

# Notes

## The Newsletter of Readifolk

**Issue 12**

Reading's folk song  
and music club

**Winter 2011/12**

*Welcome*  
to another Readifolk  
newsletter

### Rumblings from the Roots

**Welcome to the Winter edition of Notes.** With this edition we welcome in another New Year and we take this opportunity of wishing you all a very happy and successful 2012.

We are delighted with the new format of Notes which Stewart has compiled. As well as several interesting articles and news items, we include previews of all the forthcoming artists in the first quarter of the year. It was felt preferable to give previews of artists rather than reviews of past performances, so that you will be encouraged to come and see the live performances rather than read about what you may have missed.

**At the end of 2011 we look back with satisfaction** on another successful year at Readifolk - we have even managed to stay happily in our venue at RISC for another year. There have been many memorable Guest Nights at the club as well as well-attended Singers and Theme Nights. Of particular note was the charity concert held in May when we raised £430 for *Young Minds*, a recently formed branch of the *Samaritans*.

Readifolk musicians and singers have also performed in support of several other charitable events during the year, including; in May at a concert in aid of *Women's Concerns*, which is involved in the integration of black and minority ethnic groups; also in May at the Sonning Common *Big Sing* in support of the local *First Responders* medical team; in September at the *Reading Town Meal*, a community project promoting local food production; and in October a concert in aid of the Peppard Village Hall restoration fund.

**In the Autumn quarter we were surprised and disappointed** to have three of our booked guest artists pull out of their Readifolk performances. Two of the performers let us down at short notice and needless to say they will not be on our Christmas card list this year. Fortunately we had time to find replacements for two of the guest nights and we thank Bill

McKinnon & Anne Tarrant and Bob & Gill Berry for giving us two really enjoyable evenings.

But on a sadder note, it was because of serious illness that Johnny Silvo had to cancel his UK Autumn tour, which included an appearance at Readifolk. Reports indicate that his illness has now become terminal. Our thoughts are with Johnny and his family as we recall the many happy times shared with him.

**Looking forward to the new year**, we have already booked many excellent guests. You will see from the previews and the listing on the back page that we have several newcomers to the club in the first quarter. Some of them are well-established artists and some are younger performers who we feel are destined for greater things. Do look up their details on their web sites etc., and you can listen to tracks from all of the artists in a special preview edition of The Readifolk Radio Show, broadcast on Reading4U, Reading's community radio station on [www.reading4u.co.uk](http://www.reading4u.co.uk) on Friday 30 December.

The Readifolk Radio Show goes from strength to strength, with Ian Freedman anchoring, and a team of Readifolk presenters. Our programme is broadcast from 6 - 8 pm on Friday evenings. It features music from local, national and international artists, with occasional live studio performances - well worth a listen!

We look forward to seeing you at the club on any Sunday night.

**Una & Colin**



"A lovely singer and a deft guitar player", **Wendy Arrowsmith** comes to Readifolk on 18th March

### Contact us:

Una for bookings  
and coming events

[una@readifolk.org.uk](mailto:una@readifolk.org.uk)

Colin for publicity, coming events  
and the mailing list

[colin@readifolk.org.uk](mailto:colin@readifolk.org.uk)

Stewart about the newsletter

[stewart@readifolk.org.uk](mailto:stewart@readifolk.org.uk)

Alison about the website

[ali@readifolk.org.uk](mailto:ali@readifolk.org.uk)

## Folk Heroes

News of Bert Jansch's death in October saddened many of us. Steve Bingham looks into his life and contribution to folk music:

# Bert Jansch

Herbert Jansch was born in Glasgow on 3 November 1943 to a family who traced their roots back to Germany in the late 19th century. The family soon moved to Edinburgh where Bert was educated and took his first job as a trainee nurseryman. By the age of 16 he started to play at local folk clubs having taught himself to play guitar. His contact with artists such as Archie Fisher and Jill Doyle (Davey Graham half-sister) led him to the music of Big Bill Broonzy and Woody Guthrie.

Bert spent some time travelling around Europe and North Africa. He earned a living by busking and playing the odd booking. In 1965 he was repatriated to Britain after a severe bout of dysentery. He settled in London and soon came to the notice of the London folk crowd. His guitar style, a blend of traditional folk, blues and jazz, was considered extraordinary at this early date. Bill Leader recorded some tracks on a semi-professional tape deck and managed to sell the recording to Transatlantic who released the album, **Bert Jansch**, in 1965. Two more albums, **It Don't Bother Me** and **Jack Orion**, soon followed. During this period Bert started to work with a variety of other musicians including Ann Briggs and John Renbourn.

