

Lindisfarne

Lindisfarne are an English folk rock band from Newcastle upon Tyne established in 1968 (originally called Brethren). The original line-up comprised Alan Hull (vocals, guitar, keyboards), Ray Jackson (vocals, mandolin, harmonica), Simon Cowe (guitar, mandolin, banjo, keyboards), Rod Clements (bass guitar, violin) and Ray Laidlaw (drums).

They are best known for the albums *Nicely Out of Tune* (1970), *Fog on the Tyne* (1971) (which became the biggest selling UK album in 1972), *Dingly Dell* (1972) and *Back and Fourth* (1978), and for the success of songs such as "Meet Me on the Corner", "Lady Eleanor", "Run for Home", "Fog on the Tyne" and "We Can Swing Together".

History

Early days

The group began as The Downtown Faction, led by Rod Clements, then changed their name to Brethren. In 1968, they were joined by Alan Hull and became Lindisfarne, after the small island, Lindisfarne, off the coast of Northumberland.

Charisma records

In 1970, Tony Stratton-Smith signed them to Charisma Records and their debut album *Nicely Out of Tune* was released that year. This album defined their mixture of bright harmony and up tempo folk rock. Neither single released from the album, "Clear White Light" or "Lady Eleanor", charted; nor did the album itself at first. However, the band obtained a strong following from its popular live concerts and built a reputation as one of the top festival bands.

Their second album *Fog on the Tyne* (1971) produced by Bob Johnston, began their commercial success. This album reached No. 1 in the UK Albums Chart the following year. The extracted single "Meet Me on the Corner", composed by Clements and sung by Jackson, reached No. 5 in the UK Singles Chart and remains the only Lindisfarne song to win an Ivor Novello Award. The performance of this song on BBC TV's *Top of the Pops* featured Laidlaw striking a large bass drum with a rubber fish.

"Lady Eleanor" was reissued as a follow-up to "Meet Me on the Corner" and reached No. 3 in the UK and No. 82 in the US. The debut album *Nicely Out of Tune* belatedly made the UK Albums Chart Top 10 and the band began to attract a larger media following, with some calling Hull the greatest songwriter since Bob Dylan. The band were referred to as the "1970s Beatles"

Dingly Dell and change of line-up

In 1972, they recorded their third album, *Dingly Dell*, but the band were unhappy with the initial production and remixed it themselves. It was released in September 1972 and entered the Top 10 in the first week, receiving lukewarm reviews. The ecologically themed single "All Fall Down" was a UK Singles Chart No. 34 hit and the second single "Court in the Act" failed completely.

Internal tensions surfaced during a disappointing tour of Australia in early 1973. Hull initially considered leaving the band, but was persuaded to reconsider. It was agreed that he and Jackson would keep the group name while Cowe, Clements and Laidlaw

left to form their own outfit Jack the Lad. They were replaced by Tommy Duffy (bass guitar), Kenny Craddock (keyboards), Charlie Harcourt (guitar) and Paul Nichols (drums). The new line-up lacked the appeal of the original and with Hull also pursuing a solo career, the band's next two albums *Roll on Ruby* and *Happy Daze* and the subsequent singles failed to chart and they disbanded in 1975. Nichols subsequently joined the hard rock supergroup Widowmaker.

Mercury Records period

The original line-up of Alan Hull, Ray Jackson, Ray Laidlaw, Rod Clements and Simon Cowe reformed in 1976 to perform a one-off gig in Newcastle City Hall before returning to their other projects. The Newcastle City Hall reunion was so acclaimed that the band repeated it a year later and decided to get back together on a permanent basis in early 1978, Jack the Lad having disbanded after none of their singles or albums on two different labels made the charts. They continued to perform at Newcastle City Hall every Christmas for many years performing a total of 132 shows at the venue overall. They gained a new record deal with Mercury Records and returned to the charts in 1978 with the UK chart top 10 hit "Run For Home", an autobiographical song about the rigours of touring and relief at returning home. The song also gave them a hit in various countries, and was their first top 40 US singles chart hit with Atco Records, reaching No. 33. The album *Back and Fourth* moved into the Top 30 of the UK Albums Chart; however, subsequent singles taken from the album which included "Juke Box Gypsy" and "Warm Feeling" failed to sustain their newly found success. The Australian tour of early 1979 was cancelled after their show in Wellington, New Zealand, when the promoter vanished with their fee and air tickets home. The next album *The News* (1979) and the singles from it were commercial failures, and the band lost their record deal. In 1980, they supported The Beach Boys at the Knebworth Festival.

