

Notes

The Newsletter
of Readifolk

Issue 22

Reading's folk song
and music club

Summer 2014



The Blues At Readifolk

Damien Barber & Mike Wilson bring traditional
folk songs to Readifolk on **September 21st**

One Song, Many Versions

Steve Bingham ponders why there can be so many different versions of the same song

If you have attended folk clubs and concerts for any length of time you will have heard many versions of some songs. Some are just small changes to the words and others have different titles but tell much the same story. The song *A Young Man Cut Down In His Prime* exists as *A Young Sailor/Soldier/Girl Cut Down In His/Her Prime*, and even the blue songs *St James Infirmary* is a distant version of it. There are mighty tomes and doctoral theses written on the reasons why songs change, but it basically comes down to three factors - the comfort of the singer, memory and changed circumstances.

Most of the traditional songs that are sung by performers today were collected by Cecil Sharpe, Ralph Vaughan Williams and their colleagues, in a relatively short period at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Before these song collectors, various individuals had noted down song words or tunes but rarely both together and definitely not in a systematic way. It must be remembered that when a song collector wrote down a song it was a particular performance that was recorded, and it would probably be the only time that the song was performed in precisely that way. There was no way of proving how the song had been sung previously. There is a story that at one session, where Cecil Sharpe was writing down songs, a husband and wife fell out over the name of a character in the song. The wife claimed that the name should have been John Brown and the husband had sung Tom Brown - versions with both names have since been collected. Once a song was written down, and even more so when the sound of the singing was recorded, the song becomes frozen and a point in its history can be referenced. Most of the song collectors actually created new versions of the songs they collected. Usually the words and tunes were tidied up to make them suitable for performance with a piano accompaniment in a middle class drawing room or for children to sing. Some collectors were judgemental about what was published; Sabine Baring-Gould published many songs for children but the versions that he originally collected have been carefully noted with all their unsuitable references, and so we get the innocent *Strawberry Fair*, suitable for use in schools, and we get the

version as performed by Cyril Tawney, with its suggestive references to locks, and keys that fit!



Every song has a point of conception, whether it is the first time it was sung or whether it is written down and published. Once someone other than the creator hears a song and takes the trouble to remember it, the song takes on a life of its own. The second singer might not feel comfortable with some of the words so he or she changes them just a little, so that they are happy singing it. It may be that they forget something and have to make some words up to fill the gap. As the

song gets farther away from its point of creation some references may become irrelevant or incomprehensible. For example, in a song about poaching, the name of the woods might not mean anything, so a singer will substitute either a generic term like "the dark woods", or an alternative name. In fact there is a general theory that says that as a song travels, all local references, be they place names, trade terms, names of people, or anything else personal, will be stripped out and eventually replaced with names and items that are relevant to a new location. This is particularly true when songs migrated from Britain to America and Australia. To get a good picture of the end results of this process, it is worth getting hold of the two double CDs put together by Martyn Wyndham-Read - *Song Links Australia* and *Song Links America*.

Even modern songs that are written down and published as sheet music and as recorded songs are not immune to the process. Andy Barnes' song *The Last Leviathan* does not have a chorus on his original recording. Andy was quite surprised, when attending a folk club, to hear someone singing the song for the first time, and they used the first verse as a chorus. Andy now sings it that way. Even the group Prelude, who had an a capella hit with Neil Young's *After The Gold Rush*, found that when they were requested to re-record the song, they were singing it much faster and in a slightly higher key than the original recording, but they were able to correct it because they had the record.

So remember next time you forget the words, don't worry, you're just making your own version.

News and Stuff

The annual Folk for MS concert, in aid of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, celebrated its Silver Jubilee, and sadly its final concert, at Grove, Wantage on June 7th. FfMS was started in 1990 when Bob Hambleton (an MS sufferer and for many years resident MC at Readifolk) together with Sarah Davis, and Dave and Kate Guest organised a concert with Vin Garbutt top of the bill. It was such a success that it became an annual event, featuring many top folk performers. In recent years the event has continued under the direction of Dave & Kate Guest, and has raised over £50,000 for the MS Charity. From the outset Readifolk has been a supporter of FfMS and at the final concert, together with Maidenhead Folk Club, made presentations to Dave and Kate for their sterling work.

