

Notes

The Newsletter
of Readifolk

Issue 21

Reading's folk song
and music club

Spring 2014



Combining folk with roots, jazz, blues and classical, the legendary **Brooks Williams** comes from America to Readifolk on **June 1st**.

The Radio 2 Folk Awards 2014

Ian Freedman went along to make sure the right people won

I was delighted and excited to be given, as a Christmas present from Mandy, my long suffering folk widow wife, tickets for the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards. She told me that she ordered the tickets within minutes of them being released; a few hours later they were all sold out.

I cannot write an article on the BBC Folk Awards without mentioning the controversy that surrounds them. There are those within the small online community of folk radio presenters (yes there is such a community and we even have our own private facebook page), as well as within the wider folk community, who believe that the awards are so tainted by nepotism that they are of no value whatsoever. They point to the high proportion of nominated artists signed to Proper or Topic. There are accusations of a closed shop. Why are artists who are not signed to Proper, like Bridie Jackson And The Arbour or Minnie Birch, never mentioned?

There are also many questions surrounding the BBC's attitude to folk. There is one hour-long show a week on Radio 2 and the occasional special on BBC4 TV. Why did the Folk Awards have to compete with the Brit awards, which were held on the same night?

I do not intend to attempt to answer any of these questions, but instead I am going to quote a small part of a letter sent to journalist and blogger Emma Hartley by BBC executive John Whittingdale:

"Folk music is a small sub-genre. Although very few folk artists are attached to major labels some do have record companies of reasonable size such as Proper... however the vast majority of folk artists still run their own labels and are genuine cottage industries."

I include this quote to illustrate that the BBC, as represented by John Whittingdale, consider folk a small sub-genre, and when pushed, it is Proper that is mentioned by Mr Whittingdale. Of course I am open to the criticism that I have quoted Mr Whittingdale out of context, and so for the sake of balance you can read the entire blog here: <http://tinyurl.com/mnpwvrg>.

The Albert Hall is not, and never will be, my favourite venue. It was designed at a time when modern electric amplification was not an option, and presumably the echo chamber nature of the acoustic design was

carefully planned to show off orchestras in such a large space, taking into account that all the volume would have to emanate from the original sound source. Today, much of the programme content is amplified and, frankly, the building is not best suited to the style.

That said, this was the BBC and so you might expect to get the best compromise possible. Not so. I struggled to hear the presenters and award winners speak, while the live music was pumped out at a volume more suited to a pop concert.

I was delighted to see Julie Fowlis, co-hosting with Folk Show presenter Mark Radcliffe. I am a fan of hers although, as she did not sing, I still cannot claim to have seen her perform live. I did not join in the witch-hunt that surrounded Mark Radcliffe taking over from Mike Harding as presenter of the weekly Folk Show. In my opinion, given that the BBC had decided, rightly or wrongly, to replace Mike Harding, Mark Radcliffe is the right man for the job.



First up were Bellowhead who opened the show in great style. Other live performances included Martin & Eliza Carthy, Suzanne Vega and Fisherman's Friends. The last brought the house down, earning the only standing ovation of the evening.

Of all the awards presented that night, the facts of which are available on the BBC website, I will mention only two, both of which I had strong feelings for.

The first was for Best Song, which went to Lisa Knapp for her song *Two Ravens*. I was delighted to see Lisa win an award, who also spent time giving me an interview for The Readifolk Radio Show, but I cannot understand why this song was nominated. There are better songs, even, on the same album, *Hidden Seam*. If the winner had been *The Shipping Song* from the same album I would not have taken issue. I was also quite irked that what was, for me, the best song of 2013, Josienne Clark's *Anyone But Me*, wasn't even nominated.

The second was for Folk Singer Of The Year, which went to Bella Hardy. Well done the BBC for getting this one absolutely right. In my opinion, Bella is snapping at the heels of Eliza Carthy for the position of best UK female vocalist in any genre.

News and Stuff

At the time of writing, a copy of the original *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, first published in 1959, is for sale on Amazon Marketplace at a startling £1,755.06 (plus £2.80 delivery), so you may be more interested in the publication of *The New Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, which is now in paperback at a more reasonable £10. This is not simply an update of the original work, but a new collection of over 150 songs. There is also a related CD called *The Liberty To Choose*, featuring 16 of the songs in the book, by a variety of artists.