Bert and John Renbourn built up a special rapport with intricate guitar interplay; this can be heard on the album **Bert and John**. Bert and John were joined by other musicians from the folk/jazz scenes and formed the group Pentangle. The group's first major concert was at the Royal Festival Hall in 1967, and the first album appeared in 1968. Pentangle toured Europe and the USA, where they proved to be extremely successful. They reached the height of their fame with the release of the album **Basket of Light** in 1970. The track *Light Flight* was adapted for use as the theme music to the BBC TV series *Take Three Girls*, and Pentangle provided additional incidental music for the series. There were various interpersonal strains within the group and these combined with the pressure of constant touring led to the group breaking up in January 1973.

Bert had continued his solo career throughout the life of Pentangle, and resumed touring and released further albums. He also formed the group Conundrum, that toured Europe and the States but broke up at the end of the tour.

Pentangle reformed in the 1980s and continued to work, off and on, with various personnel changes, until their final tour

in 2006. Bert was also involved in a number of musical projects with other musicians and continued his solo career to within a few months of his death on 5 October 2011.

Bert was married three times. Before leaving Scotland he married Linda Campbell. This was a marriage of convenience to allow her to travel on Bert's passport - she was only sixteen at the time. They split up after a couple of months. In October 1968 Bert married the sculptress Heather Sewell. They lived together for a short time, but the marriage was not ended until the late 'seventies. He then married Loren Auerbach and this marriage lasted until Bert's death. Bert had a continuing problem with alcohol and in later years preferred to work with another musician to help keep him on the straight and narrow. Nevertheless he suffered from several periods of severe illness mostly due to over indulgence.

Almost from the start of his career Bert was recognised as a guitarist of extreme talent. His official web site [www.bertjansch.com](http://www.bertjansch.com) is full of testimonials by those he has influenced. The list includes Neil Young, Graham Codon and Beth Orton. Bert's first album contains the songs *Do you Hear Me Now*, which Donovan recorded and issued on his very successful **Universal Soldier** EP, and *Needle of Death* a song which seems to have been played by just about every guitarist. The **Jack Orion** album contains Bert's interpretation of Ann Briggs' traditional song *Blackwaterside* from which Jimmy Page took the accompaniment for Led Zeppelin's *Black Mountain Side*. In fact Bert and Transatlantic wanted to sue Jimmy Page over this, but the case never came to court, as Bert never had the money to pursue it, and Transatlantic doubted the

financial wisdom of taking on such a big name.

Bert received a number of awards including a lifetime achievement award from BBC Radio 2 in 2001 and the members of Pentangle received a similar award in 2007.

Much of Bert's music has been remastered for CD and MP3 download. All his solo albums and most of his collaborations with other musicians can be purchased from the usual outlets. All of the classic Pentangle albums are similarly available and there has recently been a box set, **The Time Has Come**, of mostly previously unreleased recordings.

Bert's music is set fair to influence generations yet to come.







**A roundup of news snippets, information and disconnected folk jottings.**

## News and Stuff

**Awards presented by Mojo magazine** are, apparently, prestigious. Well, they recently gave folksy singer Donovan the 'Maverick Award'. Whilst we may puzzle about what you have to do or be to get it, Mr Leitch himself seemed happy about it.



**A major fire in the London warehouse of [PIAS]**, who act as distributors for over 200 small and independent record labels, destroyed several million CD, vinyl and rare recordings in August. Reports vary, but anything from 3 - 25 million recordings may have been lost, possibly including the entire stock of some of the smaller labels, which includes Roots Records, and Eliza Carthy's new Hem Hem label. However, Proper Music, a distributor of folk, roots and other music, which may be familiar to many of you, has partnered up with [PIAS], to help re-establish their distribution capacity. And in case you're wondering, [PIAS] stands for Play It Again Sam, though the interweb is unforthcoming about why the name has brackets around it.



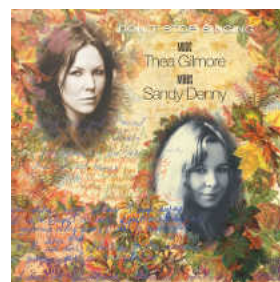
Photo by Beannunster on Flickr

**You may have seen the rumour** circulating various internet forums, that Dave Swarbrick has announced his retirement. Our own correspondent cornered him at a recent gig to ask him about this, "Barracks!" he said (we may have misheard) and then went on to explain that while he may have thought about it for a while, he changed his mind. It's over 12 years since the Daily Telegraph infamously published his obituary ("I thought they were very kind to me, nice photo too...").

