

Notes

The Newsletter of Readifolk

Issue 1

Reading's folk song
and music club

Winter 2008/9

Wassail!

**Welcome
to Readifolk's first newsletter**

Another new venue...

Just as we were settling in to the Queen's Arms in Great Knollys Street (where the atmosphere, the landlord, the beer, and even the toilets, were warm, cheap or friendly), we've had to move again. But this time to somewhere we think will be more stable and permanent -

with comfortable chairs, and proper heating, too. From now on you will find us at RISC in London Street. Details of how to get lost on page 6.

So with a new venue at the start of a new year, we thought we'd try an experiment and produce a newsletter. If people respond well to it, there may be another one sometime. At this point we're thinking of a quarterly production, to coincide with the usual publication of the Coming Events programme. We want it to help us keep in touch with people on our mailing list, and also spread the word about Readifolk to people who don't know about us yet. Several people have helped with this edition, and hopefully more people will want to contribute to it so that it can continue on a regular basis.

It would be nice if this newsletter could reflect lots of views, so let me make an important appeal right from the beginning: I need help! if you want to write something, contribute a song, tell us about the peculiar instrument you play, or if you have anything else that may be relevant to Readifolk or the wider world of folk music, don't be shy. I can often be found at guest nights where I will willingly accept bits of paper with writing on them, or have ideas run past me, or you can email me (stewart@readifolk.org.uk) and I may even respond favourably to being accosted on the street.

At the moment, this is being distributed electronically to people on our email list. This is the most economical way to do it. Please feel free to print copies, forward it on, or further distribute it to anyone who may be interested. If you have received this with your email, and you don't want it, please let us know so that we can take you off the list. We would also like to have a few paper copies available on Sunday evenings, and hopefully in the future we may be able to organise this. Meantime, if you want to make your own copies for others, please do - I can even supply a higher resolution version for better print quality.

Stewart



Instruments of Joy

Taking a look at the instruments of the folk idiom.

This issue:

The Hurdy-Gurdy



Damian & George from Pressgang recently played at Readifolk, and Damian brought along his hurdy-gurdy. In case you didn't know:

- The hurdy-gurdy is a stringed instrument, usually with a guitar- or lute-like body and no neck, in which the strings are made to sound by a rotating wooden wheel, turned by a handle, which rubs against them in a similar fashion to a violin bow. Typically (though by no means always) a hurdy-gurdy will have two to four drone strings and one or two melody, or chanterelle, strings, which are stopped by means of buttons, which press wooden tangents against the strings, altering their tonal length. There may also be a trompette string which is arranged so that a rhythmic sound, controlled by the turning handle, can augment the music. Sympathetic strings which vibrate as a result of resonant frequencies may also be found. There is great variety and many local differences to the nature of the instrument throughout Europe.
- The hurdy-gurdy is mainly found in Europe, but in 1995 the Over The Water Hurdy-Gurdy Accosiation was established in America, which now promotes festivals and educational events.
- The history of the instrument is thought to go back to the 11th century or earlier. A similar instrument called the organistrum can be seen being played by two people in a stone carving in the cathedral of Sanitago de Compostella in Spain, dating back to 1166.
- There is a UK hurdy-gurdy forum at www.gurdy.co.uk
- Donovan Leitch's song from 1968 called The Hurdy-Gurdy Man did not feature the instrument. However, session musicians on the track included Jimmy Page, who can be seen playing the instrument in the Led Zeppelin film The Song Remains The Same, and he also plays it on later Plant & Page recordings.
- To prevent a nasty rasping sound being produced, cotton is carefully wrapped around the strings at the point where the wheel rubs against them.
- The sound of the hurdy-gurdy is often compared to that of bagpipes, and it is often used to play bagpipe music.

Thanks to Wikipedia and the rest of the internet, some of the above may actually be true.



