

Notes

The Newsletter of Readifolk

Issue 11

Reading's folk song
and music club

Summer 2011

Welcome

**to another Readifolk
newsletter**

Rumblings from the Roots

Welcome to the Summer edition of Notes. Our editor, Stewart, has again produced a very readable mix of reviews, general interest articles, and of course the new programme of events at the club. It is worth pointing out that the reviews of the various performances are largely unedited and represent the views of the individual reviewer. If you have any comments on any of the reviews, or any other aspects of the newsletter, then do e-mail them to the editor stewart@readifolk.org.uk - he may be able to include them in a future edition.

You will notice that in the next quarter we are introducing mainly guests who are appearing for the first time at Readifolk. We are always keen to encourage new talent and we feel sure that you will not be disappointed with this bevy of newcomers to the club.

Do make a note of the date 31 July as on that date the club is closed. We, along with several others from the club, are off to the Sidmouth Folk Week where we will be 'talent spotting' for the club and having a good time in the process.

For this quarter we are maintaining the admission charges at £5 for Guest Nights and £1 for Singers and Theme Nights. It is likely however that we will be forced to increase charges in the future. This is due largely to an unexpected levy imposed by the Performing Right Society. RISC has been landed with a very large licence fee for its various public music activities. A specific item in the levy of charges relates to the Readifolk events and RISC has little option but to pass on those charges to us. We have been disappointed that our direct protestations to PRS have met with a stonewall response. It seems unfair to us that PRS, an organisation which aims to protect the rights of performers, can penalise small clubs like Readifolk who actively support rising talent.

Contact us:

*Una for bookings
and coming events*

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*Colin for publicity, coming events
and the mailing list*

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Stewart about the newsletter

stewart@readifolk.org.uk

Alison about the website

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The charitable members of Readifolk have been very busy in recent months. In May, several members took part in a concert in support of an organisation, Women's Concerns, which is involved in the integration of Black and Minority ethnic groups. We were out in force again at the Sonning Common 'Big Sing' which was raising funds for the local 'First Responders' medical team. Our charitable activities culminated in our own charity concert on 29th May. This concert was part of the weekend festival 'Music4Minds' organised by the EvaB Foundation. We were wonderfully entertained by Jim McLean, Anthea Neads & Andy Prince and our own local group The Westlanders, all of whom gave their services free. The Westlanders even donated their fee from an earlier gig to the charity funds. A grand total of £426 was raised from our concert, and this has been donated to the Young Minds charity.

Well done to all those who contributed to these charitable events.

Una & Colin



Multi-instrumentalist **Jo Freya** brings music and song to Readifolk on 11th September

Folk Heroes

Another of Steve Bingham's splendid potted histories.
This time he digs up some background to:

Anne Briggs



It is often stated that Anne Briggs is the most influential woman in English folk music. There is no doubt that she has influenced virtually every female vocalist on the folk scene for the past forty years. Maddy Prior, Sandy Denny and June Tabor all say she was a major influence on them. Even Norma Waterson, whose influence must be as great as Anne's, says that she learned a thing or

two from Anne. Her influence is not limited to female singers. Christy Moore claims that, after hearing Anne Briggs sing in 1964, he decided to concentrate more on his own singing. At this time in Irish sessions, songs were what happened when the musicians were getting the beer in. Of course, the elder statesmen of the folk world would have heard Anne sing live, but many of the people she has influenced can only have heard the recordings. Anne has recorded about 50 songs but only 20 of them were available between 1971 and the 1990s. One song, *Blackwater Side*, is cited by most people as the song that made the difference. Listening to *Blackwater Side* today, there is definitely something about the voice and the phrasing that makes it a standout track.

Anne was born in Beeston, Nottinghamshire, in September 1944. Her mother died when she was very young and her father had been severely injured during World War II, so Anne was brought up by her Aunt and Uncle. In the summer of 1959 Anne and a friend cycled from Nottingham to Edinburgh where they met Archie Fisher and other members of the Scottish folk scene. From then on Anne was singing in folk clubs and sessions around Nottingham and in 1962 she was 'discovered' by Ewan MacColl. Ewan MacColl and A L Lloyd were touring the country as part of the TUC sponsored Centre 42 project. This was a project that was attempting to stimulate cultural activities outside London. Anne was persuaded to join the tour. The Project 42 tour gave Anne the opportunity to meet and work with many figures on the folk scene and when it ended, she moved to London, where she was given a job as a liaison officer for Project 42. This job gave her the contacts to launch her own singing career.

