

Notes

The Newsletter of Readifolk

Issue 4

Reading's folk song
and music club

Autumn 2009

Wassail!

Club News

The programme for the fourth quarter of 2009 is on the back of this newsletter. We have an excellent list of performers booked to appear over the next three months.

We already have a lot of interest in our second Hiring Fair on 8 November. Those who were at last year's fair will know what an entertaining evening this is. We expect to have six acts vying for the prize of a paid guest spot at a future date. Full details will be available at the club.

You may have noticed that 21 South Street, a Reading Council arts venue, has started to put on occasional folk concerts on Sunday evenings, with Belshazzar's Feast booked for 6 December.

We are pleased that folk is being promoted by Reading Arts but not when it clashes with the town's folk club, so we have expressed our displeasure to Reading Arts at the unwelcome competition on Sunday nights.

We have agreed, on this one occasion, to close Readifolk on 6 December, as we are sure that many of you will wish to see Belshazzar's Feast. In return, Reading Arts have agreed to a concessionary admission price of £8 for Readifolk members instead of the normal price of £10. They have also offered us reductions on many of the other folk concerts which are being held on nights other than Sunday. To obtain concessionary tickets see Una on any club night.

Yet another good reason for coming to Readifolk!



Penny Whistlers by Vladimir Tretchikoff; circa 1950

Rumblings from the Roots

Rumours of the imminent demise of folk music are much exaggerated. But many small folk clubs struggle to survive. One reason may be the decline in the number of pubs able to host them. Other venues often charge rent, which a small club may be unable to afford. Small clubs like ours will generally avoid raising entry fees for fear of losing clientele, and we are fortunate in finding a new home at RISC (thanks, Una, for arranging that).

Another reason may be declining audiences, the average age of which seems to be rising. This is not surprising, as many of us became enamoured of this genre of music during the sixties' folk revival. But there are plenty of youngsters discovering folk music too, and some superb performers are among them, as Radio 2's Young Folk Awards proves. This year's winners are local duo Joe and Megan Henwood, whose mum was a regular at Nettlebed. Joe plays saxophone, which is hardly a traditional folk instrument. But this begs the question: what is folk music, anyway? The sixties revival spawned Fairport Convention, Steeleye Span, as well as Pentangle, which is what - folk-rock, folk-jazz? John Renbourn, Bert Jansch and Ralph McTell all emulated American blues players, while the Young Tradition followed English traditional songs, as well as mixing it up with newer songs like Cyril Tawney's 'Chicken On a Raft'.

Readifolk embraces a broad definition of folk music, hosting performers as diverse as a capella trio Notts Alliance, singer-songwriters like Jez Lowe, traditional musicians like Belshazzar's Feast, and the Tindall Family with their covers of pop songs. Guests also include old and young, from Cyril Tawney to the Askew Sisters.

So, is folk music facing terminal decline? Not if you consider the numbers attending folk festivals, or the popularity of folk performers like Seth Lakeman, or the folk influence on many young singer-songwriters, or young talent like Sam Carter (sounding like Nic Jones and Martin Simpson he will be huge). No, broadly defined, folk music is thriving.

But, your local club needs your support to remain financially viable, and as a venue for new talent. But also because folk music is not just about listening, but about singing together, whether the chorus of a new song by a promising young singer-songwriter or a well known traditional song from one of the regulars at a singers' night.

Malcolm

Instruments of Joy

Taking a look at the instruments of the folk idiom.
This issue:

The Concertina

Sara Daniels, singer, songwriter, concertina player and Readifolk regular, on the little squeeze-box...

My limited knowledge of concertinas is due to the fact that I have spent more time in the last 25 years learning how to play the instrument than learning about it. For the first year of my journey I owned an 'English' double action system concertina, a thing of rare beauty with each button playing the same note either pulling or pushing on the bellows. I struggled with it for a year but felt I was getting nowhere with the rhythm side of the Irish dance tunes that I wanted to master.

Noel Hill a renowned Irish concertina player, with whom I had classes, told me that if I wanted to play dance music why make it hard for myself, get an 'Anglo' single action concertina. With the push and draw action, similar to a mouth organ effect of blow and suck, the bellows play a different note on each button, which by changing direction of the bellows at desired moments in the tune, makes it easier to get the bounce in the music to lift the feet of the dancers.

So I changed to an Anglo Concertina in the key of C / G which had 30 buttons arranged in three rows with bass on the left hand running through to the higher notes played by the right hand, plus one air button and one C drone button, and I have never regretted it.