Guest Night Reviews

**Were you there? Tell us what you think.
If you weren't, this is what you missed.**

We won't have room or resources to review every guest night, but if one which you particularly liked is missing, why not write a piece about it?



Johnny Silvo



Who remembers Johnny

Silvo? Who could forget his regular appearances on Playschool? Well, actually, me for one, but then I grew up in a house without BBC2 - well, that's my excuse, anyway.

But it's no excuse, really. The man has a whole armful of recordings to his name, and has been constantly touring since the mid 1960s. Johnny spent most of his early years listening to jazz and blues, learning the guitar and singing, and this heritage shows as it is carried seamlessly into the songs he sings in folk clubs. His repertoire is rich and varied, with songs from Jamaica, Scotland, Germany, Norway, down to his final encore of What A Wonderful World, sung exactly as Louis Armstrong did himself. Interspersed were plenty that we could join in with. This is an artist who applies himself unstintingly to making people happy. And he does.

It's easy to be a little aloof about the older generation of folk singers who never quite became household names, but such a thing badly misses the point. It's not all

occasional kids' programmes. These are the people who have put the work in, toured hard, and survived. Johnny Silvo is given credit for persuading Sandy Denny into her first recording studio. In a large part, the current revival of interest in folk music is because of the ground work these people did.

Now living in Norway, Johnny still visits the UK regularly, drinks our whisky, sings us songs, and tells us tales from around the world. His visit to Readifolk in November was a welcome return, as his ability to respond to an audience is a wonder to envy. And clearly, those in the know are prepared to travel far to our little folk club to see him, with audience members coming from Slough and further. The prettier ones even got to duet, unrehearsed, with him.

So, next time you see Johnny Silvo on the bill, be prepared to end the evening with that fulfilling and satisfying feeling of having been entertained well.



Stewart

Readifolk Hiring Fair

On Sunday 23 November, at its previous venue at the Queen's Arms in Great Knollys Street, Readifolk held its first ever Hiring Fair. This innovative format, brainchild of Colin Waters, provided a platform for six pre-booked acts to showcase their talents and have a chance of a booking for a gig at a future guest night. Colin himself ably compered the evening's very full agenda.

The audience was certainly

enthusiastic and gave the performers every encouragement, while hidden among the audience were six judges who recorded their rating of each act. First on the bill were 3-2-1, otherwise known as Anne, Brit and Ed. These regulars at the club gave us not only some of their fine tunes on two accordions and banjo, but also a couple of songs, sung by Anne and Brit. Next up was Steve Donnelly with his guitar and a very relaxed set, including some excellent self-penned and traditional songs. He certainly got the audience's voices warmed up.

Next Janet Miller and Nigel Jones gave us traditional songs in harmony with some fine mandolin/guitar and whistle accompaniment. The Westlanders followed with an enthusiastic set of songs and tunes, including a pair of well-played didgeridoos! Janet Kent, a regular at the club and a popular singer with a huge voice and range, had the audience in stitches with her set of rather risqué songs and anecdotes.

Finally, Pint and a Half of Blues presented songs in a different genre, with steel guitar and a rhythm box, and summoned up enthusiastic audience participation.

The judges' ratings were added up, and Colin announced the winner: though the results were close, Steve Donnelly had the most points, and was invited back to give us one more song to round off a superb evening's entertainment. Steve will be offered a guest night some time next year, and we look forward to hearing a lot more songs from him.

If you are interested in coming to listen to some great music, or to perform yourself, check out Readifolk's programme here. There is something every Sunday evening, and our new venue at RISC is easy



from Reading town centre, and with plenty of parking. We look forward to seeing you.

Malcolm



Damian & George

Damian & George played at Readifolk on the last Sunday of November. A wet and miserable night - but only outside.



Those of us who have lived in Reading for too long will almost certainly have been aware of Pressgang, one of the two benchmark groups from Reading during the late 80s and 90s (along with RDF). I would probably last have seen them 20 years ago - enthusiastic youngsters making an enthusiastic young noise.