In London she appears to have gone a bit wild. She first moved in with Bert Jansch; later the pair of them moved to a house in which several members of the folk scene lived. Anne was into parties and became associated with several musicians. It was during this period that she made her first

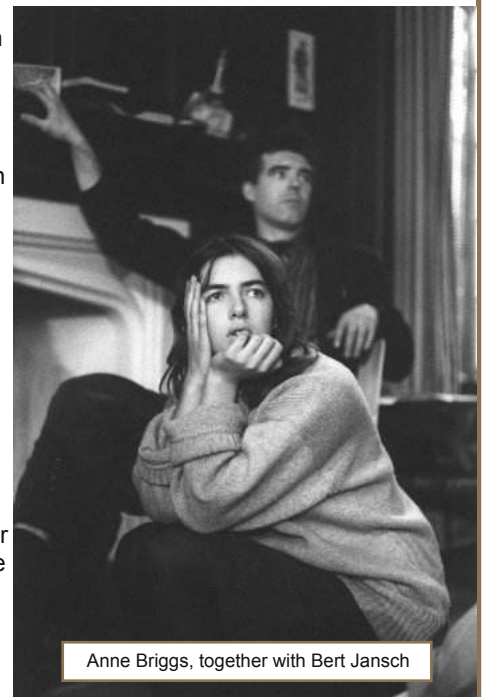
recordings. She first appeared on the themed albums *The Iron Muse* and *Bird In The Bush*, produced by A L Lloyd, and then made her first solo album *Hazards Of Love*.

In 1965 she was invited to Dublin, where she met Johnny Moynihan, who taught her to play the bouzouki - she can be heard playing on tracks by Johnny's band Sweeney's Men. She spent the summers of the late sixties touring Ireland in a horse-drawn caravan. The winters she spent touring British folk clubs in order to raise the money for her summer expeditions. How successful she was is difficult to say, as she had a reputation for not turning up for bookings, and when she did show she often performed inadequate sets. She suffered from stage fright and began to be dissatisfied with her voice. She hated the sound of it on recordings.

In 1971 Topic released the album *Anne Briggs* which is mainly unaccompanied traditional songs. Another album, *The Time Has Come*, was released by CBS later in 1971. This album featured Anne's compositions with guitar accompaniment. Anne did not support the album and consequently sales were poor and it was soon deleted.

In 1973 Anne made a fourth album, this time with the folk/rock band Ragged Robin. Before work on the album was completed Anne had withdrawn to the Hebrides, where she remained for several years. Since then she has lived the life of a recluse - rarely appearing in public and hardly ever singing. The only recorded occasions of her singing were at a memorial concert for A L Lloyd in 1990, and she recorded some new material with Bert Jansch in 1992 for a BBC TV documentary called *Acoustic Roots*.

Anne is still cited as a major influence by many of today's younger folk singers. The re-issue of all her recordings during the 1990s has helped to maintain the legend. When the album with Ragged Robin, *Sing A Song For You*, was issued in 1996 it was greeted as a long lost masterpiece and achieved critical acclaim. Most of her recordings are currently available and worth looking for. If you want to get some idea of the power of Anne Briggs, look for her on YouTube where you should find *Blackwater Side* and some of the BBC TV material.



Anne Briggs, together with Bert Jansch

Guest Night Reviews

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

The views expressed here are entirely those of the reviewers, and are independent of the Readifolk organising team.

Dick Miles

3rd April

"Dick Miles - what a lovely fellow"

"Oh, yes - lovely fellow; had a nice chat with him before the show. Amiable chap."

"Very amiable. And an interesting voice, too - has a nice rustic quality to it."

"Rustic - just what I was thinking. And a good knowledge of his subject matter."

"Lots of traditional stuff, with some jolly good concertina, too."

"But not quite so good on guitar."

"Not quite, no. But, after all, he was using a borrowed guitar."

"And a lovely fellow, none the less."

"Oh, lovely fellow."



"But..."