Concertinas were made in Germany and England from 1834 onwards. Carl Friedrich Uhlig made the first German model. It was cheaply made, square ended with one row of buttons and by several accounts rather hard on the ears of the musically sensitive. A notable American police justice in Jersey City commented that 'anyone playing such an instrument at 11 o'clock at night should be sentenced to the maximum sentence allowed and spend five years in jail' (A Brief History of the Concertina in America by Dan Worrel).

Hundreds of thousands of these concertinas were shipped by steamer to America and sold for a dollar each. With two rows of buttons, they sold for \$5. Being small, cheap and portable they were taken up and played by the settlers and immigrants all over the U.S. and Canada in musical styles as diverse as the working class population themselves. The concertina was a favourite with the Mormon pioneers and the Salvation Army used them to head their bands at the rally calls. The concertina was mainly the instrument of the working and slumming classes with whom the Sally Army wished to empathize and convert.

The English makers, Wheatstone, and later Jeffries, Lachenal, Jones and others, had always made far superior instruments developing the hexagonal shape. The title 'Anglo' was added to their improved German single action concertina, ('German' was dropped at the onset of World War 1). It is thought that George Jones added the third row of buttons with sharps and flats and called it 'Anglo/Chromatic'. Although the English makers went on to develop many different styles and systems of free reed instruments,

the 'Anglo' stayed the favourite among the lower and working classes. The more expensive English made instruments were not exported to America in the huge numbers that the cheap German models enjoyed and were mostly taken over to the States by Irish and English emigrants.

The term 'English' given to the double action concertina, with the same note playing on either the push or pull of the bellows, was considered by the musical elite as the superior instrument for playing classical and semi classical pieces. The ability to play long fast, legato runs made it easier for an amateur musician to play the written pieces of music that by the 1860's were increasingly being published.



April 5th Sunday - I'm in Cornwall for the weekend having tunes with friends. Dick Shanks, a fine fiddle player and singer, and his wife Trish. They moved to Cornwall 10 years ago. They were regular visitors to The Claddagh Ring, formally The Kennet Arms in Reading when Paddy Coyne ran it.

Paddy, a renowned accordion player, and Dick were familiar to all the musicians who frequented the many sessions played there at that time. It's a joy to be down here playing some of the old tunes. The concertina and fiddle are well suited. Dick's fiddle playing is of the old style, no hurry and plenty of time to remember how the tune goes.

The popularity of the concertina has risen in recent times with the revival of traditional folk music, but compared to the extensive appeal it enjoyed in the hands of ordinary people in the late 1800's, especially in America when music for the masses was taking a hold and nearly every home would have had

some kind of musical instrument with which to entertain themselves and others, we are today indeed impoverished.

Looking on the web I see there are several concertina makers selling their wares. The best ones still seem to be modelled on the Wheatstone and Jeffries, but I doubt that this fantastic little instrument will ever be as popular as it was. Between 1860 and 1900 the concertina was equal to the flute, fiddle and banjo, and was even accepted, albeit grudgingly, by the classical world.

But by the 1920's the American big bands and dance halls called for more volume and the accordion and piano won the day. In England, Ireland and Australia the concertina remained a favourite in more confined surroundings, not all homes had the room for a piano, but the accordion severely dented sales. The demise of parlour playing and music hall entertainment in England brought the concertina heyday virtually to a close.

If you Google 'concertinas', or use Wikipedia, there is enough information there to keep you occupied for a while. But even better, get a concertina and learn to play it; that's much more fun.

Guest Night Reviews

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

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

Soiree

Soiree are Sue Graves, Hector Gilchrist and Steve Poole who are based in Surrey and have been together since 2004. Focussing on material that is melodic, easy on the ear and, "generally of a positive bent", they draw widely from the Tradition, the best of contemporary song-makers, jazz standards, the odd tear-jerker and even a bit of dusted down Rock 'n' Roll!We were treated to James Taylor, Donna Long, Hoagy Carmichael, Stan Rogers, Joni Mitchell, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Kirsty McColl and Janis Ian, interspersed with both traditional and more modern material. Whilst songs of old men lusting after young maidens were included, the more recent material was most memorable; lyrics such as "troubled days while tall towers fall" (9/11), showing how folk music begins. Similarly, the tear jerker, 'Waterlily' was about a journalist whose fiancé was murdered in Bosnia whilst waiting for a visa to leave. Steve was at his best on guitar and Hector excelled with his haunting harmonica accompaniment.