**Australian band Men At Work** have been found guilty of plagiarism, and ordered to pay up some of their royalties. In a final appeal in October, the Australian High Court ruled that part of a flute riff in their song *Down Under*, which was written in 1978, was copied from *Kookaburra Sits In The Old Gum Tree*. The original was written by Marion Sinclair in 1934 for a Girl Guides' song competition, and has since been regarded by generations of young Ozzies as a folk song. Sinclair died in 1989, having made no challenge to the provenance of Men At Work's song. Current copyright owners, Larrikin Music, bought the rights in 1990, but didn't start proceedings against EMI and the band until 2007. Spokesman for the band described the case as "opportunistic greed". Spokesman for Larrikin said "It's earned us a hell of a lot of money since we've bought it",

claiming 40 - 60% of royalties. In a possible show of sanity, the judge limited payment to 5% of royalties back dated to 2002.

**An album of songs by Sandy Denny**, with words written in her final months, but never recorded by her, has been compiled by Oxfordshire singer-songwriter Thea Gilmore. Thea was given a collection of lyrics, fragments and poems that Sandy had been working on, by the guardians of her estate, which she arranged and developed into songs. The album, ***Don't Stop Singing***, was released in November, with Thea Gilmore being the same age, at 31, that Sandy Denny was when she died.



**Just when you thought** there couldn't possibly be room for any more festivals, folk or otherwise, Frome gets its own folk festival in February, and for those winter die-hards amongst you, there is even provision for camping. More normal people may wish to explore the local guest houses. The lineup includes Spiers and Boden, Steve Knightley, Jackie Oates, Belshazzar's Feast, Bella Hardy, and many more. Cara Dillon, now a Frome resident, has agreed to be patron for the inaugural festival. More details at [www.fromefolkfestival.co.uk](http://www.fromefolkfestival.co.uk).

**By the time you read this**, two acts who have been guests at Readifolk, will have disbanded. To the disappointment of many of us, both Uiscedwr and Isambarde will have played their farewell gigs, so that band members can pursue other interests. In the case of the two key members of Uiscedwr, Anna Esslemont and Cormac Byrne, that is a new band by the name of Bad Anne, which should be touring in the new year. When Ian Freedman asked how it would be different to Uiscedwr, Anna said "It'll be different because it's not Uiscedwr!"

**Standing amid a sea of tents**, Graham Nash and David Crosby took their acoustic guitars and performed an ad hoc set for the Occupy Wall Street demonstrators in November, during the protest at Zuccotti Park in New York.

**Speaking to the BBC recently** about the health benefits of singing, Prof. Grenville Hancox of Canterbury Christ Church University said he wants to get singing prescribed by GPs. He has set up singing sessions for people suffering Parkinson's Disease. Elsewhere, similar projects help people with mental health problems, Alzheimers, lung disease and cancer.

**Senegalese Youssou N'Dour**, whose music has crossed the world, and is based on the traditions of his homeland, has put all his artistic endeavours on hold in order to enter politics ahead of February's presidential elections. He said "For me, there are two Senegals - the Senegal of the have-nots, and Senegal of the haves. My concern is the Senegal of the have-nots". The popular singer is also an astute businessman, and already owns a Senegalese newspaper and TV station, both of which frequently fall foul of the authorities for their critical stance.



**Biggest selling traditional folk album of 2011**, by a long way, was Bellowhead's *Hedonism*, which recently merited them a silver disk for 60,000 sales.

**Alas, this year it's too late** to win tea and cakes with Jackie Oates, a mushroom foraging trip with Bellowhead's drummer, or redecoration by melodeon player Simon Care, in the Auction of Promises which raises funds for Oxford's Folk Weekend. Created by local folkies to replace the cancelled Oxford Folk Festival in 2011, the Folk Weekend returns again in April 2012, and is heavily dependent upon voluntary contributions. Find out more about the weekend at [www.folkweekendoxford.co.uk](http://www.folkweekendoxford.co.uk).

## Farewells

Photo by candyschwartz on Flickr



**Mike Waterson - died 26/6/11 aged 70.** Just as the last edition of Notes was being published came news of Mike's death from pancreatic cancer. An essential and idiosyncratic member of The Watsonsons since their formation in the early 1960s, and later with Blue Murder, he had been battling ill health for some time, though still managed to make the occasional stage appearance.

Diagnosed with cancer and given only a few months expectancy, at the one year anniversary of the diagnosis he held an irreverently named party to mark the occasion.

