

Down East Music in Wentworth



Margie Crossman from Brookfield and Gail MacKenzie from Hilden presented a marvelous one-hour service of gospel hymns and songs at the Wentworth United Church. (Hope Bridgewater Photo)

By Hope Bridgewater

Down East Fiddle Music is celebrated at the Wentworth Recreation Centre the last Sunday of each month (except December). Down East music is a blend of Scottish, English, Irish, Welsh, French, American, German and Spanish folk tunes, original compositions, and recent melodies of today composers.

Dominated by the Don Messer style of music and dancing, a good time is had by everyone: the musicians, dancers, and listeners. Inclusive and friendly, all ages are welcome, both dancing singles and couples, musicians of different Down East styles and abilities, and listeners at side tables who enjoy the happy and spirited music. Well-known fiddlers known for their Down East style are Earl Mitton, Graham Townsend, Ivan Hicks, Johnny Mooring, and Cye Steele.

The Wentworth Recreation Centre has a large hall with a hardwood floor which is excellent for old-time dancing of waltzes, polkas, hop-polkas, foxtrots, reels and jigs. People dance free-style, mostly in a traditional way, some may do a promenade, others may do a rock and roll swing style, some may move very fast around the floor and others are much slower in the space they cover.

There is freedom in the way one can dance.

During this particular July music afternoon, people coming past the entrance put in a voluntary donation and then took a donation of food to the

kitchen as a contribution to the potluck lunch at about 4 pm when the musicians and audience have the chance to chat and be friendly together. The kitchen and canteen volunteer workers were Mary Forsythe, Robert Schell, and Geraldine McGill. The performing musicians present were Dave Bagnell (fiddle & saxophone), Gerald McKenzie (fiddle & banjo), Robert Taylor (fiddle), Al McVicar (fiddle), Arden Hayman (fiddle), Basil Miller (fiddle), Gordon Canning (guitar & band member), Jess Thompson (bass & band member), Betty Curry (piano & band member), Vivian Taylor (piano & band member), and Bruce Gibson (vocals).

Two directors, Dave Bagnell and Betty Curry organize and direct this great show. What is amazing and exciting is that all the musicians are volunteers as are the directors and all of the workers in the kitchen and entrance. Some musicians come from faraway as Dartmouth, and at our last Sunday performers came from Truro, Malagash, Dartmouth, the Falls, Millvale, Springhill, Oxford, Mount Pleasant, Bedford and Wentworth.

The music is not rehearsed beforehand for this show and none of the musicians know what the other performers will play, but do know the music will be dance centered. Somehow, a lot of variety in the music prevails.

The hall has an excellent PA system, a stage of consider-

able size upfront, and Dave Bagnell arranges that each fiddler has time for several selections to be played and backed by the usual band whose members usually come. Often, old-time favourite tunes are played such as "Orange Blossom Special," "Maple Sugar," "St. Anne's Reel," "High Level Hornpipe," "Squirrel in the Tree," "Shingle the Roof," "Gram Lee's Waltz," "Big John McNeil," "Mason's Apron," and many others.

Robert Taylor, from Dartmouth and featured in the accompanying photo, is fiddler, composer and author of two books, *Beyond the Music* and *Yesterday's Boys*. Quotes from his books reveal his passion for Down East Music and music in general: "Music can take you on journeys of the mind...the sound will often take you to a world all your own...It is a driving force. It has great healing powers. It can, and will, change your life...Music is the lifeblood of all of us...the greatest reward has been watching people dance." As well, Taylor has composed the following fiddle tunes: "Hills of Sunnybrae," "Stony Road Stomp," "Back to Owl's Head," and "Thelma Marie's Waltz."

Dave Bagnell, as well as being a director of Wentworth Sunday Music Afternoon, a fiddler, a saxophonist, also composes Down East music and has published a book of sheet music with commentary titled *Down East Fiddle Tunes From Both Sides Of The Cobequid Mountain Range*. "Sherry's Waltz," composed for his daughter Sherry, was recorded with Dave's permission by Don Messer on Apex Records. Other compositions by Bagnell in his book are "Don Isenor's Party," "Happy Birthday Waltz," "Fiddling Dave's Reel," "Curt and Winnie's Polka," "Christmas Polka," "Captain's Smith's Polka," and "A Very Pretty Waltz."