Towards the close of the first half, just as I thought we had heard their full range, I was stunned by Susan's rendition of Joni Mitchell's 'Carey' which did justice to the original, with the full range of high and low notes. Susan said it was in the middle of the set, as any earlier, she couldn't hit the high notes and any later she'd miss the lows!



Having ended the first set on this high, we were not disappointed in the second, especially when the familiar guitar riff opened for 'Diamonds and Rust'. If we thought Susan was good as Joni, we were left spellbound when she did Joan and the song is still playing in my head. Then, we were taken to Kirsty McColl's chip shop, with Hector in an Elvis wig, playing the banana shaker but thankfully brought back to sanity with Susan singing Bob Dylan's 'Forever Young'. Few women can sing Dylan and it is probably no coincidence that Susan, who excels with Joan Baez, is one of the few . . . then the end came with Janis Ian's, 'I Wish You Joy' and the Mamas and the Papas for an encore.

Robert

Andy Mathewson & Liz Harrington

Readifolk on 19th July kicked off by Malcolm, helped along by the 'vocal locals' on the chorus of 'When the Green Man Walks'. I first heard this song from John of Australian duo Cloudstreet. It's a celebration of the traditional "Greenman" (did he write it?).

Floor musicians Anne and Ed followed with a couple of lively



Morris Dance tunes on melodeon and banjo, before our guests took to the floor and kicked off their set with wonderfully lively blues numbers from the 1920s, made famous by Memphis Minnie of the Chicago music scene: 'Me and My Chauffeur Blues'; 'Dragging My Heart Around'.

Liz and Andy were loudly encouraged to produce more of the same, and Andy's guitar playing had us enthralled and he was watched avidly by our regular players who were hanging onto each bit of the magical finger-picking styles.

Liz's voice was rather light for the traditional blues we remember from the big African/American voices of the 20s and 30s. However, she sang with great feeling and melody. The songs were sympathetically delivered with clear, crisply audible lyrics. It really was lovely to hear the words to each song.

A Bessie Smith classic followed: 'I Want a Little Sugar in My Bowl', which even I remember from childhood, sung by Nina Simone. A reflection of the hard times of the 30s, with perhaps more than one level of interpretation of the lyrics.

An early interval, then Alison McNamara gave only her second floor spot ever, with a lovely Valentine number 'Old Lovers'... "First they fight/ Then they turn out the light". Well it was her wedding anniversary, and sung for Danny, no doubt. We all loved her second song, and you can't stop Readifolkies singing. "The sky's erupting. I must go where it's quiet" was a very appropriate choice. Alison was influenced by Ralph McTell's Red Sky Album's 'Farewell Angelina', but this old hippy remembers Joan Baez's version. Well sung Alison. The final burst of songs began with Malcolm's introspective self penned "The Road Divides".

Without wasting time, Liz and Andy gave us a nifty roaring 20s number with the memorial words "Was I drunk? Was he handsome? Did Moma give him hell!". Andy can certainly make that guitar sing and each performance was loudly appreciated.

Hoagy Carmichael's 'Georgia on My Mind', made famous by Ray Charles, sung smoothly by Liz, accompanied with lots of nice trills and clever guitar tricks by Andy, was followed by Liz's solo of a Patsy Cline song 'Walking After Midnight', a stomping rhythmic number with foot tapping percussion from the audience. I would love to hear Liz let go and give a bit more welly, as she has a great voice.

All the songs were given a great introduction, and Andy was very generous with his blues knowledge, giving us much of the histories of songs, singers and geography of the blues. Even Radio 2's Russel Davies programme got a good plug! That's where he first heard Pearl Bailey's version of Loretta Lynn's 'Here You Come With Love', a depression era song of domestic tensions. Nothing really changes.

Andy's solo was inspired while out walking and thinking of his Devonian roots 'When We Were Quite Young'. Andy was inspired to write contemporary old time blues songs, and I feel he should keep writing. And Singing. And Playing. And prove that the wheel of life and the struggle which is at the heart of the blues, goes on and on. How about 'Credit Crunch Blues'?

As a tribute to 50 years of Motown, our guests sang 'Walk Away Renee' and 'More Than I Can Say'. The participation revealed the average age of the club! Andy seemed surprised and delighted by the response, and enjoyed conducting the massed voices in 'Honkey Tonk Moon' at the end of a very enjoyable evening. We had a great chance to taste the blues of the 20th Century, and appreciated blues alive and kicking in the 21st Century. Liz's soft dulcet tones, although sometimes a little light, were perfectly complemented by Andy's guitar style. Andy's gifted finger picking techniques were highly intricate and polished, as demonstrated in 'City of New Orleans', 'Blind Blake's Rag' and 'Muskrat Ramble'. The amazing riffs had me spellbound and wanting to hear more. An outstanding, polished performance. Thank you, Liz and Andy, from someone who was never interested in the blues.

