

## 1/Dec/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

### The Brian Heywood Column

#### *Oldest Swinger in Town*

Next Tuesday (Dec 7) **Fred Wedlock** is visiting the Hat Factory in Bute St Luton when he is appearing as special guest at Benny's Folk Club. Fred has been a favourite of folk clubs since the 1960s but managed to break into the mainstream briefly when he had a hit record with "The Oldest Swinger In Town" in 1981. Fred now lives down in the West Country but is making a special trip up here to appear at Benny's. The club takes place in the basement at the Hat Factory in Bute Street, Luton, and tickets for the performance are £6 (members), £4 (non-members) and £2 (concessions) available on the door or in advance from the box office on 01582-878100. You can also email them [hatfactory@luton.gov.uk](mailto:hatfactory@luton.gov.uk) or visit their website at [www.luton.gov.uk/hatfactory](http://www.luton.gov.uk/hatfactory)

With the current resurgence of interest in the 70's super group **Led Zeppelin** it seems appropriate that a scion of the band should be visiting The Horn down in St Albans next Thursday (Dec 9). **Deborah Bonham** is the younger sister of Zep's John Bonham who was possibly one of the world's greatest – or at least most famous - rock drummers. Deborah has achieved a major breakthrough in the USA on her debut tour with her nephew (Jason Bonham) who is also John's son. Her band consists of Peter Bullick (guitar), Ian Rowley (bass), Jerry Shirley (drums), Gerard Louis (piano, guitar) and Jason Mercer (keyboards). Ms Bonham opened her US tour at a tribute memorial show for her brother entitled "A Night For Bonzo" at the prestigious House Of The Blues in Los Angeles.

On the recording front she has already released a couple of critically acclaimed albums and I've heard some clips off her current offering 'The Old Hyde' which is a fairly straight-down-the-middle blues rock album. Strangely enough, I thought I could detect a few touches of the Led Zeppelin sound creeping through as well as a bit Janis Joplinesque grit, giving the tracks a bit of a US west-coast spin. On the home front she has been confirmed as a special guest on selected dates for the current Jools Holland UK tour which will no doubt raise her profile on home soil. Anyway you look at it, it's worth popping down to St Albans next week to catch her live at The Horn. The doors open at 8pm and tickets cost £8 in advance or £10 on the door. You can find out more about the gig from the venue's website ([www.thehorn.co.uk](http://www.thehorn.co.uk)) or more about the girl from [www.pogomotion.co.uk/roster/dbonham/dbonham.htm](http://www.pogomotion.co.uk/roster/dbonham/dbonham.htm)

Incidentally, any local bands interested in appearing down at the Horn should send their demo plus any other relevant stuff to Andy Sizmur, The Horn, Victoria Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3TE.

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## 8/Dec/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

### The Brian Heywood Column

#### *Festive Folk!*

Just to prove that it's not all "sell, sell, sell" at this time of year, there are a number of Christmas shows in the offing. These lighten the oppressive commercial aspect of the festive season – often to the accompaniment of mince pies, which is no bad thing. Examples of this fine art are coming to the local area when Hitchin Folk Club presents a couple of Christmas crackers this month at The Sun Hotel, Sun Street, Hitchin. The first foray is on Sunday (Dec 12) when **St. Agnes Fountain** ([www.st.agnesfountain.com](http://www.st.agnesfountain.com)) will be presenting their own take on the festive season. The quartet is made up of **Chris While** and **Julie Matthews**, **David Hughes** and Fairport Convention's **Chris Leslie**. The material ranges from stunning four part harmony songs to readings of Dylan Thomas, all spiced up with a dry wit and brilliant instrumentals from this bunch of talented multi-instrumentalists.

If you want an altogether more off-the-wall spin on the end of year festivities then the following week (Dec 19) the amazing and hilarious **Sid Kipper** will be appearing at the Hitchin Folk Club. Known as the story-telling Rhinestone Ploughboy from Trunch in Norfolk, he will be performing his Christmas Cod Pieces show; a collection of very, very funny stories, tunes and surreal songs. I saw Sid at Towersey festival last year and he held a packed concert marquee totally mesmerised – even during a complete power failure. Sid will be supported by the instrumental group **Strangeworld** which features some members of Shave the Monkey. For details of either (or both!) of these gigs phone Maureen on 01462-812391 or visit [www.hitchinfolkclub.idnet.net](http://www.hitchinfolkclub.idnet.net)

Tomorrow night (Thursday) you can see **Bill Whaley** and **Dave Fletcher** at The Cricketers (The Common, Redbourn, Herts) who are billed as "Lincolnshire's best kept secret" (Living Tradition). Playing a selection both ancient and modern songs accompanied in traditional style on English and duet concertina, harmonium, and melodeon, with enough choruses to satisfy any audience. I'm sure that they will be performing songs off their second album "Old Men & Love Songs" which has recently been released to enthusiastic reviews. For further information you can ring 01582-452954 or 07850-163241 or surf to [www.redbournfolkclub.org.uk](http://www.redbournfolkclub.org.uk)

