

Notes

The Newsletter of Readifolk

Issue 5

Reading's folk song
and music club

Winter 2009/10

Wassail!

**Welcome
to another Readifolk
newsletter**

Rumblings from the Roots

This is the time of year for reflection, to review the past and look forward to the future.

The past year has been one of the most successful in the chequered history of Readifolk. The RISC venue has at last brought some stability for the club and comments from our members and performers have been largely complimentary. We have had some superb Guest Nights as you can gather from the various reviews given in the four quarterly editions of *Notes*.

Looking forward to the New Year, we have already a full guest list up until the fourth quarter of 2010. The programme for the first quarter can be found on the back page and you will see that we have an interesting mix of established performers and a number of exciting

newcomers whom we have 'talent spotted' during the past year.

Club News

It's with a good deal of satisfaction that we bring you Issue Five of *Notes*, the Readifolk Newsletter. It is a year since Stewart first suggested that we try an experimental newsletter, to see what people think of it. We are happy to say that it is entirely down to your help and support that we got beyond Issue One. The newsletter has been a great innovation and we congratulate Stewart and the many contributors for the high standard of this publication.

We would like the newsletter to have a wider reach, to spread the news of Readifolk and to help bring our guest performers bigger audiences. But we will need some help to do this. At the moment, Stewart is overseeing the production of *Notes* on his own, but would like to involve others more. Please see his article on page 5 about this.

It is with great pleasure that we can report that our neighbouring club, Bracknell Folk Club, is back on a sound footing again. They would appreciate your support, and now meet on Tuesday evenings at The Sun in Windlesham. For more details, see their website www.bracknellfolk.org.uk

We send you our Season's Greetings and look forward to seeing you at the club.

Una & Colin

Contact us:

Una for bookings and coming events

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Colin for publicity, coming events and the mailing list

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Our guest-night MC is Malcolm
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Stewart about the newsletter
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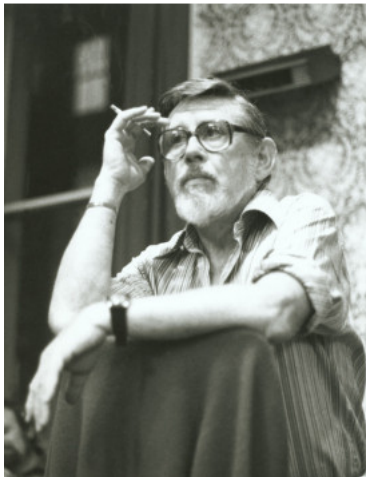
The Askew Sisters emerge from the undergrowth and return to Readifolk on 28th March

Folk Heroes

All folk are equal. But some folk are more equal than others. In another potted history, Steve Bingham looks back on the life of:

Ewan MacColl

(born James Henry Miller)



Ewan MacColl has always been part of my musical landscape.

When I first heard *Dirty Old Town* being bashed out by a skiffle group in the late 1950s I knew it was something different. A song about places and things I knew rather than America where most of the pop music came from.

James Henry Miller was born in January 1915 in Salford, Lancashire. His father had moved to Salford because his

trade union activities made it impossible for him to get work in a Scottish iron foundry. Jimmie left school at fourteen and was unable to get a long-term job. This meant that he had plenty of time for his political interests and he rapidly became a leader of the Young Communists League. He first came to public notice through the mass trespass on Kinder Scout in 1936. He helped to plan and publicise the event and wrote his first successful song *The Manchester Rambler* as a result of his experience.

He developed an interest in drama and found himself writing, directing and acting in sketches and plays in support of his left wing views. Through this interest he met and, in 1936, married the actress Joan Littlewood.

Ewan and Joan took their theatre company on the road touring in the North of England. The outbreak of World War II put a temporary stop to theatrical work and in July 1940 Ewan joined the Army. He deserted in December. The reason for his desertion and why he was not prosecuted remain mysteries.

From 1946 until 1950 Ewan, Joan and company were back on the road. In 1950 the Theatre Workshop, as the troupe had become, decided to settle at the Theatre Royal in Stratford, East London. Ewan was apparently unhappy with this decision and it seems that the break with Joan Littlewood was both professional and personal.

By 1950 James Miller had become Ewan MacColl. The reasons for the name change are not clear but it seems that he wanted to get closer to his Scottish roots. He had always had an interest in the Scottish songs that he had heard his parents singing. He became associated with Topic Records as a performer and producer. From 1956 onwards he issued albums containing traditional and his own songs. He worked with folk song collector A L Lloyd and others, recording albums of the Child Ballads.