As a rock group with its roots growing in the fertile earth of folk tradition, Pressgang still exists occasionally, though the band members have long since moved away from the area. George and Damian, two stalwarts of the group, and now living in Pembrokeshire and Dorset, are still to be found singing and playing, both individually and, when circumstances permit, as a duo. And it's clear that the enthusiasm is undiminished, though the noise has matured and now has greater scope and depth.

At Readifolk, that miserable November

evening, they played music from all around Europe, sung in native languages, unaccompanied or played on a variety of instruments, notably including Damian's hammered dulcimer and hurdy-gurdy. There were chorus songs which we all joined in with - even if we didn't understand the language we were singing - and tunes old and new.



What is such a pleasure to see is two people who still clearly enjoy the music they make, and are happy to chat with people about it. And if you want to see the inner workings of a hurdy-gurdy, catch Damian, who was very happy to take time afterwards to show people its mechanism.

Outside, the night was cold and wet, but inside, Damian & George warmed our hearts and souls.

The Fat Budgie



Steve Turner

A dark but not stormy night, intensified with a cold core that seeped into the bones, gave vigour to Steve Turner's rendition of "The Little Pot Stove" - one highlight among many.

Steve plays Mandolin and Cittern with accomplished panache, but his Concertina playing is original, precise and stunningly musical. To bring this technique into the accompanying role adds satisfaction and taste. Put simply the guy is superb, using counterpoint and inversions against a sure singing style.



Reading presented Steve in the usual folk club forum and he was supported by a variety of floor spots that did him justice, but, they would

admit, could not outshine him.

When the guy started with Rye Cooder - a well formed blues in something way beyond 12 bar - we knew we were in for something special. These expectations were amply fulfilled.

Force me into criticism and I would suggest a little more dynamic range to his tenor voice. But having said this his delivery was servant to the material and just as importantly one could hear the words, despite one's tendency to focus on his unbelievable concertina accompaniment.



An evening of almost intense pleasure that drew one's mind away from the hard chill and the pain in one's bum from the equally hard chairs.

Doug



Contact us:

Una for bookings and coming events

una@readifolk.org.uk

Stewart about the newsletter

stewart@readifolk.org.uk

Julian about the website

julian@readifolk.org.uk

Our guest-night MC is Malcolm

malcolm@readifolk.org.uk

Colin for publicity, coming events and the mailing list

colin@readifolk.org.uk

Rosa's Daughters



On a cold and frosty December night a small but select group of Readifolk diehards braved the elements to attend our final night at The Queens Arms.

Rosa's Daughters, who are Marie Rice, Suzi Zeffert and Julia Jacs, came armed with a plethora of interesting instruments including guitar, bouzouki, Appalachian dulcimer, Hungarian cittera as well as some unconventional percussion gadgets. Suzi even brought along a home-made Bakewell tart to be shared out in the interval!

With the comforting background sound of the industrial heating unit, Rosa's Daughters entertained us with an excellent mix of traditional songs and music plus contemporary offerings from many of our well-known song writers including Rob Johnson, Graham Moore, John Connelly, Graham Miles, Ron Truman-Border and Si Khan, plus a haunting self-penned song 'Peace be Upon You' by Marie.

All the songs were performed with great enthusiasm and it was clear that Rosa's Daughters loved to perform before such an appreciative audience.

There was ample opportunity for audience participation in the many

chorus songs and in the friendly banter and exchange of 'Christmas cracker' jokes.

The evening was ably compered by Doug Brown, who contributed a couple of songs in his own inimitable style. From the floor Peter Haynes entertained with a zany presentation of the weather forecast, which confused everyone – including Peter!

Overall the evening was a very

enjoyable antidote to the excesses of the festive season and was a memorable farewell to The Queens Arms. We look forward now to a more secure future for Readifolk at our new venue at RISC, starting with a Singers Night on 4 January.

Wishing you all a happy and peaceful New Year.

