

BAMPTON BARN DANCE BAND

Barn Dancing my way



Starting Left. Ian Clarke, Frank Purslow, Tim Marish, Don Rouse, Marion Edwards & Kevin Suter. In the 1980s

Having spent over twenty years devoted to Weightlifting, I was beginning to get disillusioned at what was going on in the weightlifting world with the continuing abuse of Drugs for quite a few years. I had secured my International Referees certificate and could have looked forward to an interesting career in that field, but Drugs? The situation was so bad that schoolboy lifters were trying, and often succeeded to access them! There was no way that I would contemplate that, having achieved what I did the natural way. Things got so bad that the National weightlifting association has now a separate heading and is known as the ‘Drugs Free Weight Lifting Association.’

By 1974, I was getting more involved with Barn Dancing. As Chairman of the Social Committee of the Oxford – Leiden Link Twinning Committee, I had organised a couple of Barn Dances on my Farm to raise funds for the organisation, using my Bampton Morris dancing contacts to help sell the tickets as both Barn dancing and Morris dancing come under the same group heading of ‘English Country dancing’.

Both dances were a complete success and I thoroughly enjoyed the fun and laughter that was created by it. With these successes under my belt, I had the idea of putting on a Christmas Party in Oxford to introduce our City members to a little bit of rural life. We booked the Conservative Club in Cowley, probably not the wisest move as so many Councillors with whom I had to have a working relationship to promote twinning with were members of the

Labour Party. None the less, ticket sales were good, so we were looking forward to another great evening of fun and dancing.

Ten days before the event the band leader informed me that he could not get a 'Caller' for the evening. Apart from the band, the Caller is the most essential part of Barn Dancing as he is basically the Master of Ceremonies with a good knowledge of Country Dancing and an ability to instruct others to do things out of their comfort zone. I had spent a lifetime as an 'M.C.' at Weightlifting Shows and a qualified Instructor for teaching in schools, the band leader suggested that I had a go at 'Calling' for the evening. He knew that I had the 'gob' for it and that I just lacked the knowledge of the dances. So, we spent a very intense week of him teaching me enough dances for an evening's dancing. Thus, began one of the most hectic, busiest, financially rewarding, and enjoyable forty years of my life.

In the following Spring we had a Dutch group visit us from Leiden, because the dances had been so successful, we introduced them to Barn Dancing for the social evening at the end of their visit, once again with me as the Caller and my new found mentor and dance instructor Frank Purslow providing the music, another roaring success was on the cards.

My confidence grew with the more dances that we did, and I started to attend other dances with different callers and bands to improve my repertoire and style. One thing that I noticed was the difference in clientele at these events, there was the 'purist type' who insisted that even just holding hands had a certain accepted style to it. Their 'four hand stars' were a delightful piece of creative art, but it was not going to be for me. This was not the direction that I wanted to go, as these people would express their disdain at the 'plebs' who did not share their pride in performance. I noticed that the people having the most fun were those who went wrong and created enormous 'cock-ups'. From then on I decided to make every dance a party with fun, laughter and lots of cock-ups as opposed to achieving a perfect professional performance. I respected what the 'purist type' was trying to achieve, but it was not for me. I wanted to be a Caller with a difference and at this time with modern technology, it was an ideal time.

Traditionally, Callers performed from the stage using the Bands' Public Address system and issued their instructions from this vantage point, with Radio Microphones it was possible for the Caller to be down on the floor with the people as part of them. This was a brilliant step forward and to me was the perfect answer. It worked so well and our success was so great that even the local E.F.D.S.S (English Folk Dance and Song Society) booked us to play at their Annual Party. I think they were just being curious to find out what our successful style was. We never got asked the next year!

To help me demonstrate the moves whilst being amongst the audience, I would look carefully at the audience and choose a lady who was hopefully on her own and had an extrovert personality to assist me, if she was well known to the people, then success of the evening was

guaranteed, and now I was 'part of them'. This system worked well for a few years until I did a dance at Swindon.

To me, this lady appeared to be alone, was great fun and helped all through the evening. Come the last dance I introduced her to the audience and publicly thanked her for helping me which was my normal routine, however towards the end of the dance I noticed a man following us around the floor, he was looking a bit aggressive and I noticed my partner suddenly tense up, after years of teaching in youth clubs where the reading of 'body language' played an important role in peace keeping, I was able to address him first, this released the pressure a little and he asked me how many times we came to Swindon? But before I could answer he said in a very loud Irish voice "next time you want to dance with my wife, you ask me first!" If only I had known that her husband was of the 'lurking' type, I would have avoided her like the plague. From then on, I made sure that I took my own partners to help me.

Experience taught me that there were a few groups of people whereby the women loved to dance but the men didn't. Young Farmers and Irishmen being the main culprits. Once, we did a dance in Slough for the local Irish Association, as a lot of our tunes were indeed Irish tunes, I thought that I was in for an easy time. The hall was crowded and yet during the whole evening only the women got up to dance, all the men spent the evening at the Bar right up until the last dance, then they all crowded on to the floor as having watched it all night and with the confidence that a few Beers had given them, they thought they knew exactly what to do! I had to make sure that the last dance was a simple one, as there was no way that any of them could have done anything intricate.

At the start of every evening, I would introduce myself and tell them what the evening was all about. I would say that "I will walk you through the dance steps so that you know what to expect. Then the music will start and all hell will be let loose as chaos will take over as everything goes wrong, don't worry, when you go wrong, that is when you start to laugh and enjoy yourself, which is what we are after, an evening of fun." "If it all goes terribly wrong then blame the Caller".

And that is exactly what happened, the people loved it. Bookings started to roll in and Frank, who up to then was involved with other Bands, started to choose different instrumentalists to provide the music for our bookings, often using his musical pupils; he was a brilliant teacher and an expert in Folk music.

These youngsters matured into great musicians and later formed their own Bands. People like brilliant local Fidler, Mat Green who went on to form one of the greatest local bands, The Woodpeckers. Accordion player Alister Cook formed Step and Fletcher. Other well-known Folk musicians that joined us, included Chris Bartram, Tim Marish who I am sure played for us more than any other musician. Drummer Ian Clarke, Bass player Andy Fidler, key board

player Kevin Suter, who went on to become our leader in the latter years and many more celebrity players along the way.

For a while, my son played a Double Bass and Keyboards for us. I remember carrying his Double Bass over my shoulder through St. Giles in Oxford for a performance at Debenhams. Wesley was 14 at the time and his instrument was much bigger than him. I felt so important and part of the 'Oxford musical scene' with a Double Bass over my shoulder!

My work with the Twinning Link brought me into contact with a lot of influential people, during a Black-Tie event in an Oxford Hotel, I found myself sat next to members of the Beaconsfield and Burnham Conservative Association. Naturally the conversation drifted into what our different hobbies were, so when it came to my turn I told them about my new venture into Barn Dancing, "Ooh" they said with some excitement, "would you travel as far as Burnham in Buckinghamshire?" And that was the beginning of a very successful, happy and adventurous forty years of Barn Dancing for us away from Bampton.

