

various covers. Like Stevie Smith Deitra doesn't carry a watch and sang her heart out for nearly two hours. A fitting end to a marvelous weekend's fabulous entertainment. The jam finished at 4ish as I recall and was noteworthy for some rollicking fun with the Wildcards, including Martin and Kevin (+ Paul Lester) on keyboards for some boogie which enforced further dancing, and at one stage three drummers on one drum set. As usual the only thing lacking was sleep, as evidenced at breakfast on Monday!..... **Alan Harvey**

LINTON BLUES AND ALE FESTIVAL 2004

Alma Inn, Linton, Ross-on-Wye.

Hot sunny sultry Saturday June morning and I arrived early in order to set up camp - yes folks I'm slept under canvas again this year! Met up with the Brew House Bunch and had late breakfast with them. The camp site this year had moved next door as the venue site needed more space for the bands cars vans and low loaders! etc. Luckily the paddock had been mown specially for us - though it was still knee deep and on a considerable slope!

Made my way over at 2pm for the start and it was just then the heavens opened and a sudden deluge ensued! Got soaked to the skin and thought that this would dampen anyone's enthusiasm. But it stopped just as suddenly as it began and so it continued for the rest of the weekend - brilliant sunshine, warm and dry days followed by balmy warm evenings that helped the overall pleasant and congenial atmosphere that abounded this year as it had previous years. First visit to the real ale tent and it was Smiles Heritage for me. Met up with Anne and Phil and fellow reporter Alan Harvey and we all squatted down on our favourite straw bale having first covered it with blankets and padding to prevent straw scratching our tender bits! The first band then hit the stage. They were Blue

Blue Pig

"...a good opening act"

photo Alan Harvey



Pig, sponsored by "Relic Pride" - who ever they might be! I read in the programme that the previous evening Clive John the first act on had been sponsored by "Ideal Carpets Ross and Newent". And so it went on - each band or artist had been sponsored by local shops and factories. I'm sure Eugene Hideaway Bridges were delighted to see themselves sponsored by Cornwall's Butchers - Ross!! Well Blue Pig got under away with a selection of classic Blues / Rock featuring some Hendrix, Cream, Free and Peter

Green. This London based trio belt out their material in grand style and proved to be a good opening act for the festival. They consisted of drums Josh Brown, Bass, Steve Bingham and Lead/vocals David Edwards. I distinctly remember them doing a great "Walking The Dog" "Going Down Slow" and "Messin' round". Next up were a five piece West Coast Swing outfit by name of "Bad Town Blues". By now the sun had reached it's zenith and it was getting blisteringly hot! As did the music. BTB who come from Essex way like their type of Blues Chicago styled and gave us a good helping of it that afternoon. I especially enjoyed their "Crepper", "Blue Edged Blues" and Taj Mahals' "Move up to the Country" and "Down in the Alley" - which happens to be the title of their first CD. Nice one!

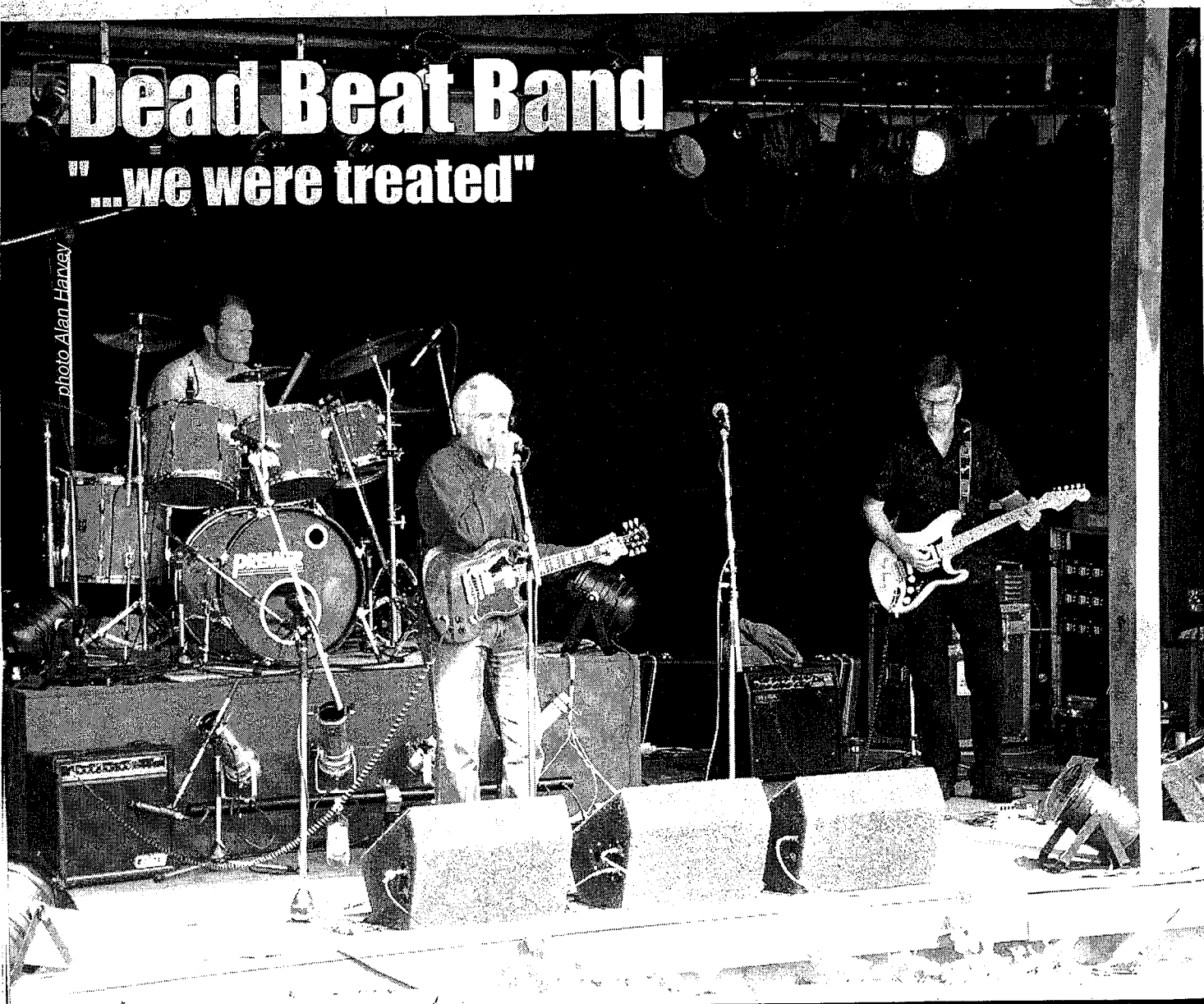
Early evening and several beers later - and a fine bacon roll or two and on comes Richie Milton and the Lowdown. No strangers to this magazine - but it was their first visit to Linton and they went down a storm! Their distinctive soul sounding bluesy repertoire had us up dancing in no time. Numbers selected were mainly from their last two CDs and they sold a goodly few of those following their performance. By now the sun was lowering itself towards the west end horizon and the headliners for the night took the stage and blasted us all back into Bluesland!! Mr. Otis Grand and His Big Blues Band made no bones about what they had come to play that night - NO SIR! There was no hesitation as what we had come for that evening and loads more crowded onto the grassy dance area in front of the stage and boogied on down. No matter how many times I've seen this guy over the years he and his fellow musicians never fail to give anything but a hundred percent and MORE besides! Otis wandered off stage to mingle with the dancers and strike hypnotic poses at the seated audience on their rustic bales and then at the end a group of youngsters aged between eight and eleven were invited up onto stage to dance with the band in front of the audience. The youngest by far was a shy lad to the right of Otis who looked a little bewildered at first but then Otis placed the guitar over his head and so began this youngsters first guitar lesson. As his hand, which now held Otis' pick strummed over the strings guided by the big man himself the lads face turned to amazement and sheer delight and as he left the stage following the number he ran excitedly to his parents in the crowd. His first lesson in the Blues "shouted Otis Much cheering ensued. By now the scarlet sun reddened sky had darkened and the first day was all but over. Staggered back to the campsite after a final visit to the porter loos at the pub site as they had omitted to put any facilities for this on our campsite!