Earlier this year, Dave Swarbrick embarked upon a tour that he called the *Passing the Baton Tour*. The idea was that the old stager would give an opportunity to a young, up and coming artist from the local area, to support him at each stop of the tour. For his trip to Reading, he chose our good friend and, err... youngster, Rik Knight. Alas, it was not to be, and Swarb had to call off the gig. This means that Rik will just have to put up with us lot as his audience for a little longer, while he rethinks his plans for greater stardom.



Singing From The Floor by JP Bean, a book charting the folk movement, from the revival of the 1950s onwards, in the words of the people that were there, has been published by Faber & Faber. It was a project overseen by Jarvis Cocker, who is currently Faber & Faber's Editor At Large. It has an impressive list of contributors, but we're unsure if that includes anybody from Readifolk.

The Readifolk Radio Show, our very own shindig of the interwaves, is to change its time slot, and also gain a repeat broadcast each week. From now on it will broadcast at 7 - 9pm on a Wednesday evening,

Contact us:

Una for bookings and coming events una@readifolk.org.uk

Colin for publicity, coming events and the mailing list colin@readifolk.org.uk

Stewart about the newsletter stewart@readifolk.org.uk

Alison about the website ali@readifolk.org.uk

Ian about the radio show radiofolk@readifolk.org.uk

www.readifolk.org.uk



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

with a Friday evening repeat, also from 7 - 9pm, an hour later than its old time. The show is carried by Blast 1386, which broadcasts from Reading College campus; you can listen over the internet at <http://blast1386.reading-college.ac.uk> (click on 'Listen Live'), or if you live near to the campus, tune in on 1386kHz on the AM band.

As if they haven't already achieved enough, members of Fairport Convention decided that the arc of their careers would be incomplete unless they attempt to break the world record for the longest string of festival bunting. Who knew that such a record existed? Who even cared? Well, actually, the people behind Warwickshire's art gallery, Compton Verney, do, because it is they who are organising it. The attempt will take place during Fairport's own festival at Cropredy this summer, where everyone attending will be encouraged to help - so be sure to take your felt-tipped pens, sticky-backed plastic and spare bits of string along. Fairport's Cropredy Convention takes place from August 7th - 9th.

Farewells

Arthur Smith - died 3/4/14 aged 93. American guitar, fiddle and banjo player, whose biggest hit was the 1945 instrumental *Guitar Boogie*. He was also the unacknowledged composer of *Dueling Banjos* (originally called *Feudin' Banjos*) from the 1972 film *Deliverance*, which led to a long legal dispute to gain the royalties.

Archie Tawney - died 28/5/14 aged 94. Not as well known as younger brother Cyril, he was also a singer, and involved with folk clubs in the Manchester area.

Midge Paxton - died 1/6/14 aged 69. Wife and muse to Tom, they met when they were both part of the Greenwich Village folk scene in the early 1960s. She remained an environmental and civil rights campaigner throughout her life, before succumbing to an autoimmune disorder that affected her for several years.

Shows Worth Seeing

Previewing the new season of guest nights coming to Readifolk.

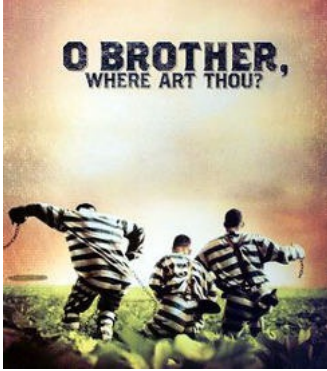
On **6th July** a plethora of local talent perform an **O Brother Special**.

What we say:

A showcase of very talented Reading-based musicians and singers, including The Newtowners and The Retreat Singers

www.facebook.com/TheNewtowners

www.facebook.com/RetreatSingers entertain us



with songs from the Coen Brothers' cult film **O Brother, Where Art Thou?**. This is an evening not to be missed, with lots of your favourite foot - stomping songs and music.

Hear more:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HpW_pOESXA

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zMtBv0aFz8



We are delighted to welcome back the marvellous trio **Soiree** to Readifolk on **13th July**.

