

## **Charlie Bate: Compilation by Bert Lobb 1973**

John Buckingham

This 'Unknown Album' was put together by Bert Lobb, an enthusiastic Padstonian exiled in London, who returned home in 1973; after which this tape was made.

It begins with some 'live' recordings of the May Day Music and chat by him. He was producing this to share with his friends. On that day his stepson Robert was with him and his nephew Peter. He mentions Johnny Tremain a local TV and Radio Engineer who helped him to put the tape together. The year was 1973.

He records down at the Metropole and mentions an old friend Georgie Pinch. He takes time to record a rather boozy rendering of 'Nancy' (How Pleasant and Delightful). Fortunately, we have Charlie Bate singing it solo elsewhere. Best with a good Chorus.

Bert tells how he remembers Charlie Bate living up behind the Golden Lion run by the Couch family (mother and daughter) with sister Cissie.

The rest of the tape is mostly taken up with a recording made at a private party held in Dennis Rd. and includes a spirited rendering of the May Song, with explanations for these 'up country' visitors Charlie continues with a Cornish standard 'Camborne Hill' followed by the tune 'To be a Farmer's Boy'. This is followed by a comic song 'Leslie's lost his marbles'. This is followed by another comic song sung by an unnamed singer.

'How Pleasant and Delightful' follows, sung as only Charlie could and next the classic 'Cornish' song the 'Cadgwith Anthem'. Not really Cornish at all but loved in Cadgwith and Cornwall none the less. A quick rendering of 'I'll go no More a Roving' is followed by 'The Maid and the Grenadier'. This is where I must declare an interest as it was in my days as a 'floor singer' not so extraordinary, that I copied this song from a recording by the 'Ian Campbell Folk Group'. (circa 1965). Not surprisingly it became a favourite and as with so many songs, became part of the local repertoire. It was picked up and recorded by Tommy Morrissey and Charlie Pitman for 'Veteran' and later made its way into the repertoire of the Padstow based 'Stowes'.

Charlie continues with an explanation of what happens in Padstow on Boxing and New Year's Day; 'Darkie Day (now called Mummers' Day see Padstow Museum web site). \* Boscastle Breakdown' which comes next would have been part of those celebrations, as it was not restricted to 'plantation' Minstrel songs as might be assumed. Anything was a 'Darkie Song' if sung by them on those days.

Charlie follows this with 'Maggie May'; another not strictly 'Cornish' song but cherished none the less. Then comes 'In the Village of St Merryn' a lovely dialect chorus song ... the lament of a new recruit to the Army. 'Johnny Bugger' needs no explanation. Not one for the Chapel Tea Party for obvious reasons!

'Lamorna' a lovely chorus song made popular by the queen of Cornish singers Brenda Wootton whose Charlie Bate Tribute song is also on this compilation, alongside Larry McLaughlin's 'Queen of the May' that so beautifully encapsulates the feelings of so many for the Padstow May Day experience.

Together David Scotts recording at the Old Cornwall Society concert in 1976 this 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.

John Buckingham, Padstow Museum May 2020

\* "Darkie" and "Darkying" are Cornish dialect terms associated with the various disguises adopted by Cornish Geeze Dancers. Geeze Dancing pre-dates and is unconnected with Stephen Foster and the Minstrel Songs. With the popularity of minstrel shows it was inevitable that in Charlie's day the two would be conflated but no offense was intended or taken in Charlie's Padstow. In respect of modern sensitivities Padstow dropped the Name "Darkie Day" and reverted to the original term used in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to become "The Padstow Mummies". For detailed discussion see Merv Davey, "Guizing: Ancient Traditions And Modern Sensitivities." *Cornish Studies* 14: (Exeter, Exeter University Press, 2006), pp. 229 – 244.

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1. Bert Lobb Introduces May Day
2. Down at the Metropole where all sing "How Pleasant and Delightful"
3. Bert Talks about Charlie Bate
4. Charlie Bate sings the Night Song
5. Charlie Bate sings and explains the Day Song
6. Camborne Hill
7. To be a Farmers Boy
8. Leslie's lost his Marbles
9. Comic song – Ding Dongs
10. How Pleasant and Delightful – Charlie Bate
11. Cadgwith Anthem
12. A Roving
13. The Maid and the Grenadier
14. Charlie explains what happens in Padstow on Boxing Day and New Year's Day
15. Boscastle Breakdown
16. Maggie May
17. In the Village of St Merryn
18. Johnny Bugger
19. Lamorna
20. Tribute to Charlie Bate by Brenda Wootton
21. Queen of the May – Larry McLaughlin