*Mike’s memories Part 16 Book 5*

Over the years I have had the privilege of meeting many interesting acquaintances but none more than those that I worked with in Chagford for C J Saunders. People who have been the backbone of Dartmoor folk music, for example Jimmy Stanlake known to have been the last man in the team that finished the building of the youngest castle in the country, Castle Drogo at Drewsteignton. He worked on Saunders water team, a single man. If you followed the haunting sound drifting through the Chagford darkness you would find it drifting from Jimmy Stanlake’s Jews harp as he played standing in the shadows of Lloyds Bank in Chagford Square. How interesting if these ancient notes could be recovered today by Dartmoor music groups.

Less Rice was in the C J Saunders building team. He had a vast talent and could step dance on a farm trailer and cause a brilliant rhythm. He had a passion for all Dartmoor music so when we were teenagers attending a dance at The Jubilee Hall in Chagford we would first visit The Bullers Arms to enjoy the piano-accordion music and singing from Les Rice. We know he carried his talent far and wide, such as to The Ferry Boat Inn by the River Dart at Dittisham. There were times spent with Bob Cann and his Pixie Band at South Zeal while forming the Dartmoor Folk group. I met Bob Cann when I attended the farm he was managing at South Zeal and during that period of time experienced his ability as a lone accordion player entertaining evenings of dancers with a casual attitude, ie sitting on a chair with about 2 glasses of beer standing by his side and a half smoked cigarette in his mouth playing good music in a trance like manner. One can value the hard work put in by Bob and his friends such as Les Rice, who have left us with events such as the South Zeal Dartmoor Music Festival held just after the Sidmouth Folk Festival.