



From performer to Promoter

Glasson Dock first hosted a Spot On show in 1995. There has been a gap, but we are looking forward to welcoming them back to the family in Spring '26. We are thrilled that our new promoter in Glasson will be Kate Howden, who, as part of howdenjones, has years of experience on the rural touring circuit, including many performances in Lancashire. Here, Kate describes her journey from performer to promoter, celebrating rural touring and her beloved community.

For my entire working life, I have been self-employed and have always been interested in the arts. My first job was as a Community Artist, then as a teacher for people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and presently as a Musician and Artist.

I was part of the Lancashire-based duo howdenjones from 1998 to 2017, producing, writing and performing our music and songs. I sing and play guitar, mandolin, handpan, and Bodhran. My music has always reflected observations of history, people, their stories and places. I am very much inspired by nature. As part of the duo, I also organised all the promotion and publicity, and we played at folk clubs, festivals, and various music and community venues across the country. We also worked with National Rural Touring Forum networks, including Spot On.

What was wonderful about rural touring was the ethos of taking music and arts to rural communities that did not otherwise have access to them. That was what we did as a musical duo: we experienced warm, community audiences and found that their village halls were very important to them for bringing people together to meet, celebrate, and participate in the arts.

howdenjones focused on working in village halls, and most of our touring saw us visiting venues in many counties. (Lincolnshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Somerset and Lancashire, to name a few)

We played in an old Nissan hut ...older halls where the community could be raising money for a new building. Churches that were gorgeous spaces to play music in, and brand-new halls proudly looked after by mostly volunteers from the community.

With the experience of rural touring, we enjoyed our shows being hosted by committees that would organise the space for us, put on a three-course meal, run a bar... and run interesting raffles! Those community spaces were perfect for our duo, many of which had stages and lighting, great acoustics, and were always in a beautiful rural location. Great places to work your craft, in front of community audiences who often knew each other and were there to support their village hall and have an evening together.

Kate Howden, an old friend and our newest Spot On Promoter in Glasson Dock



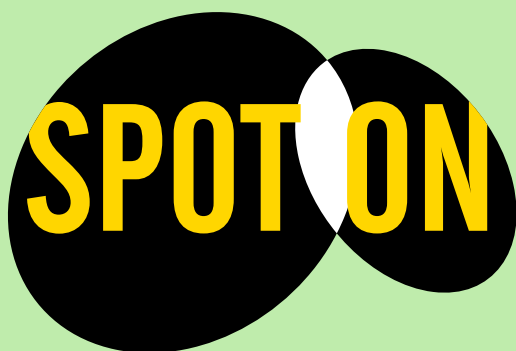
Without the generosity and friendliness of these hall organisers, who were our hosts, we would not have had all of the wonderful experiences that these people and places gave us...people would often tell us a 'village tale' that was great fuel for new material! I think they enjoyed our music too, as we were asked back to our favourite venues throughout the years, with fans following us to the next beautiful rural village hall.

I stopped playing with howdenjones in 2017 and decided to do something slightly different, to go and study. I wanted to dive into history and research and 'have a go' at academia as a mature student. I got a place at Leeds Conservatoire and studied a BA in Folk Music and then an MA in Music. I loved it, and would recommend 'going back to school' to anyone! I was surrounded by creative musicians and tutors from all genres, ages, and abilities in a wonderful environment, and it deepened my love for music. Quite interesting doing a performance course in lockdown though, but that's another story...

Since I finished (and passed!) my degrees, I returned from Leeds to be closer to my Mum, who is 91. She is an inspirational woman who still manages in her own home, but she has had more challenges in her older age. We can now spend quality time together. I had lived in Glasson before I started studying, and returning here felt like coming home.

I've always stayed in touch and been involved in this community. I've recorded albums in the village hall, watched and participated in concerts, hired it, even had my wedding reception there! It's always had a place in my heart. Now that I'm resettled, joining the hall committee is another way for me to be connected to the community I live in, and Glasson is a beautiful place!

The village hall is ever-changing and in recent years has faced a few challenges. Glasson has traditionally had a high population of older people, a small rural school and a small but active church community. The village hall was used less for activities and events after COVID, and the Mobile Post Office recently stopped using the premises. With a new influx of committee members and people into the village, the hall is now undergoing much-needed repairs, and a new heating system has been installed this year. New groups within the changing community are hiring rooms, with Yoga, table tennis, coffee mornings and band practices again on the roster. We have a wonderful space to attract more events, with a large hall (and a movable stage), meeting rooms, a kitchen, and a bar area. The Village Shop, Smokehouse, Quayside Cafe, Dalton Arms and Christchurch Glasson are all thriving after a great summer, and more community events have been happening in the village, giving it new energy. What is apparent, too, is that each of these places supports the other, which is refreshing to see. Glasson is a healthy coastal village visited by walkers, bikers, birders, cyclists, dog-walkers, and families. We also have a tall ship in the basin at the moment, Helene, which has been a tourist attraction this summer! (complete with Pirates and Cannons!)



Having returned after 7 years away in Yorkshire, with all its wonderful experiences, for me, it feels right to be back in Lancashire right now. As part of the committee, we are all looking forward to the next chapter for Glasson Dock Village Hall and welcome the opportunity to host Spot On once again.