1980s

Over the following decade, the original quintet continued to release albums. They formed their own company *Lindisfarne Musical Productions* and recorded singles such as the electric, rock-oriented "Friday Girl" and the humorous song "I Must Stop Going To Parties" in the early 1980s, as well as the album *Sleepless Nights*. In 1984 they supported Bob Dylan and Santana at St James' Park. Saxophonist, flautist and vocalist Marty Craggs joined shortly afterwards, making the band a sextet. During the second half of the 1980s they played annual Christmas tours and released *Dance Your Life Away* (1986) and *C'mon Everybody* (1987) – the latter made up of covers of old rock and roll standards and reworkings of some of the band's most popular songs. Keyboardist Steve Daggett, formerly of new wave band Stiletto, produced both these albums and augmented the onstage line-up for two tours. Another album, *Amigos*, was released in 1989.

1990s

In 1990, Lindisfarne introduced themselves to a younger generation with the duet "Fog on the Tyne Revisited", accompanied by footballer Paul Gascoigne, which reached No. 2 in the UK singles chart. Around this time Jackson left the band and Craggs took over his lead vocals, adding piano accordion and tin whistle, as the band gradually rediscovered its acoustic roots. Clements started to play slide guitar and mandolin, his former role as bassist being filled by Steve Cunningham and, later, Ian Thomson. Hull's son-in-law Dave Hull-Denholm joined in 1994 to replace Cowe, who left shortly after the recording of the album *Elvis Lives on the Moon* and emigrated to

Toronto, Canada, where he ran a brewery. He rejoined them briefly on stage for occasional dates on a subsequent American tour. He died in September 2015 from oesophageal cancer.

Death of Hull and 2nd break-up

Alan Hull died on 17 November 1995, but the surviving members continued to use the name. With former Jack The Lad frontman Billy Mitchell in Hull's place, the band released two more studio albums, *Here Comes The Neighbourhood* (1997) and *Promenade* (2002). A number of live albums were also released. Craggs quit in 2000, after which Mitchell took over Jackson's and Craggs' lead vocals and used the harmonica on a harness.

Lindisfarne finally broke up in May 2004, with the full line-up performing a final concert on 1 November 2003 at the Newcastle Opera House. The final line-up as a band consisted of Dave Hull-Denholm, Billy Mitchell, Rod Clements, Ian Thomson and Ray Laidlaw. Clements, Hull-Denholm, and Mitchell continued to tour under the name Lindisfarne Acoustic until May 2004 (the trio having played under this name occasionally since 2002), whilst Clements, Hull-Denholm and Thomson formed The Ghosts of Electricity.

Alan Hull memorial concert and plaque

On 19 November 2005, the friends and colleagues of Alan Hull held a memorial concert at Newcastle City Hall and included Alan Clark, Brendan Healy, Tim Healy, Ian McCallum, The Motorettes, Jimmy Nail, Tom Pickard, Prelude, Paul Smith and Kathryn Tickell. Proceeds from the concert were donated to The North East Young Musicians Fund. The Alan Hull Award for young musicians in the North East was set up a year later in response to the success of the concert.

On 19 July 2012, following a public campaign led by Lindisfarne's former manager from the 1970s, Barry McKay, an Alan Hull memorial plaque was unveiled on the front of Newcastle City Hall, at a ceremony attended by hundreds of fans and filmed by Sky TV and Tyne Tees Television.

The Lindisfarne Story touring band

In mid 2012, Ray Laidlaw, Billy Mitchell and The Billy Mitchell Band toured 'The Lindisfarne Story', consisting of the band's music and stories from Lindisfarne's history. This was followed by a concert at Newcastle City Hall in June 2013.

In February 2013, in support of Newcastle City Hall which was then under threat of closure, Ray Jackson announced he would return to the iconic venue for a Christmas show for the first time in 23 years. Tickets for Ray Jackson's Lindisfarne Christmas Show sold out in six hours. A second show was added for 22 December 2013, which also sold out.

Ray Jackson's Lindisfarne: 2013 - 2014

In June 2013 Ray Jackson announced the line-up of what is Ray Jackson's Lindisfarne, comprising himself, Daggett, Harcourt, Hull-Denholm, and Thomson, along with new recruit Paul Thompson (of Roxy Music) on drums. At the same time a third Newcastle City Hall 2013 Christmas Show was announced, which also sold out. All of the band members hail from the Newcastle area.

Lindisfarne: 2015 - present

On 12 January 2015, it was announced that Ray Jackson had retired from the band. The remaining members later announced that Rod Clements had rejoined the band in Jackson's place.

On 30 July 2018, Lindisfarne announced the retirement of Charlie Harcourt from the band due to health issues; Rod Clements added that Lindisfarne would continue as a five-piece. Harcourt died on 28 July 2020.

In 2021 Paul Thompson retired from the band and was replaced by Paul Smith on drums.