Early blues singer Robert Johnson is widely said to have sold his soul to the devil before his early death, in destitution, in 1938. His heirs and relations have been fighting over the profits of his legacy ever since. Only two photographs of Johnson are known to exist, and as these are often used on album covers and other material, a legal battle has recently been raging about who is entitled to their copyright. The Mississippi supreme court has ruled that his son, Claude, is now entitled to the rights, rather than the descendants of his sister, who had previously claimed ownership.

Peppard Memorial Village Hall is hoping to raise funds for a new roof, and to that end is running regular Peppard Unplugged sessions, on the first Saturday evening of each month at 7.30. It's proving popular, and you'll see many familiar faces from the local music scene. Hopefully, it'll be some time before enough fundraising is done.

Andy Mathewson has often entertained us at Readifolk, both as floor singer and guest, showing us how an acoustic guitar really should be played. Recently, his song writing talents have been achieving wider recognition, with a song co-written with Lisa Winship called *When It Seems Like I Can't Have You* gaining an honourable mention in the US song writing competition SongDoor, and his own song *Since He's Been Gone* appearing on a CD by Canadian guitar



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

picker Jim McLennan. With international stardom obviously calling, we hope he'll still remember to visit us at Readifolk.

Farewells

Daide Lufano Chaves - died 26/12/13 aged 30. After studying classical guitar in his native Italy, he studied other styles from around the world before moving to London, saying of the frustrations of being a musician in Italy "To do a tour of Italy, I had to go and live in London." Lately he joined Alejandro and the Magic Tomboinos, with whom he toured the festival circuit before being diagnosed with multiple myeloma.

Pete Seeger - died 27/1/14 aged 94. One of the most major influences on modern folk music, he helped to shape our sensibilities for over 70 years. A man of undying principle and conviction, during the McCarthy era in America, sanctions were imposed against him, and he spent time in jail, before an appeal found his sentence unconstitutional. With eloquence and intelligence, he survived the media blacklist, continued to speak up for social justice and peace, and became a mainstay of folk music around the world. He was instrumental in organising both music festivals and environmental campaigns.

Paco de Lucía - died 26/2/14 aged 66. A highly influential Spanish flamenco guitarist, as a prodigious child, his father forced an intensive practice regime on him, resulting in his first professional appearance at 12, with world tours from 14. In the 1960s he led the New Flamenco movement, which brought him wide recognition, and collaborations which took him beyond pure flamenco. He is also credited with introducing the cajón to Europe (see Notes 17).

Contact us:

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Shows Worth Seeing

Previewing the new season of guest nights coming to Readifolk.

On **13th April** the dynamic trio **Folklaw** appear at Readifolk.

What they say:

Exhilarating songs and music that guarantees to get your feet tapping. Well known for their crowd-surfing fiddle antics, engaging on-stage banter and an energized stage performance

What others say:

"Whirling jigs and lyrics that bite... imagine Show of Hands with a new wave ethic!" - *fRoots*.
"Blistering musicianship" - *Severn FM*.



What we say:

We heard rave reviews. They came and

enthralled us with a short floor spot. We are now looking forward to the full works!

Hear more:

www.folklaw.co.uk
www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTXJiLuQXHW
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDz5esaMzXk



Award-winning poet, author and songwriter **Alan Franks** makes a welcome return to Readifolk on **27 April**.

What he says:

Since leaving The Times four years ago after thirty-two years with the paper, Alan has stepped up some of his other activities, collaborating as lyricist with jazz composer Tim Whitehead on a new set of songs recorded both in studios and live in clubs by five prominent vocalists. He has also written another novel, his fourth, called The Notes of Dr. Newgate, which was nominated by The Guardian as one of its Books of the Year in 2013. A World Elsewhere, his play about music and politics at the height of the Vietnam War during the days before the US presidential election in 1968, enjoyed a highly successful run at Theatre503 in Battersea. He continues to write and perform his own distinctive range of songs at clubs and festivals, mostly by himself since the

retirement of his long-standing singing partner Patty Vetta, with whom he made five albums.