M&M

Jerry Epstein & Ralph Bodington

What sort of society do you get when you turn off the TV, take the batteries out of the iPod, consign the Playstation to a suitable, wheeled, receptacle that lives by the back gate, silence all mobile phones, and disconnect the internet? It's hard to remember, isn't it? Whether we want it or not, we have ready-made entertainment provided at every opportunity; we are distracted by it in every shop, dentist's waiting room and Post Office queue. Seldom are we required to make our own entertainment. Televisions are left on all day, often in several rooms, exorcising the silence; radios exude banality as if it were aural air-freshener, and quietness has become a hazy memory of some far-off place. No one has much chance to whistle a tune to themselves anymore.

But Jerry Epstein and Ralph Bodington, over from America,



You can help...

Fancy writing something for the newsletter?

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

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

Whatever ideas you have we'd like to hear more, so contact Stewart - I'm often at guest nights, or you can email me - stewart@readifolk.org.uk

and neither of them any longer in the flush of youth, can clearly recall such days. Their forte is the opposite to so many of the values we see around us - the pair of them are uncharismatic, unassuming and unpretentious. They just sing, and play a little. It seems to me that this must be what used to happen when family and friends once gathered together, and someone would start to sing - unremarkable and uncomplicated. Give us a song, Jerry; play for us, Ralph.

Now, it has to be said that this was a low-key evening - you had to pay attention if you were going to be entertained by these two, and I did hear one or two comments, during the interval and afterwards, that expressed the view that the whole evening was (how shall I put it) something of a disappointment. The second half of their set proved more interesting than the first, but it's not for me to defend them against the view that they were, perhaps, just a little too laid back for this audience - almost to the point of appearing aloof. Actually, I think that may have been a bit of a cultural divide: sometimes 'relaxed' in American English seems to erroneously translate into 'arrogant' in British English. And it's a shame to let personality cloud the performance - after all, the song is the thing, not the singer. Well, not always, anyway.

But there were good things here; some damn interesting songs, mostly sung by Jerry, who also produced the occasional delight on the concertina; some thunderingly good banjo playing from Ralph, who also sang a little, both as accompanist and occasionally solo. Songs were mostly drawn from America's agricultural and labouring past, including the likes of 'The Boll Weevil', 'Old Paint', 'John Henry', and also 'Time has Made a Change in Me' and 'Been All Around This Whole Round World'.

These two are not a duo, but combined forces for the tour. They have independent careers and collaborations, and both have produced CDs of their work. This may not have been to everyone's taste, but it certainly beat the distractions on TV.

Stewart

Reg Meuross

I'd not heard of Reg Meuross before, but on the basis of Colin's email I ventured down to Reading without any preconceptions or expectations. Reg was introduced as an artist who had started in the music business as a "pop" artist. I asked him about this later and he told me that he was originally signed by Dave Dee and has had 3 major record deals, the last of which was when he was part of Talk Talk in the eighties. Other than the extremely professional performance, and some very catchy choruses, there was little in his Readifolk performance to suggest such a background.

Reg has a gentle and sweet voice, which is complemented by fine, and where appropriate, intricate finger-picking style guitar. I was reminded at times of Gallagher and Lyle, and later in the evening, of John Denver. At times there was a country feel to the guitar playing, no doubt influenced by the work that Reg does with Hank Wangford. This was evident on the three sing-along up-tempo songs: 'Goodbye Hat'; 'It's Me or Elvis'; and the encore, which was about Birmingham.

Reg helps to bring the songs to life by introducing each with an interesting and sometimes amusing anecdote. I particularly liked the introduction to 'Good With His Hands' a song about his father. Reg shared with us the day his father showed him the TV remote control, which he had made - a long stick with a carved finger on the end to turn the TV on and off.



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A number of the songs had a historical context, many inspired by the places Reg has visited to play gigs in far-flung places on behalf of the Arts Council. These included the excellent, 'And They Danced' about Eva Braun's last days in the Berlin bunker, 'William Brewster Dreams of America' about one of the Pilgrim Fathers from Scrooby in Nottinghamshire, and 'Lizzie Loved a Highwayman' based on the true story of Dick Turpin. Others, like 'The Man in Edward Hopper's Bar' and 'Johnnie Ray', were based on things which Reg has seen. Perversely, the only song I didn't like, 'When Jesus Wept', is a favourite of Mike Harding's – ah well...

