



# BOLLINGTON

# Live!

Number Sixty

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BOLLINGTON LINES... PART 4

OFF THE RAILS

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**BOLLINGTON***Live!*

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Back issues on line at: [www.happy-valley.org.uk/live](http://www.happy-valley.org.uk/live)

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# A FESTIVAL WELCOME

Since our planning started in 2011, acting as an aged George Bernard Shaw, scrabbling around on hands and knees in Belfield's window to put up advertising and having my bare backside appear on the front of Festival calendars have been just a few tests of my abilities (and dignity) for the Festival.



I feel privileged to be part of this wonderful event. When I volunteered to become chairman, the economic crisis had got into gear and there were doubts as to whether something as incredible as the 2009 Bollington Festival could be financially viable again. I took on the role with the intent of not only helping make a 2014 Festival happen but also to financially secure it for the future. We won't know if those aims have been met until June but I plan on having a lot of fun finding out.

We've done our best to include events and activities for every sector of our town in the areas of science, art, literature, music, drama, dance, sport, comedy and

more. I very much hope that you'll find things here to entertain, intrigue and delight you. If you're young ones, consider staying in Bollington for the half-term break in May (and invite friends and relatives from far afield) - I'm sure that there'll be more going on here than on some dull beach and you don't need to sit 30,000 feet up crammed in a sardine tin or stuck on a motorway for hours on end to get here!

This is probably the largest volunteer-run festival in the UK with over 100 events taking place over 17 excitement-packed days. The effort that is being put in to make this a success is phenomenal. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers who are helping to put this Festival together - it's a pleasure and privilege volunteering with you. I also want to thank the many sponsors and donors without whose generous support the Festival would not be possible.

I look forward to a fabulous 2014 Bollington Festival in the hope that it keeps Dr John Coope's 1964 vision alive.

**Jon Beck - Festival Chairman**

Photograph of Jon Beck by John Appleyard

# EDITORIAL

You wait patiently for a Bollington anniversary, then two turn up at once! This is our sixtieth edition of **Bollington Live!** and whilst our (long suffering) deliverers may curse the fact, this issue has the most pages (hence the heaviest to deliver) yet.

**Bollington Live!** is inextricably linked to Bollington Festival, having been borne of the festival programme in 1993. The group who produced that programme were inspired to continue together, starting **Bollington Live!** which was then, a twelve page magazine. This issue has twenty-eight pages, many of which are focussed on the fiftieth anniversary Bollington Festival.

In addition to articles written especially for this issue by the Festival Team, you will also find the full Festival listings in the centre-pages of this issue. I hope that you will find something of interest to attend and support Bollington's amazing festival - there is surely something for almost everyone!

Further articles in this issue, interspersed with those concerning the Festival, are our usual **Bollington Live!** articles. I hope you find something of interest to read. From our recent online survey, we have found that articles concerning history and Bollington people are most popular. Both can be found in this issue.

So, two anniversaries for the price of one. Enjoy the Festival in May, and I hope this issue of **Bollington's** magazine whets your appetite for some of the varied, interesting and exciting events happening in Bollington over the next few months.



Left: The 2009 Festival Marquee on the Recreation Ground

Photograph by Anthony Holland

# FESTIVAL FEVER

You could, of course, go to Edinburgh or Glastonbury. But those festivals seem a little limited compared with what the Bollington Festival has offered for 50 years.

Bollington can do opera and drama. But Bollington has also done brass bands, poetry, and swimming; races on foot, in canoes, on bikes and with pigeons; family picnics, science and gymnastics; folk and flamenco; golf, bridge, bowls, tennis and fishing; art and garden trails; It's A Knockout; rifle shooting and dog shows; and cricket and comedy. And the original festival was able to advertise a dance with two "beat groups".

That first festival ran for six 'swinging sixties' days in September 1964, a mere month before Harold Wilson and Labour won a general election after 13 years in the political wilderness. The festival's souvenir brochure (price two shillings and sixpence) says nothing about politics but reveals just how many shops there were in the Happy Valley 50 years ago, including a ladies' outfitter that was a "sole agent for Pulfront corsets and Playtex".

The festival was the idea of John Coope, Bollington's legendary doctor, who wrote in that brochure: "I hope [the festival] will serve to stimulate interest in this attempt to re-ignite the community spirit by reminding Bollington of its past and also of its present achievements, both in its industry and its busy social life. Perhaps we can hope that when our present itself becomes a page of history, it may also be worth remembering."



Photos of the 1964 Festival from the Discovery Centre Collection

The community spirit was not just re-kindled; it caught fire. Half a century on, Dr. John would be happy to know that Bollington residents have for three years been fretting about tents and toilets while planning, organising, programming and fundraising for the 16 days of the eleventh festival. He would have been delighted that so many people were willing to fall out of bed early one Sunday morning last September to pack Palmerston Street for a crucial scene in a Bollington movie to be given its world premiere at the 2014 festival.

Many of the organisations Dr. John badgered into existence for that first festival are still going strong. In 1964 he directed the newly-formed Festival Choir in a performance of Handel's Messiah; this year the choir will tackle Carl Orff's Carmina Burana, whose texts are not for people of a sensitive disposition.

There has always been all kinds of music at the festival, and drama too: Dr. John played Oberon in a production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in 1980, and in 2000 wrote 'The Wedding Photo,' a play inspired by and celebrating a Bollington marriage.

But the festival has also evolved in 50 years, grown bigger, more ambitious. It has sometimes looked beyond east Cheshire to the world - in 1993 Croatian musicians played a piece for clarinet and strings inspired by ferocious attacks on Dubrovnik by Serbian forces.

The same year, a choir from Granada joined the Festival Choir for a performance of 'Verdi's Requiem' and in later years other choirs from Sweden and the US have come to sing. In 2005, a Canadian electric folk band rocked both the Big Top and several Bolly pubs, and in 2009 New York bass singer Joe Chappel gave the choir a sensational lesson in how to perform George Gershwin's 'Porgy and Bess.'

Big names were also drawn to festivals: Humphrey Lyttleton and George Melly came in 2000 and there have been repeat visits from the Chris Barber Band and Ken Dodd, whose shows lasted so long that elderly patrons were said to have begged to be allowed to go home before the sun rose over White Nancy. Poet Carol Ann Duffy did not go on quite as long when she came to the Methodist Church in 2009 to give her first reading after being appointed poet laureate.

The 2005 festival was perhaps the last one when money wasn't too much of a problem and the sponsorship partnership between the festival and AstraZeneca won an Arts and Business award. Undeterred by a global financial crash, the 2009 festival team set about serious fundraising, taking over the Viceroy for a biryani and boogie night and persuading 13 respectable local businessmen to get their kit off for a calendar that raised £11,000. That was also the year the hugely successful science strand was introduced into the festival.

And so to 2014. And when that's all over, planning will start for the next festival but only, in the words of Dr. John, "when the pain of the last one has ended".

David Ward



Dr. John Coope - taken from the 1964 Festival Programme