What others say:

"An astonishing wordsmith and virtuoso musician" - *The Tudor Folk Club*. "Franks's songs are wonderful, complex, true, addictive things. I wish I could write and think and play like him" - *Jake Thackray*.

What we say:

We have seen Alan several times at Readifolk, appearing with Patty Vetta. He returns to entertain us, this time in a solo role, with more of his excellent songs and music.

Hear more:

www.alanfranks.com
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ToqU2jL4pQg



On **11th May**, **The Yirdbards** travel up from deepest Wiltshire to entertain us.

What they say:

Lead singer Paul Darby says "I sing because it gives me pleasure. With The Yirdbards' line up of cello and acoustic guitars, there's more space for intimacy and subtlety. It's more intricate. I just hope that people will be moved by our music in some way." The music of The Yirdbards strives to reconnect us with the land and remind us that, as



its stewards, we have a collective responsibility for its safe keeping.

What others say:

"Subtly pleasing second helping from Devizes' self-styled 'earth poets' (Paul Darby, Patrick Randall, Verity

Sharp), continuing their mission to reconnect us with the land - without over-preaching, gently but effectively, through a careful choice of contemporary songs (mostly by local writers, with some Paul Metsers covers)" - *fRoots*. "Strong and true" - *Bob Harris, Radio 3*.

What we say:

We were very impressed when the Yirds did a floor spot at the club last year. We are sure that you will enjoy their thought-provoking songs with fine guitar, cello and violin accompaniment. N.B. not to be confused with The Yardbirds. The name Yirdbard is derived from *Yird*: noun, *earth* and *Bard*: noun, *a poet*.

Hear more:

www.yirdbards.com
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vp-Q_XYGEoY
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fyu_q73qtXc



Louise Jordan makes her first Guest appearance at Readifolk on **18th May**.

What she says:

Louise Jordan is a young singer, composer and multi-instrumentalist rapidly making an impact on the UK acoustic music scene. She has a purity of voice which melts the toughest of hearts and a delivery which unsettles the most discerning critic.



What others say:

"A stirring, lilting grace" - *The Telegraph*. "A masterclass in songwriting" - *R2 Magazine*. "Absolutely, totally and completely brilliant" - *Mike Harding*. "The fragility of perfection" - *FolkWords*.

What we say:

We first spotted Louise at the Wallingford Bunkfest where she truly captivated the audience. Don't miss this opportunity of seeing this very talented young lady.

Hear more:

www.louisejordan.co.uk
www.youtube.com/watch?v=En08etNhR9U
www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYhrDGVUBvC

On **1st June** we welcome the legendary **Brooks Williams** on his first visit to Readifolk.



What he says:

Brooks Williams is an American acoustic guitarist and singer/songwriter. His style combines roots, jazz, blues, classical, and folk. He has released some albums consisting of contemporary folk music, and some consisting of instrumental guitar music.

What others say:

"Pan-Americana Roots 'n Blues, doused in Moonshine, alt-Billy and delicious Dixie" - *Net Rhythms*. "Absolutely beyond criticism!" - *fRoots*. "I've known Brooks for many years. He's a lovely player, a lovely singer, and a great writer and a lovely man. The real thing" - *Martin Simpson*.

What we say:

Brooks Williams is acknowledged as one of the world's top acoustic guitarists. He performs with Boo Hewerdine in the highly acclaimed duo State of the Union. As a solo artist his rich and silky voice ably complements his wonderful guitar playing.

Hear more:

www.brookswilliams.com
www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLMVdioRkgQ
www.youtube.com/watch?v=H49hJ6FUfrA



Tom Lewis navigates his way back to Readifolk on **15th June**.

What he says:

Tom is a 24-year veteran of Her Majesty's Royal Naval diesel submarines; although now he's comfortably located on dry land. His songs cover a wide range of nautical topics, from life on board H.M. ships, through



the loneliness and lure of the sea, to traditional shanties and classic nautical poetry, set to his own, and others' melodies.