We became so popular in that part of Buckinghamshire, a 'Fan Club' was formed guaranteeing up to 50 ticket sales if they booked us. The 'Fan Club' designed a wonderful logo for us, they produced Tee Shirts and sweaters with the Logo on.

Within two years we had played in every Primary and Secondary school in Maidenhead, Slough and Burnham. They seemed to enjoy the fact that I spoke with a 'rural' accent and would mimic me, so that when I asked them to form a 'Basket' they would emphasise the open vowels in 'Baaaasket' all good banter and all good fun. I would like to think that we brought a bit of the countryside to these townies, if not necessarily the smell! demand was so great and physically demanding that we had to limit our performances there in that area to once a week.

My workload and timetable at the time was pretty hectic. I was milking 150 cows at the time, which required a 5.15am start with the evening milking finishing at 5.30 pm. For a long journey like Slough, the Band pickup time would be 6.15pm in Bampton, 6.40 in Sunderland Avenue Oxford and then on to the venue.

By this time Frank and I along with Chris Bartrum, a well-known Folk musician who approved of our 'low key yet high in fun' style of dancing, decided to form our own band and came up with the name 'Bampton Barn Dance Band', other names were tried like the 'Bampton Five' which a lot of our followers called us for a while. As we often had six players, this was a no no.

Frank's job was to organise and book the musicians and do the entire treasury work. Chris, as an experienced Electronics and Sound engineer was in charge of all the electronic equipment and my role was to set the price, get all the bookings and organise the transport. The equipment

was carried in a trailer that was towed behind my car, in the early days before seat belts; there would often be six people on board very cosy but extremely dangerous.

It was all done in a business-like fashion, on arrival the total mileages were noted as everyone was paid for their mileage to the pickup point. We then set up and did our sound checks, often having to rearrange the chairs in the hall as Barn Dancing needed a much bigger floor space than the Discos that were starting to be our biggest competition for entertainment. We had learnt that the angles of the tables were important to enable those that weren't dancing to watch the fun. The timing of the interval was also critical, especially if it was going to be a cooked supper. Invariably as the caller, I would have to be in close contact with the Chef to ensure perfect timing. One thing that I had learnt from many years of experience that not many of the volunteer part-time chefs were aware of, was the cooking of 'Jacket Potatoes', just because you can bake one 'Jacket Potato' in a set time doesn't mean that you can cook 180 in a similar time. On one occasion at a Dance on my Farm, the chef was still serving 'Jacket Potatoes' at one o'clock in the morning!

After the Dance it was also my responsibility to get the money from the Promoter and hand it over to Frank; now this is where the fun began as he was so pedantic, he would divide the money after taking out all the travelling expenses, this could take him up to 45mins by which time we had packed all the equipment away into the trailer and were desperate to start the journey home which would often be in excess of 75 miles. But Frank would plod away making sure that he had the right amount in his purse after all the expenses were paid. It would be approaching 2.00am by the time that I got home for Milking at 5.15am that morning. With another dance lined up for the following evening it was a very shattering weekend but I would not have changed it for the world. If it was my weekend working; I milked 2 weekends in every three, I do not know how I did it. I must admit that I always had good drivers who would do the homeward run for me. On one winter journey, we left Slough in thick fog at about 12.30am and within a short while I had fallen asleep in the back of the car. When I awoke, we were in Bampton unloading Frank at his place. The time was 2.00am and I didn't remember a thing about the whole journey. Yes, this partner was a very good driver indeed.

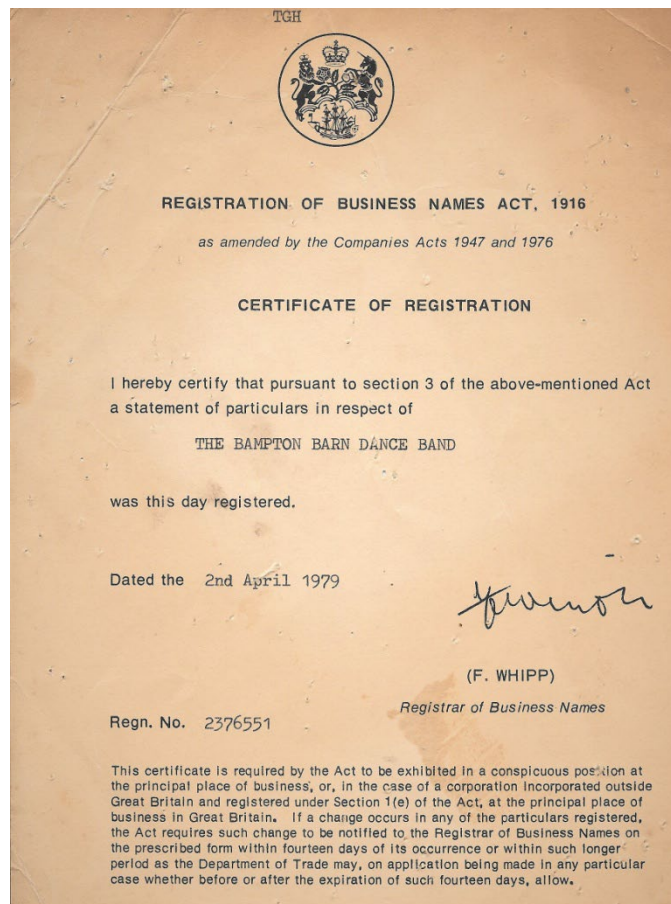
It is amazing how quickly one learns from one's mistakes, at the start, we relied on just an exchange of letters for confirmation as being adequate to secure the booking. Big mistake! Once, we went all the way to Burnham in Buckinghamshire to perform for an evening, when we got there another Band had set up ready to play. It turned out that the organisers had changed their Secretary without our exchange of letters being noted. That was the warning that we needed to tighten up on our administrations.

With the help of an accomplished Secretary from my Twinning contacts, a Contract was devised that stipulated all Safety requirements re; Electric and Insurance, even our food requirements. After one experience where the Treasurer of the event had gone home without

paying us, resulting in us chasing around Slough at the end of the evening to get our money, we included 'Payment in cash to be made during the interval'!

We also built into the Contract the conditions of recompense for cancelling, as often we were getting booked 12 months ahead of the contract date, so a deterrent against cancelation was imposed.

As a result of a booking that I took at Swindon Civil Service Cricket Club, we realised that it was necessary for us to register our trading name with HMRC. Up to this point we were only making enough money to cover our costs so we felt there was no need to register, having taken this booking we felt that the place would be crawling with Tax men, so we quickly did the honourable thing and registered. What a surprise it was for me when after registering that the first person I met at this dance was an acquaintance of mine, a 'Man from the Ministry of Agriculture' otherwise known as the 'Bull with the Bowler'! Yes the very man who came to inseminate my cows to make them pregnant! These Civil Servants get their fingers and arms into everything, don't they!



We are in Business – Legally!!