Willie Nelson in his recent book *It's A Long Story* says "Music makes people happy...harmony...is the moral message of all music." His comments are the way to describe Sunday Music Afternoons in Wentworth.

Masstown Community News

By Christine Urquhart

With all the hot days of summer we all need more water to drink. Please remember that your pets also need lots of water as do the birds. Keep bowls of water in shady spots for your pets and keep your birdbath full. Don't neglect your children or yourself, either! Water is very important to keep all our body parts working as they should.

With September just around the corner, things are starting to pick up! First though, the Masstown Steward's & Trustees would like to thank each and every person who helped out in any way with their recent Annual Blueberry & Salad Supper. It was a huge success! It couldn't have been done without all the donated salads, desserts and rolls, or without those who so kindly helped with serving, clearing and resetting tables, worked in the kitchen and more. So, Thank You Very Much!

On Thursday September 3rd at 7pm the Masstown UCW will meet at the home of Irene Gratto. The program for this meeting will be preparing items for the ditty bags for the upcoming UCW Biennial in April. They encourage other UCW units to also create items for the ditty bags.

On Saturday September 5th at 8am the DGM Men's Club will meet at the Double C Restaurant in Lower Debert. All men are welcome to come to this fun breakfast meeting.

On Saturday September 26th, from 2 to 5pm there will be a Farewell Party for Rev. Carol Gillard at Debert United Church. September 27th will be her last Sunday with us before she leaves to go lead a pastoral charge in Glace Bay. We send best wishes with her, although we are sad to see her leave.

On Sunday September 27th from 1-4pm there will be a Variety Concert at the Masstown United Church. It looks like a wonderful lineup of talent! Including Harry Bentham doing our "arriving and leaving" music, there will be The Grant Family, Wayne Elliott, Joyce Arsenault, The Teed's, Larry Webb, Richard & Edna McClellan and so many more! There will be free refreshments during intermis-

sion and a Free Will Offering taken prior to getting our "tea"! It should be a very fun filled afternoon so come on our and bring some friends! Proceeds are for the Masstown United Church.

There may be Coffee Parties in September but this will not be decided until our meeting on September 3rd. Keep your eyes open for posters, information in the Truro Daily News or on Big Dog/Cat Country Radio. There will be Coffee Parties in October but that information will be in your next copy of the Shoreline Journal.

There have been lots of summer visitors and some travelers this past month. Linda McGraw from Prince George BC visited her parents Cecil and Dotty Jennings. Lindsey Jones and her daughter Charlene from Byemore BC visited her parents Dave and Annette Jennings. Cheryl Gaskin and her children Vinton, Ella and Keira from Ontario visited her sister Brenda & Wayne McCray. Phillip MacKenzie from Beaumont Alberta visited his uncle Pat and Donna Guilderson. Clarence and Fran Guilderson from Campbell River BC visited his brother Pat and Donna Guilderson. Stan and Phyllis Porter from

North Port PEI visited his uncle Jack and Mary Barley. Arlene Simpson from Florence Cape Breton visited Lorne and Leticia Putnam. Debbie Baillie from Amherst NS visited Ron and Chris Urquhart. Marlyne Myles of Bedford visited Ron and Chris Urquhart. Barbara and Craig Houton of South Carolina visited Ellen Putnam. Dr. Burt and wife Marjory Akerman of Illinois visited his sister Ellen Putnam. Shelly and John Rodham of Florida came home for the wedding of Katherine Akerman and Barry McCarthy in Five Islands and visited with Ellen Putnam. Heather Milligan visited relatives in Niagara Ontario. Sandy and Toosje Anderson visited her mother in Trenton Ontario. Rev. Carol Gillard visited with family in Ontario.

Congratulations to great-grandparents Jack and Mary Barley and Evelyn Graham on the birth of their great-granddaughter Madison Barley, another child for Stephen Barley and Chantelle Mills. Grandparents are Jim and Kelly Barley.

Enjoy these great days of summer and remember that school will start up again in a few short days. Please keep your eyes open for children who are rushing to get to school, and please obey the speed signs in school zones.

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