"Yes!"

"Something missing. What's the word I need..?"

"You're quite right. Whatever the word is, that's exactly what I would have said."

"Which is not to say he's not a lovely fellow."

"Oh, a lovely fellow. But I just wish it hadn't been so, err..."

"Yes; absolutely. But as you say, a lovely fellow."

"Though perhaps he could have thought more about, umm, y'know..."

"Yes; just what I thought, too."

"A smaller audience than usual, here tonight."

"Yes. School holidays, perhaps?"

"Or maybe it's because there's poetry reading in the bar downstairs"

"Is there, now! Fancy that. Another beer?"

"Good idea. Have I ever mentioned my deep interest in poetry..."

Dave & Nick

Three Pressed Men

17th April

A group, always popular with Readifolk audiences, came to entertain us in April. Three Pressed Men, who are Mark Fry, Ian Wheeler and Dick Wolff, all from the Oxford area, arrived with a plethora of instruments and a great collection of songs, tunes and anecdotes. Their introductions to each set gave interesting information on its origin and background, with influences from morris tunes, church music - ancient and modern, which reflected their personal interests and experiences.

Ian, vocals and expert on anglo concertina and melodeon, culled the 15th century song *Agincourt* from the repertoire of his choir 'St James Singers'. Mark, vocals, guitar and anglo concertina, sang a poignant song *Hallo Says Cyril* - a tribute to a local (Oxfordshire) character, Cyril Broughton, which was based on a poem by Barbara Payne with an inspired tune by Mark. Dick, vocals, melodeon, concertinas and accordion, (his hammer dulcimer sadly left at home!), introduced the 1890's

hymn *We Have An Anchor*, the anthem of the Boys Brigade. The rousing chorus to this hymn proved very popular, especially with some old Boys Brigadiers in the audience.

There were a number of songs with interesting parallels with present day circumstances. A stunning musical rendition of Rudyard Kipling's *The Dutch In The Medway* told about the lack of supplies and men, leading to the rout of the British fleet. Times of recession occur in Steve Tilston's *Pretty Penny*, evocative of periods of shortages when, as always, the poor get poorer and the rich get richer.



Three Pressed Men are adept at combining the song with a set of tunes. Their Irish dance tunes set our feet tapping and Ian's superb spoons playing proved that the poorman's instrument is still alive and can combine well with more sophisticated instruments.

As well as their very accomplished instrumentals, Three Pressed Men proved equally competent at a-capella singing. Their superb harmonies and solos were performed with vitality and sincerity and covered a vast range of material.

Overall this was a very well rehearsed and professional performance with generous enthusiasm from 3PM for the floor singers, and great opportunities for audience participation. Do come again soon.

M & AI

Kieran Halpin

8th May

Kieran Halpin is probably the hardest working guest we've had at Readifolk. Nineteen albums, a DVD, two song books, each with fifty songs! Not only does he write and record, his tour schedule is awesome, if not gruelling. "I don't write on tour", he said, "it's too busy as I'm also my own organiser. I set aside a few weeks in the summer for song writing".

Is Kieran a 'singer' or a 'songwriter'? I asked him in the interval. He said he never intended to write for other people but thankfully, big names keep covering his songs and as a result he has a nice family house in Scotland. Needless to say, the songs in both sets were Kieran's own, delivered in a gravelly voice and intonation reminiscent of Billy Joel. "Sorry I'm a bit hoarse", he said, "I was in Bath yesterday, Fareham the day before and Antwerp the day before that". Hoarse or not, the voice suited the songs and, with his guitar accompaniment (a ten-year old Rob Armstrong) filled the room. We don't use PAs at Readifolk!

The songs ranged from intimate love songs (*Nothing To Show For It All; The Deal We Made With God*), family songs (*Elmo's Garden* - for his father), protest songs (*Letter To America* - about Iraq), to songs of optimism (*Berlin Calling, Walk Like A Champion*). Kieran, like many Irishmen, has the knack of drawing the audience to him, putting them at their ease so they can relax and sing along. Each song came with an anecdote; for example, Kieran is very proud of being



banned, live, by the BBC when his song, *Letter To America*, was curtailed. "Anyone who listens to BBC Lancashire must think I write very short songs", he commented. The radio station in Hobart, Australia liked it enough to play it in its entirety!