Colin

Readifolk on YouTube

A few weeks ago, one of our floor singers was Tom Harker, a visitor from America. Many of us couldn't help noticing that he videoed *everything*, and got a friend to hold the camera while he performed himself. See the results:

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=A-xu0sgZI2M>

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=3ltAF2Bj5b0>

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=KhkuaY04Jbl>

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=q6grwgQDdlY>

You can help...

What do you think of this newsletter? Like to see a second edition? Fancy writing a piece for it?

How about an article on an instrument you play? Or maybe you could transcribe a favourite song or two, giving us some background and history.

But we could also do with a few photographs of guest nights, too, and we'll always need people who can review the performances with fresh insight.

And folk-related general interest articles, news items, or other editorial could all help to enhance the Readifolk experience.

We'd also like to make a few paper copies of this newsletter available. This requires use of an A3 colour printer. If you have access to one and could donate some copies, we'd like to hear from you.

Whatever ideas you have we'd like to hear more, so contact Stewart - I'm often at guest nights, or you can email me - stewart@readifolk.org.uk

How to Find Readifolk's new Venue

Readifolk now meets at Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC) on London Street. The easiest way to find it is to put RG1 4PS into your sat-nav. For the rest of us, pay attention...

From railway station, or on foot from town.

From station cross road, go south along Station Rd. opposite, until Friar St. Turn left, pass Town Hall, leave pedestrian area, cross road and pass Post Office, down slope, pass Jacksons, cross road into Duke St. over canal. Cross Inner Distribution Road complex, up London St. RISC is 20 yards on left. For rear entrance, go past shop front and turn left down ally. Follow building round. The rear entrance is accessed from car park; Readifolk meet in a room just inside.

From M4 Junction 10, A329M and the East.

Follow signs for Reading. When you find yourself on London Rd., a 3 lane one-way street, keep in middle lane, pass hospital on left. Traffic lights reduce road to 2 lanes, then immediately past The Turks pub turn right down small lane called East St., continue across South St. down slope. See **Car Parking**.

From M4 Junction 11 and the South. Head north along A33 dual carriageway for about 2 miles. After traffic lights with adjacent BP garage, get in right lane. Pass under bridge, then at lights bear right, following signs for The Oracle and Aldershot A327. Get in left lane at next lights, cross all lanes to get into left-most lane. Descend slip road to the Oracle roundabout. Get in right lane of slip road. See **From Oracle Roundabout**.

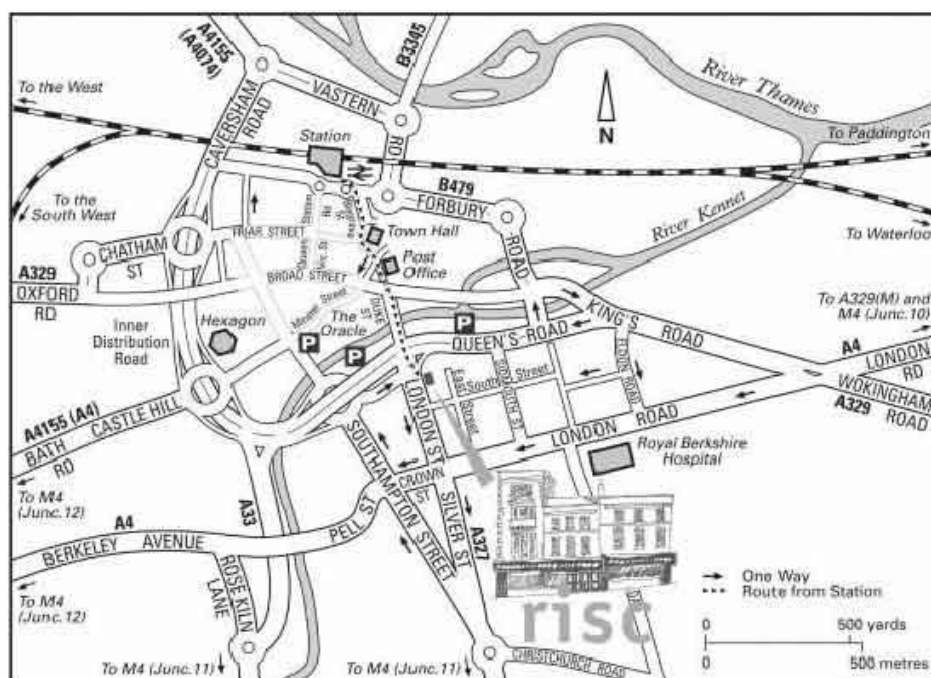
From M4 Junction 12 and the West. Head east along A4 for about 5, then descend Castle Hill to roundabout. Right lane for 3rd exit following signs for The Oracle and Aldershot A327. Exit roundabout and keep left to descend slip road to the Oracle roundabout. Get in right lane of slip road. See **From Oracle Roundabout**.