Having done forty years of entertaining and getting people to dance, often when they did not want to, taught me so much about people, life, and the changing phases of life. The fire at Bradford City Football ground which caused a national outrage in May 1985, created a complete change in the way Fundraising and Charity work operated. In the early days all you

needed was a barn with some basic form of electricity, some hay bales to sit on and you could have a Dance, but after that incident, new 'Health and Safety' rules were introduced which completely ruined the market for easy and cheap Venues for fund raising in rural areas. It completely decimated the industry as local Councils got involved with their tendency to over-react and insisted on inspecting premises for Health, Safety and if food was involved, Hygiene as well. Then the Fire Service was involved with Risk assessment including Electrical safety certificates. Some councils insisted upon 'Planning permissions' to put on an event. Bar Licences were reviewed, which up until then was a grey area that many part-time promoters found a way around by using tricks like selling Raffle tickets at a price that was allied to the values of a drink. Or including the price of drinks in the entrance ticket, all these gimmicks and more were used in the 'good old days' to enable Charities and Fund raisers to carry out valuable work within their communities without causing any harm. As people were booking us up to a year ahead, these new restrictions led to an awful lot of cancellations.

Prior to all this some of the settings that we have had to play in were incredibly basic with farm animals next to where we were dancing, lovely for the children, but the accompanying aroma at supertime was sometimes not too good, especially if Chicken was on the menu and a few hens were wandering around you as you ate!

Toilet facilities on farms were also pretty basic but everyone seemed to accept this as normal behaviour of a visit to the countryside. A farm at Toot Baldon just outside Oxford, was a regular venue for us, it was run by a wonderful and generous Dutchman who with his wife did a lot for the local community. One year they booked us for three consecutive weekends for different organisations. The toilet arrangements were basic yet serviceable. Along the side of a separate Barn with the help of some sheets of tin and a few straw bales they had erected a Urinal for the men. Now for the Ladies they borrowed a Bell Tent and erected it on a piece of grass not too far from the Dancing area. Perfect – 'til about 10pm, that was the time that it started to get dark, and the organisers put a 'Tilley lamp' inside the Tent to give light to assist the ladies with their ablutions. What they didn't realise was that people outside the Tent could see everything that was going on inside the tent in silhouette form! They did it only one year which was a shame.

A farm at Water Eaton was another regular booking for us; they had two big barns side by side, so one year during a spell of inclement weather they decided to have the Dance in one and hold the Barbecue in the other, a fantastic idea guaranteeing a dry supper, but as we all know there is a lot of smoke when a barbecue is first lit up and with the wind in the wrong direction the barn for dancing had to be abandoned before we all choked to death as the smoke drifted over the wall!

Suppers were always a delicate feature, that from the very early days we had to build a clause into the Contract. If we were going to travel 70 or 80 miles straight from work, then we needed feeding. We didn't mind paying for it as we could add that to the fee, it is just that we had to

know we would get fed. This led to some very interesting situations. Take the Political sector; we have performed for all three main parties and each one was totally different in their approach and behaviour. The Liberals as they were called then, were usually a 'low key' event. A factor in judging who you were playing for was if the quality of food was good.

On most occasions, as I have mentioned these events were often held in farmers' barns and it was surprising how many of the Rural community were our supporters. We did one for the Liberals at Gayden prior to the afore-mentioned tightening of Rules and Regulations. We set up the Band and did our 'sound checks' only to find that there was a terrible 'humming' coming through the sound system, on close inspection we managed to establish that it was coming from Frank's Melodeon; as Chris was our electronic wizard, it was up to him to cure the problem. He established that it was an 'earth' problem which he cured by tying a piece of wire from Franks bare foot to a nearby cattle water trough, very basic, but it worked. On another occasion Chris showed us his technical prowess when one of the two new Combos we were using broke down completely, after checking all the connections and fuses it still refused to function, so he just picked it up and slammed it on the ground with the instant response of it working and it never failed again. As I said this was before all the new Health and Safety regulations.



We did a dance for the Cumnor Conservatives in a Barn Just outside Oxford, they assured us that food would be provided, we could tell by the cost of the tickets and the attire of the attendees that this was going to be a posh do. As the arranged time for the interval approached, I could see the slices of ham, beef and smoked salmon along with the bread rolls, licking my lips I whispered to the Band how 'up market' our supper was going to be. When the

time came for the break, the organiser showed me where our meals were awaiting; there on a table away from everyone else were a few dry sandwiches on a plate! That really hurt, so a couple of us got into the car and dashed into the next village where we knew there was a good Fish and Chip shop. You should have seen the look on the faces of the Conservatives when we borrowed their salt in their cut-glass cruets to put on our chips.

This was a regular annual booking for many years, so they made the signs and just changed the date each year.

To show that I am completely politically unbiased I will tell you the story of Gerry, one of our most loyal fans and a member of our Slough fan club, he along with his wife Irene travelled many miles to attend our dances in the Slough area. He was a staunch Socialist and a great supporter of Arthur Scargill, in fact he booked us to do our one and only 'Labour Party' Barn Dance. was an outdoor event on a Council owned Green in Slough. Everyone brought their own food and drink, so no law breaking here. Though it was a basic hand assembled Stage, it would not have been acceptable to Health and Safety standards, in fact one of the musician's chairs slipped between a gap as he tumbled off, but on the whole it was a good night. One of the biggest laughs that Gerry gave me was at a dance in Wokingham; we were setting up as Gerry and 'the gang' were booking in. After they had bought their tickets, I went over to have a chat and personally greet them, when Gerry said "Who is it for tonight then Don?" "Wokingham Conservatives" I replied. You should have seen the look on his face, you would have thought that he had swallowed a wasp as he realised he had given his hard earned money to support what in his opinion was the worst organisation in the country! If ever I needed proof of Gerry's political leanings, I got it when we were a little late arriving at a school in Slough; Gerry and the gang arrived just as we were unloading, and there it was, his car said it all, a Russian Lada Car, in red of course! There is a terrible ending to my appreciation of Gerry and his lovely wife Irene.

We were doing a dance at a school in West London, perfect first half with a lot of fun and laughter, as usual all our friends joined us at our table for the refreshment break with lots of fun and banter abound. At this period of time, I would traditionally start the second half of the evening with an 'old time' medley using the Gay Gordons, St. Bernards Waltz and a Barn Dance, all one after the other without a break. The Barn dance that I used on this particular evening was 'Duck for the Oyster', a dance that involved a lot of twisting and turning, soon after it started I noticed a commotion as Gerry had collapsed on the floor. An Ambulance was summoned but it was too late, Gerry had died in front of all his friends with Irene having to watch it all. It was terrible. I've never cried so much in my life as I did at his funeral. It took several months before I could bring myself to start using that format for starting off the second half of a dance again. The only consolation being that he died doing what he loved best "having fun with his wife and friends"!