Kieran was clearly tired and croaky, so perhaps that extra spark was missing from his performance but it was a good evening. "Thanks for coming, thanks for staying", said Kieran. I'm glad I did both.

Robert

Bram Taylor

22nd May



From the moment Bram Taylor took the stage there was that comfortable feeling of being in the hands of a seasoned professional. He established an immediate rapport with his audience, maintaining an often jokey repartee.

His set featured a

great many songs that most of us would be hearing for the first time, penned often by lesser known songwriters. These songs had been carefully chosen, however, with audience participation in mind. Many of them featured strong choruses and simple but powerful images. Couple these factors with Bram's natural energy, a percussive guitar style with an emphasis on rhythm, and you have a ready-made singalong evening.

It wasn't all driving chords, however. He opened, for example, with an unaccompanied number (Jean Ritchie's *See That Rainbow Shine*) and gave us a sample (only one, sadly) of his concertina-playing with *Lend A Hand To Those Who Fall*. From time to time, too, he would put away the plectrum and treat us to some more delicate (and perhaps more interesting) guitar work (see, for example, his treatment of *I'll Lay Ye Doon, Love*).

Much of the material he uses deals with dramatic natural landscapes serving as metaphors for crises or transition points in human life. We had songs about a rainbow, harbours (more than one), mountain, sea and sky, symbolising (variously) parent-child relationships, lost youth, lost opportunity and broken dreams. To leaven the mix there were some more light-hearted items (*No Hoppers, Jokers And Rogues*, for example).

What his material didn't do, for me, was take risks (or take sides). Much of it featured poetic language but dealt with safe or uncontroversial subjects. Even his one 'political' song ("Brammy doesn't do politics") was an exercise in taking a neutral stand on a highly divisive question. This was I P Morton's *Two Brothers*, which observers on both sides of the divide may believe over-simplifies the difficult issue of Palestine and Israel.

Whilst his material took few risks, however, some of his jokes were very definitely un-PC and ran a risk of offending some elements of his audience.

The evening also gave us the opportunity, once again, to hear some Readifolk regulars, and introduced us to 13-year old Anna, who beguiled us all with a selection of reels, jigs and a slow air. In addition we had a highly polished set from Tudor Lodge, who joined Bram for an impromptu finale in celebration of Bob Dylan's 70th birthday.

All in all, a quality performance from a confident and experienced stalwart.

Danny

Music for Mental Health

With The Westlanders, Anthea Neads & Andy Prince, and Jim McLean

29th May

An evening of Treasures. The evening of 29th May 2011 was the conclusion to 4 days of Music4Mental Health, during which, in excess of £1000 was raised. Readifolk contributed over £400, and the artists played to over 60 people - a magnificent turnout.

The Westlanders put together an interesting set ranging from *Scarborough Fair* to *The Readifolk Song* (written by Ian Freedman). The didgeridoo added a haunting texture; sometimes I think "it will never work with that song", but, as usual, they gave me a pleasant surprise. If you see them, they're worth a listen.

Ian also makes the MC's job look easy and he's always fun (listen to his radio show).



The fantastic thing about writing reviews for Notes is that you get the chance to meet some truly beautiful souls. Anthea



Neads & Andy Prince are at the top of this category. It was easy to see that they are very much in love and content in each other's company. Andy was with the punk band Sham 69, is a very accomplished bass player, and provided a very gentle harmony to Anthea's wonderful vocals. They reminded me of the 1960's 'love and peace' style of music and certainly the album *Penhail* is totally absorbing.

They have penned some very interesting and varied songs on this album.

The bass was played with subtlety and the vocals were enchanting, but if I must be a critic, I would reduce the volume of the rhythm guitar to emphasise those wonderful vocals and bass runs. All in all, though, totally enthralling; let's have them on again so they can display their full range of songs to us.

Jim McLean is an artist who gave us a master class in how to leave an audience wanting more. This softly spoken Scot says he was brought up listening to Jim Reeves and Alex Campbell who were regularly on the radio during his youth. Alex Campbell was a key influence for Jim and he feels that Alex never got the recognition in this country that he deserved.