From Caversham and the North. Approach Reading over Caversham Bridge A4155; follow signs for Town Centre and The Oracle. Road becomes dual carriageway with high concrete sides; at next traffic lights dual carriageway divides several ways - get in left lane, follow signs for The Oracle and Aldershot A327. Descend slip road to Oracle roundabout. Get in right lane of slip road. See **From Oracle Roundabout**.

From Oracle Roundabout. Nearly there. You are aiming for the third exit from this roundabout. Follow signs for Aldershot A327. At bottom of slip road proceed onto roundabout, then middle lane to go immediately right under flyover, and immediately left to exit into Mill Lane. Pass mural wall painting on right, and at traffic lights, turn right onto London St. RISC is 20 yards on left. For parking, continue past, take next left into South St., then left into East St. See **Car Parking**.

Car Parking. Go to the bottom of East St and turn left; RISC's carpark is up a spiral ramp straight ahead. The car park is free to RISC users at weekends and evenings. **Do no use the lower parking.** The rear entrance is accessed from the car park and Readifolk meet in a room just inside. Alternatively there is on-street parking on East St, or further down South St.

Buses. Routes 5,6 21 and 24 all run Sunday evening services to London St. from the town centre and beyond running until just before midnight. The stop on London St. is right outside RISC



A Song Worth Singing Down By The Salley Gardens

I first heard this song - well the sublime melody, at least - played by jazz saxophonist Barbara Thompson, but it is a standard in the folk repertoire, and is covered by a great many artists. The lyric is by Irish poet WB Yeats, who said that he based it upon a half remembered song heard from a peasant woman. It also bears a striking resemblance to part of The Rambling Boys Of Pleasure, most famously sung by Planxty.

For the music, Herbert Hughes set Yeats' poem to the traditional Irish air The Maids of the Mourne Shore - though you may occasionally hear it set to the tune of The Foggy Dew. The original poem only has two verses, but you will usually hear this sung as a three verse song, and with a variety of minor differences between singers.

The word salley is an anglicisation of the Irish word saileach, which means willow, and a salley garden was a piece of land in Ireland where willow trees (salley trees) grew, often on the edge of a village. The willow withes were an important resource for building work and basketry. Apparently the gardens were favoured spots for young lovers who would go there especially to reflect upon leaves growing on trees and grass growing on weirs.

The following is set out for standard guitar tuning, but some guitarists prefer to use DADGAD tuning.

Stewart

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It includes guitar chord diagrams above the staff. The first system shows chords D, A, G, D, G, A, and D. The second system shows chords D, G, F#m, D, G, A, D, and D. The score includes a repeat sign, a 'To Coda' instruction, and a 'Coda' section. The lyrics are: 1. It was down by the sa-ll-ey gar-dens my love and I did meet She passed by the sa-ll-ey gar-dens wi-th li-ttle snow white I be ing young a-nd foo-lish with my love did not a- feet. She bid me take love ea-sy as the leaves gr ow on the tree, B-ut gree

1. It was down by the salley gardens, my love and I did meet.
She passed by the salley gardens with little snow white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree,
But I being young and foolish, with my love did not agree.
2. In a field down by the river, my love and I did stand
And on my leaning shoulder, she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weir
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.
3. It was down by the salley gardens, my love and I did meet.
She passed by the salley gardens with little snow white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree,
But I being young and foolish, with my love did not agree.