**Manuel Galbán - died 7/7/11 aged 80.** Known to most of us as guitarist in the Buena Vista Social Club recordings, he was a professional musician since 1944 in his native Cuba.

**Facundo Cabral - died 9/7/11 aged 74.** Argentinian musician, poet, and outspoken political activist opposed to South American military regimes, he rose to fame in his homeland in the early 1970s, and was killed by unidentified gunmen ambushing the car he was in, in Guatemala.

**Dan Peek - died 24/7/11 aged 60.** Member of folk rock trio America.

**David Honeyboy Edwards - died 29/8/11 aged 96.** Blues singer and guitarist, whose legacy goes back as far as playing with Robert Johnson.

**Ray Fisher - died 31/8/11 aged 70.**

Scottish singer, particularly noted for her expressive ability to deliver ballads, both as a soloist, and with her brother, Archie Fisher.

**Christopher Small - died 7/9/11 aged 84.**

Educator and musicologist from New Zealand, who moved to Europe and London in the 1960s. He explored the links between musical traditions of different countries and cultures, and insisted that 'music' was a verb, not a noun; it's something we do, not a product.

**Bert Jansch - died 5/10/11 aged 67.** Noted for his exemplary guitar technique and retiring personality, much can be attributed to his influence on both folk and rock music since the 1960s, as well as being an inspiration for many aspiring guitarists. Closely associated with the band Pentangle as well as individuals such as Anne Briggs and John Renbourn, he was also a respected solo artist. Typically understated about the seriousness of health problems which had affected him for several years, his eventual death from cancer came as a shock to many of us.

**Jackie Leven - died 14/11/11 aged 61.** Of Romany descent, and always something of an outsider, he started singing his idiosyncratic and challenging songs in the folk clubs of Kirkcaldy before fronting a number of cult bands, including 1970s Doll By Doll, and then going solo. He survived a murder attempt and heroine addiction before setting up the Core Trust to help other addicts. He died of cancer, having released over two dozen albums, some under pseudonyms.



## Shows Worth Seeing

Previewing the new season of guest nights coming to Readifolk.

**ALBERT NILAND**, Irish guitarist and singer, will be at Readifolk on 8th January



*What he says:*

From the melodies of my native Ireland, and the colours of all the places I have lived and visited..Spain, France, San Francisco..and on and on.

*What others say:*

"High class solo performance, boundary-breaking guitar-work, from rock to flamenco, with powerful vocal lines built from his Irish roots" - *Het Parool, Netherlands*. "Less preoccupied

with shifting units than with gigging, Albert Niland has yet to achieve the widespread recognition his talent merits" - *Sunday Times*. "Very, very good" - *Mike Harding*.

*What we say:*

Simple, uncomplicated one-man-and-guitar music played with confidence and panache. Expect a wide range of international influences with many original compositions. Here is the sort of singer who makes up the backbone of the UK folk club circuit.

*Hear more:*

[www.albertniland.com](http://www.albertniland.com)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVkhgO1vCzQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVkhgO1vCzQ)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMZlnZ\\_MnVQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMZlnZ_MnVQ)



**DAVID GIBB & ELLY LUCAS**, guitar and fiddle backed singing duo from Derbyshire visit Readifolk on 22nd January

*What they say:*

A mixture of original and re-worked traditional material. Chosen as finalists in the prestigious BBC Young Folk Awards 2011 and on the road have supported such acts as Bob Fox, Mark Chadwick (of The Levellers) and 3 Daft Monkeys.

*What others say:*

"Whether it be on TV or in music halls across the country, there is no doubt you are going to be hearing a lot more of this talented Derbyshire duo." - *Nottingham Post*. "Modern English folk with a witty wordy charm and a bit of an uplifting infectious feel" - *Organ Music Magazine*. "I'm a sucker for well written nostalgic pop of which David Gibb is a strong example" - *Tom Robinson*. "A 7ft God with the body of an Olympic athlete and the voice of an angel." - *Mark Chadwick*. "A passionate and surprisingly invigorating twist to folk tradition" - *fRoots*. "Very, very good" - *Mike Harding*.

*What we say:*

This exciting young duo from Derbyshire play a mixture of original and reworked traditional material. They combine fiddle, guitar and sublime vocals with a confidence that enthral the audience. They are rapidly gaining recognition and are undoubtedly capable of reaching the premier league of folk performers. Come and see them first at Readifolk.

*Hear more:*

[www.myspace.com/gibbandlucas](http://www.myspace.com/gibbandlucas)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CHoJmoB7PI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CHoJmoB7PI)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkTT2mmDjA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkTT2mmDjA)



5th February will bring songwriter and performer **PETE MORTON** to Readifolk.