Mark

Jim McLean



I saw Jim McLean for the first time when he popped in to do a floor spot during Reg Meuross' set last month and marked him down as being worth seeing when he returned to Readifolk in September. I was right!

The floor spots began with mein host, Malcolm Smith who played two dependable songs followed by Gary who played one of his own excellent songs and a traditional one. Father and daughter team of Allan and Ellie sang the next two, and one of the highlights of the evening

was their version of 'Henry Darger'. Allan's minimalistic guitar was the perfect accompaniment to Ellie's lyrical, and haunting voice. I enjoyed them immensely.

And then came Jim McLean! Some performers can possess a crowd just by walking onto the stage, and Jim is one of these. He lifted the room with his infectious smile and easy humour from the moment he stepped up to the mark, and then launched straight into a sing-along which engaged the audience right from the very beginning. He got the mix of material just right too. Some light stuff, some serious. For example we heard 'Barbara Alleyn' as well as a song educating us as to why dogs sniff each other's bottoms when they meet! Jim has a wonderfully smooth voice that sits just right with his Scots lilt, and a simple guitar style that belies his obvious mastery of technique. Add to the mix his skilful use of dynamics and you have one of the most interesting artists I have seen at Readifolk. I was impressed by the way he managed to keep his twelve-string guitar in tune the old fashioned way: without the use of an electronic tuner!

Jim told us that he likes Appalachian music, and this was apparent from some of the music he played, but he never abandoned his native accent for that horrid, false mid-Atlantic drawl that some singers adopt. He has my respect for it.

Rosa's Daughters started the second half for us, and then Jim came back on to finish off the night. A particular highlight for me was his version of 'Auld Lang Syne', which, I am ashamed to admit, I didn't know had more than one verse!

The only disappointment for me was that he didn't do more of his own self-penned songs. I look forward to seeing Jim at Readifolk again.

Ian

Jeff Warner

We welcomed, on his return to Readifolk, Jeff Warner, a renowned folklorist and expert on the musical tradition of the

region from North Carolina up to New England. Jeff inherited his love of traditional songs from his parents, his father having made recordings, from the 1940s onwards, of songs and accompaniments, aided by his mother, who was left to decipher the many dialects of the isolated communities. They researched and published the wonderful old lyrics that Jeff shared with us.

From his home in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, he has carried on collecting not only songs and tunes but also the language, traditions, stories and children's ditties and jokes. He is a naturally gifted teacher and entertainer. Throughout the performance, he explained how folk songs have evolved through oral traditions and inter-continental migrations.

Jeff opened with 'Hometown of My Heart' (1930s Grandpa Jones). 'Been All Around This Whole Round World' followed, from childhood memories of Mary Wheeler listening to the African-American roustabouts on the Ohio riverboats.

Next, we were mesmerized by his wonderful spoon playing. It was like watching a "hand ballet"; he not only made them sound wonderful, but it looked like it was in slow motion and effortless. We urge you to raid the cutlery box and have a go!

'The Wind and the Rain', a ballad traced to an 1880 publication in Norway, arrived in America via England - a rather ghoulish song. In our quick trip around the states, we moved to Utah in 1910 for the longest but speediest song that accompanied most of the social history of the period.

'The Farmer's Cursed Wife' was accompanied on his newly-acquired Jew's harp played in the key of G, which was made for Jeff by Michael Wright. Michael later gave us his own spectacular master class on several of his own harps, with a tune tribute to the north east of England. Again, do try one!

Next, from the barrier islands of eastern North Carolina, a Napoleonic broadside ballad collected from the singing of Charles Tillett in 1940, and traced by Jeff to an 1837 songbook.

'Southern Girl's Reply' he collected from Ellie Azar Tillett, from the same family - another sad civil war song.

The highlight of the evening was the arrival of Limber Jack (a wooden "jig doll"), who performed acrobatic dancing to Jeff's 'I'm Going Down to Town' in true western, north Carolina style, which finished to great applause.

Jeff is not only a scholar, but a multi-instrumentalist - his instruments include a treble concertina made by Wheatstone in 1908, a baritone concertina made by Lachenal (1928), five-string banjo, guitar, spoons and Jew's harp.

