

‘Gunner Joe’ performed by Roger Johnson

[Music]

Dennis Rookard: In Ireland they call it a ceilidh, and that’s its name as well in Scotland. But in England, it’s a barn dance. Well, whatever you call it, be it a ceilidh or a barn dance, Saturday night last saw me in the company of the Blackmore Morris Men at their ceilidh held in the village hall of Stondon Massey, which, near the village of Blackmore in Essex, is only some 25 miles out of London.

Now, an Essex folk ceilidh is one of those events where everybody who can does get up and do their own thing, from perhaps a mummer’s play through folk singing to Morris dancing.

So, come back in time with me now to Saturday night last and join me with a jug of ale in hand, perhaps, as we bring you some of the many recordings we made at the Blackmore Morris Men’s ceilidh. And we start with Roger Johnson, well known in Essex folk clubs for his monologues and stories. And if you think you’ve heard it before, well maybe you have, because Roger has a love of old-time music hall.

Roger Johnson:

One day him and Nelson was boxing the compass, like sailor lads do.

When ‘Ardy come up wi’ a spyglass, and pointing, says “Ere, take a screw!”

So, they looked to were ‘Ardy were pointing, and saw lots o’ ships in a row.

And Joe says abrupt like but respectful,

“Here, ‘Oratio lad, yon’s the foe.”

“What say we go and attack ‘em?”

And Nelson says- Joe, Joe says, “Nay lad, nay nay, lad”. He says, “Nay”-

[Laughter]

“Lad, not today.”

Recorded by Dennis Rookard for Harold Wood Radio, around 1980. Gunner Joe was written by music hall writer Marriott Edgar. Read more about the recording on Essex Archives Online: [SA 19/1/34/1](#)