Weddings can be the worst events to do a Barn Dance for, and yet on the other hand, it can be one of the best as couples begin their life together. It is a work of art, for the caller as he often has to become the Master of Ceremonies as well as the caller for the event. When approached for a wedding booking, I would do my best to put them off because if their guests were not Barn Dancers or indeed only a few, then it would not work. Barn Dancing is great for getting people to have fun and to mix together but if they are not going to get on the floor to start, then it is a no-go. It is then too late to change your mind, a Barn Dance band plays barn dance music only, and they can't suddenly change to 'pop' or 'strict tempo' like a Disco.

The worst wedding we did was when the Bride's mother insisted that her daughter had a Barn Dance for the wedding. She assured me that this was what the Bride wanted but in reality, this certainly was not the case; neither the couple nor the guests wanted it and at first resisted to get on to the floor. I had to really work hard for my money that night. You can't make people get on the floor if they don't want to and with nobody on the floor you can't have a barn dance it's as simple as that!

Yet we did have many good wedding dances, each one would be a challenge, yet so many people to this day tell me how much they enjoyed theirs. I've had a multitude of dance partners during the years that always assisted me with demonstrating the moves. One of them was my Veterinary Surgeon, a very pretty girl though very blunt and forthright as you would expect from a Vet. I once set up a dance where everyone was holding hands in a circle. The girl on the right side of my vet asked her if she had known me long, as this was the first time that she had seen her at one of our dances, my vet leant over and whispered in her ear "Quite some time, in fact the hand that you are holding was inside the bum of one of Don's cows this morning"! I've seen how fast a woman's hand can move before but never as fast as that. She loved barn dancing so much that she chose us to play at her wedding. A special request she made for her wedding shows exactly the sort of situations that a caller can find himself in. Evidently her father and mother had an acrimonious divorce a few years before the wedding and she knew and liked the fact that barn dancing consisted of progressive dances where couples and people changed partners, that is one of the reasons she chose us. Her problem that she offloaded on to me at the start of the evening was that in no way was I to allow her father and mother to come into contact with each other during the evening. The very first dance that I usually started with was a 'progressive' one that was always ideal for getting people to mix together, it had eight sequences; nine with the walk through, so a quick check on her mum and dad showed that they were ten couples apart. So that was ok. By the end of the evening it was obvious that the whole beautiful atmosphere that we created had mellowed them all and any animosity had disappeared.

Our Finale at weddings was truly romantic and fitting; all of the attendees would make an enormous circle of Arches, starting at one end of the room and finishing at the exit. The dance was appropriately called 'Haste to the Wedding', the Bride and Groom would then go under the arches made by their guests saying 'goodbye' to them all as they went. The very last ones by the Exit were their close family, so bigger kisses and cuddles were in order as they went to their 'get away' cars. It never failed to be the perfect finale.

Throughout my forty years of Barn dancing, I always had new things happen that would completely amaze me or end up making me laugh 'til I cried. Here are a few;

As I said at the start I was a 'Caller with a difference'. I would often do a cabaret act telling a few 'Rural' Jokes if I felt that it was appropriate. The Band had to listen to the same jokes over and over again yet was always supportive. If a new joke came along then they would go

right over the top in their appraisal shouting out ‘New Joke, New Joke, Wow Don’s got a new Joke! Some jokes were a bit near the knuckle, and I learnt from early on that the line between funny and crude was very narrow and flexible with whoever we were playing for. A perfect example would be “You can always tell the difference between posh people and ordinary people; posh people get out of the bath to have a wee!” It was very funny one week, the next week at a Methodist Dance it did not go down at all well. I remember one of our followers was at a Dance, when all of a sudden he came rushing up to me and whispered in my ear “the Vicar has arrived, so please tone it down.” What is it about vicars? The public were more frightened of what I might say in case it offended them, when in actual fact every event where a vicar appeared they seemed to enjoy our style and commented at the end how much they had enjoyed it. It was always comforting to know that our fans were watching my back as well as my soul!

I would adjust dances to be more fun than in their natural arrangement and give them different names like “Wham Bam Thank you Mam” or the ‘Bampton Smooch.’ Choosing the last dance of the evening was always important to catch the right mood for the evening so that they all left with a happy feeling. Very often I felt that the Dance needed to finish in a romantic vein, so I would walk them through the routine, start the dance and then turn the hall lights down low, so the name befitted the dance, a perfect scenario for a lovely quiet finish. So many times after I had done this you could hear the fans going home singing or humming the music from the Bampton Smooch. Perfect. Unless of course the man that is the ‘bane’ of all callers – the Caretaker, comes along and before the end of the smooch turns the lights on full, showing the fans in a close embrace, because he wants you out of the Hall in five minutes! I know that it is wrong to generalise, but why is it that Caretakers take on the mantle of being the most important person on earth? Always reminds me of a badge that my wife once gave me. ‘why be difficult, when with a bit more effort you could be blooming impossible’!

Sometimes I would finish with a fast, hectic dance as that would be befitting for the mood of the dancers; it was just a matter of assessing the mood. One dance was a ‘High Kicking’ dance where the dancer had to be careful that whilst kicking one leg high into the air that the other leg didn’t join it and they fell on their backside. The funniest one I had was where my partner and I tried to out kick each other and her shoe flew into the air almost knocking someone’s head off.

Another alteration to a formal dance was one that I called ‘Clap, Tum, Bum and Kiss. It involved 4 couples in a line and after some normal manoeuvres, to make it progressive the top couple would clap hands with each other then go around the next couple where they would bump their tummies, then around the next couple where they would bump bums and on to the last couple where they would do a quick kiss. At a wedding I had the newlyweds perform in the group right in front of the Band. It went very well until the Bump Tums bit, on this

occasion the Bride bumped her new husband so hard that he shot backwards into the Band' flattened the Fidler and brought the dance to a halt as everyone fell about laughing!

Another time that we had to stop playing in the middle of a dance was in a Barn at Down Ampney in Gloucestershire. The Barn had been used for storing cattle in the winter; they had done a good job to make it reasonably respectful for this dance in aid of the church. I remember the date as it was both mine and the Vicar of Down Ampney's birthday, 2nd June. All went extremely well with Birthday cakes, candles and a hearty rendition of 'Happy Birthday' which the vicar thoroughly enjoyed; midway through the second half there was an enormous scream "Stop the Dance!" Evidently a lady had laughed so much that her teeth fell out into the dust and she couldn't find them! I am happy to report that after a diligent search the teeth were safely found and with a quick wipe on her sleeve found their way back to the proper orifice.

You might think that was embarrassing for her; just think of the young lady at a dance outside Thame. It was a Farm that had diversified into the corporate entertainment world, there were ex-Army Lorries of all shapes and sizes to do cross country runs up muddy banks and through Lakes. The main barn had been converted into a large Restaurant complete with a dance floor ideal for wedding and large functions. They used us on a regular basis and this occasion it was a corporate event with all the youngsters participating with great enthusiasm. A lot of barn dances require a lot of jumping up and down and this young lady had jumped so much that her 'boob' unbeknown to her had jumped clean out of the top of her dress! It wasn't until the dance finished that she realised it. Even our dour Band Leader smiled at that performance.