What a talented, word-perfect, polished well-balanced and truly informative performance by such a nice chap. Come again, Jeff!

**le girls
de Readifolk**



Photo: Christian Richardson

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THE RULES OF THE QUADRILLE and Other Dances

Puzzled by the difference between a Jig and a Reel? Britt-Marie Papierowski, accordionist with 3 2 1, explains the rhythms of various folk dances. Part 1 looks at some of the forms most familiar to us in Britain and Ireland. Look out for Part 2 in the next issue of Notes.

"Will you walk a little faster?" said a whiting to a snail.
"There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading on my tail.
See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!
They are waiting on the shingle - will you come and join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?"
Excerpt from *THE LOBSTER QUADRILLE* by Lewis Carroll
(C L Dodgson 1832-1898)

Here follows what I have discovered so far about some different dance rhythms that I've come across while playing with Anne and Ed in our trio called '3 2 1'. I've included examples of tunes which are in our repertoire, and would appreciate any feedback regarding corrections or additional information. In the illustrations, the basic rhythm is indicated by the pattern of notes per bar, with the emphasis beat underlined.



The Jig

Possibly of Irish origin, a jig is in 6/8 time, consisting of two groups of three quavers (or eighth notes). Jigs have a particular 'bounce' in their rhythm, due to emphasising the 1st and 4th beats in the bar. Consider

the words **Pine-Ap-ple A-pri-cot** representing six beats to the bar, with a strong first and fourth beat.

Examples: 'The Oyster Girl', 'The New Rigged Ship', 'The Moon and Seven Stars'.

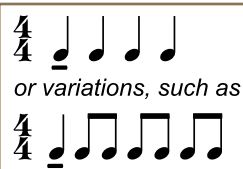


The Slip Jig

The 9/8 form of a jig is sometimes known as a slip jig. These are similar to jigs with an extra three beats to every bar, thus three groups of three quavers. Think of the rhythm in

the words **Apple tree, Orange tree, Lemon tree** with the emphasis on the first, fourth and seventh beats.

Examples: 'Drops of Brandy', 'The Peacock Followed the Hen', 'Sir Roger De Coverley'.

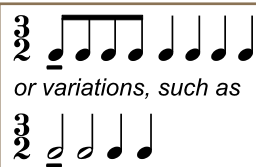


The Reel

A basic Scottish and Irish traditional rhythm, with 4 beats per bar. Think of the composition of the word **Wa-ter-me-lon** with the emphasis on the first syllable. However the four beats are typically broken into patterns of

eighth notes. The reel is usually the fastest type of dance tune.

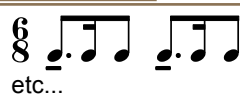
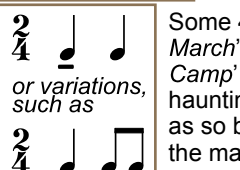
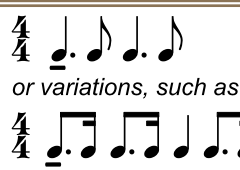
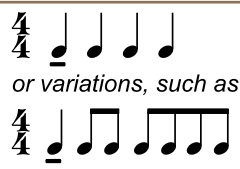
Some examples are: 'The Fairy Dance', 'Winster Gallop', 'Salmon Tails up the Water', 'The Ale is Dear', 'The Dashing White Sergeant', 'The Flowers of Edinburgh'.



The Hornpipe

Supposed to be of English origin, it changed its form at the latter end of the 18th century from triple time (3/2) to common time (4/4). Many hornpipes are dotted, and the rhythm is bouncier than that of

reels, with an accent on the first and third beat. Hold on longer to the first and third beats and shorten the second and fourth



beats. Think of **Hol-ly I-vy**.

Examples:

The old 3/2 form: 'Reed House Rant' and 'Rusty Gully'.

The 'straight' 4/4 form: Henry Stables' 'Grand Hornpipe', played at a jauntier pace than a march.

The 'dotted' 4/4 form: 'The Navvie on the Line', 'Redesdale Hornpipe', 'Lemmy Brazil's No.2' and 'The Trumpet Hornpipe' better known as the theme from Captain Pugwash.

The March

Marches are usually written in 4/4 time, although Scottish marches can be written in 2/4 like 'Lord Lovat's Lament' and 'The Meeting of the Waters'. There are also Scottish Pipe Marches in 6/8 time, like 'The Athole Highlanders'.