A certain amount of scandal was caused when Ewan took up with Peggy Seeger, an American singer half his age. He was still married to Jean Newlove his second wife at the time. In 1957 Ewan and Peggy began working with Charles Parker, a BBC radio producer on what was to become a groundbreaking series of radio musical documentaries. In the Radio Ballads, as the series became known, Ewan used

the voices of ordinary people to tell the stories. Many of the people's words became incorporated into the songs that went into the shows. There were eventually eight of these programmes on subjects ranging from the engine driver John Axton, to fishing, and the life of the travelling people.

From 1960 until his death in 1989 Ewan continued to work with Peggy Seeger touring and producing albums. He remained politically active, lending support to many left wing causes. During the 1985 miners' strike Ewan and Peggy gave many benefit concerts.

Ewan MacColl wrote over 300 songs. Many of these songs have found their way into the folk tradition. If you hear a song that you think sounds traditional, but a little modern, the chances are it is a Ewan song. The strength and wide appeal of Ewan's writing was shown when BBC Radio 2 held its poll to find the most popular songs of the 20th century. He won two categories: best folk song for *Shoals of Herring* and best soul song for *The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face*. What more need be said!

RECORDINGS

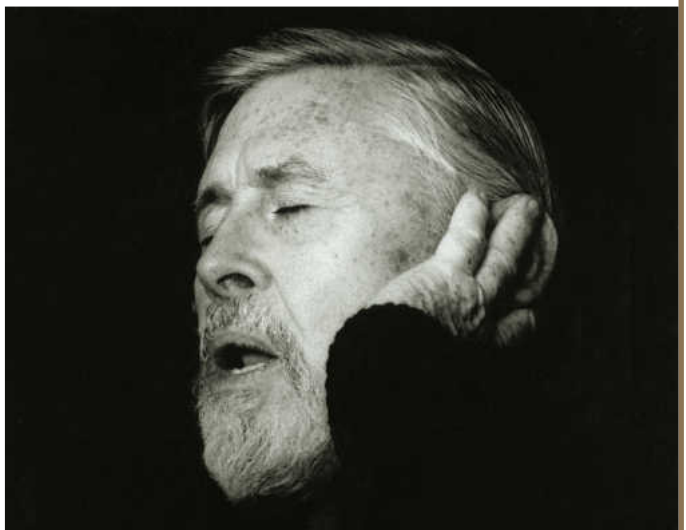
Unfortunately there are not too many of Ewan's recordings readily available. There is no collection of his best written songs for example.

The double CD Ballads (TSCC576D) contains 29 Scottish ballads of murder, intrigue, love and discord.

For a good cross-section of his work The Definitive Ewan MacColl (HPO6006) or The Real MacColl (TSCD463) are worth considering.

All of these are available from HMV or amazon.co.uk. If you are lucky you may find other albums by trawling the net. Few of his albums of political songs have made it on to CD. The original albums occasional appear on Ebay. Those in good condition sell for considerable sums.

Topic has issued all of the original Radio Ballads. These are good and show just how good a musical documentary can be, in the right hands. *Singing the Fishing*, *The Travelling People* and *The Ballad Of John Axton* are particularly good in my opinion.



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.

George Papavgeris

I don't know much about Greek folk music or culture, beyond a few received stereotypes. I have fleeting memories of Aphrodite's Child, a pop and prog. rock group from the late 60s and early 70s that is fast sinking into the quicksand of historical oblivion, which consisted of Demis Roussos, Vangelis Papathanassiou and, err... another chap. Two of them, of course, went on to achieve much greater international success (and bodily weight) later on. Dunno about the other one. My vague memory of the group left a lingering impression that there was really no detectable Greekness about them. Revisiting them on YouTube, you can barely hear any influence of what I imagine (in my ignorance) their roots must be - a chord progression here and there, an inflection in Roussos' warbling voice, but not much more.



So I really had no idea what to anticipate from George Papavgeris, but maybe half expected some energetic dance rhythms, played, perhaps, on bouzoukis, lutes, goat skinned drums and the odd odd-shaped double-reeded pipe (did I mention stereotypes?). But it was a surprise to find that it really wasn't obvious at all, from his music, where his heritage lay. Right from the first song, he fitted easily into the standard English folk club format, singing what could have been sung by any English folk singer.

I'm in two minds about this - it was a lovely evening of folk music, but it would have been nice to hear some more profoundly Greek-sounding roots to his music. On the other hand, maybe what I've discovered is that no matter where it's from, the folk music of different cultures can have many common elements. And that, in its own way is a profound thing.

In fact, this is the main theme that runs through George's song writing - the things which are common to all of us; the way we fit into society, songs about childhood, working life, nature, and, of course, the perplexities, heartbreak and joy of love, family and friendship. But the biggest surprise of all is to discover that he only started to write songs fairly recently, yet these are accomplished works.

Accompanying himself mostly on a 12 string guitar and occasionally on a lovely 6 string Takamine, his playing is easy, competent and unspectacular, and it complements his singing well. George is, clearly, one of us. The wall that can separate performer from audience is completely absent - he is neither detached from us nor over-awed by us, and his singing is as natural and unstilted as any you will hear on the folk circuit.