Jim is a warm, friendly and talented artist who really makes a song his own. He treated us to a full range of songs, from *The Bricklayer* (sometimes known as *The Sick Note*) to his own song, the moving *Ballad of Steven Lawrence*.

Displaying a variety of



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picking and strumming techniques, that were an inspiration, for his uncluttered style was so precise and beautiful that he made both his 12 string and 6 string guitars ring. His uncomplicated style, amusing anecdotes, vocal expression and the ability to keep eye contact with the audience, combined with a warm smile, make him, for me, not a musician, but an all round entertainer.

Graham

Tim Laycock

5th June

What I love is hearing a range of instruments played in harmony, and voices singing in harmony. I'm no expert on the solo performer singing meaningful songs. However, as I often am at Readifolk when faced with a solo performer, I was very pleasantly surprised indeed and had a most enjoyable evening.



The evening began in its usual fashion, with some excellent performances from our Readifolk regulars. First of all we were entertained by the growing supergroup of Danny, Alison, Lance, Bob and Chris, performing two songs composed by Chris and Bob. Then it was Malcolm's turn - back after his lengthy travels and lovely to see him again. Later in the evening The Westlanders, 3 2 1 and Alison entertained us with a good range of tunes and songs.

However, the star of the evening was Tim Laycock, and when he started his performance I was immediately reassured by his gentle manner and his clear delivery. I was also reassured by the fact that he had more than one instrument with him, all of which he played with great competence and to great effect during the evening. He accompanied himself on two different concertinas, harmonica, melodeon and guitar, however I was particularly impressed with his amazing concertina playing - how could he still play all the right buttons while he was waving it around in the air so vigorously? During the evening we heard a range of songs, mainly from the West Country, delivered with ease and interspersed with interesting, sometimes funny stories which brought the songs to life. He showed himself to be a very knowledgeable man, an excellent musician and a confident performer, and I'm sure everyone enjoyed participating by joining in with his choruses throughout the evening.

I can't finish this review without giving a special mention to the last tune in the second set, where he succeeded in making his concertina sound like bells pealing by rotating his arms in a very acrobatic fashion, like an almost out of control windmill. What an amazing ending to a thoroughly excellent evening.

Anne

Tattie Jam

19th June

I arrived at RISC to find Tattie Jam had already set up, with a professional looking backdrop, and were ready to go. Seylan Baxter and Ruaridh Pringle are a Scottish based duo in the middle of a tour that includes Canada, Australia, Glastonbury festival and, of course, Reading! Our MC for the evening was Janet Kent who started the evening bang on time with a couple of songs, which included a fine version of *Wild Mountain Thyme*. This was followed by Danny and Chris who gave us a spirited rendition of *Back In The Night*.

Tattie Jam have been touring and performing for many years

and this showed in their polished delivery. They have a full sound that is completed by their strong singing voices. I didn't hear a note out of tune all night. They sang using Scots dialect in a natural and unpretentious way that added to the performance. Seylan is a talented cello player, and it was good to hear something other than the usual guitars and mandolins at Readifolk. Her intelligent use of an electric cello, which had a 5th string - low F - enabled her to produce a fair approximation of a double bass which she used sparingly; so many acts have a gimmick which they over use. Not so in this duo's case. The same can be said for Ruaridh's didgeridoo playing. He used it on one song in a way that added to the performance and then left it to one side. His guitar playing was also top notch, although I wasn't wholly enthused by his carbon fibre instrument, which I felt sounded a little dull. The same might be said of Seylan's matching carbon fibre cello.

Club regulars 3 2 1 & Dave Williams started the second set and were followed by yours truly and Lance. Modesty forbids me to mention just how good our performance was! Ali McNamara completed the floor spots for the evening with a couple of Bob Dylan songs.

Tattie Jam started their second set with a song accompanied only by simple percussion instruments, one of which was a shaker made from the toenails of llamas! Yes honest! This song, about a soldier remembering a fallen comrade while watching children playing at Halloween, was for me one of the joint highlights of the evening. The other was the last song of the second set, *The Doctor's Tochter*. This is a fine song in traditional style that any writer would be proud to have written. You can hear it on their website www.tattiejam.com.

In all I would give Tattie Jam ten out of ten for musicianship, and perhaps a marginally lower score for entertainment value.