One dance that was always asked for and gave a lot of fun was 'Cumberland Square Eight'. This involved a 'basket' as part of the sequence; this is where two couples link their arms around each other to form a Basket and circle around very fast. This has to come with a safety warning that, it is all totally within the ladies control, as to where they put their hands will affect what happens to their feet. If the ladies are happy for their legs to go in the air like a helicopter, then they put their arms along the top of the men's shoulders, lean in with their bosom and out with their bum whilst the men do what I called the 'Playtex Manoeuvre' which was to take the girls firmly by their waist then 'lift and separate' as they circle around; the girls would then go airborne, if the girls were uncomfortable with this then all they had to do was to reverse the roles, make sure that their arms were under the men's arms, keep their bums pushed in, shoulders back and then men's legs would go into the air instead of theirs, this always created so much fun. Naturally I was always on the floor along with them and occasionally with the help of a Band member would demonstrate and create the perfect 'Helicopter' and with two purposefully chosen lightly framed girls. We demonstrated this once and as the audience showed their appreciation, in which we both wallowed, we were stopped in our tracks by two extremely well-built girls as they challenged us to do the same with them, they must have been at least sixteen stones each, equal in farming parlance to two sacks of Barley. What a dilemma? It would have been so insulting to the two ladies if we had

declined, and how demeaning it would have been to two young Bampton men if we had failed to get them airborne and we all collapsed into a heap! So, Mathew Green, who like me was acquainted with handling sixteen stone sacks of corn on the farm, and myself took a very firm hold of these two challengers and with the music playing we got them airborne. It was two very happy and knackered young men who crept off the floor whilst once again receiving the accolade from an appreciative audience; the applause I must add was as much for the two large girls for providing so much fun as it was for us.

I have to thank Barn Dancing for helping me overcome a difficult problem that I had experienced throughout my young life. When I was younger, I had a terrible job coming to terms and being at ease with mentally handicapped people, especially children. For some reason I think that I was frightened of them, even though I had a cousin who suffered from Down's syndrome, I was totally unable to communicate with them. One organisation, the 'Home Farm Trust' which deals with mentally handicapped children started to book us regularly, amongst their clientele were a lot of these handicapped youngsters, it was a bit daunting for me to be thrown in at the 'deep end' but I soon realised that what these youngsters lacked in ability to respond quickly to instructions, they made up for with a brilliant response to rhythm, whilst their carers would struggle with fitting their steps in time with the music, these youngster had it instantly and danced with such enthusiasm and fun. It didn't take long for me to overcome my fears of being with these lovely youngsters and start to enjoy being part of them on the dance floor.

In the 1980 /90s when we were at our busiest, Barn Dancing was all the craze, all the PTAs from the schools, all the Sport supporters, even the Oxford Undertakers Associations who I must say were a very lively bunch booked us as we were so popular, it was the perfect way of having a great social evening whilst raising a lot of money for their causes.

At this period of time, Barn Dancing was so popular that there were five Bands with their roots in Bampton, yet if anyone attempted to hold a dance in Bampton it was doomed to failure as all the folk had their own different allegiances. We were by far the busiest doing well over a hundred dances each year. Our drummer was earning more with us than he was with his day job!

One question that was always asked of us was 'Do you give a discount for Charities?' On one occasion when a Village Hall asked us that question, my immediate response was 'why and what for?' When it turned out that it was just for some new curtains, the answer was a big NO. For the Home Farm Trust, it was always a very big YES!

Over the years we have performed in some pretty rough places and also some extremely salubrious Hotels. We have 'toured' Europe on five occasions. Three times as part of the Oxford – Leiden exchange which in 1989 included a Barn Dance in the Main Street outside their Town Hall and participating in their "3 October Parade" where several thousand people

took part, and a lot more lined the streets to watch. We were transported on a large Float towed by a top of the range Mercedes. The trailer was big enough for us to perform along with our own Troupe of ten Dancers as we were taken through seven miles of crowded streets. We did two tours of Germany as part of the Witney – Unterhacking Twinning organisation. This included an interesting trip up through the snow covered Alps. Considering that my German was pretty well non-existent and I do have to admit that their English was much better than my German, in some cases better than my English. We all had the time of our lives. Once again, we took our own dance troupe of ten dancers as well as a complete band. Our troupe helped tremendously in showing the Germans how to do each Barn Dance before letting them loose on to the floor, they were also the Cabaret performing at the start as an introduction to English Country Dancing as well as performing during the interval. The Germans thoroughly enjoyed their introduction to the Bampton style of dancing that they booked us again a couple of years later. One thing that surprised me with the Germans was that we have been brought up to ‘not mention the war.’ Yet all the time that we were socialising with them, that is what they all wanted to talk about, in a way making excuses for all the misdemeanours.

The German that I was billeted with was quite a rich man who had his own Speed boat; he took me out on to a lake for the day after the dance where I was able to recover with a day of swimming and sun bathing. He talked about how his family at the end of the war, purposely moved west to avoid being captured by the Russians. He was so glad to be part of West Germany.

On four occasions we have performed with more than four hundred people in attendance, a fantastic challenge that worked perfectly every time. The most challenging being an International Girl Guides Jamboree held at Faringdon. We had no idea of the size or what to expect when we got there. We realised it was half under cover and half outside and that our Public Address system was totally inadequate for the area that we would be covering; purely by luck we had Andy Fidler playing Bass that night: now Andy in his spare time ran a very successful and well equipped Disco and lived just a couple of miles up the road from the venue, within ten minutes we had extra speakers and amplifiers on site to remedy the situation. So that cured the problem of sound coverage, now I had another problem! Being International, over sixty percent of the girls were foreign and had trouble with their English, what’s more there were no boys there. To conduct a barn dance it is necessary to be able to instruct the boys and girls to go in separate directions. We managed to overcome many of the problems by getting a group of English Speaking Girls to form a ‘set’. Then I would quickly run them through the steps of the dance to enable them to demonstrate it to the others. It was surprising how quickly those youngsters picked it up. A good night’s fun was had by all.

We have performed in a terrific variety of venues, from dusty barns with archaic toilets to posh hotels and top of the range Town Halls. We have often been the first Band to play in newly

built halls as well as renovated ones, this always brought to light an oversight that the Architects had over-looked, acoustics. Didcot Civic Centre probably being the worst in the 1980s. It was a big opening night with all the Dignitaries present, lots of formal speeches then the dancing began. The noise was horrendous as the sound reverberated around the walls of the octagonal building. I know that I have been accused, and accept that I love the sound of my own voice, but to have it reverberating round and round that Hall was too much for even me to bear. Within a couple of weeks they had 'Pegboard' attached to all the walls to absorb the sound. A lot of the other halls where we were exposed to this problem they fitted heavy curtains to the windows, this achieved the same successful result though much cheaper.

