

Bursledon Village Hall
 Long Lane, Bursledon,
 Southampton. SO31 8BZ
 Meeting every Sunday
 7.30pm to 10.45pm

**WOOLSTON & BURSLEDON
 FOLK CLUB**

- LICENSED BAR
- FRIENDLY CLUB
- ALL WELCOME

Sam and Sandy • 023 8039 8017 • 078 1073 7126
 sandy@woolnetfolk.co.uk • www.woolnetfolk.co.uk

SUNDAY 30 MARCH 2008
 Club Starts 7.30pm • Doors & Bar open 7.00pm



PHIL BEER

Drifting towards Acadia

*An account of Sunday evening (30/03/08)
 at Woolston and Bursledon Folk Club featuring
 Phil Beer, Tom Palmer, floor spots and the raffle
www.woolnetfolk.co.uk*

In Arthur Koestler's Farewell to Gaughan, the writer goes on an air conditioned world tour with Mrs. Koestler, from one grand hotel to the next and comes home impoverished as a result. That was over thirty years ago. These days you can get that kind of mind numbing experience in front of your tv.

I'm glad I wasn't in front of mine on Sunday night. Phil Beer, travelling minstrel, jester, storyteller was holding court at Bursledon Village Hall. The place was packed, testimony to the power of the tale and the song over the box in the corner.

From the floor spots to Phil Beer with Tom Palmer in support and the audience joining in the songs, this was a cracking evening. Putting my own elation aside I heard it in the deafening roar of applause at the end; smiles like half watermelon's everywhere and in particular Martin, the bartender's beaming daughter Lisa who reckoned it had been "fantastic."

THE FLOOR SPOTS

Before Phil Beer's opening set two floor spots performed a brace of songs each. First up was

Audrey cradling a glass of red wine accompanied by her husband Roy on accordion and the bartender who doubled on ukulele. Audrey sang The Carnival is Over and Frankie and Johnnie. For all the world the trio sounded like a 1930s dance band on an ocean bound liner.

Jeff followed on with a classic cockney music hall double entendre about washing on the line. He ended with a beautiful self penned ballad called, I think, Dancing With You.

PHIL BEER

Sandy seamlessly called Phil Beer to the stage and he weaved a set of pure magic together, a tapestry of originals, classic pop, and the blues, sea faring standards, a nod to Lark Rise to Candleford even a roustabout country sing-a-long called I think the Devil's Right Hand. Everything he played on fiddle and guitar sparkled. The warmth of his voice drew deep into the well of the songs and his banter with the audience was pure music hall from the days of steam radio. Cracking stuff.

His closing "Wagnerian epic" sealed the set for me. It began with him sat playing campfire fiddle before singing Ashley Hutchings Bold General Wolfe about the Colonial War with the French and the love the General left behind. This he stitched to a magical rendition of Robbie Robertson's Acadian Driftwood about the French displaced to Louisiana where they sired the Cajun culture.

Phil Beer sang the verses playing his "sexy black guitar" and the room sang along with that haunted chorus of: "Acadian driftwood, gypsy tailwind, they call me home, the land of snow . . ." I never got history lessons at school like these.

TOM PALMER

It took me a while after that to appreciate Tom Palmer's closing two numbers before the break. Tom Palmer sang powerfully with Phil Beer in support on guitar and then fiddle but my head was still hopelessly adrift in Acadia.

FOREVER YOUNG

I bought raffle tickets in the break, a must in supporting the tireless work of folk club promoters, all the volunteers behind the bar, those selling the tickets and that cracking lady, forever young, in her gypsy dress and head scarf who dances down the rows collecting up the glasses.

MORE CRACKING FLOOR SPOTS

Before long the second half was underway with a set of tunes from the Heys family. Steph Heys thrummed an Irish tambourine, also known as a

'bodhran' in folk circles; Martin Heys strummed guitar and their daughter Charlee played some beautiful fiddle. Then Martin Heys sang a heartfelt Rosewell Fair. Wonderful.

Barry Wake completed the floor spots, with two of his own songs I think, The Widowmaker about the evils of the Cornish mining drill and Purple, White and Green inspired by a radio interview with a suffragette. Once again it was a cracking way to get a history lesson.

THE RAFFLE

While Phil Beer waited patiently onstage Sam and Sandy drew the raffle. Like a music hall double act Sam scampered about at breakneck speed delivering prizes and Sandy called after him as he carried on several conversations at once. In the tradition of Punch and Judy she threatened divorce by the end of the week. It was as priceless a moment as witnessing Boarhunt's Charles Gale mc at the Fareham and Gosport Festival last week. He wore a Saville Row suit set off by a lemon and slate gray tie.

PHIL BEER

Phil Beer came effortlessly into his second set sharing a classic tale of a young assistant in a Brighton music shop selling him strings and insisting he knows him from somewhere. Phil Beer modestly saying he doesn't think so then telling him who he is. "I knew it, I knew it," exclaims the assistant, "my Dad loves you . . ." Howls of laughter followed by a classic sixties pop song Simon Smith and his amazing Dancing Bear.

TOM PALMER

Then Phil Beer welcomed Tom Palmer back to the stage who sang a spirited Daka Dan about a character mining opals down under. Paul Brady's Crazy Dreams suffered from an over amped guitar but Static On the Line I thought was haunted and beautiful.

PHIL BEER

Phil Beer concluded the evening in cracking one for the road style at a country pub lock in. He had been lamenting all night about being a grumpy old man and being in good company. Paid homage to newscaster Moira Stewart 'retired' by the Broken Biscuit Company. "I'm sick to death of having the news read to me by people I have to explain it too." Loved that line.

A Nic Jones song I'm not familiar with Warlike Lads of Russia, I think, was excellently followed by a tongue firmly in cheek lesson in the history of the

ukulele and its importance to Irish music. On his ukelele Phil Beer played O'Carolloran harp tunes, snatches of George Harrison's Here Comes The Sun and the Oooh's Pinball Wizard and a belting Tom Loer song Vatican Rag.

After that we took to sea on the Falmouth Packet and ended up in the western oceans of Stan Roger's song about Newfoundland. If that wasn't enough Lowell George's anthem Willing took me back down the Amarillo Highway from Tehachapi to Tonapah. The audience were on the boat and aboard the truck from the get go.

The introduction to Phil Beer's final song explained why the guitar was tuned to open G and the influence of Joseph Spence, the Caribbean acorn gospel song man whose music filtered down from Ry Cooder to the Rolling Stones. This all wonderfully introduced a Frank Mansell poem drawn from the bloodied trenches of the Great War and lamenting the lads of the Cotswold who would never return on a Severn tide. A telling sermon as any on a Sunday night.

The encore was inevitable, not a soul there wanted to go home till one last song. Tom Palmer returned to the stage and Phil Beer took a bottleneck to the guitar while Tom Palmer sang a crackerjack version of John Hiatt's Borderline. A belting end to a brilliant night.

Arthur Koestler, meanwhile, drifted from the Cairo Hilton to the Sydney Sheraton and missed Acadia and Bursledon Village Hall entirely. Poor chap.

Mike Plumbley

