

**Alveston History Soc . Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 7.30- 8.45 tbc** Timings subject to Alveston HS committee meeting etc (**FINAL 26/5/26 \*\*** )

Props to bring (Liz + Chris)

- 1: 2 bags of flower and greenery displays – to be put in green covered tins
- 2: Music stand garlands
- 3: Small wedding head dress for Gill with flower headband ( made by Judy )
4. Moon (to find/ make )
- 5: Thomas Hardy at the front / middle of stage with primroses at his feet; wreath round his neck; trail of primroses laid on top of wreath (easily removable).
- 6: Club regalia pole: Alastair – at the front of the incoming procession (audience member at the end)
- 7: Silhouette fairies on sticks given to 3 nominated band members and kept under their seats plus 4<sup>th</sup> fairy with Chris Chaloner in audience
- 8: Helston dancers: Robin Hood hats [+ shepherd outfit – smock HJ to make]– dancers to keep under seats
- 9 Serpent
- 10.Handbills
- 11.Poster -where we play next ... BVB board plus words Let Union Be
12. Lillies of the valley for Helston
13. Tins with Flowers for Briggy to be placed at the front of the stage

**Bringing in the May: a celebration of Springtime** - with 1850s west country music, words and mischief with Brigstowe Village Band (Musical Leader: Alison Rowley)

## **1. INTRO**

- 7.15: Briggy + John Mills as groom circulates the audience. Briggy nibbles any flowers in the hall ;in tins on the front of the stage
- 7.20: Ale house start / BVB main band from sides. 7.25 Colin + bass on stage front

Order of Procession (line up at back)

1. Alveston 'village emblem pole' carried at the front by Alastair
2. Lyn - behind Alastair with drum
3. Singers in order: Heather, Harry, Liz
4. John M + Briggy

## **Singers: Sumer is a comin in**

-double bass plays 2 x ostinato

-Singers + drum :

i) sing once through in unison as procession walks in.

Line up on stage in this order (Alastair, Heather, Harry stage right - Liz, John M, Briggy stage left)

ii) sing through again as a round facing the audience (Harry starts, then Heather, John, Liz)

iii) finish when Liz finishes (in the meantime, everyone repeats last phrase till Liz sings it)

## **2: In which we talk of Alveston and Stone, village bands and village musicians**

Liz (link) Ladies and gentlemen we are the Brigstowe Village Band. Thank you for welcoming us back to AHS.

Those of you who have seen us before will know that we are an un-biddable crew, like the Mellstock Quire - the band that Thomas Hardy wrote about in his novels, and Thomas Hardy himself is here to keep an eye on us. We are 'providers of music for all classes on all festive occasions ' **Band Hurray!**

**Band: Rogues March: x4 Intro. Perc.**  
**Butchers of Bristol: x4 Intro: Bass.**  
**Saltash: x4 Intro: Fiddles last 4 bars :Gill**

Link (Liz) Last time we were here you showed an interest in some of the instruments we play ....We have, as a Thomas Hardy's village band would have had, an often random collection of acoustic instruments, fiddles; viols , concertinas, accordions , melodions ; recorders, flutes,'clairomettes' euphonium, bass and maybe this fine fellow who is a serpent **Going round the circle - band hold up their instruments**

Mixed consort: , Awake with love, + Now is the month of Maying

(Link): Chris Mapp Today we celebrate the joyous month of May with a programme of May time, customs, words and music from the nineteenth century ,when Alveston was still a village. The village band in Alveston would have accompanied the hymns in the old church of St Helen's from the musicians' gallery, which was taken down before the church became disused.

Link (Colin ) The Ann family were stalwarts of Alveston musical life in the nineteenth century. In church, Joseph Ann played a violin, Robert Ann a brass instrument. Later in 1879 a harmonium was played by Emma Ann who was then aged 12. Later still, but continuing the musical tradition of this family, the Alveston postmaster from 1851- 1871, Mark Ann founded the Alveston Village Band - demonstrating the dedication of what Thomas Hardy called 'the zest of these bygone instrumentalists .... amateur musicians all – from ploughmen to carters, shoemakers to tailors' - and post masters.

Link (Lyn) Another musician in the area that we know about was George Till who lived most of his life 6 miles away in Stone. George was born in 1845 in Berkeley to Mary Clutterbuck – Clutterbuck being a well known name around these parts He was illegitimate but, as a child, he lived with Thomas and Charlotte Till at Stone and took their name. George worked as a farm labourer rudely called clodhoppers by more elevated members of the community , but he was also a highly skilled fiddle player who compiled a manuscript book of tunes when he was about 21. He may well have played in All Saints church up the road in Stone with Woodford.maybe in the west gallery for musicians (gone now) before the vicar replaced it with an organ – just as in Hardy's story which you might remember we told you about last time.