Two memorable places that we have played at were 'Datchet water Sailing Club' and 'Phyllis Court Hotel in Henley.' The Datchet Club is based at the Queen Mother Reservoir with the club room at the top of the building, very tiring to get all the equipment up so many steps, but the views at the top were out of this world. The first evening that we played there, the sun was just setting so all the beautiful colours of a setting sun were reflected in the reservoir, best of all was that in the middle of this picture, framed by the setting Sun was the silhouette of Windsor Castle. Absolutely brilliant, well worth a visit.

Now Phyllis Court was probably the most up market venue that we have ever played at. The occasion was a Wedding, and we were given strict instructions on the 'Dress Code.' To start with, no one would be allowed in any part of the Hotel other than our function room without wearing a Tie! Now those of you that are acquainted with Folk Musicians will know that very few of them possess a tie let alone be in the habit of wearing one. This problem was easily overcome by me bringing one of mine which I kept by the door, so that if anyone wanted to go to the toilets, could slip it on, go and do their business and get back in time for the next one to borrow it!

The highlight of this visit was that Simon Weston of the Falklands war fame was there and came and chatted to us when we were having our break. Evidently, he was promoting his Charity the 'Simon Weston Trust'. A wonderfully humble, fascinating, and yet brave man.

One of our dances was so up market that both my partner and I had to be in 'Black Tie mode. The Mayor of Carterton was a very keen Barn Dancing enthusiast and this particular year he was the President of the Grand Order of the Freemen of Oxford, one of the highest positions to have within the City. Their Annual Ball was held in one of the Colleges with my partner and me as honoured guests. We had to take a lot of stick from the Band members as they had never seen us looking so smart. My partner and I tried not to have too much to do with them as they were dressed as 'Folkies' normally do. Dressed as we were, they were not in our league at all and they were not allowed to sit and eat with us!! This particular partner was also a Nurse involved in research work at the Churchill Hospital. Part of her work was the study

of 'Sleep Deprivation.' She desperately phoned me one week asking for me to help her in their research work. Evidently the following Friday she was going to be the 'guinea pig' in an experiment. Before midnight on that day she needed to be as tired as she could possibly get. As we had a Dance that night she asked if she could be my partner and could I tire her out? A tall but terrific challenge for me, you see she was some 25 years younger than me, extremely fit and athletic. Our favourite dance was the Polka which is an extremely energetic dance; with her being at least three inches taller than me we could achieve great speed, cover a lot of ground and consumption of energy. So, at every possible opportunity we did a Polka, the people loved it and joined in with great enthusiasm. At the end of the evening there were indeed at least one hundred people that were going to sleep well that night, except of course our lovely young Nurse, you see the object of the exercise was that no matter how tired she was, she wasn't allowed to sleep for the next 24 hours!

Nurse Debbie

Enjoying a drink

Yet she deprived me

of any more Orange

Juice!



Having her as a partner came in very handy one night, we were booked to play at a school in Gerrards Cross. As we pulled into the car park we observed that all the cars there were extremely upmarket, there were Bentleys, Jaguars, Daimlers and an abundance of Range Rovers making me feel very inferior with my Peugeot 305 Diesel complete with wooden trailer. Undeterred we set up the band and did our sound checks; when members of our fan club turned up they reported on the extortionate prices they were charged to come in. Still not concerned about the class of people we were performing for, it had never bothered us before, the band played the introductory music, I then went into the middle of the room, introduced myself in the normal manner, using my slight 'west country' accent which always proved popular before as it created a kind of rural atmosphere for Barn Dancing, I invited them to join me on the floor for the first dance. Not one person moved! So I left the floor telling the band to play a nice piece of music whilst I thought things through, two members of our fan club from the area - actually it was Gerry and Irene who I mentioned earlier - suggested that my accent was wrong for this group, I tended to agree with them. So at the end of the piece of

music I returned to the floor and in my 'poshest' ever voice, I began again "Oh good evening Ladies and Gentlemen, "My name is Donald Rouse and I am your caller for the evening." It worked, it had an instant effect and I had the audience 'eating out of my hand.' The members of the band were absolutely 'gobsmacked' they had no idea that I could talk in such a cultured manner. 'Farmer Don the Caller in his dungarees from Oxford', became an 'Oxford Don with a degree in talking posh'!

I am strictly teetotal but have always found that drinking Orange Juice had the same effect as alcohol has on others, it seems to ferment in my stomach and make me extremely 'Hyper.' I remember my grandson got the same result from eating Orange Smarties, obviously something in the genes! So, I got two large Orange Juices inside me, got stuck in and everyone was having the time of their life. By the time of the interval, I had consumed four large drinks of Orange Juice and my partner, who as I have said was a qualified Nurse, was getting concerned about my mental state and insisted that I accompany her outside, actually I thought that she would never ask! But she lectured me insisting that if I did not calm down instantly there would be serious problems with my health. So, in the second half I reverted to being my old self, the country lad from Bampton; it got a few strange looks from the dancers but in general they accepted that there was a lot of fun to be had from Barn Dancing and to hell with what the caller talks like. One thing did change forever after that night. Debbie and the Band restricted me to no more than three Orange Juices in a night!

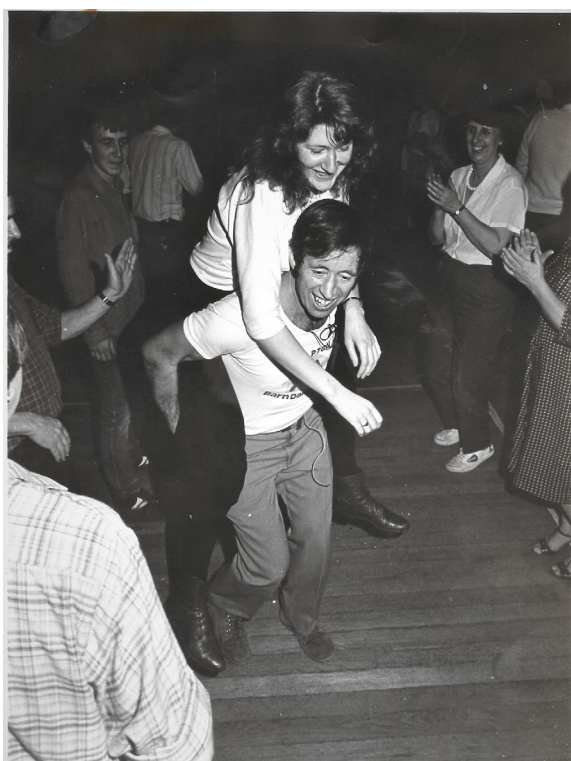
The most difficult dance for me to do was without doubt one that I had to do in a converted Church in Didcot. Very little conversion was done other than removing most of the Pews, so for all intents and purpose it was still a Church. Now I have been brought up in a strict religious regime. My Mother was a strong member of the Methodist Church, serving on committees and for many years the Organist at the Bampton Methodist Church. My Father was a strict member of the Church of England. He was Church Secretary and a Sidesman as well as the Captain of the Bell Ringers with the responsibility of teaching all the youngsters and newcomers to ring. One condition of being a 'Rouse' was to be able to ring a Church Bell before puberty. I joined the church choir at the age of eight and was an Altar boy at thirteen which occupied a lot of my time, a typical Sunday would consist of Holy Communion at 8am, ring the Bells for the morning service and singing in the choir. Sunday school at 2pm followed by ringing and singing for the evening service. This was in the era of 1945 – 1959 where misbehaviour was not tolerated, choir boys making a noise during the service would be whacked on the head with a heavy Hymn book by their elders who were sat immediately behind them. I even witnessed the Vicar kicking a choirboy up the backside for a misdemeanour, so you can see where I am coming from with that background, how difficult it was for me to sing and dance in a building that still resembled a church. I am so glad that I have now overcome these inhibitions and am able to clap worthy performances in Church Concerts, especially ones that I have organised.

