**Traditional Village Dance, Askrigg 2 March 2012**

**Introduction to the Evening and the Band**

Good evening and welcome to an evening that seeks to recreate something of the atmosphere of the old village dances that took place all over the Yorkshire Dales until the advent of rock-and-roll and television diverted people away to other pastimes. The opening dialogue, read by Eleanor and myself, was taken from a field recording made in 1953, in which folk tune collector Peter Kennedy asked Sam Fawcett, a musician from Baldersdale, about the old village dances and recorded dance tunes that Sam played on his concertina.

Last year, a project began under the aegis of the Dales Countryside Museum to create an archive of the traditional dances and dance tunes of the Yorkshire Dales. This led to a workshop in which participant musicians learnt some of the old dance tunes, and then to tonights attempt to re-create one of those traditional Saturday night village dances. That re-creation can only go so far. For instance, dances often did not begin until very late in the evening because many of the male dancers – and often the band as well – could not be prised out of the pub until then. However, we have got round that problem by providing a bar in the back room!

We are incredibly fortunate tonight in having *Tumbling Tom* playing for us, one of the best folk dance bands in the north of England, and their callers, Fiona and Les, will explain and walk us through each dance. They have put an enormous amount of time and effort into reconstructing some of these Dales dances from imprecise verbal instructions given on field recordings made several decades ago. They will explain and demonstrate how they have done this and how they will enable us to dance old Dales dances not only to their own performance of the traditional tunes, but also to the music of some of the old musicians, like Kit White from Swaledale, the Beresford family from Langstrothdale and Harry Cockerill, who lived here in Askrigg in later life. So please give an enthusiastic Dales’ welcome to *Tumbling Tom*.