What they say:

Soiree are Sue Graves, Hector Gilchrist and Steve Poole. They sing a variety of beautiful songs, with fine harmony vocals, harmonica and acoustic guitars. Their aim is to create the warm, relaxing atmosphere of a satisfying musical evening spent with friends. Performing material that is melodic, inspiring, accessible and mostly of a positive bent, Soiree draw widely from the best of contemporary songs, the Tradition and jazz standards, along with the odd tear-jerker and even a bit of dusted - down Rock 'n' Roll! Mostly songs you know and a few hidden gems too, including some of their own.

What others say:

"What a stunningly refreshing night last night! I can't remember when I've enjoyed just sitting and listening quite so much - the three of you make

such a wonderful sound" - *George Wilson, Woolston & Bursledon Folk Club*. "I'm still soaking up the joys of last night's performance by Soiree at Chesham. It was a superb evening, the singing and playing were truly great, and I hope the Group is able to return again soon" - *Geoff Knowles, Tudor Folk*.



What we say:

We look forward to another evening of fine musicianship and beautiful singing from one of Readifolk's favourite trios.

Hear more:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OVeu3a556Q

www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMMRL5QekkU

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ih3ae09a4WU



On tour from New Zealand, **Wild Clovers** bring a bit of Blarney to Readifolk on **27th July**.

What they say:

The Wild Clovers are an energetic Irish band who play Celtic Rock through to the traditional well loved songs, and toe tapping tunes.

What others say:

"The entertainment was superb and the variety was enormous" - *Benny Luiten, RSA*. "The Wild Clovers were just brilliant. Their music was



fantastic and had everyone toe tapping" - *Pauline Ryan, Te Kuiti*.

What we say:

We are really looking forward to what promises to be a lively, interactive evening. Just what the Readifolk audience loves.

Hear more:

www.mypennyworth.com

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9d5cOqiXKJE

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwkr_JRe4GE



On **17th August**, **Jimmy Lee** brings his **Edge of Chaos Orchestra** back to Readifolk.

What they say:

To bring his music to life Jimmy has put together some of the finest musicians he knows to form The Edge of Chaos Orchestra, combining classical and traditional instruments that sail through a challenging variety of genres yet have their own distinctive sound.

What others say:

"Jimmy Lee and his group of musicians sail through an eclectic repertoire of original music from ballads to instrumentals, folk-rock and more. There are great stories woven in beautiful melodies and their live performances simply 'creak' with talent" - *Frank Gutch Jnr, Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange*. "A creative genius, his own self-penned material will surely see Jimmy receiving 'kudos' beyond his wildest dreams" - *RH, Maverick Magazine*.



What we say:

On their last visit to Readifolk we had one of the most memorable evenings that we have had. We look forward to more of the same.

Hear more:

www.edgeofchaosorchestra.co.uk

www.youtube.com/watch?v=uC_3ig3WhGI

www.youtube.com/watch?v=PidMHHoD4Ko



Back by popular demand, **Bram Taylor** appears at Readifolk on **14th September**.

What he says:

Bram entralls his audience with a fine rich voice and entertaining sense of humour, performing an excellent selection of traditional and contemporary material on guitar, duet concertina and baritone ukulele. His powerful vocal quality also lends itself perfectly to a capella singing.



What others say:

"He has a superb voice, engaging stage presence and delivery which evades casual description" - *Flos Headford*. "Bram is the complete package - a superb mix of traditional and contemporary folk with outstanding

guitar work and of course his concertina and incredible voice" - *Chris Davis, The Willows Folk Club*.

What we say:

A lively evening in store - get ready to exercise your vocal chords!

Hear more:

www.bramtaylor.com

www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9_IObjCLGQ

www.youtube.com/watch?v=lc-GS7fx864



On **21st September** we welcome the return of **Damien Barber and Mike Wilson**.

What they say:

Mike and Damien have a rich shared repertoire of traditional songs plus the work of modern folk writers such as Bellamy, Ewan McColl and Mike Waterson.

What others say:

"Nothing but great songs brilliantly sung" - *Mike Harding*. "They entertained us with depth, humour and tons of chat" - *Readifolk Newsletter, Notes Issue 10*.