What others say:

"Tom has carved a niche for himself in the annals of maritime music, his traditional idiom song writing is up there alongside Tawney and MacColl" - *Seán Laffey, Traditional & Folk Music Directory UK*.
"Highly infectious. I can't help but be caught up in the magic myself and add my own voice to the choruses" - *Mike Regenstreif, Sing Out! Magazine*.
"It's impossible not to sing along" - *Dirty Linen*.

What we say:

This is a long-awaited return of a master of nautical songs. Tom brings to the stage wry humour, button accordion, ukulele and a great voice. We look forward to joining in on the rousing choruses.

Hear more:

www.tomlewis.net
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdAaLVoucwo
www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2QREmq3BBQ



On **29th June** we welcome **Bob Wood** from the Ram Folk Club.

What he says:

Bob Wood, from the west of Scotland is a warm and engaging singer and performer with an easy going sense of humour and a highly accomplished

finger-style guitarist. Exploring a range of open tunings, his playing and song interpretations have been described as displaying a rare sensitivity, lightness of touch and great technique.

What others say:

"An artiste with an eclectic and entertaining repertoire of song which he accompanies with an innovative and always sympathetic guitar style" - *Archie Fisher*. "He's a little bit unsung, you know" - *Andy Irvine*. "Bob Wood is one of the deftest pickers and tastiest arrangers of songs it has been my pleasure to hear... a real delight!" - *Steve Tilton*.



What we say:

It's nice to welcome a fellow club organiser to the stage at Readifolk - Bob is co-founder and an organiser of the Ram Folk Club in Thames Ditton, Surrey. Bob's wide repertoire ranges from traditional to contemporary songs with occasional pipe, harp and other tunes.

Hear more:

www.bobwood.co.uk
www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSvegZUHKb4
www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3WUK-Fk4Gs

A Song Worth Singing

Karijini

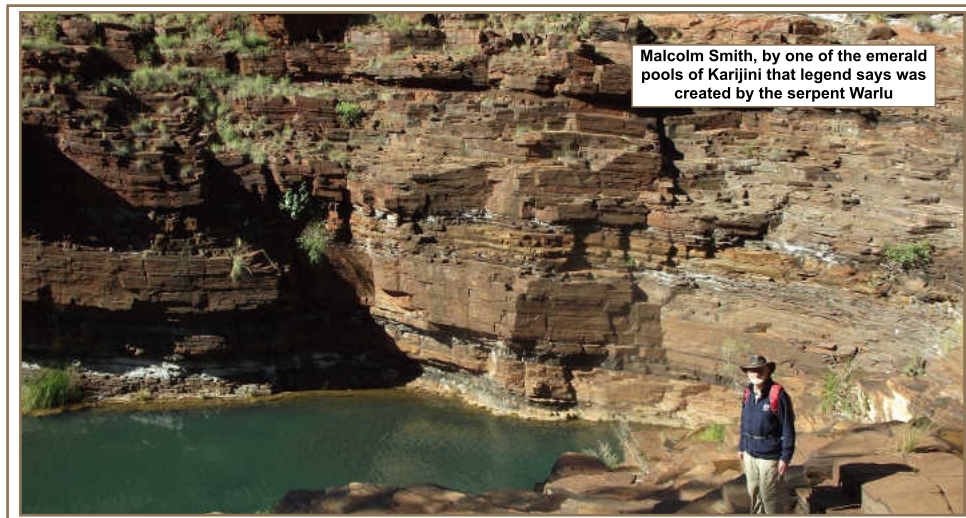
Malcolm Smith recently visited Karijini National Park in Western Australia. He tells us about a song it inspired him to write.

In June and July 2013, Clare and I were lucky enough to travel around Western Australia. In the northern part of WA is a remarkable and beautiful National Park called Karijini, which is sacred to the aboriginal people of the Pilbara. It always has water in the gorges, even in the driest of dry seasons. This area has not always been a protected park, however, and even now is not completely safe from the mining companies, since it contains very rich deposits of iron ore. Indeed, parts of it have been mined in the past, and mining continues just outside the park, for example at Tom Price.