Also the final 2004 session of Benny's Folk club will be taking place on Tuesday (Dec 14) at the Hat Factory (Bute Street Luton). The night will be a laid back party featuring local artists in an informal setting in the lower bar in the basement. If you play then bring an instrument to participate in the session. Entry is £6 (non-members), £4 (members) and £2 (concessions) available on the door or in advance from the box office on 01582-878100. You can also email the club at [BennysFolkClub@hotmail.com](mailto:BennysFolkClub@hotmail.com) or visit the website at [www.bennys.org.uk](http://www.bennys.org.uk)

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## 15/Dec/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

### The Brian Heywood Column

#### *We Wish You an Indie Christmas*

There seems to be plenty of action for local Indie and alternative rock bands, both here and down in London. On Friday (Dec 17) **The Tempest** – who have now been together just over five years – are playing at the Water Rats again. They've organised a coach to take local fans down to the gig – you need to book your seat with Robbo [robbingram@yahoo.com] and tickets will be allocated on a first come first served basis. Robbo tells me that if the demand for seats is overwhelming then a second coach will be laid on. See [www.the-tempest.com](http://www.the-tempest.com) for details about the band.

The **Imperial Vipers** will be celebrating Christmas in their own unique style on Thursday week (Dec 23) when they headline at one of London's iconic venues - the 100 Club. They will be performing their fast and furious, explosive, high energy new style rock with support from **Shard** and **Geisha** and their performance will be filmed for the video accompanying the release of their first 'signed' single which is due for a February release. Check out the gig details at [www.the100club.co.uk](http://www.the100club.co.uk) or the band at [www.imperialvipers.co.uk](http://www.imperialvipers.co.uk)

Andy Miller from **Dilate** emailed me to tell me about a new music project they've been working on. It's a new band called **Imicus** which was originally formed in Stevenage by a bunch of music college graduates who, after parting ways with their former singer and guitarist, have now been joined by the Luton based founders of **Dilate**. Andy assures me that **Dilate** have not split up - this is a completely separate project and goes on to say that the new line-up has been secretly working hard on material which has "a soaring but corrosive guitar sound that sets the mood for a dark melodic vocal delivery". The band – which is influenced by "A Perfect Circle" - have big plans for the future with a single release ("breathe") due before Christmas and an album tentatively titled "Resolution" due in late February 2005. The signed, limited edition single – which will include a video – will be available from selected Virgin Megastores and other outlets. For more information you can check them out on the web at [www.imicusband.com](http://www.imicusband.com) or by email from [info@imicusband.com](mailto:info@imicusband.com)

**Graham Robins** launches his new album - 'Parish Papers' - on Friday (Dec17) at the Hat Factory in Bute St, Luton. Fronting his new band in the intimate basement venue, this local singer / songwriter promises us a soulful romp through his latest material which takes him back to his 'rootsy' roots. Graham is a charismatic front man who exudes warmth and passion in an eclectic mix of Soul, Blues Country and Gospel music. You can contact the Hat Factory Box Office on 01582 878100 for tickets (£6 /£5).

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## 22/Dec/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

### The Brian Heywood Column

#### *Hat Factory Headstart for 2005*

This time of year it is traditional in this column to review the state of the local music scene – partially because the end of the year is a pretty obvious time to do this but also because the live music scene takes a bit of a festive holiday while people get down to the serious business of celebrating Christmas – and of course last minute shopping.

In Luton, this April saw the reopening of the Bute Street Arts Centre under the name of The Hat Factory (it was formerly the Artezium). According to creative director Andy Grays, the Hat Factory “is not a traditional art centre, it is not the answer to Luton's requirement for a theatre”. In his speech launching the Headstart project he went on to say “I believe it is a regeneration project focusing on the arts and creative industries whilst offering a rich selection to public of entertainment”. The new scheme offers help to local artists – including musicians – to develop both their artistic and business ‘chops’ to help with their professional careers. One practical example of this a series of ‘jam night’ sessions where local musicians can perform either solo, or supported by professional musicians, which can also act as a kind of showcase gig – the next one is on January 19, 2005. The new scheme is being administered by arts company Integria and you can find out more from 01582-417878 or check it out on the web at [www.integria.net/headstart](http://www.integria.net/headstart)

On the Dunstable front things are still pretty slow. The new arts complex is not due to become active until autumn 2006 – although the South Beds District council have decided on a name for the new facility – The Grove Theatre. This means that there is still an arts/music black hole in South Beds area centred on Dunstable and, even if there are no further delays, the town will have been without a dedicated music venue for more than half a decade. If the Luton experience is anything to go by then it's going to take a while to get the facility up and running, just in terms of letting the audiences know that there's something going on there.

If the South Beds District council was smart, it would start the process of getting audiences back into Dunstable in advance of the opening by supporting existing local events. Things that spring to mind include the Dunstable Folk and Dance Festival, the Battle of the Bands, the Dunstable Amateur Dramatic Society (DAOS), Tyre Kickers' Ceilidhs and the Cali Reunion gigs. All these would give a ‘ready-made’ audience to the new venue and perhaps go some way to convincing us that the council was serious about making the new facility work.

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Send gig information to “The Brian Heywood Column”, PO Box 649, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 4XD and you can also email details of gigs, gossip, web sites or anything else to [info@lutonscene.com](mailto:info@lutonscene.com). A searchable archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>