What we say:

We know what to expect from this highly talented duo and are looking forward enormously to hearing them again at Readifolk.

Hear more:

www.damienandmike.co.uk

www.youtube.com/watch?v=agR5xIR_n4g

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wjir03gMVmk

On 11th March 1810, Marie Louise, the Duchess of Parma, became the second wife of Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France. Bonaparte himself was not at the marriage ceremony, and the two did not actually meet for the first time until 16 days later. She is said to have remarked "You are much better looking than your portrait". Marie Louise was the daughter of the Austrian Emperor, Francis II, and the marriage marked a time of relative stability and peace between the two fractious nations, though her father bitterly resented the arrangement. A year later she bore a son, who Bonaparte named after himself, and proclaimed him to be Emperor of Rome.

The younger Napoleon's life was short, with him dying at 21, probably of TB, and he would hardly have known his father, who was absent, fighting the Napoleonic Wars while the boy was still in infancy. Within a few years, Bonaparte was forced into abdication and exile, but he managed to regain power, briefly, before his final defeat at Waterloo, forcing a second abdication and exile, during which he died.

Napoleon I's abdications resulted in his son becoming Emperor (twice). Napoleon II, who was now only ten, and his mother, were, by this time, both exiles themselves in Austria and his tenures as Emperor were each for little more than a few days. He was probably unaware of these technicalities at the time, as his position would, in any case, have been in name only, without power, before his position was usurped by the restoration of the French monarchy.

Much of his knowledge of his father would have been passed to him as heroic accounts of a man who changed the face of continental Europe and its alliances, both for and against him. Many of his warring campaigns were triumphant, but some, particularly the costly and, ultimately, failed invasion of Russia, and his inability to defeat the old enemy from Britain, overshadowed his victories, and may have caused his son to dream of vicarious revenge.

The bunch of roses, of which this song tells, has been interpreted in several ways - it could represent the coalition of European heads that brought Bonaparte's downfall, or it could be the nations of the

recently formed United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Perhaps more plausibly it is simply the English, of whom the symbol of the rose has long been associated, or the British army, in their red coats, and which was probably Bonaparte's most enduring enemy.

The song eavesdrops on a conversation between Napoleon II and his mother. We hear of the young man's desire to emulate his father's military prowess. In some versions, we hear him remind Marie Louise that his father had reprieved her father's life after the defeat of Austria by France (in fact this may be a bit of balladeering, as the historical accuracy of that detail is not well supported, and this verse is often omitted). They reflect upon the older Bonaparte's defeat at Moscow, where his massed armies were



Napoleon Bonaparte II

reduced to a fraction of their former size, finally storming the city, only to find it deserted and ablaze, the Muscovites having withdrawn to let the Russian winter, and starvation, finally defeat the invaders. We hear Marie Louise cautioning her son against renewing the fight against the English, now part of a stronger United Kingdom. And finally, her son's dying words, lamenting his lost opportunity to avenge his father's defeats, but hoping that his father's actions will, nonetheless, leave an enduring mark upon his enemies.

And those hopes are, perhaps, born out in ways that he would not have imagined. Bonaparte's

leadership in post revolutionary France involved reforms of feudal laws and oppressive taxation, early democracy and secularism, implementation of sewerage systems, and the inception of metrication. These benign social changes may have left a more abiding mark than all the warfare that he pursued.

The earliest existent version of both words and music to this song seems to be that which was collected by William Christie, Dean of Moray, Ross and Caithness, in 1850, from a native of Aberdeenshire, and subsequently published in volume 2 of his *Traditional Ballad Airs*. Many references have this as a Scottish song, though some say its Napoleonic sympathies make it more likely to be Irish. However, it seems to have been popular throughout the whole of Britain in the 19th century, despite its subject.

