

Notes

The Newsletter
of Readifolk

Issue 26

Reading's folk song
and music club

Summer 2015



Delicious harmonies: **Said The Maiden** come
to Readifolk on **27th September**

Folk Heroes

His sudden death in March will have saddened the many guitarists and folk musicians he inspired.

Steve Bingham gives a brief recap of the life of

John Renbourn

John Renbourn was born in Marylebone, London, in 1944. His main musical interest at school was classical guitar, but by the late 1950s he was taking an interest in skiffle, which led him to the likes of Josh White and Big Bill Broonzy. By 1961 Renbourn had started to make money from his music. In that year he toured the South-West with Mac MacLeod - this was probably a mixture of pub gigs and busking. MacLeod was later to inspire Donovan and have an unsuccessful career in folk and rock music. On the other hand, Renbourn began to develop a style of his own, bringing together his various musical enthusiasms - early music, jazz blues and folk. In 1963, Renbourn and MacLeod recorded three demos of traditional American songs, and Renbourn made his first appearance on a commercial record, backing the American blues singer Doris Henderson on her album *There You Go*.

By 1965 Renbourn had become a regular at the London folk clubs that went in for guitar music and had formed a duo with fellow guitarist Bert Jansch. In 1966 the duo released the influential album *Bert and John*. In the folk clubs both Jansch and Renbourn worked with other musicians and gradually the group Pentangle came together.

Pentangle's rise to fame was rapid. Tours of Britain and Europe were followed by a tour of America in 1968 on which they appeared at some of the U.S.'s most prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall in New York and the Newport Folk Festival. They recorded several successful albums between 1967 and 1972 but their only single success was with a song called *Night Flight*, which became the theme tune for the TV series *Take Three Girls*. Pentangle broke up in the mid-1970s, and Renbourn continued with his solo career.

In the late 1970s, Renbourn formed a new duo with the American guitarist Stefan Grossman. They produced two studio albums and one live album. Their music was fairly similar to that which Renbourn had created with Jansch.

Between 1980 and 1983, Renbourn took a break from touring to take a degree in musical composition at Dartington College of Arts in Devon. He later joined the faculty to run the first degree course in England on playing the steel-stringed guitar.

In 1988, Renbourn was invited to perform one of a series of concerts in New York's Central Park. He formed Ship

of Fools to fulfil this engagement. Ship of Fools, turned out to be a short-lived band with the singer/songwriter Steve Tilston, Tilston's partner, the Irish singer, Maggie Boyle and flautist Tony Roberts. This band recorded a good studio album but the recording for a live album disappeared after a row between their manager and the sound engineer.



Renbourn continued to tour and record throughout the 1990s and 2000s. He worked with a number of different musicians, including Archie Fisher, and often performed with his old Pentangle colleague Jacqui McShee, as well as taking part in the much celebrated Pentangle reunion of 2008. He also made his fifth visit to Japan, touring with Japanese and American musicians. During this period he concentrated on composition and contributed music to the films *Scream Out Loud* and *Driving Lessons*. His last released album was *Palermo Snow* which featured mostly classical pieces, with strong folk and jazz influences.

Although John Renbourn was chiefly known as a folk musician he was respected by musicians from across the musical spectrum. Many of his albums featured early music pieces, notably *The Lady and the Unicorn*. He also published a number of music books. Some, like *Songs for the Guitar* were of his own compositions, and others, like *Complete Anthology of Medieval and Renaissance Music for the Guitar* and *Anthology of O'Carolan for Fingerstyle Guitar* contained his arrangements of others' compositions.

John Renbourn was married twice, first in 1966 to Judy Hills, a fellow student at Kingston College of Arts. They set up home in London and had two children. The marriage lasted until 1971. His second marriage was to Jo Watson. They lived in Devon and had two children. This marriage lasted until 1994. After that John moved to San Francisco for a couple of years before returning to Britain and settling down in the Scottish borders. John died at his home in Hawick, Scotland, on 26 March 2015. At the time he was in the middle of a tour with Wiz Jones, another artist whose career started in London in the early 1960s.