### **Band Grumbly OOh**

Link (Colin) The range of tunes that George, and musicians like him played, was surprisingly wide - country dance tunes and hymn tunes, music hall tunes , tunes referring to national events. On the 6 mile walk with friends from Stone to Alveston to play at a dance, George might have listened to local, national and even international gossip Sophie Elizabeth Cripps who died in the Cawnpoor riots in India in 1857 ,Edward Jenner the great scientist born in Berkeley both represented ( as you know ) by the wall tablets in Stone with Woodford church

**Link (Liz) Here are 2 tunes from George Till's manuscript book**

**Band: Scotch Polka x3 Intro: Fiddles last 4 bars A . John Lewis**

**Band : move quickly to next piece : watch Bobby**

**Brighton Camp x4 Intro: Perc.**

**3: The Coming of Spring, skylarks and May warnings**

Reading (Colin) : It is now May. It is the month wherein nature hath its full mirth, and the senses are filled with delights. And the sweetness of the air refresheth every spirit; the sunny beams bring forth fair blossoms, and the dripping clouds water Flora's great garden. The lark sets the morning watch, and the evening the nightingale. The tall young oak is cut down for the maypole; the scythe and the sickle are the mowers' furniture, and fair weather makes the labourer merry. Butter and sage make a wholesome breakfast, but fresh cheese and cream are meat for a dainty mouth: and the strawberry and the peascod want no price in the market.

Link (Liz:) Skylarks were familiar in Gloucestershire in spring. They sing when they are flying, unlike other birds who sing only when perched. Folklore has it that the lark and the toad exchanged eyes and voice. The lark took the toad's dull eyes but kept its lovely voice, while the toad took the lark's beautiful jewel like eyes and was left with a dull croak!

**Band: Rising of the Larks : x 4 Intro Fiddles last 4 bars Gill counts – check key signature / accidentals for intro - keep it moving**

**Singers and audience: Larks they sang melodious- band join in chorus**

**( Link )Heather:** Whilst there is a natural eagerness to hail May as a summer month, it is very much a spring month. May can still be cold. Proverbial weather wisdom warns us against being too eager to regard it as a time for changing into light clothing

Alastair is positioned at the end of the aisles at the back He dances up the aisle - flings off his outer garment and with a large sigh faces the sun. At his attempts to remove his trousers ... Gill stops him....

**Band: Shocked anticipatory oh...** (Gill you could encourage this band response !)

Gill: (in 'finger wagging mode' to Alastair) N'er cast a clout till May be out.

Gill: Till April is dead n'er change a thread (pauses as if thinking ....then continues to address Alastair severely)

Gill: Button to chin till May be in. (Alastair buttons up)

Alastair: If you change in June ... (pause) it will be too soon

Alastair (brightly on a new tack): For health and strength, eat sage in Lent (flexes his muscles).

Gill: For a skin so new, bathe in May morning dew (she pats her cheeks and looks seductive)

Alastair: To be fit in May; drink clarified whey (pause)

Gill and Alastair (agreeing with each other): Youth and Age; both need sage

Both: (with energy): May is green and pink and red

Both (to audience): Awake, get up and out of bed.

#### **4. May mischief and love divination**

Briggy rushes in (Liz) Welcome Briggy, our hobby horse, with your wreath of flowers for new spring life

Briggy whispers in Liz's ear

Liz: Briggy tells me that there is another problem with May – it is the arrival of fairies, shape shifting magical creatures. **Band : welcoming the magic ...Oooh**

Briggy (again whispers in Liz's ear)

Liz: Briggy says there are good fairies and bad fairies. If there are good fairies in your house you might come home and find the washing up done .. but other sorts of fairies might play a prank on you (Briggy perks up with concern).

They might ... curdle the milk (**Band .) No!** or make you park on double yellow lines (**Band and audience)No** ...or steal your baby and replace it with a fairy baby, a changeling (**Band and audience: shocked No**)

Liz: I have heard that there might be fairies around here.. in the band .... or even the audience.

Sometimes fairies might **torment** Briggy . Briggy have a look ... Briggy (slowly)scans the band for fairies.

Briggy faces Angela's side of band, whilst Pauline leans out and waves her fairy.

Chris C from audience shouts 'behind you'

Pauline puts down fairy .Briggy turns round and dashes towards her side of the band. Angela leans out and waves her fairy.

Chris C from audience shouts 'behind you'... no response from Briggy

Briggy turns Pauline's side of the band. Angela leans out and waves her fairy.

Chris C shouts 'behind you'

**Briggy tuns** to face **Chris C** in the aisles of the audience in confusion .Briggy *has his back to the band* Mean while all 3 fairies ( **including Pat** ) are waved.

Chris C shouts and points to the band " *over there*'

Briggy reluctantly turns slowly round, by which time the fairies have disappeared.

Liz 'Stop, stop .. you are wearing yourself out .. trying to chase there slippery creatures .'