A dance that gave me great satisfaction was the one inspired by the Bampton Parish Council in recognition of the Queens Silver Jubilee, I think it was in 1977. All of Bampton's musicians

were invited to participate under the leadership of Frank Purslow, they assembled and played in the Women's Institute with the music being relayed into the Market Square. I had the honour of being the Caller and with the aid of my Radio Microphone was able to conduct the dancing in the Market Square.

With bales of straw providing unlimited seating, it was indeed a great night to remember. Bampton's Policeman of the day was an extremely unsociable person who had earned the name 'Super Cop' as he was so pedantic and kept strictly within the law. My style of calling always insisted on everyone taking part and having fun. I had my work cut out to get Super Cop involved yet with the help of some very persuasive Bampton ladies, we succeeded in persuading him to dance. Would you believe it? He actually smiled!

The era between 1974 to about 1988 was an incredibly joyous time; people had fewer inhibitions and were always out for fun and willing to try anything which helped my style of calling. One dance that was very popular was called 'Pat-a-cheek-polka:' it was at the time when that great BBC presenter and entertainer Terry Wogan made the tune popular as the 'Cornish Floral dance,' so to keep up with the times we used that piece of music to fit this dance. This dance has a sequence whereby the dancers patted each other's bottoms, great fun at the time but as we moved into the 1990s it was definitely vulgar, anti-social and unacceptable, so that was the end of that.



Nurse Debbie aka Lady Godiva, about to be patted on the 'Back'?

Memorial Hall Shrivvenham

Another similar dance that was guillotined at that time was 'Lady Godiva's Reel.' As the name implies, one sequence required the lady to climb on to her partner's back as he carried her weaving in and out of the men as they went to the bottom of the set to make it a progressive

dance. The men were invited to pat the ladies bottom as she was carried past. A lot of fun and laughter was experienced with varying strengths of patting; the dance was often requested by both the men and the ladies. It once backfired on me though, as my partners were always part of the Band, on the occasions when dancing Lady Godiva's Reel, I would quickly break away and parade her in front of the Band as a treat for them, she would have no option as I was in control. On this particular occasion my partner was a little 'wisp' of a girl, but as she was working with me on the farm was very strong. She persuaded me to jump on her back which I welcomed, as it was a change from the tradition, suddenly she headed for the Band with me helpless to do anything about, she headed straight for the drummer who seemed to be prepared for my visit, he whacked me so hard across my backside with his Drumsticks that they broke! It was then that I realised it was a complete 'set up' with me as the victim. They still laugh about it to this day.

Kissing is another thing that paid the price of modern acceptance during this era. A popular dance of ours was 'Piggy in the Middle.' A square set of 4 couples, one girl was elected the leader and had to go into the audience, choose a spare man bringing him back to the set and standing him in the middle (if there was a shortage of men, the band members were always willing to help out) this man, naturally was called 'Piggy in the middle.' He would then in turn dance with each of the girls in the set, at the conclusion all five men would go into the middle and lock their arms around each other as they circled to the left, whilst the girls would hold hands and circle to the right around the outside of the boys. When the music stopped, the five men would break out and grab a girl for a kiss as his reward. The odd man who missed out would then become the new 'piggy in the middle.' In the early 1980s this dance was always in demand for the fun loving people. Many of the men soon latched on to a naughty trick of mine, whereby as I put my arms around the two men next to me to control them, I could also reach the hands of the other two men, so that when the music stopped I was in a position and as an ex Weightlifter, able to hold all the men in my control until the girl that I wanted was opposite me, I would then let go of them all and 'grab and kiss' the girl that I wanted! Unbelievably great fun, as the second time through they would realise what I was doing and then try to thwart me, which sometimes could get out of hand yet in all my forty years the only bit of trouble we had was when two women had a 'set to' and the owner of the Barn closed the Dance down immediately.

In the later 80s kissing was frowned upon and no longer vogue, with the scenario mentioned above, the men folk would not be bothered with chasing the girls and the girls were not fussed about the men! So it just died a natural death.

With all the Dances that we've performed at and the many thousands of miles that we've travelled we have had only three altercations with the Police. The first one was when travelling back from a dance at Burnham; at 1.15am we were stopped by the Police for speeding. In those days unbeknown to me, if you were towing a trailer and did not have the unladen weight of the trailer marked on the drawbar, complete with a Disc stating 50mph on the back, you

weren't allowed to travel more than 40mph even on a motorway. As we were doing 60 we had a lot of pleading ignorance to do and they let us go as we promised to rectify the situation. In those days the journey was a weekly occurrence so we complied.

The second time the Police stopped us we were returning from a dance at Cholsey. Right at the end of the dance there was a cloud burst that made it impossible for us to load up the equipment without getting drenched, so we worked out a system whereby the Band members handed the equipment out of the marquee for me alone to put into the trailer as I had a Raincoat. Fully packed up and loaded I realised that my trousers below the knees were absolutely soaked and too uncomfortable to drive in, so I took them off and drove home in my underpants. All went well until we got to the Bridge with the traffic lights that go under the Railway in Didcot. The Cloudburst had flooded the road, though the lights were green giving me the right of way I saw a Police car with Blue lights on coming through, so I stopped. The trouble was that the driver following me didn't and he ran into the back of me. Thank goodness I was able to assure the Police that we could sort the problem without me having to expose my 'trouser less' legs to them.

The third time we were involved with police was at a dance at Lechlade. Our Pianist at the time was rather a mischievous young lady who was always up for a laugh. During the Raffle towards the end of the evening whilst I was perched on the end of the stage, she dropped some Ice cubes down the back of my trousers, causing a lot of laughter between the Band Members. So when we were packing everything into the trailer outside the Hall, Tim the Fiddler and myself decided to pack her into the trailer at the same time. My word I never realised such a small girl could scream so loud. The appearance of two village Policemen soon quietened things down especially when they started to question her as to whether she would like to make a complaint!!