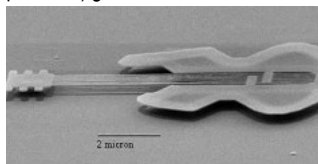
Many of John Renbourn's recordings are readily available either as CDs or downloads, so you should have no problems getting to hear this inspirational musician. For guitarists wishing to set themselves a challenge, many of his music books can be found on Amazon and in music book shops.

News and Stuff

Oxford City Council is introducing a new code of conduct for buskers, which includes the admonition "Very noisy instruments such as bagpipes are not permitted", also that a busker must "Smile, enjoy yourself and entertain others" and ensure that they do not "Perform in a manner that is dangerous to themselves or to the public". The code is being brought in under the Public Space Protection Order, which is intended to address anti-social behaviour, and means that those breaking the code could face fines of £100, rising to £1,000 if the case goes to court. This has generated protest, not only from buskers and the public, but from opposing councillors, too, with a campaign called Keep Streets Live concerned that such measures may be adopted in other towns, too.

Winners at this year's BBC Folk Awards included Josienne Clarke & Ben Walker (Best Duo), and Peggy Seeger (Best Original Song - *Swim to the Star*) who have featured in previous Readifolk Radio Shows' *Album of the Year* roundups. Other winners include The Young'uns (Best Group), and many regulars will remember their extremely entertaining set at Readifolk not so long ago.

The world's smallest (and, quite possibly, most pointless) guitar is about 10 microns long. Before you go



looking for a ruler that has microns on it, the nano-guitar is about one twentieth of the diameter of a hair.

It was created by researchers at Cornell University, developing techniques in nano-technology. Each string is about 100 atoms wide, and can be plucked with a laser, producing a frequency of about 40 megahertz - about 2,000 times that of the highest audible note, and about 14 octaves above middle C. This is believed to be the highest note ever recorded, though reports are vague about whether this was done with a nano-microphone and a nano-tape-recorder.

Ashley Hutchings was awarded the MBE in the recent Birthday Honours list. The veteran musician has been involved with acts like Fairport Convention, Steeleye Span, and The Albion Band for over 50 years, and the award is in recognition of his services to folk music.

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Farewells

John Renbourn - died 26/3/15 aged 70. Inspirational guitarist, See Steve Bingham's appraisal on page 2.

BB King - died 14/5/15 aged 89. A giant of the blues, who probably popularised the idiom amongst both black and white audiences better than anyone else. He rose from poverty as a plantation worker to world class status as a guitarist, and had a distinctive, lyrical playing style that was instantly recognisable. He was still performing over 200 shows a year into his seventies.

Flora MacNeil - died 15/5/15 aged 86. Folk singer from Barra in the Outer Hebrides. In the 1950s she became a significant figure in Alan Lomax's archive of recorded world folk music, subsequently touring Europe and America, and recording two acclaimed albums.

Jean Ritchie - died 1/6/15 aged 92. Exponent of American roots music, she did much to popularise the Appalachian dulcimer, from the Kentucky mountain community she grew up in. In 1952 she released her first record, and also gained a scholarship to study the links between her own cultural music and that of Britain, travelling with a tape recorder to collect songs from around the UK.

Ronnie Gilbert - died 6/6/15 aged 88. Original member of seminal American folk group The Weavers, which also included Pete Seeger, the group achieved great popularity until it was dogged by the McCarthyist blacklists of the 1950s. Eventually disbanding in the early 1960s, Ronnie turned to the theatre as both actor and writer, and also became a qualified psychotherapist. In the 1980s, a series of reunion concerts persuaded her to sing again, and she also worked with Holly Near. She then continued to tour into her eighties.



Shows Worth Seeing

Previewing the new season of guest nights coming to Readifolk.

The delightful **Louise Jordan** makes a long awaited visit to Readifolk on **5th July**.

What she says:

Louise plays original works, musical settings of literature as well as her own unique arrangements of traditional material. Accompanying herself on piano and guitar Louise's songs cross musical



divides; influenced by acoustic, classical and folk, Louise's music appeals to all.

What others say:

"A rising star" - *The Telegraph*. "She has a

purity of voice which melts the toughest of hearts and a delivery which unsettles the most discerning critic" - *iDigStroud*.

What we say:

We have seen her superb performances at Wallingford Bunkfest and look forward to an enchanting evening at Readifolk.