Sunday - last day and it was altogether a pleasant morning till a dark cloud appeared and threatened rain again. I quickly decamped as I did not want a wet tent in the boot all day and have to dry it out at home! Just made it and just like the day before it chucked it down suddenly but then brightened up again rapidly. Although I had cereals fruit and a cuppa with the Brew House boys I couldn't

Dead Beat Band

"...we were treated"

photo Alan Harvey





Otis Grand "...sheer delight"

wait for the bacon butties to come on sale as they were nice! Although not listed we were treated to the Dead Beat Band prior to the main attractions of the listed programme Nice to have an "extra" now and again.

This final day was another good one and started off around 1.30 with the dazzling Bob Hall Show. With him as usual was the delightful Hilary Blythe and an extra thrown in today for good measure was Henry Ayrton a fine acoustic guitarist. Chucking off his neat jacket to reveal a blazing colourful westkit underneath not long into his set of fine finger blistering boogie woogie piano Bob, ever the showman, played like a demon possessed. This was amazing considering the heat of the afternoon. Good start to a last day. Next on were a total surprise to me. "Spooky Blues" (*sponsored by the General Store & Chicory Crops Ltd.*) This band from St. Ives was just what was needed on a hot sunny afternoon. A cool chill out jazz/soul/Blues line up of superb instrumentalists if ever there was one. Here we had five". On keyboards the youngest member of the band Thomas Quirke. What a talent - inherited no doubt from dad - Mike Quirke Vocals, percussion and harp! Then there was Bernie Davies Guitar/vocals, Hugo Pulley Bass and finally Tony Brown drums, percussion and vocals. It was just what the Dr. ordered as far as I was concerned. A respite Blues period extraordinaire! Much of the set list was taken from their CD "Waiting For Hugo" and included superb renditions of "Red House" "Rout 66", "Pink Champagne" "I ain't Got You" "Rio de Janeiro Blues". Stylish, smoother than a cream top, iceberg cool, classy and so laid back! I loved them to bits!

Big sigh! Then it's finale time. Who better than Mr. Eugene Hideaway Bridges to do the honours? As he hit the stage the sun cast it's final stupendous blinding rays across the sky straight into the faces of the band, Even the large brimmed Stetson of EHB could not keep the burnished glow from his face unless he lowered his head nigh onto his chest. This did not deter him or the band from playing their damdest for us and the audience responded in usual manner and got to their feet and danced away the closing hours of the day and festival. Eugene played his heart and soul out and brought this great little festival to a glorious finish with a choice selection of Blues anthems old and new - many his own composition with the strong guitar wailing when required whispering on demand and joyously bursting forth much to the delight of the adulatory crowd. After all this we said our goodbyes and left for homes knowing we had witnessed another triumphant festival at The Alma Inn. I'm unsure of how much money was raised as this is a charity event but several local charity groups are the beneficiaries of the cash raised by this event and especially by the sale of the festival "T" shirts which there are only just a few remaining!! Get yours now while stocks last!.....*Diane Sister Feelgood*