One story of an aboriginal elder I found very moving: her grandfather had been buried on a hill that was subsequently mined until it became a hole in the ground. Sitting in the shade of a

Mulga tree on our campsite at Dales Gorge, I found myself writing this song. I was filled with wonder at the long perspective of the aboriginal people, and how recent the catastrophe of the arrival of white people is for them. However, the song ends with the hope that we can all learn from each other: the National Park is a part of that process. Warlu is the name of the serpent who, according to aboriginal legend, came from the sea and created the rivers and gorges at the beginning of time.

You can see and hear me singing *Karijini* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtT5JFyVrec
I usually sing this song in B or C, with a capo on the 4th or 5th fret of the guitar, using G chord shapes, but it can be played without a capo. The notation here is in C, for chords without capo.



Am C Dm7 G Am C Dm7 G

I'm sit - ting here in the Ka - ri - ji - ni, Un - der the shade of a Mul - ga tree,

Am C Dm7 G Am Dm7 G

dream - ing a - bout the great War - lu, Long long time a - go.

- I'm sitting here in the Karijini
Under the shade of the Mulga tree
Dreaming about the great Warlu
Long long time ago
- He came from the sea onto the land
When the earth was soft as time began
He carved the gorges where the waters flow
Long long time ago
- For thousands of years my people lived here
Nothing changed from year to year
And the children learned what they should know
About the long ago
- Then white men came with their colonial schemes
Cattle and sheep and their loud machines
They took our land all for their own
Not so long ago
- They took my grandfather's burial place
Of his sacred hill they left no trace
They said they wanted the iron ore
Two generations ago
- Now they want to preserve the Karijini
For all the world's people to come and see
And we hope that understanding grows
Of all our long agos
- I'm sitting here in the Karijini
Under the shade of the Mulga tree
Dreaming about the great Warlu
Long long time ago

**Words and
music by
Malcolm Smith
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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 APRIL - JUNE 2014

6 April	Singers Night	<i>The usual format – a song, a tune, a story, a poem, a joke or just come and be entertained by us. All welcome.</i>
13 April	Folklaw www.folklaw.co.uk	<i>Exhilarating songs and music from this dynamic trio. 'Show of Hands with a new wave ethic' fRoots</i>
20 April	Theme 'A Cheerful Earful'	<i>Come and brighten up the evening with your cheerful songs.</i>
27 April	Alan Franks www.alanfranks.com	<i>Award-winning poet, author and song writer Alan returns to Readifolk to enthral us with more of his wonderful songs and music.</i>

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4 May	Singers Night	<i>Another opportunity for you to show us what you can do.</i>
11 May	The Yirdbards www.yirdbards.com	<i>This Wiltshire-based trio perform a mix of thought-provoking traditional and contemporary songs with fine guitar, cello and violin accompaniment.</i>
18 May	Louise Jordan www.louisejordan.co.uk	<i>Louise is a young singer, composer and multi-instrumentalist rapidly making an impact on the UK acoustic music scene.</i>
25 May	Theme 'Rails & Sails'	<i>Travelling by train or by boat? Let's hear your songs on the subject.</i>

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1 June	Brooks Williams www.brookswilliams.com	<i>Ranked as one of the world's top acoustic guitarists – a rich and silky voice and writer of wonderful songs.</i>
8 June	Singers Night	<i>Come and sing, play or just listen. A warm welcome is guaranteed.</i>
15 June	Tom Lewis www.tomlewis.net	<i>Widely acknowledged as one of the finest exponents of contemporary nautical songs, Tom brings to the stage wry humour, button accordion, ukulele and a great voice.</i>
22 June	Theme 'Just the Job'	<i>Work songs or songs fit for purpose? You decide.</i>
29 June	Bob Wood www.bobwood.co.uk	<i>Bob is a highly accomplished finger-style guitarist. His playing and songs display a rare sensitivity, lightness of touch and great technique.</i>

Admission: £6 Guest nights; £2 Singers & Theme nights

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

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Find us on Facebook www.facebook.com/readifolk and Twitter www.twitter.com/readifolk

The Readifolk Radio Show is on the internet every Friday evening 6 - 8 p.m.

<http://blast1386.reading-college.ac.uk> click on 'Listen Live'.