Here follows further argy bargy followed by Briggy dancing

Pauline Pat G, Angela continue to wave them in time to Fairy Prince

Liz: Stop , Stop - this won't do Briggy. You are wearing yourself out trying to chase these slippery creatures. We must give you some protective primroses. (takes primroses from garland near Thomas)

Briggy will you accept this garland / trail of primroses which will protect you, and help you protect the band ... and the audience... against wicked fairies. (**Briggy nods**)

Liz: And to ensure full protection, we need you to dance

**Band: Fairy Prince** x4 Intro: Bass Slight pause

Heather : May Day Eve (April 30<sup>th</sup>) was a mischief night, when honest folk had to guard against witches as well as fairies. Witches were reputed to ride through that night on broomsticks, dance on water ....and steal milk from cows.

(**Band Ooh**)

Heather continues :...But as May day dawned, one common activity was to go into the countryside, bringing back foliage and decorating the house, a declaration of the common good, ensuring we humans and the natural world could exist in harmony.

Link :Colin : The Rev. Francis Kilvert, curate of Clyro near Hay on Wye and a romantic young man absolutely desperate to find the girl of his dreams and fall in love, wrote about bringing May day eve in his diary :

Alastair “This evening being May Eve. I ought to have put out some birch and some mountain ash over the door to keep out the ‘old witch’, but I was too lazy to go out and get it. Let’s hope the Old Witch will not come in during the night ..... the young witches are welcome.”

Lyn: May Day celebrations spread to the rest of the month and there was a great deal of gadding about in the woods overnight ..... pause ... which had little to do with greenery. The main feature was noise with the returning ‘mayers’ cheering, firing guns and **Chris Newman blows**

Heather: In May love is in the air. In the 1850’s, love divination in many forms was a very popular activity. One form of love divination was linked to the moon, and incidentally, next Sunday May 31st is a blue moon – the second full moon in this calendar month – a rare event, and ... a special time for moon gazing.

Gill nods to Heather, puts on the wedding head dress and assumes maidenly visage.... benign smile, hands placed under face

Chris. N (**walks to front with moon**) shows it to the audience and to Gill

Gill – theatrically ..... All hail to the moon! All hail to thee

I pray good moon, reveal to me. This night, who my husband must be...

**Heather continues quickly**

Heather: there are also stories of hemp divination occurring in the west country - used by young women to try to ascertain the identity and trade of a future husband.

Gill: I went with a girl friend to the churchyard at midnight, carrying some hempseed in a bag. As was the custom I threw the hempseed over my shoulder and said the well known charm: ‘sow hempseed, hempseed I sow, He that is to be my husband, come after me and mow, Not in his best or Sunday array, But in the clothes he wears every day!’

The boughs cast green shades and there was uncanny music – a whirr of nightjars .....(**cue vibra slap from Bobby**) strange and horrid things - peeping eyes ... and cloven tongues. My friend was very frightened. She said that maybe even the devil himself was coming for us. Not good magic at all. So we ran and ran home to safety, as fast as we could! My Ma and Pa said we should never practice the hemp seed charm again for fear of offending the spirits...

**(BAND : scary oooh)**

**5: ‘Music for all classes on all festive occasions ‘ Celebrations, singing, drinking, dancing**

Link (Liz ) Any celebration in the 1850’s would have meant singing, drinking and dancing. Dancing was hugely popular, largely because it was the only way in which men and women could fraternise relatively unchaperoned.

**Band:** Trumpet Hornpipe x3 . Intro: Boxes – last 2 bars of B

Link (Liz) Singing: was often a solo affair that told a story with the audience joining in

**Singers and Audience:** Tailors Breeches **join in if you can words will be provided**

Heather: At the end of May the village band 'providers of music on all festive occasions' played for the Whitsun procession – where it was important to wear new clothes otherwise you might attract the unwelcome attention of disparaging birdlife. (Band UGH)

Liz (Link) Dancing might also have been part of a procession. This is being assembled in front of you now (dancers assemble Liz explains as below). You might like to join them. (NB Past experience tell us that it is unlikely the audience will join in but if they do we will have a little rehearsal)

Liz: In Alveston there were Friendly Society's (sick benefit clubs) which not only encouraged money saving - to spare working men the anxiety of worrying about how to get through a period of illness without seeking poor relief- but also provided an excuse for gaiety and sociability.

Once a year in May, the chief officers of the club, dressed up, and led a procession of their members round the parish. Here we have a shepherd and some foresters (particularly attractive as they looked like Robin Hood and his merry men). There would have been someone with a "pole head" with the society's emblem on it ... and of course they were accompanied by the village band as these dancers will be. In Alveston some society's marched to the old church for a service and then to the Ship Inn for dinner, and finally to one of the local farms for cider. (NB Find audience member to hold pole emblem)

The musicians probably used any tune they knew and liked. So we will do the same and process to the Helston Furry Dance.

**Band and dancers: Helston Furry Dance** x 3 Intro. Boxes – last 4 bars

Link (Liz) We end with a celebration final song – again a chance to join in

**Band and singers:** Let Union Be; Intro quiet D chord then singers count 1234  
**NB Band needs to be able to see singers**

Bow, pause for applause