Ian



You can help...

Fancy writing something for the newsletter?

We'll always need people who can review guest night performances with fresh insight. But alternatively, how about an article about an instrument you play or have a particular fondness for? Or perhaps you could transcribe a favourite song or two, giving us some background and history. Or maybe you could research the life and times of an essential folk singer.

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

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

Folk Links

As if the internet didn't already waste enough of your time, we, at www.readifolk.org.uk, felt it was time to make life unbearable for you, with some links that will keep you up long past midnight.

There are countless pages devoted to folk music on the internet; rather than just list our favourite artist's sites or YouTube clips, we've come up with some links that are, perhaps, more involving, or are relevant to Readifolk.

Links about Readifolk:

Of course we have our own website, recently revamped by new webmeister Ali McNamara; as if you need telling, it's at www.readifolk.org.uk. Ali has also expanded our web presence with both facebook and twitter pages; www.facebook.com/readifolk and www.twitter.com/readifolk

In recent times, a number of people have put clips recorded at Readifolk onto YouTube. For those of you who missed The Askew Sisters' first appearance at the club, our friend Hamish Currie caught some of them: www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_ke49QnE0U
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vq70c-4VI8w
www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Sr64UkN9so
www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0M0Eb9d2K0

And if you like the ukulele, occasional visitor from the States, Tom Harker, filmed his own floor spots: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhkuaY04Jbl
www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ItAF2Bj5b0
www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6grwqQDdIY
www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-xu0sgZl2M

13 year old Anna impressed us all with her fiddle playing: www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0g5o9fnQuY
www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhJrrjYxuU4
www.youtube.com/watch?v=6t4ulBX-u6Q

Bob Watson and others remembered John Westland: www.youtube.com/watch?v=fco0ke99Md0
www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoStOX8pSWY
www.youtube.com/watch?v=tv3AsTvn3Co

And we shouldn't forget our friends at Reading For You, Reading's own community radio station, on which the Readifolk Radio Show is to be heard between 6 and 8 pm on a Friday evening. You can listen to it online by visiting their website at www.reading4u.co.uk and clicking on the Listen Live button, or by pointing your favourite media player to <http://87.106.180.82:80/readingcb128>

Readifolk is affiliated to the English Folk Dance and Song Society, who are the foremost organisation for promoting traditional music and dance in the country. Whilst a visit to Cecil Sharp House in person may be preferable to many, they are gradually putting some of their vast archive of material onto the internet, as well as having an online shop, and making other downloads available. Visit them here: www.efdss.org. The EFDSS also run a mini Wikipedia-type project about various aspects of folk music: http://folkopedia.efdss.org/Main_Page

General Resources:

EZFolk

<http://ezfolk.com/audio> is an excellent place to start if you are just beginning your exploration of the folk-a-net. You'll find tutorials, videos, mp3s and song tabs all suitable for beginners, as well as a forum. It's an American site, but no less interesting to UK readers.

Mudcat Cafe

This is a well respected site, which is also hosted in America, but is very closely in touch with its folk roots over here. Mainly hosting a forum, it can be found at <http://mudcat.org>. This will take you to a page listing all the latest forum messages, discussing all kinds of folk minutiae.

Some of the messages may bear familiar names - people like George Papavgeris, Tom Bliss and even Eliza Carthy have been spotted as more or less regular contributors to the forum. But there is also an extensive archive of songs in what they call the Digital Tradition. It's not the most intuitive of sites to find your way around; make use of the search boxes, and always remember to scroll down the page, as some of the least interesting stuff is often at the top.

Folk Radio UK and Folk Ally

Like so many shoe-string budget enterprises on the internet, the online radio station at www.folkradio.co.uk has had its ups and downs, but it provides a vibrant mix of music to listen to, if folk music is your thing. In recent years, it has been able to support 3 different channels of folk music, one for new and independent music, one for world music, and one for more traditional folk music, as well as hosting a friendly and interesting forum. But it depends entirely upon listener donations, and in these straitened times, only one channel is currently active, offering a broad range of folk music. Sadly the forum has gone, too, but what remains offers some great listening. Folk Alley, on www.folkalley.com is an American based online folk music station, and whilst its output tends to lean towards the Country end of the music spectrum, it has a wide scope, and is another fine station.