*What he says:*

I've been singing all my life. I listen to a lot of traditional music, and I love words - how people try to bring the world forward through songs I find exciting and inspiring. There are just so

[www.readifolk.org.uk](http://www.readifolk.org.uk)





many great traditional songs around, and it's very challenging and daunting for any songwriter to try and come up with something to match.

**What others say:**

"Song craftsman, impassioned performer and general good egg" - *Properganda*. "Is there no end to Pete's energy? Top-drawer songwriting shot through with integrity" - *fRoots*. "Not only impressive but a revelation. Totally original." - *The Guardian*. "Very, very good" - *Mike Harding*.

**What we say:**

We have been long-time admirers of Pete Morton, having seen him live on a number of occasions. He is a master songwriter and has an engaging presence on stage. His best known composition, *Another Train*, is one of Una's favourites. Don't miss Pete's first visit to Readifolk.

**Hear more:**

[www.petemorton.com/listen.html](http://www.petemorton.com/listen.html)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=agtCQvIYqeQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agtCQvIYqeQ)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=sffm6ZF97el](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sffm6ZF97el)



Two fiddles and a guitar make up **SKYHOOK**, who come to Readifolk on **12th February**



**What they say:**

Characterised by breathtaking twin fiddles combined with sublime guitar, bouzouki and voice. Skyhook shift seamlessly between exhilarating dance music, with unique interplay and harmonies from the fiddles, to spine-tingling songs which are sensitively arranged and beautifully sung.

**What others say:**

"The musicianship just shone through and it was a privilege to host such a quality act" - *The Barn in Baston*. "They play an exciting mix of the music of Scotland, Ireland and Cape Breton Island, plus some of their own jigs and reels. The sound is genuinely that of the great wild outdoors. The gig was carried off with disarming wit and humour" - *Newark Advertiser*. "Very, very good" - *Mike Harding*.

**What we say:**

We were mightily impressed with this trio's debut album **Skyhook** - superb musicianship plus strong vocals with a mix of mainly Celtic influences. We look forward very much to seeing their live performance.

**Hear more:**

[www.myspace.com/skyhookuk](http://www.myspace.com/skyhookuk)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Nvqley2VDw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Nvqley2VDw)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAFQpIOWe3s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAFQpIOWe3s)



Scottish trio **NORTH SEA GAS** trek southward to Readifolk on **26th February**

**What they say:**

The best of Scotland. Thirty years and stronger than ever!! One of Scotland's most popular folk bands with great vocals and tremendous three part harmonies.



**What others say:**

"Through their work they introduce

audiences to the wider world of the folk tradition and its riches" - *Living Tradition Magazine*. "They now have a depth and range of musical skills and a richness of sound that is hard to match" - *EdinburghGuide.com*. "Very, very good" - *Mike Harding*.

**What we say:**

This is a rare opportunity to see this eminent Scottish group on their tour south of the border. Reminiscent of The McCalmans, they play a variety of instruments combined with great vocals and tremendous three part harmonies, plus a keen sense of humour. This promises to be another memorable night at Readifolk.

**Hear more:**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zus0ulPFINI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zus0ulPFINI)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvrmgh\\_MEJ8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvrmgh_MEJ8)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI0Byfdkmg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI0Byfdkmg)



Liverpool based **ANTHONY JOHN CLARKE** brings his guitar to Readifolk on **11th March**

**What he says:**

I have recorded 12 albums, three singles and published two songbooks. I have played in hundreds of clubs and festivals here and in Europe and the USA.



**What others say:**

"He storms it every time he gets on a stage. Brilliant!!! He had our audience eating out of his hand every night on the Fairport Convention Tour" - *Dave Pegg*. "The ability to capture an audience and mesmerise them with a combination of intelligence, humour and musicianship" - *North Cheshire Cruising Club*. "A supreme wordsmith, talented guitarist, and sublime storyteller, Anthony has an air of the alchemist about him" - *Derbyshire Times*. "Very, very good" - *Mike Harding*.

**What we say:**

We have heard so much about this performer from our scouts in other folk clubs that we had to bring him to Readifolk. There is a poise and clarity and a dash of humour about Anthony John's songs which we are sure will delight you.

