

## A Dartmoor Country Dance Party

It is over 60 years ago that Bob Cann first played for country dancing and since then he played for scores of barn dances all over the country, He has performed either on his own, (often playing melodeon and calling the dances at the same time) or with a variety of musicians who have crossed his path over the years. These have certainly been diverse, from the traditional Dartmoor players to, in the 1970's, rock musicians, when he played in a dance band led by ex Steeleye Span bass guitarist Ashley Hutchings.

Bob's first memory of a formal band, known simply as 'Bob Cann and his band' was in the 1940's, and it wasn't until the early 1960's that they became known as 'The Dartmoor Pixie Band'. This was when Bill Murch, who had played mouthorgan and melodeon with Bob for many years, was joined by Tom Barribal on banjo and Hawaiian guitar, and Roy Parish on drums. The drummer's seat was finally occupied by the drummer on these recordings, Cyril May, and this line-up was completed by Bill on mouthorgan, Kath Mortimer on accordion, Bill's son Robert Murch on banjo and Bob's grandson Mark Bazeley on concertina and melodeon. After Bob's death in 1990 Mark took over the leadership of the band on melodeon, with his wife Sarah calling the dances.

Bob Cann's Pixie Band played at village halls all over Devon and it was rare for them to have a Friday or Saturday evening free, particularly when many bookings are taken twelve months in advance. They had a large local following who would travel anywhere in the county to dance to the band, and at many dances there is little need for Bob to call even the most complicated dances, as the gathered crowd have been so well taught in the past that they are now totally familiar with his repertoire of dances.

These recordings were made at one such dance in the Victory Hall in South Zeal in 1988 with the band in full flight with Bob calling the dances to his regular crowd. This, then, is a continuing tradition with a repertoire which includes many well-known dances as well as new dances and the most interesting and unusual dances to be found being danced in a Dartmoor village hall, the American Squares which Bob made so popular.

## Bob Cann's Pixie Band



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