, I compèred the wonderful Langdale Charity Folk Festival in Cumbria at the Old Dungeon Ghyll pub. A bunch of organisers and musicians who put on a festival twice a year, no one gets paid, no expenses, to raise money for Cumbria Air Ambulance and Mountain Search Dogs.

In 2009 to 2017 they raised well over £50,000. Some great musicians, sound men giving their time for free; just lovely people. I have made some real friends from that festival. The vibe of that fest sums up for me the essence of whatever folk music is; people playing together, for fun, for the joy, for the craic.

So 50 plus years of searching out new music....what was that all about then? I have made a lot of friends and I have done a lot of things, been to places I would never have done without music. I have heard some truly wonderful performers and songs. I continue to want to 'discover' new talent even though they may already be known to others.

In the last few years; Lowri Evans, Lucy Ward, Ange Hardy, Luke Jackson, Kenneth J Nash, Chapin Wickwar, Phantom Voices, the Jon Palmer Acoustic Band and many more and this summer we'll do it again.

Gigs and fests with my present band, gigs and fests as a member of the audience, gigs and fests just to be with friends, singarounds, open mics and always that search for that one new voice that started at Egremont Folk Club 51 years ago.

**Contact Dave at [davidghenderson@btinternet.com](mailto:davidghenderson@btinternet.com)**

**For more about the band, visit the Whale website at:**

**[www.facebook.com/pg/whalebanduk](http://www.facebook.com/pg/whalebanduk)**