Some 4/4 time examples are: 'The Dorchester March', 'The Weavers' March', 'Brighton Camp' (or 'The Girl I Left Behind Me'), the haunting tune of 'Over the Hills and Far Away' as so beautifully sung by Allan at Readifolk in the manner of an air (though when speeded up somewhat it is like a march), an example illustrating that if a tune is played or sung at a different tempo, it could be considered as belonging to a different category.

The Quadrille

A formation dance originating from 17th Century military parades and made fashionable in England by the Duke of Devonshire in the 19th Century. I understand it involves 4 couples dancing in squares to a medley of tunes (often 5), which could be in combinations of 2/4, 6/8 or 4/4 time. It's more akin to formal ballroom dancing. However there are single tunes named as quadrilles, which have probably been adapted for Country Dancing.

Example 'William Gile's Quadrille' from the Village Band Book arranged by Dave Townsend. This is the only example of sheet music that I've got, and it has a lovely syncopated rhythm which is great fun to play in harmony.

I started with the song of the Lobster Quadrille, about which there is no information on the internet on the exact rules. It remains to say that, as in Alice's adventure, all these terms



may be confusing and even sound bizarre, but it's not an exact science. The important thing is to participate, and when dancing, just follow everyone else, being careful to avoid stepping on the toes and tails of others.

Illustration: John Tenniel

A Song Worth Singing

The Water is Wide

Allan Moore looks into the background...

'The Water is Wide' is the title of a song which, over the centuries, has had links with the songs 'Jamie Douglas' (which appears in F.J. Child's collection), 'Cockleshells', 'Waly Waly' and probably others – by 'link', I mean that verses have wandered from song to song according to the whims and memories of countless singers. One could follow up many lines of investigation, but I want to concentrate on the 'Waly Waly' line. This song first appeared in print back in around 1725 in Scotland. A version closer to the one people generally know appeared in Cecil Sharp's One Hundred English Folk Songs of 1916, with 8 verses (Sharp notes that it once formed part of 'Jamie Douglas').

What I find particularly interesting, though, is one aspect of the song's subsequent history. Peggy Seeger learnt it in the 1950s when studying in Cambridge, and taught it to brother Pete. Pete Seeger, however, found it a 'dreary' thing and determined to do something about it to make it singable again. Seeger's version, which he recorded in 1958, contains only five verses with the first repeated.

Something of its already-chequered history can be seen by the varying line lengths (the numbers of syllables per line) and rhyming patterns – the verses clearly haven't all come from the same source. Be that as it may, subsequent singers seem to have used Seeger's version as a new 'source' – I've only ever heard one of the verses Sharp uses (but Seeger doesn't) in arrangements for choir, which clearly come from a very different performing tradition.

In the 1960s, Greenwich Village singer Fred Neil used verses 1, 2, 5 and 6, which itself has become a 'subset' tradition – the Seekers (remember them?!) sang the same set of verses, as did Mary Black's recording in the 1980s. June Tabor's revival in the late 1990s used verses 1, 2, 3 and 5. Not only did this reintroduce the crucial third verse, in which the singer's misplacement of trust is made manifest, but it refused to round the song off with the last verse. In its return to the memory of the relationship in an early, positive, stage, this verse implies that good memories can outweigh bad – Tabor's version suggests this is not the case.

The group Edward II recorded it less than a decade ago and, interestingly, they chose verses 1, 3, 2 and 6 (in that order). Verse 2 coming after verse 3 again tends to nullify the force of the singer's lack of trust – perhaps it was only momentary, because her declaration of deep infatuation follows it.

Most interesting of all, though, is Steeleye Span's recording from 1996. For one thing, it is exceedingly long, much of it consisting of Peter Knight's expansive, almost oceanic, violin solo, which seems to try to encapsulate in music alone that deep sense of infatuation. But this is only amplified by the verses Gay Woods sings – just two, verses 2 and 6. Contrasting this and June Tabor's version is very instructive. Tabor sings, restrainedly, of disillusionment. Woods sings, with more fragility, of love remaining. She cannot be unaware of the verses she has jettisoned, but has actively chosen to focus on the positive (and whether this has anything to do with her 'return' to the folk scene from some years in a performing wilderness can only be speculation).

What is, perhaps, strange is that Seeger's fourth verse, the openly erotic one, has vanished from the song as it now tends to be sung – perhaps it brings an unnecessary lightening of tone to a song which so lends itself to being sung meaningfully? But what is most interesting, as even this tiny survey shows, is that the meaning of the song isn't simply the meaning of its lyrics. Without even going into subtle details of how these performers performed it (in terms of how they moulded melody and rhythm, how they articulated the words, etc., all of which have an effect on how a song means), any response to the question "What's 'The Water is Wide' all about?" has to be met with "Whose version"?! Perhaps it's not the song which means, after all, but the singer.

