

A Summer Evening Concert

The Concert on 17th June at the United Reformed Church began with the Somerset Nightingales, Eileen Ann Moore and Jim Parham singing a Victorian Set ably accompanied by Jeannette Owen on the piano. This might sound a bit stuffed shirt, but far from it. Immediate audience participation was achieved with such old favourites as "Just A Song At Twilight", "Little Brown Jug", "Oh No John" and "Lass of Richmond Hill", and many, many more Victorian parlour songs.

The traditional sombre moment was beautifully delivered by Jim's solo rendition of Handel's "Silent Worship" which might have been sung at such a Victorian evening, and a nice delivery of "Home Sweet Home" from Eileen Ann. The first half was brought to a close with The Nightingales singing their signature tune of The Sweet Nightingale. The audience was cleverly led in the chorus with the gents then the ladies singing in canon.

An interval feast set up by the church ladies was much appreciated by all after such a busy first half. The second half was totally down to The Acorn Shanty Crew - namely Eileen Ann and Jim with his stuffed parrot, Mike Dibble, Geoff Williams, Alan Jones, Rita Tremain, Rob and Jenny Williams. They are a group formed at the Acorn Folk Club with a vast catalogue of songs locally collected by Cecil Sharp from Yankee Jack of Watchet, and they are performing more and more around the Somerset area. It is worth mentioning that a "good shanty man" was worth his weight in gold to the ship's company. His job was to ensure that the efforts of the hauling men was kept in time and rhythm with simple songs and choruses that the men could join in, as they also had amusing lyrics to keep them entertained, thus making the exhausting work regime more bearable.

The Shanty Crew took us on a world voyage commencing with the boarding of Watchet's "Rosabella", then a visit to "Frisco Bay", following an encounter with "The Drunken Sailor", when ashore. Then back on board for the journey home and whilst sailing in the Southern Ocean Geoff gave us a lovely solo about the Albatross or was it Albert Ross - I still haven't worked out that one yet! Jenny then sang "the Mollymawk" - another song about an albatross.

Onward via "Spanish Ladies" and "The Bristol Channel Jamboree" to home. In all a shanty programme of seventeen songs with many old favourites and much audience participation. The crew finished with "The Padstow Farewell" sung in harmony, but an encore was called for and off the Crew went to "South Australia".

Some of the Crew are also musicians, Mike Dibble - banjo, Rob Williams - melodeon, Geoff Williams - guitar and Jenny Williams - fiddle, who gave a good rendition of "Princess Royal" and "Portsmouth" as part of the interval break.

It didn't pass without notice that both the Victorian set and the Shanties consisted of songs set around drinking and women! In all a great evening's entertainment; what talent we possess locally. The Acorn Folk Club who are affiliated to the English Folk Dance and Song Society supported the event and the sum of £176 was donated to the United Reformed Church Fund. Review by Fred Povey (with additions by Rob Williams).