**Hear more:**

[www.myspace.com/wwwmyspacecomanthonyjohnclarke](http://www.myspace.com/wwwmyspacecomanthonyjohnclarke)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2UcST6I2e8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2UcST6I2e8)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxyCTxgK\\_s0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxyCTxgK_s0)



**WENDY ARROWSMITH** makes a welcome return to Readifolk on **18th March**



**What she says:**

Wendy has sung many different styles of music but with folk music she has found songs that come from the heart and allow great emotional expression and social commentary. Originally from Glasgow, Wendy performs a mixture of British folk songs including a generous helping of Scottish material plus songs of her own. She generally accompanies herself on guitar, but whistles, bodhran, mandolin and accordion have also been known to appear

**What others say:**

"A bubbly personality that pushes flamboyance into her set... her songs have important points to make on the human condition, including the misery we inflict on each other" - *Fatea Magazine*. "A lovely singer and deft guitar player. She handles trad with subtlety and insight, while her original material is lovely" - *Redditch Folk Club*. "Very, very good" - *Mike Harding*.

**What we say:**

We've invited Wendy to beguile us again with her entertaining mix of material and musical styles, unaccompanied songs and traditional ballads, with fine guitar and concertina. We loved her before and expect to feel the same again. Only more so.

**Hear more:**

[www.wendyarrowsmith.com/page2.html](http://www.wendyarrowsmith.com/page2.html)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=5M\\_jbe6DpkQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5M_jbe6DpkQ)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJr9gS3F75s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJr9gS3F75s)

# The EFDSS

Readifolk has been affiliated to the  
English Folk Dance and Song Society for several years now.  
Sandra Buttrick finds out more about it.

Photo by Andy Newcombe on Flickr



The London Improvisers Orchestra  
performing at Cecil Sharp House

## Cecil Sharp House

Cecil Sharp House - often abbreviated to C# House - is the purpose-built home of the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), which aims "to support artists and practitioners and engage people in folk arts activities" and "place the indigenous folk arts of England at the heart of our cultural life". Named after one of the founding fathers of the twentieth century folk revival, Cecil Sharp House is a 1930s red-brick listed building in Camden, North London. It has three halls with sprung floors; the largest, Kennedy Hall, is said to be the second best dance floor in London (the best is the Ballroom in Buckingham Palace!) and is decorated with a 65 ft Ivon Hitchens mural. There are smaller practise and meeting rooms, a licensed bar selling real ales, a walled garden and a library.

Cecil Sharp House also acts as a venue for concerts, dances, lectures, films and exhibitions. Most events are open to the public, with tickets sold through the box office or on-line, and the programme can include names like Jon Boden and Kathryn Tickell, while Folk Rising is a series of events to showcase new talent.

Sharps Folk Club, "one of the friendliest.....traditional folk clubs left in London" (Time Out), meets every Tuesday in the bar, mainly for singers nights run by a rota of MCs who call on volunteers to play an instrument, sing or tell a story. Guest nights are about once a month (recent performers include the Askew Sisters) and also have slots for floor singers. Dance events are numerous, too, the most popular being the Friday night ceilidh, and there is also a rolling programme of free exhibitions, supported by lectures and film. The current exhibition, Canning Town Folk, examines the role played by "three extraordinary women with strong ties to Canning Town" in the formation of the English Folk Dance Society.

## Education, Education, Education!

EFDSS is an education, training and development agency, providing classes and workshops, from fiddle playing to Baroque dance, for all ages and abilities. Most classes are in the evenings or at the weekends, and various other folk societies also meet here, too. The Cecil Sharp House Community Choir meets weekly, is non-audition, and concentrates on traditional British and international a cappella songs. Recently, the Choir has been singing The False Knight, Red Apple Juice, and Hungarian lullabies. The Saturday Folk Music Workshops offer teaching from professional folk musicians in a variety of instruments.

It also goes out to schools, colleges and community groups, mainly in London, and provides training to teachers. Supporting professional artists is important and the artist-in-residence scheme covers visual arts and storytelling as well as music and dance.

EFDSS publishes a quarterly magazine, "English Dance and Song", and the academic "Folk Music Journal", which appears annually, as well as a range of specialist books. The shop stocks a wide selection of other folk related books, CDs and DVDs, all available on line. East Midlands Mimming, The Dancing Around the Maypole Book and Songs for Cornish Travellers are among the eye-catching titles.

## Archives and Resources

The Society has a comprehensive website ([www.efdss.org](http://www.efdss.org)) and.....it's complicated!..... but it is worth taking time to explore. There are lots of free downloads, mainly from EFDSS projects, and although primarily teaching materials, are often of wider interest. The recent school "Singing Histories: London" initiative has an excellent resource pack, containing the music for several little-known songs with an appeal beyond children and London. The News section is kept up-to-date as is the list of festivals and links to other folk sites, and there is also a virtual tour of the building. The website is constantly evolving and a recent experiment was the live worldwide streaming of a Folk Rising event.

