

Charlie Bate Entertains Padstow Old Cornwall Society-Produced by David Scott

John Buckingham

It is possible that this concert was recorded by David Scott in 1976. There is some uncertainty over this. It did take place in what was the games room of the Metropole Hotel where Padstow Old Cornwall Society held their meetings. There is no uncertainty over the performance by Charlie Bate, and this is probably the only recording made of this number of songs and tunes at any one time by this much-loved local singer and musician. May Day was at the root of his love for his music. Through it he made many friends throughout the country. He was invited to perform at several concerts and on radio. Listening to this sample of his performance we hope you can see why

Together with Bert Lobbs compilation of 1973 the makes up a unique record of a very special man and his music. Charlie Bate was of his time and bridged a gap between the old and what became known as the 'Folk Revival'.

Charlie had a wide circle of friends and those of us around at the time shared in the interest aroused in the music of the people. We became aware that, in the abundance of popular music available, there was still a place for some of the old tunes that had been around long before 'pop' culture took hold. Back in the early 60's impromptu pub sing-songs still took place where hymns were sung alongside more profane ditties without any embarrassment. 'Brightly Beams our Father's Mercy' would be followed by 'Damn and Bugger your Merchant Ships your Ships of Slavery'. Fragments of Shanties from the days of Sailing Ships still lingered in the hearts of many. I do think us 'Young Bloods' realised we were listening to bits of history. To have been there can never be taken away. Such memories are priceless.

1. Padstow May Song -The first track comes not from this performance but from a recording made at some other time possibly for a broadcast. It is the Padstow May song, with some explanation, sung solo by Charlie. We leave it here as a suitable introduction to the man and his music.
2. Old Grey Duck – Charlie may have already known this song when Brenda Wooton made it popular. They both shared a love of music and Cornwall and were proud to belong. To be 'one o we'.
3. How Pleasant and Delightful – At one time after the May song the best known in Padstow with versions known all over the country. One that Charlie would have grown up with and sung by him in 1965 at a concert in The Royal Festival Hall. An LP was produced by HMV entitled "Folk Sound of Britain". The EP (remember those?) contained "The Sweet Nightingale" sung by Charlie, another Cornish favourite.
4. Lamorna – Another song made popular by Brenda. A staple of any Cornish sing-a-longs
5. Little Brown Jug – variations on a theme. A typical Charlie party piece exploring his gift of improvisation and self-taught skills on the accordion. A Waltz is followed by a Polka, a March by the Twist (very up to date at that time !!) followed by a Tango, a Fair Organ and ending in church with a Hymn.
6. Maggie May - Another Cornish staple. Personalised, on this evening, for Margaret Brenton who was in the audience. Simply and sincerely sung as only Charlie can.
7. Dorsetshire Hornpipe – Dorset Ring Dance – The Accordion is just right for country dance music and Charlie demonstrates that here. One of Bob Cann's favourites.
8. Egloshayle Ringers – A song from that 'plaaace' up river. A lovely old chorus song beautifully sung. There are several similar variants of this song.
9. The Bells – More accordion virtuosity from his nimble fingers.
10. Tune – Polka
11. Tune – Bluebell Polka

12. John Barleycorn – Charlie had heard Fred Hamer play this Billy Bartle version at Pelynt and obviously enjoyed passing on that pleasure to his audience. “Fal al al al it’s a lovely day”. Yes, grown men do sing that kind of chorus!!!
13. Cadgwith Anthem – Today firmly out there in Male Voice Choir circles it was little known outside Cadgwith until Jim Bailey started singing it around the numerous Cornish Folk Clubs in the 60’s
14. Jigs – The Mucking of Geordies Bier and The Bugle Horn – Good foot tapping stuff here, picked up no doubt by contact with other country musicians like his good friend Bob Cann from Dartmoor.
15. The Oyster Girl – From the singing of Harry Lightfoot of Wadebridge.
16. Tune unknown
17. The Sweet Nightingale – Much loved Cornish song – sung wherever there were Cornishmen in the 19 C.
18. Tunes – Three Hand Reel / Come Dance and Sing.
19. The Old Pigskin Pianna – With the aid of a matchstick to create the drone, Charlie turns his accordion into bagpipes. Another party piece from a natural entertainer.
20. Alpine Echos – The fading on this track is on the original recording.
21. Cuckoo Waltz – In European countries, tunes like these last two are still played outside open air cafes. No surprise to find Charlie enjoying this kind of tune.
22. Post Horn Gallop – The concert ends on a high note with a tune that needs no explanation. “Tallyho”

Thanks to Chris Blount of Chough Digital who tidied up the original tape and transferred to CD.

John Buckingham Padstow Museum May 2020

1. Padstow May song
2. Old Grey Duck
3. Pleasant and delightful
4. Lamorna
5. Little Brown Jug Variations
6. Maggie May
7. Dorsetshire Hornpipe
8. Ringers of Egloshayle
9. The Bells
10. Unnamed Polka
11. Bluebell Polka
12. John Barleycorn
13. Cadgwith Anthem
14. Jigs Mucking of Geordies Byre & Bugle Horn
15. Padstow Oyster Girl – 46 20
16. Unnamed Tunes
17. Sweet Nightingale
18. Set of - Reels Three hand reel+1
19. Pigskin Pianna
20. Alpine Echoes
21. Cuckoo Waltz
22. Post Horn Gallop