Songs and Lyrics

Alas, Olga is no more - the On Line Guitar Archive finally succumbed to pressure from big business insisting that copyrighted material should not be available for people to learn for themselves. But several sites already mentioned host archives of traditional songs, and if you want to seek out more, complete with guitar tabs, you could try to search with www.chordie.com, which also has facilities for transposing and changing tunings.

The Session

Now that you've found some songs to play, you'll be wanting to join in with your nearest session. www.thesession.org has some good advice for beginners.

Forums and Usenet Groups

Many of the sites mentioned here host their own forums so that readers can connect with each other. But there are others worth mentioning. On the web: www.charliegillett.com/bb The great man may no longer be with us, but a nice forum on his website continues. www.talkawhile.co.uk is mostly centred around Fairport Convention and related topics.

Usenet is a very old part of the internet, that many people are unaware of. It exclusively supports messaging forums (newsgroups), of which there are tens of thousands, on any subject you can think of (and many you would prefer not to), and where people can have no end of argumen... err, I mean discussions. Actually, once you get the hang of it, it can be a very entertaining way of online interaction, though its open access means it suffers from a share of spoilers and trolls. If your ISP doesn't support usenet access, sign up for a free account at, for example, www.eternal-september.org, and then point a newsreader (often your email software can be used) to that account. Download a list of available newsgroups, search for groups with 'folk' in their title, and 'subscribe' to any you like the sound of; for example: rec.music.folk, rec.music.folk.tablature, and uk.music.folk. There are many other groups that concern themselves with things like folk dance, guitar playing, and other topics, too. Dick Gaughan is a keen supporter of usenet, and can often be found in uk.music.folk. He's also written a brief guide to using usenet, which you can find on his site here; www.dickgaughan.co.uk/usenet/guide

A Song Worth Singing

The Rufford Park Poachers

Folk song meets history...

The Rufford Park Poachers tells the story of an incident that happened in 1851, between the gamekeepers of the park, and an ad hoc collective of about 40 poachers. It resulted in the death of one of the gamekeepers, and the transportation of 4 of the poachers for a period of 14 years for his manslaughter.

The song has been recorded by many artists, most notably the likes of Nic Jones, Martin Carthy, Coope Boyes and Simpson, and, more recently Jim Moray. But it is probably due to composer Percy Grainger, who included the tune in his composition *Lincolnshire Posy*, that we have the song as we know it today.

Despite the title of Grainger's work, Rufford Park is in Nottinghamshire, within the larger area of Sherwood Forest. But he had befriended amateur Lincolnshire singer Joseph Taylor, who, in 1908, became the first English folk singer to be recorded. Several recordings of his singing were made, which included a version of *The Rufford Park Poachers*, at a scant 3 verses. It was based on this that Grainger later went on to include it, amongst other folk songs, in his Lincolnshire suite. Subsequently, according to Martin Carthy, "...Patrick O'Shaughnessy of the Lincolnshire Society did a reconstruction job on the words...", and so we are familiar with longer versions of it today, which may be 10 or more verses long. Some of those versions have it that the convicted four were deported for 40 years, but, in fact, this seems not to be the case.

The land of Rufford Park was originally associated with a 12th century Cistercian abbey, but after the dissolution of the

monasteries, the abbey became a manor house and the land gradually transformed into a hunting park. The park, then, consisted of over 28 square miles of land, on which the lord of the manor had "over-riding" rights. Anecdotal records suggest that those who worked and lived on the land at the time were being forcibly prevented from catching small game to provide food for themselves and their families; the priority of the landowners was to preserve all game for their own hunting pleasure. Their gamekeepers, it seems, were often using violent means to enforce this.

It might be worth putting the idea of 'poaching' into the context of the enclosure acts that changed the nature of land rights in major ways, as the various acts were introduced, particularly between 1750 and 1860. These brought about a change in the traditional life of poor country dwellers, who until recently had been free to catch their own supper on common land. But the enclosure acts changed all this; much land changed from being a common resource to the exclusive asset of the landed and the wealthy, making the previously legitimate act of catching food into a crime.

By the mid 19th century, many people felt that these rights had become unfairly tipped in favour of the land owners and their violent gamekeepers, and those at Rufford organised a revolt.

