

Dances and Music

Whisky bottle - Nipping out for a nip

By the time Askew Hall was built in 1935, it was quite hard to get a license to serve alcohol. That's why there was the whole problem of the men staying in the pub. But there was always this little triangle of terracotta field drains, stacked up outside most of the village halls, because they would just take a whisky bottle. So you would go out and there was this nicely cooled bottle... and then back into the dance!

Alistair Anderson, concertina player, Northumbrian piper, folk musician and composer

Mighty moothie player

The shepherd Will Atkinson, for most of the time he was playing for dancing, played various button boxes – but he had played moothie [mouth organ] as a youngster. Into his early 50s, they were away on holiday in Scotland and he went in to buy a moothie for one of the kids. He said, 'God, this is a good 'un!', so he bought another one for the kid, kept this one and really got back into playing. And he was just utterly brilliant, a seriously great player. He had a tremendous sense of rhythm, having played for dancing all his life.

Alistair Anderson, concertina player, Northumbrian piper, folk musician and composer

Making music

We never had a car as a family so we never really went much out of the valley, but I do remember once getting a lift with the postman up to North Yardhope and spent the day with my relatives there. Like many people at the time, they made their own entertainment. After having lunch, we sat and then Joe the shepherd got out the accordion, and we had an afternoon listening to him playing music, before the kind postman came and brought us back to Rothbury.'

Andrew Miller, who was born in Rothbury in the late 1950s

Aal that canny dancin's hard work. It'll make ye reet clammin!
All that great dancing is hard work. It'll make you really hungry!
A pie and mushy peas will fill your tummy.
Pie 'n' peas will fill ya kite.

Eldson was lovely because there was a really old wooden hall. We had great nights – the whole place was nearly rocking up and down. They did suppers and at half time you could buy your supper and go back, and we'd rock 'n roll. Every Saturday night!

Rosie Dickson, born in Hepple in 1943

Musical memories

I remember our happy young family and their friends at Christmas in a gaily bedecked village hall, kilts flying, dresses swirling, reeling and waltzing all night to the music of those wonderfully talented natural musicians: fiddlers Archie Bertram from Rooklands, Jack Armstrong from Carrick, Billy Pigg the piper.'

Helen Richardson, who fondly remembered dances at Alwinton