Readifolk Newsletter

Nobody involved in the production of this newsletter are writers or editors, and some of us even failed the eleven plus, so please excuse any errors, including spelling mistakes, poor grammar, over use of clichés, stylistic misdemeanours and downright libel. Other than this, we're not responsible for anything. Ever. We're probably guilty of plagiarism, and if you think we've pinched your copyright in any way, we're sorry, OK? Readifolk is definitely non profit making.

READIFOLK

READING'S FOLK SONG & MUSIC CLUB

N.B. New Venue & Start Time !!!!

Every Sunday 8:30 -11:00 p.m.

Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC),

35-39 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS

PROGRAMME JANUARY – MARCH 2009

<u>4 January</u>	SINGERS NIGHT	<i>Come and sing what you like and how you like.</i>
<u>11 January</u>	CHERRINGTON & WARD (http://www.cherringtonandward.co.uk/)	<i>Pamela Ward and Paul Cherrington are a lively duo presenting a mixture of music and contemporary folk to ragtime and blues.</i>
<u>18 January</u>	THEME ‘FOLLOW THE LEADER’	<i>Find a link with the previous song. If you can't, we'll help.</i>
<u>25 January</u>	MARTYN WYNDHAM-READ & IRIS BISHOP (http://www.martynwyndhamread.com/)	<i>Traditional and contemporary English and Australian songs from this accomplished duo.</i>

<u>1 February</u>	SINGERS NIGHT	<i>Another chance for you to make your own entertainment and contribute to another warm and friendly evening</i>
<u>8 February</u>	NA MARA (www.myspace.com/namaramusic)	<i>A welcome return to Readifolk for this highly-rated duo whose repertoire ranges from arrangements of Irish fiddle tunes for mandolin & guitar to songs and ballads for voice, guitar and mandolin.</i>
<u>15 February</u>	STEVE DONNELLY (www.myspace.com/stevemdonnelly)	<i>Winner of the Readifolk Autumn Hiring Fair. A great voice, fine interpretation of traditional songs and some excellent self-penned songs. A very polished performer.</i>
<u>22 February</u>	ISSY & DAVID EMENEY with KATE RIAZ (www.issyemeney.co.uk)	<i>The trio combine outstanding melodeon playing by Issy, fine guitar and bouzouki accompaniment by David and brilliant cello playing by Kate. Much of their material is original but their style is distinctly traditional.</i>

<u>1 March</u>	THEME ‘WE’LL KEEP A WELCOME’	<i>It's St David's Day. Let's celebrate with an appropriate song or tune.</i>
<u>8 March</u>	ANDY CLARKE (www.flaxey-green.co.uk)	<i>'An excellent singer & instrumentalist who performs with the skill & taste of a master craftsman' Pete Coe</i>
<u>15 March</u>	SINGERS NIGHT	<i>Your turn again. Come and surprise us.</i>
<u>22 March</u>	JEZ LOWE (www.jezlowe.com)	<i>Widely regarded as the best folk writer in the UK today. Nominated for the 2008 BBC Folk Awards 'Folk Singer of the Year'</i>
<u>29 March</u>	THEME ‘DISASTERS’	<i>A favourite theme for folk songs. Come and sing us your 'disastrous' songs.</i>

Admission: £5 guest nights, £1 Singers & Theme nights

More information from our web site www.readifolk.org.uk

Una - 0118 9483145
(una@readifolk.org.uk)

or Anne - 0118 9613586
(anne@readifolk.org.uk)