

‘Queen Of The Lowlands’ by Odette Michell

Reviewed by Carl Filby (May 2025)



I first came across Odette Michell playing at the much missed Hertford Musical Mystery Tour around 9 years ago and a couple of years later I managed to book her for [Royston MusicFest](#). I never managed to book her for a second time but I think it was clear even then that she was perhaps destined for greater things.

I saw her perform again at Royston Folk Club in 2019 and was impressed enough to buy her debut album ***The Wildest Rose***. Six years later it is good to see a second album appear after a no doubt difficult period when Covid threatened to decimate the future for many folk artists.

The new album is released on June 13th and it is good to see that Odette has managed to gather round her a very impressive array of talented musicians including Phil Beer, Chris Leslie and the Ninebarrow duo, along with Stu Hanna who recorded and produced the album. It is also good to see that the design and packaging of the CD version of the album is of a high standard including a booklet with all the lyrics and an explanation of the background to each song.

Before I received the CD to review I had been sent one track, ***Hourglass***, which had been plucked from the album for release as a single and I was more than happy to play that on my radio show ‘Filby’s Folk’. Since then the opening track from the album, ***The Woodlark and the Fieldfare***, on which Ninebarrow’s gentle vocals blend harmoniously with Odette’s lead vocal, has also been released as a single and also played on Filby’s Folk – Show 97 podcast. Both songs stand out for me along with the title track ***Queen of the Lowlands*** a passenger ship converted into a troop ship during World War One.

The family element is clearly very important to Odette’s songwriting with the above-named Hourglass dedicated to her father and ***St Helen’s*** being inspired by her 19th Century ancestor Mary Quinn. The closing track ***All The Bonny Ships*** is based on the true story of her Polish grandparents who were separated for the seven years of World War Two before being reunited in England in 1946.

In between there is the very affecting ***Waterline*** which was inspired by photographs of rusty trawlers at Fleetwood on Lancashire’s Fylde Coast, boats destroyed by their owners in return for cash handouts from Brussels. I’m no supporter of Brexit but the EU is not without its faults!

The quality of the songs is maintained throughout the album and each one has an interesting back story which is where the informative booklet with lyrics becomes so useful and interesting.

Notwithstanding the guest appearances of renowned fiddle players Phil Beer and Chris Leslie on a track each, with each listen it becomes clear what an important contribution Stu Hanna has made to the album, both as the producer and as a musician, and he has done a fine job on several tracks with his own fiddle playing.

You will have a chance to see Odette in concert at the album launch on June 11th at the Heath St Baptist Church, London when both Phil Beer and Stu Hanna will be there to assist and she will then be on tour solo and in her trio as Michell, Pfeiffer & Kulesh. Details can be found on Odette's website [HERE](#) or you can find a link in the 'Gigs & Tours' Listing on Unicorn Folk as you are already on site.
