

Warwick Folk Festival 2008  
Report by Judith Ratcliffe

The Warwick Folk Festival ran from Friday 25<sup>th</sup> through Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2008 and I was on the main site, at the Warwick Boys School, on Saturday and Sunday.

From sea shanties to the soft lilting tones of David Ferrard's 'Take Me Waltzing Tonight', the Warwick Folk Festival 2008 was ablaze with music of many different styles, complimented by instruments from pipes and guitars to spoons and bones<sup>1</sup>. The party atmosphere was maintained by bands including Jez Lowe and the Bad Pennies, and dance acts such as Pig Dyke Molly, who had their audience spellbound on Saturday afternoon as they performed dances which included a depiction of the three 'wyrd sisters' from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Many have named the Warwick Folk Festival the 'friendliest' festival around, where everyone seems to know everyone else and are always happy to invite a newcomer to join them for a brew, or a glass of cider. It was said that the people who attend the festival are like one big 'family'.

I think one reason why the Warwick Folk Festival is considered the friendliest festival around and a reason why it is so popular has to be the active encouragement of audience participation in events, whether it be to sing along with the chorus of a folk ballad played in the concerts of singers such as PennyRoyal, or to take part in a Ceilidh, or one of the many and varied workshops on offer, such as 'Scrap-drumming': Metal dustbin lids, plastic water barrels, a bicycle bell, and a hose, were just a few of the instruments used in this workshop to create a tune to raise the roof of the Guy Nelson Hall.

Moving away from the main festival site and roaming the streets of Warwick itself, you might be mistaken for thinking that carnival day had returned to the town: Vibrant coloured costumes, jugglers and dancing by groups such as the Wakefield Morris dancers filled the streets with merriment.

As I walked home through a golden sunset, I thought about all the stories told through folk music, just a few of which I had heard at the festival in the lyrics of songs and the movement of dances – tales of soldiers from Virginia who were sent to Iraq and Afghanistan - tales for the 'raising of a glass' to the 'lads' and the 'lasses' - tales about the 'caller' who woke coal-miners every morning for work up in the Northern counties - love stories about fairground dwellers.

Next year I want to go back and hear more... The Warwick Folk Festival is itself a story of generations of people coming together to make the music they love, I have become a part of that story - the tale of the festival begins in 1979 and, like a good episode of Doctor Who, remains timeless and keeps regenerating into a new and exciting weekend's entertainment.

For further information about the Warwick Folk Festival, the web address is:  
[www.warwickfolkfestival.co.uk](http://www.warwickfolkfestival.co.uk)

---

<sup>1</sup> (originating from Egypt, 'bones' are two pieces of bone/wood of approximately the same length- when snapped together they make a clicking sound and are often used as an accompaniment to folk music, especially music such as Irish reels)