

THE ATKINSON

Love Folk Festival 2022

A tribute to Jim Minall

For 16 years, Jim Minall's mission in life was "to bring the best in folk, folk-rock, acoustic and other good music to its supporters" in Lancashire and Merseyside through his project in retirement, *Friends of Folk*.

In 2004, at a Steeleye Span gig in Derby, Jim had asked Maddy Prior when she was next performing in Lancashire. "When you invite me" was her reply! Jim's response was to book Maddy for a gig in the foyer of Preston Guild Hall in April 2005, and *Friends of Folk* was born. More than 200 shows followed over the next 16 years, in venues ranging in size from *Preston Guild Hall* itself (seating 900) to social clubs and village halls, all over the region.



While bringing some of the best-known names in folk music to the region, including Oysterband, Ralph McTell, Pentangle, Feast of Fiddles, Steeleye Span, Peter Knight's Gigspanner and Julie Felix, Jim also provided performance opportunities for many local singers and musicians in the form of support spots and gigs in the smaller venues.

Jim's intention was never to make money, and from the outset *Friends of Folk* was a not-for-profit organisation. He absolutely loved it, and made many friends amongst the artists and the music fans who attended the shows.

We all know that the Covid-19 pandemic has done terrible damage to the music and entertainment sectors, and the livelihoods of musicians and many others. In the autumn of 2021, with audiences still reluctant to come out in large numbers, Jim had the enthusiasm and courage to restart. He organised a series of concerts at the Fox Lane Club in Leyland, and here at *The Atkinson*, and he had plans in place for many more shows in 2022.

Jim became seriously ill in September. After only two of the planned Fox Lane concerts had taken place, he took the difficult decision to cancel the rest. The shows at *The Atkinson*, including *Avondale* and *Ashley Hutchings & Becky Mills*, were able to go ahead. The final show to be organised by *Friends of Folk* will be *Feast of Fiddles* on Sunday 10 April this year.

Sadly, Jim died just before Christmas. We thank him, and his ever-supportive wife Jean, for everything they did, through *Friends of Folk*, for music lovers and performers in the north west.

Written by Chris Nelson, February 2022