Cecil Sharp House contains the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, "the most important concentration of material on traditional song, dance and music in the country" (Dictionary of English Folklore). It holds books, pamphlets, periodicals, press cuttings, paintings, photographs, recordings (audio and visual) and artefacts. It also houses the manuscripts, field notes and transcriptions of the most distinguished British collectors of folk music and dance traditions, including George Butterworth, Lucy Broadwood and Anne Gilchrist, as well as Cecil Sharp and Vaughan Williams. The BBC Folk Music Archive is also held here. EFDSS members may use the Library, borrow some materials and submit phone/email/postal enquiries free, but non-members are charged £3.50 for library access, in person or enquiry, and the Sound Library operates an appointment system.

But some of the collections can be accessed online, free to members and non-members via the website. This work is still at the development stage and is up-graded and expanded regularly. The eventual goal is to provide on-line access to all of the library's catalogues and indexes. The material available on-line currently includes a number of the library's indexes for manuscripts, the Broadside and Roud Folk Song indexes and the catalogue of books bequeathed by folk music scholar Leslie Shepard. Searching can be difficult without prior knowledge of the contents of the various collections. There are several bibliographies/discographies covering traditional song, morris, clog and sword dancing which can be downloaded, and Cecil Sharp's Appalachian Diaries (1915-18) and 300 of his photographs are available for on-line viewing.

## Membership and the Voice of Folk

Finally, EFDSS is a society with 4,000 members and relies heavily on subscriptions. Individual members may attend the AGM, vote, receive the quarterly magazine and the Folk Music Journal and have free use of the Library. Folk clubs (including Readifolk), have special membership and may take advantage of the Public Liability Insurance scheme, but individuals from subscribing clubs are not eligible for any membership benefits. The Society also acts as an advocate/lobbyist and recently has campaigned to increase the BBC's folk music coverage and exemption from the Licensing Act for small gigs.





# A Song Worth Singing

## The 12 Days Of Christmas

A children's counting song, or a religious tract?

Although not an overtly religious Christmas song, the twelve days of Christmas are the period between Christmas and Epiphany. But there are differing theories about what this song is about. One theory has it that the song originated in Tudor England, when the Roman church was under oppression during the Anglican reform, and followers of the Catholic faith had to find covert ways to express it. In this case, "my true love" was God, and the "partridge in a pear tree" was Christ, born on the first day of Christmas. From here on, we find two testaments of the bible, the holy trinity (or sometimes three holy virtues of faith, hope and charity), and four gospels. Five represents the Pentateuch - the first five books of the Old Testament, then there are six days of creation, seven sacraments, eight beatitudes, nine fruits of the Holy Spirit, ten commandments, eleven faithful apostles, and twelve points of the creed.

One can't help but draw parallels to the excruciating and much parodied *Deck Of Cards*, written by country singer T. Texas Tyler in the 1940s (though, itself, having an antecedence dating back to the 18th century), and sung by Max Bygraves and the like; in this context, the two songs share many of the same figures with regard to what the numbered items supposedly represent. It also makes some sense of the versions of the song that go "...my true love *said* to me...", as the artefacts of the song are, in fact, a code to be unscrambled, rather than gifts.

But more usually, the song speaks of a true love who 'sent' or 'gave' the gifts, and appealing though it might be, another theory suggests that this explanation is but an invention of the 20th century, and that the song is more likely French in origin, first used simply as a children's counting and memory game. There are at least three different French versions of the song, but the earliest known printed version was published in England in the 1780s, in the children's book *Mirth Without Mischief*, and it is interesting to note that tree-dwelling partridges had only recently been introduced into England at that time. But it is thought the song's French origins pre-date that.

The music that we are all familiar with today is surprisingly complicated, with changes to time signature and tempo. But there is also a change in the repetitive part of the melody, which notably takes place at the dramatic 'Five Gold Rings' stanza. Prior to this, the countdown from four to two, more or less repeats the same melody for each line. But after 'Five Gold Rings' has been sung, it is only the lines from twelve down to six that observe the repetitive melody, and the previously repetitive four, three and two now take a separate tune of their own. This section of melody was only introduced into the song in the early 20th century, by composer Frederic Austin. The rest of the tune was first transcribed by song collector James O. Halliwell, and published in the 1840s.