Hear more:

www.louisejordan.co.uk

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fTK891fkqA

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftmhVguV5eo



On **12th July** our guest is the highly acclaimed singer/songwriter **John Conolly**.

What he says:

Hailing from Grimsby in Lincolnshire, John Conolly has been writing and singing folk songs for over forty years. Many of his works have made their way into other artists' repertoires, with his song *Fiddler's Green* a popular favourite (as well as often mistakenly being known as a "traditional" song!). Other classics include *The Grimsby Lads*, *Punch and Judy Man* and *Send Us A Postcard*. His well crafted songs pair well with his easy



going charm and sense of humour, making him a firm favourite with both audiences and fellow musicians.

What others say:

"John's songs have

been performed and recorded by many well-known artistes – people like The Dubliners, Liam Clancy, Malinky, The McCalmans, Roy Bailey, The Yetties and George Hamilton IV, to name but a few – but there is a special buzz in hearing them sung by the composer" - *Faversham Folk Club*.

What we say:

This is a welcome return to the club for this 'living legend' of the folk world.

Hear more:

www.myspace.com/johnconolly

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-yzh8bO6PM

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsNfePZI07A



On **19th July** we have a return visit of the wonderful **Anthony John Clarke**.

What he says:

Chances are you've met Anthony John at an event on the folk music circuit. He has been involved in music for many years now, having recorded twelve CD albums, three CD singles and published two songbooks. He has played in hundreds of clubs and festivals in the UK, Europe, Australasia and the USA, and his songs and career receive good coverage. His shows are funny, challenging and extremely popular. Anthony John Clarke is one of the music scene's real gentlemen.



What others say:

"He storms it every time he gets on stage. Brilliant!!!!" - *Dave Pegg, Fairport Convention*. "One word. ... Outstanding!" - *Niall Crozier, Belfast Telegraph*.

What we say:

He gave a brilliant performance at his last visit to Readifolk. Expect more of the same this time.

Hear more:

www.anthonyjohnclarke.com

www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2UcST6I2e8

www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkacUnCjHq

An entertaining evening with **Si Barron** is on **16th August**.

What he says:

Si Barron is a folk singer, songwriter, superb self-taught musician based in Somerset. He has a deep relationship with English traditional music and a gift for turning time-honoured melodies into fast foot-stomping anthems on guitar, dulcimer or pedal organ.



What others say:

"Simon Barron, known through his work with the duo Barron Brady, is an exquisite guitarist and a fine interpreter of traditional and contemporary folk songs. He plays and sings with great integrity and skill and his guitar

arrangements are a sparkling accompaniment to his crystal clear voice" - *David Francis, Nailsea Folk Club*. "I think he's a really, really fine guitarist and an even finer interpreter of traditional and contemporary folk songs" - *Mike Harding*.

What we say:

We have heard Si at Readifolk in the excellent duo Barron Brady and anticipate another great evening with Si as a solo artist.

Hear more:

www.sibarron.eu
www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2N1Rzt-oPw
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChGuxbqYLgc



On **30th August** expect a lively evening from **James Bell & the Half Moon All Stars**.



What they say:

James Bell and the Half Moon All Stars is Oxford's latest folk big band extravaganza.

The band is fronted by local legend James Bell and plays a wide selection of original and traditional material with infectious stage energy!

What others say:

"James Bell and the Half Moon All Stars provided a different experience altogether with energetic songs more fitting to Beck than Bert Jansch" - *Oxford Times*.

www.readifolk.org.uk

What we say:

Be prepared to join in with lots of your favourite chorus songs.

Hear more:

<http://jamesbellcentral.net/the-half-moon-all-stars>
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ei3QQqWEksA
www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJZ1louMzsE



The **Askew Sisters** make a very welcome return visit on **13th September**.

What they say:

Emily and Hazel Askew are fast becoming one of the most popular and respected duos on the English folk scene. From dark ballads to uplifting dance tunes, they play with driving energy and the unity of two people who have played together all their lives.

What others say:

"Simply fantastic traditional music - look out, England - the sisters of stomp are heading your way!" - *James Fagan and Nancy Kerr*. "Hazel's rich gutsy voice and inventive melodeon playing, combined with the skill of Emily's singing fiddle or soulful cello, are a new force to be reckoned with!" - *Stirrings Magazine*.