The version here is based on a recording by Nic Jones, from the album *Unearthed*; he used an open tuning, but this is based on a conventional EADGBE.

Arrangement by Ed

A buck or doe, be - lieve it so, a pheasant or a hare, Were sent on earth for
ev - ery - one quite e - qual for to share, So poa - cher bold, as I un - fold, keep
up your gallant heart, And think a - bout those poachers bold, That night in Rufford Park

A buck or doe, believe it so, a pheasant or a hare,
Were sent on earth for everyone quite equal for to share,
So poacher bold, as I unfold, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.

They say that forty gallant poachers, they were in a mess,
They'd often been attacked when their number it was less,
So poacher bold, as I unfold, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.

Among the gorse, to settle scores, the forty gathered stones,
To make a fight for poor men's rights, and break the keepers bones,
So poacher bold, as I unfold, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.

The keepers went with flails against the poachers and their cause,
So no man there again would dare defy the rich man's laws,
So poacher bold, as I unfold, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.

The keepers they began the fray, with stones and with their flails,
But when the poachers started, they quickly turned their tails,
So poacher bold, as I unfold, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.

Upon the ground with mortal wound, head keeper Roberts lay,
He never will rise up until the final judgement day,
So poacher bold, as I unfold, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.

Of all that band who made a stand to set a net or snare,
The four men brought before the court were tried for murder there,
So poacher bold, as I unfold, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.

The Judge he said "For Roberts' death transported you must be,
To serve a term of fourteen years in convict slavery",
So poacher bold, my tale is told, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.



READIFOLK

READING'S FOLK SONG & MUSIC CLUB



Every Sunday 8:00 - 10:30 p.m.

Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC)

35-39 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS

PROGRAMME JULY - SEPTEMBER 2011

3 July	Singers Night	<i>It's the usual format - a song, a tune, a poem, a joke or just sit and be entertained. You will all be very welcome.</i>
10 July	Claude Bourbon www.claudebourbon.org	<i>The unique Monsieur Bourbon is a formidable performer - romantic, medieval & Spanish blues with finger-picking guitar & songs.</i>
17 July	Sandy Brechin & Ewan Wilkinson www.myspace.com/ewanwilkinson	<i>Master Scottish accordionist Sandy teams up with ace guitarist Ewan to play and sing a mixture of Scottish, Irish and English traditional songs as well as some originals.</i>
24 July	North Drive www.northdrivebluegrass.com	<i>Richard Holland returns to Readifolk with the newly-formed 4 piece group North Drive. Expect high-energy bluegrass music at its best.</i>
31 July	Club Closed	<i>Another holiday weekend. Business as usual next week.</i>

7 Aug	Theme 'Bird Songs'	<i>We'd like to hear your songs about/including birds - preferably the feathered variety.</i>
14 Aug	Sara Daniels + Mark T www.saradaniels.me www.circleofsound.co.uk	<i>A superb double bill featuring two renowned local artists performing a combination of traditional and self-penned songs and music.</i>
21 Aug	The Reverenzas www.myspace.com/thereverenzas	<i>The Reverenzas are a trio performing traditional English songs and tunes with an inventive modern style - strongly influenced by Spiers & Boden.</i>
28 Aug	Singers Night	<i>It's your turn again to entertain us. Come and sing, play or just listen. You will be made very welcome.</i>

4 Sept	Theme 'Time & Tide'	<i>We can't wait to hear your songs on this theme.</i>
11 Sept	Jo Freya www.myspace.com/jofreya	<i>A talented multi-instrumentalist, Jo has performed as part of Blowzabella, The Old Swan Band, Token Women etc. etc. Now hear her superb solo performance of traditional and contemporary songs ranging from comedy to wry observation.</i>
18 Sept	John Kelly (Harmonium Hero) www.bigalwhittle.co.uk/johnkellyharmoniumhero	<i>John returns to Readifolk by popular demand following his last year's memorable floor spot. John performs traditional songs and tunes with a unique style, accompanied on harmonium and guitar.</i>
25 Sept	Singers Night	<i>Come and join in the fun. Anything goes and you are sure of a warm response.</i>

Admission: £5 Guest nights; £1 Singers & Theme nights

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

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