By the mar - g-i-n of the o - cean, One plea - sant ev'ning in the month of June, The
plea - sant sing - ing black - bird, His char - ming notes did

sweet - ly tune. Was there I spied a - wo - man, La - menting in great grief and woe, Con -

vers - ing with young Bon - a - parte, Con - cerning the bon-ny bunch of ros - es - o

1. By the margin of the ocean,
One pleasant ev'ning in the month of June,
The pleasant singing blackbird,
His charming notes did sweetly tune.
Was there I spied a woman,
Lamenting in great grief and woe,
Conversing with young Bonaparte,
Concerning the bonny bunch of roses-o
2. And then up and spoke the young Napoleon,
And he took hold of his mother's hand,
"Oh mother dear, be patient,
And soon I will take command.
I'll raise a terrible army
And through tremendous danger go.
And in spite of all of the universe
I'll conquer the bonny bunch of roses-o."
3. "When first you saw the Great Napoleon,
You fell down on your bended knee
You asked your father's life of him,
And he's granted it most manfully.
'Twas then he took an army,
And o'er the frozen alps did go;
And he said, "I'll conquer Moscow,
And come back for the bonny bunch of roses-o."
4. "He took three hundred thousand fighting men,
And kings likewise for to join his throng.
He was as well provided for,
Enough to take the whole world alone.
But when he came to Moscow,
All o'erpowered by driving snow
And Moscow was a-blazing,
He lost the bonny bunch of roses-o."
5. "Oh my son, don't speak so venturesome,
For England she has a heart of oak,
And England, and Ireland, and Scotland,
Their unity has never been broke.
And so my son, think on, your father,
In St Helena, his body it lies low,
And you will follow after,
Beware of the bonny bunch of roses-o."
6. "And it's goodbye to my mother forever,
For I am on my dying bed.
Had I lived I might have been clever,
But now I bow my youthful head.
And when our bodies do moulder,
And weeping willows over us do grow,
The deeds of brave Napoleon
Will stain the bonny bunch of roses-o."



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 2014

6 July	O Brother Special www.facebook.com/rareoldtime/info	<i>Music from the Coen brothers' cult film 'O Brother, Where Art Thou?' performed by Rare Old Time Productions, a collaboration of established Reading based musicians & singers.</i>
13 July	Soiree www.soireemusic.co.uk	<i>Hector Gilchrist, Sue Graves and Steve Poole are a fine combination delivering beautiful songs lifted still further by lilting harmonies and liquid guitars.</i>
20 July	Singers Night	<i>The usual format - a song, a tune, a poem, a joke or just come and listen and join in the friendly banter.</i>
27 July	Wild Clovers www.mypennyworth.com	<i>On tour from New Zealand, The Wild Clovers perform their own versions of rousing Irish songs that you can't help but clap or tap your feet to, and as often as not, sing along with.</i>

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

3 Aug	Club Closed	<i>It's the holiday weekend and Festival time. Business as usual next week.</i>
10 Aug	Theme 'Home & Away'	<i>Songs about your holiday destinations perhaps? Lots of other links possible - you decide.</i>
17 Aug	Jimmy Lee and the Edge of Chaos Orchestra www.edgeofchaosorchestra.co.uk	<i>Bringing together musicians from the world of folk and classical music, this ensemble will delight and surprise you.</i>
24 Aug	Singers Night	<i>Another DIY night when you have the chance to show us what you can do.</i>
31 Aug	Club Closed	<i>It's another holiday weekend and time for Wallingford Bunkfest. Open as usual next week.</i>

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

7 Sept	Theme 'Crime & Punishment'	<i>A popular 'folky' theme. Let's hear your songs on the subject.</i>
14 Sept	Bram Taylor www.bramtaylor.com	<i>An entertaining artist with a distinctive voice and relaxed stage presence. Lots of opportunities for joining in with your favourite songs.</i>
21 Sept	Damien Barber & Mike Wilson www.damienandmike.co.uk	<i>Powerful singing with guitar and button accordion accompaniment - delivered with a lively rapport with the audience.</i>
28 Sept	Singers Night	<i>It's tonsil exercising time again. Come and surprise us!</i>

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

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

Una - 0118 9483145 or Anne - 0118 9613586
una@readifolk.org.uk anne@readifolk.org.uk

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

The Readifolk Radio Show is on the internet every Wednesday and Friday evening 7 - 9 p.m.
<http://blast1386.reading-college.ac.uk> click on 'Listen Live'.