What we say:

We are delighted to welcome back to the club this young, talented duo whose performance improves on each visit.

Hear more:

www.askewsisters.co.uk
www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDMQYPNszRo
www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Sr64UkN9so



On **20th September** **Steve Hicks & Lynn Goulbourn** entertain us with superb vocals and breathtaking finger-style guitar.

What they say:

A refreshing fusion of soulful vocals and breathtaking fingerstyle guitar.

What others say:

"Astonishing quality" - *Exile Music Festival*. "Cracking repertoire... some top drawer original



songs and Steve Hicks is easily the outstanding acoustic guitarist regularly working the folk club circuit" - *Eddie Walker*.

What we say:
They did a floor spot at the club last year which impressed us mightily. Don't miss this opportunity of seeing this exceptional duo.

Hear more:

www.hicksandgoulbourn.com
www.youtube.com/watch?v=061K90oOULU
www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyrvKCvBPai



The all-female trio **Said The Maiden** bring wonderful vocals and a plethora of instruments on **27th September**.

What they say:

The band has quickly picked up momentum and found themselves playing at some of the best known folk clubs in the country, and opening for some of the biggest names on the scene.

What others say:

"Their delicious harmonies have been making a big impression on the folk scene" - *Folk All*. "I like anything these girls do.... their harmonies are extraordinary" - *Dave Swarbrick*.

What we say:

Another fine group spotted at Wallingford Bunkfest. We are sure that you will be delighted by their performance.



Hear more:

www.saidthemaids.co.uk
www.youtube.com/watch?v=i106T40fxZ0
www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3DKBTdHbyc

A Song Worth Singing

As with most traditional songs, there is no definite origin to this one, but it was seen in print by the first half of the 1700s. F J Child collected several variants of it, and this was expanded by Bertrand Bronson, who developed Child's work, and found about 130 versions and several different tunes. This generally indicates that a song has been around for a long time, being adapted or mis-remembered enough times for new variants to become established.



Author Nick Toches, in his book **Country**, about the origins of rock and roll, conjectures (perhaps somewhat unconvincingly) that one variant, called *Black Jack Davy*, can be compared to the Ancient Greek myth of Orpheus in the Underworld. The song has also become a favourite target for contemporary parodies, with versions about the misdeeds of travelling salesmen, beatniks and hippies, and gun-slinging cowboys.

The Raggle-Taggle Gypsies

This is a song about romantic ideals, about disenchantment with materialism, about love taking precedence over wealth; or it is the tale of a feckless woman, easily swayed by the shallow charms of an exotic stranger, who casts aside her

commitment to marriage on a whim. Or it is a song of rebellion against the strictures of expectation and power; or it is a tale of regret for too hasty a decision. And strangely (or maybe rightfully), it is the person who, on the face of it, has been wronged, that seems to

attract the least of our sympathy.

In a time when marriage within the aristocracy often had a political, rather than a romantic aspect, being a means of uniting power and wealth between families, forming dynasties and alliances, it was likely that a young daughter may have had little say in who she became betrothed to; in that light, the song could even be seen as a

commentary about the ruthless scheming of feudal power being undermined by the clever deceptions of the underdogs.

Some people relate this song to one from the 1600s, which in turn seems based on a local legend concerning the 6th Earl of Cassilis in Ayrshire, whose wife Lady Jean Hamilton, is said to have run away with Johnny Faa, supposed King of the Gypsies. They were tracked down by Cassilis, and Faa and his men hanged, and the faithless Lady Jean spent the rest of her life incarcerated. In the versions *Seven Yellow Gypsies*, or *Johnny Faa*, Cassilis and Faa are referred to by name, and the song recounts the executions. However, scholars tell us that there

is no evidence to support any of this having any basis in fact.

Although *The Raggle Taggle Gypsies* is often attributed as being Scottish, or from the Borders, it seems to be a well established part of the Irish canon, too, and versions of it can also be found throughout Europe and North America. Many of us will remember learning it at school, largely due to Cecil Sharpe's efforts, as he included it in his collection *English Folk Songs for Schools*, and later it would feature in the BBC schools broadcasts of *Singing Together*. Popular recordings can be found by various Waterson/Carthy lineups, as well as by Planxty and Christy Moore, The Waterboys and many others.