Below, I've notated the tune in 3/4; at a slower speed (which some people like) this tempo can work well – if you want to play it in 4/4, simply elongate the first beat of each bar. You'll need to repeat or omit notes depending on the varied number of syllables per line.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. The water is wide, I cannot get o'er
And neither have I wings to fly
Give me a boat that can carry two
And both shall row – my love and I | 3. I leaned my back up against some young oak
Thinking he was a trusty tree
But first he bended and then he broke
And thus did my false love to me | 5. O love is handsome and love is fine
Gay as a jewel when first it is new
But love grows old and waxes cold
And fades away like summer dew |
| 2. A ship there is and she sails the sea
She's loaded deep as deep can be
But not so deep as the love I'm in
And I know not how I sink or swim | 4. I put my hand into some soft bush
Thinking the sweetest flower to find
I prick'd my finger to the bone
And left the sweetest flower alone | 6. The water is wide, I cannot get o'er
And neither have I wings to fly
Build me a boat that can carry two
And both shall row – my love and I |

Readifolk Newsletter

Brought to you in words and pictures by people who care. My eternal gratitude is due to everyone who contributed anything.

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Readifolk is guaranteed to be environmentally friendly and low in cholesterol. It may help you live longer, and possibly enhance your love life, too. Worth a try, anyway.

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 OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2009

<u>4 Oct</u>	GEORGE PAPAVERIS www.folk4all.net	<i>'George is something special' Martin Carthy MBE A gifted songwriter with a memorable delivery. Not to be missed!!!</i>
<u>11 Oct</u>	SINGERS NIGHT	<i>Another chance for you to entertain us. There is no pressure and all contributions will be welcomed by an appreciative audience.</i>
<u>18 Oct</u>	ANNE LISTER www.annelister.com	<i>A very welcome return to Readifolk for one of our finest singer/songwriters. A simple, direct approach to performance, laced with liberal doses of humour and a close rapport with the audience.</i>
<u>25 Oct</u>	THEME 'LOOKING FORWARD'	<i>We are supporting the Reading International Festival (18 Oct – 1 Nov). The theme of this year's Festival is 'Reclaiming our Future'. Appropriate songs please!</i>

<u>1 Nov</u>	SPIRE www.myspace.com/spirefolkband	<i>A welcome return to Readifolk for Spire, who are an excellent five- piece group, performing mainly British traditional songs and music.</i>
<u>8 Nov</u>	THE 2nd READIFOLK HIRING FAIR	<i>An opportunity for aspiring performers to impress us – with the possibility of a full Guest Night booking for the best act. For details and/or to register your interest contact Una (0118 9483145)</i>
<u>15 Nov</u>	BROOM BEZZUMS www.broombezzums.de	<i>Traditional music from England, Scotland & Ireland - and elsewhere. They delight in a whirlwind of strong musical performance and engaging cheeky off-the-cuff patter.</i>
<u>22 Nov</u>	SCARECROW www.scarecrowband.co.uk	<i>An exciting local trio performing mainly folk instrumentals and songs and occasionally a bit of jazz or blues.</i>
<u>29 Nov</u>	ORKNEY ISLAND SPECIAL 'WHERE FIRE MEETS WATER' Fiona Driver/Graham Simpson, Jo Philby www.fionadriver.co.uk & www.jophilby.co.uk	<i>Don't miss this rare chance to see these three exciting artists perform music & song, with fiddle & guitar from their acclaimed albums 'Orkney Fire' & 'Saltwater & Stone'</i>

<u>6 Dec</u>	BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST at 21 SOUTH STREET	<i>A Reading Arts concert at 21 South Street Arts Centre. Special concessionary admission tickets available from Readifolk!</i>
<u>13 Dec</u>	MAGPIE LANE www.magpielane.dsl.pipex.com	<i>This Oxfordshire sextet represents the very best in the English country song and dance tradition. They combine powerful vocals with vigorous dance tunes.</i>
<u>20 Dec</u>	CHRISTMAS PARTY	<i>The celebrations start here. Come and enjoy the music and the festive fare.</i>
<u>27 Dec</u>	CLUB CLOSED	<i>A happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year to you all. We are open again on 3rd January.</i>

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

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

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