In the late 1990s, the attitude of the public and the whole way of life changed making a nightmare for anyone organising a fundraising event. As I mentioned earlier, we were often booked a year ahead especially for annual events and the tickets would all be sold well in advance. People would often say to the organisers "I'll have ten tickets, and here is the money" as they would go away and sell them. This attitude suddenly changed, when the usual ticket sellers approached to see if they wanted any tickets, their response was "I will let you know" which translated to "I will wait 'til closer to the time and if nothing better comes along, I will have some off you." This became a nightmare for the promoters and on the weekend before the event they would often phone me to say "I've only sold thirty tickets, what can we do? At this rate we are going to make a loss!" My experience at the time told them to hold their nerve and that 'it will be alright on the night' and it usually was.

By the turn of the century our band was showing signs of aging. Frank the Leader, who was now approaching his eighties, was finding it difficult to keep his fingers moving fast enough on his Accordion to keep pace with the tunes, what started off as a Polka was ending up as a

Waltz. After all the years that he had devoted to the Band and taught us so many things, no-one had the heart to say to him that it was time to call it a day. So, I came up with the idea that as the times were changing so much and that the bookings were falling off, we should have one 'Big last Charity Dance' where we would say good bye and thank you to our public and close the Bampton Barn Dance Band down. Frank agreed to this, so a last dance was agreed upon. What a fantastic evening that was! Invitations were sent out to all those who had supported us over the years, clients, fans and dancers came from all over the country, including couples whose weddings we had played at. We gave it the title of 'Don's Last Bash' and it was a complete 'sell out.' Many of the musicians that had played for us over the years all came along and gave their services free for a chance to play together once again with Frank.

Friends and relatives acquired Raffle prizes from local shops and sold tickets, ran the Bar and provided the food. As we were a Bampton Band, we decided to make the Bampton Medical Centre the recipients of the proceeds from our final evening. All together the event raised £2,800, which was enough money for two Defibrillators and a little left over for other equipment. All our Doctors and Medical people were there as we presented the cheque to them and the title that we had given to the evening meant that Frank's feelings were protected.



Doctors Nick Ward. John Uden and Mathew Perry receiving the Defibrillator from a representative of the British Heart Foundation. As a result of the 'Don's Last Bash' Barn Dance at Woodgreen School Witney .



A cake to celebrate 'Don's last bash' made, designed and served by Gill Pinkerton who with her husband Bill was a great supporter of the Band.



A few of the Musicians that have been a great help and support to me over forty years of Barn Dancing at the farewell Bash.

Having given of their time to help raise enough money to treat the Bampton Surgery to valuable equipment and therefore the people of Bampton, take time out to admire the Cake.



As always I just had to be in the middle of our friends with so much fun going on

Whilst Frank was aware that I had been approached to carry on, he was adamant that the name of the band would no longer be used. Kevin, our Keyboard player who had many years of experience of playing with us and was used to my style of calling, was keen to lead a new Band which consisted of our Bass player, Andy Fidler, Chad Truman on the Rhythm Guitar

and Banjo with his wife Sally playing the Fiddle, they turned out to be an 'Awesome Foursome'! They came up with a new name for the Band, 'Grandmas Yoyo' and it was an immediate success, their style was totally different from Frank's, with a lot of experimenting, fun and laughter to an extent that I had never seen in the band before. I did say to them on one occasion "If Frank could see you lot now, enjoying yourself like this, he would turn in his grave!" Their enthusiasm was infectious and made for some wonderful, memorable dances. On one occasion when Kevin wasn't available Sally took on the role of Band Leader at the Burnham Beeches Golf Club, another great night to remember.

As we moved into the twenty first century the whole way of life carried on changing, our bookings now consisted of more Birthdays, Weddings and private parties as opposed to specific Barn Dances. Health and Safety regulations with its required paperwork to prove that we were insured and all our electrical equipment had current individual Certificates of safety, all had its effect. By now the demand for Barn Dancing had dropped quite a lot, we were normally doing fifty or so bookings a year, this then dropped to under thirty. My knees by this time had started to complain about all those energetic Polkas that I had forced upon them, so in March 2014 we agreed that the next dance would definitely be the last one. A family that we had done so many dances for in the past; we had done their 30, 40 and 50th, now wanted us for their 60th birthday celebrations and we felt that this was the perfect opportunity to bring it to a perfect close.

My style of Calling was sometimes a bit 'over the top' I know, but at this last dance I had my 'come -uppance'! In our forty years we had observed many geographical differences in the way that people responded to my style of calling, it was found that the nearer we were to Swindon the greater difficulty the dancers had in following my instructions. The result being, that no matter where we were in the country, if the dancers appeared to be a 'bit on the slow side', that's the nicest way I can put it though the word 'Thick' would be more concise, the band would call out to me "How far are we away from Swindon then Don?" Which would always be an in house joke making the band laugh. On the occasion of our last dance the band found it necessary to call out this question. So as it was our last Dance I decided to share the Joke with the audience accompanied with a full description. It went down quite well considering that we were only 10 miles from Swindon. During the interval, a man sidled up to me and said "tell me then Don, and what part of Swindon are you from?" We both had a good laugh, especially when I confessed that I was indeed born just 10 miles the other side of Swindon!

I have had so much fun over the forty years of Barn Dancing and when lots of strangers still recognise me in the streets and want to talk about 'the good old days of Barn Dancing' I will always give them all the time in the world as we indulge each other with our memories of such happy times.

I would like to thank all those many partners who have helped me put on such great shows, demonstrating the different manoeuvres and assisting the dancers both here and abroad over the years. The musicians, who've steadfastly been by my side through all sorts of trials and tribulations, have endured my stories and jokes whilst at the same time were always encouraging me to get new material. They were my Rock!

Most of all I would like to thank my Wife and family who made it all possible by keeping things going at home whilst I was away for so much time. Mary had established an award winning Hotel and Restaurant over most of the forty years with our son, Wesley and daughter, Julia.

It is very fitting that when I was once asked "What has been the highlight of your dancing career?" I can honestly say "When the Band and my family were centre page spread in a National Farming Magazine called 'Farming News.' The Journalists spent the whole day with the family at our home seeing what our home life was all about, then joined the Band for a Dance at Shrivenham for the rest of the evening. The magazine devoted four full pages to the family enterprises. Wesley with his Piano Tuning and the Restaurant Manager. Julia and Mary with their Hotel and food production. And of course the Bampton Barn Dance Band playing for a group of 'Country Folk.' A great achievement for us all!

Mary's Hotel business was a brilliant success; she was very resourceful, often making last minute decisions to accommodate her guests. On getting home at 2am from a Dance in London, I noticed that she had left me a big notice on the door to our bedroom, it said "Don, do not enter, I've let our room to some desperate guests. We are sleeping in the Lounge!" What I do take great comfort in is that she never said that she had 'let my side of the bed!!' One 'back door' compliment that came our way was the local 'Purist Folk Club' often held their Annual Christmas Party in Mary's Restaurant with their 'Style' of music and dancing. Certainly a contrast to mine! I naturally stayed away.



GRANDMAS YOYO
Chad Truman. Banjo
Andy Fidler. Bass
Kevin Suter. Leader and
Keyboard
Sallie Truman. Fiddle.

A very happy and entertaining Band. Never a cross word and always exuding fun. A great finale for me to finish my dancing life with.