Arrangement
advice: Ed

There were three old gypsies came to our hall door, They came so brave and bold-ly - o, And

one sang high, and one sang low, and the other sang a raggle-taggle gyp-sie - o

1. There were three old gypsies came to our hall door
They came so brave and boldly-o
And one sang high and one sang low
And the other sang a raggle-taggle gypsy-o
2. It was upstairs downstairs the lady went
Put on her suit of leather-o
And there was a cry from around the door
She's away wi' the raggle-taggle gypsy-o
3. It was late that night when the lord came in
Enquiring for his lady-o
And the servant girl she said to the lord
"She's away wi' the raggle-taggle gypsy-o"
4. "Well saddle for me my milk white steed
My black horse is not speedy-o
And I will ride till I seek my bride
She's away wi' the raggle-taggle gypsy-o"
5. Now he rode east and he rode west
He rode north and south also
And when he rode to a wide open field
It was there that he spied his lady-o
6. "How could you leave your goose feather bed
Your blankets strewn so comely-o?
And how could you leave your newly wedded lord
All for a raggle-taggle gypsy-o?"
7. "What care I for my goose feather bed
My blankets strewn so comely-o?
Tonight I lie in a wide open field
In the arms of a raggle-taggle gypsy-o"
8. "How could you leave your house and your land?
How could you leave your money-o?
How could you leave your only wedded lord
All for a raggle-taggle gypsy-o?"
9. "What care I for my house and my land?
What care I for my money-o?
I'd rather have a kiss from the yellow gypsy's lips
I'm away wi' the raggle-taggle gypsy-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 2015

5th July	Louise Jordan www.louisejordan.co.uk	<i>Louise is a young, award-winning singer, composer and multi-instrumentalist who is rapidly making an impact on the acoustic music scene.</i>
12th July	John Conolly www.myspace.com/johnconolly	<i>A highly-acclaimed singer/songwriter with guitar & melodeon accompaniment. John is the writer of 'Fiddlers Green', 'The Trawling Trade', 'Punch & Judy Man' and many more.</i>
19th July	Anthony John Clarke www.anthonyjohnclarke.com	<i>A brilliant singer/songwriter with a unique performance. "Anthony John is quite simply a national Treasure" - Fairport Convention</i>
26th July	Singers Night	<i>The usual format – a song, a tune, a poem, a joke or just come and listen. Everyone is welcome.</i>

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2nd Aug	Club Closed	<i>It's the holiday weekend and Festival time. Business as usual next week.</i>
9th Aug	Theme 'Sun, Sea and Sand'	<i>Lots of possibilities with tonight's theme. Come and surprise us.</i>
16th Aug	Si Barron www.sibarron.eu	<i>"A really, really fine guitarist and an even finer interpreter of traditional and contemporary folk songs." - Mike Harding</i>
23rd Aug	Singers Night	<i>Another opportunity for you to entertain us. All standards welcome.</i>
30th Aug	James Bell & The Half Moon All Stars http://jamesbellcentral.net/the-half-moon-all-stars	<i>A really lively band from Oxfordshire. Be prepared to join in with lots of your favourite chorus songs!</i>

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6th Sept	Club Closed	<i>It's another holiday weekend and time for Wallingford Bunkfest. Open as usual next week.</i>
13th Sept	The Askew Sisters www.askewsisters.co.uk	<i>This delightful young fiddle and melodeon duo play mainly traditional music and songs in a modern and exciting way.</i>
20th Sept	Steve Hicks & Lynn Goulbourn www.hicksandgoulbourn.com	<i>A refreshing fusion of soulful vocals and breathtaking finger-style guitar. Their repertoire includes traditional, contemporary and self-penned songs and music in a variety of styles.</i>
27th Sept	Said The Maiden www.saidthemaideen.co.uk	<i>A delightful all-female trio singing traditional and contemporary English, Irish & American folk songs, some in a-cappella 3-part harmony, some with instrumental accompaniment (guitar, flute, violin, accordion, mandolin, clarinet, whistle, ukulele)</i>

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

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

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The Readifolk Radio Show is on the internet every Wednesday 7 - 9pm and Friday 5 - 7pm
<http://blast1386.reading-college.ac.uk> click on 'Listen Live'. And now on www.bluesandrootsradio.co.uk