Arrangement by  
Ed

1. On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me a part-ridge in a pear tree. 2 On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree. 3 On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me three french hens two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree. 4 On the fourth day of Christmas my true love gave to me four calling birds three french hens two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree. 5 On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me five go - ld rings four calling birds three french hens two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree. 6 On the sixth day of Christmas my true love gave to me six geese a-laying three french hens two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree. 7 On the seventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me seven swans a-swimming three french hens two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree. 8 On the eighth day of Christmas my true love gave to me eight maids a-milking three french hens two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree. 9 On the ninth day of Christmas my true love gave to me nine ladies dancing three french hens two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree. 10 On the tenth day of Christmas my true love gave to me ten lords a-leaping three french hens two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree. 11 On the eleventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me eleven pipers piping three french hens two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree. 12 On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me twelve drummers drumming three french hens two turtle doves and a part-ridge in a pear tree.

One the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me:  
A partridge in a pear tree

On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me:  
Two turtle doves  
And a partridge in a pear tree

On the third day of Christmas, my true love gave to me:  
Three French hens  
Two turtle dove  
And a partridge in a pear tree

And so on:

Four calling birds  
Five gold rings  
Six geese a-laying  
Seven swans a-swimming  
Eight maids a-milking  
Nine ladies dancing  
Ten lords a-leaping  
Eleven pipers piping  
Twelve drummers drumming

Readifolk Newsletter

This edition of Notes happened entirely by accident. We didn't mean to do any of it, and so can only apologise for any inconvenience caused, or losses suffered. We'll try harder not to do one next time, but can't promise that we'll be successful. Meantime, my humble gratitude to everyone who contributed, however hard you tried not to.



# 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 JANUARY - MARCH 2012**

1 Jan	<b>Theme 'Resolutions'</b>	<i>Start off the new year with a song, a tune, a poem, a joke or just come and listen. All welcome.</i>
8 Jan	<b>Albert Niland</b> <a href="http://www.albertniland.com">www.albertniland.com</a>	<i>'Guitar wizardry and a voice that could make the coldest heart sing' - Dublin Magazine</i>
15 Jan	<b>Singers Night</b>	<i>Your turn again to contribute or to listen. A fun evening, whatever you decide.</i>
22 Jan	<b>David Gibb &amp; Elly Lucas</b> <a href="http://www.myspace.com/gibbandlucas">www.myspace.com/gibbandlucas</a>	<i>Young Derbyshire duo David and Elly play a mixture of original and reworked traditional material.</i>
29 Jan	<b>Theme 'Songs from the Showers'</b>	<i>Everyone says that they sing in the bath and the shower - so let's hear your 'shower' songs.</i>



5 Feb	<b>Pete Morton</b> <a href="http://www.petemorton.com">www.petemorton.com</a>	<i>Wonderfully crafted songs from one of England's finest songwriters.</i>
12 Feb	<b>Skyhook</b> <a href="http://www.skyhookmusic.com">www.skyhookmusic.com</a>	<i>Breathtaking twin fiddles combined with sublime guitar, bouzouki and voice. Watch out for the name; this quality band are going places.</i>
19 Feb	<b>Singers Night</b>	<i>It's your turn again to entertain us. Come and sing, play or just listen. You will be made very welcome</i>
26 Feb	<b>North Sea Gas</b> <a href="http://www.northseagas.co.uk">www.northseagas.co.uk</a>	<i>One of Scotland's most popular folk bands with great vocals and tremendous three part harmonies.</i>



4 Mar	<b>Theme 'Water, Water, Everywhere'</b>	<i>Any song with a watery theme will be fine.</i>
11 Mar	<b>Anthony John Clarke</b> <a href="http://www.anthonyjohnclarke.com">www.anthonyjohnclarke.com</a>	<i>A fine songwriter with a unique performance. "Anthony John is quite simply a National Treasure" - Fairport Convention</i>
18 Mar	<b>Wendy Arrowsmith</b> <a href="http://www.wendyarrowsmith.com">www.wendyarrowsmith.com</a>	<i>A lovely singer and a deft guitar player. She handles traditional songs with subtlety and insight, while her original material is impressive.</i>
25 Mar	<b>Singers Night</b>	<i>Another DIY night when you have a chance to show us what you can do.</i>

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

**More information from our web site [www.readifolk.org.uk](http://www.readifolk.org.uk)**

Una - 0118 9483145 or Anne - 0118 9613586

[una@readifolk.org.uk](mailto:una@readifolk.org.uk)

[anne@readifolk.org.uk](mailto:anne@readifolk.org.uk)

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