Stewart

Anne Lister

Some guests at Readifolk just blow my socks off. At the other end of the spectrum, there are those that I find a bit underwhelming, and I'm afraid that Anne Lister's gig on Sunday 18th October fell into this latter category for me.

To be clear, the floor-spots were impressive, with Janet as MC for the evening, lively tune-spinning from two members of 3 2 1, a couple of beautifully presented numbers from Sara Daniels (including the wistful self-penned *For A While*) and a truly exciting introduction to Scarecrow (whose main gig later this season is reviewed elsewhere).

Anne Lister drew an unusually large audience, demonstrating that she clearly has a significant number of fans in the Readifolk family, and I realise that I court controversy, therefore, in my assessment.

A key theme in her songwriting is storytelling, drawing on resources from Greek mythology to Irish folklore. More specifically, she deals with the super-natural or other worldly possibilities of these stories - ghosts, faeries, dragons, mermaids. Indeed, even when they promise to deal with the real world - such as the experience of women prisoners - her lyrics revert to the supernatural (ghost-sightings in prisons...). This storytelling theme is often combined with another theme - the area around Pontypool (where she lives) and its characters (such as the Rev. James, a sort of Derek Acorah in clerical garb).



I was dismayed that, despite their other-worldly character, Anne's lyrics were often literal and lacking poetic subtlety. I heard very little metaphor and sometimes very bald formulations ("...somewhere there might be a different scale of values..."). Unlike many traditional stories, her lyrics seemed to be simple word exercises with no particular purpose (other, perhaps, than their shared purpose of claiming that there might be more to this world than we know). I found myself asking - what perspective, what sensibility is being articulated here?

Anne Lister is a very poised and confident performer, interspersing her songs with anecdotes and humour. Her singing is even and sure-footed, although with her capo firmly stuck in the same position on a little parlour guitar for the entire evening and using a limited range of keys, her songs quickly started to sound "samey" to me.

Having said that, there were some highlights in the performance - the tuneful *The Hunter's Fox*, the gritty unaccompanied *Locked In* and the imaginative *Seventh Angel* (drawing on the poetry of Zbigniew Herbert).

Towards the end of the set Anne Lister included two numbers that have been covered by others, notably by Martin Simpson (*Icarus* and *Moth*). I have to say that I was surprised to learn that she had written these, as I have greatly enjoyed them in Martin Simpson's hands. What was the difference, I wondered, in the two approaches to these same songs, and could it help me understand better my response to the evening? In the end it seemed to me a question of dramatic tension. Where, I asked, had been the dramatic tension in the evening's songs?

Danny

Spire

The 1st November had been filthy. Torrential rain and a drop in temperature had signalled the end of our Indian Summer. I was expecting much from my third visit to Readifolk! When I saw the array of instruments which included a hammered dulcimer and an English harp with piano accordions, bouzoukis, fiddle, guitar and mandolin I felt sure I would not be disappointed. And so it proved.

Spire is a five piece acoustic band. Ed, Pete and Steve are multitalented musicians who between them played ten instruments during the evening. Sian and Roxy are strong vocalists who produce lovely harmonies. The range of instruments gave added interest and variety to each number although when Ed played a hurdy-gurdy I decided the sound it made was probably an acquired taste!

Spire's relaxed style and quality of performance engaged the audience immediately and the joie-de-vivre with which they started the first number was maintained throughout the evening. Their choice of music provided stimulating variety as they switched from traditional tunes and songs to more modern pieces, selecting ones that played to the strengths of the group. Some of the numbers that stood out particularly for me were the lovely harmonies of Chris While and Julie Matthews' *Circle Round The Sun* and Karine Polwart's *Follow The Heron Home*. I loved the haunting melody of *On The Edge Of A Storm*



which told the story of the fate of one of the murderers of Thomas Becket. Traditional pieces such as

Begone Dull Care, *Down By The Salley Gardens* and *Rambling In The New Mown Hay* were also included in a programme that involved audience participation from the start. The highlight for me was probably the sublime Sandy Denny number *Who Knows Where The Time Goes* towards the end of the show.

The floor spots set just the right atmosphere for the main act. Sarah, Linda, Janet and Alison warmed up the audience with a wide variety of songs and Ian kept the show on the road in style. Sarah's sensitive interpretation of the thought provoking *And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda* was a poignant reminder of Remembrance Day approaching.

By the end of the evening, I knew why Spire had been invited back to the club and as I lifted the blinds the next morning, still humming *The Carnival Is Over* the sun was shining in a clear blue sky.

Beryl

The 2nd Readifolk Hiring Fair

I can't decide if it was vanity or Stewart's mammoth right hand on my delicate shoulder that made me agree to write this. You see I have a personal problem with the concept of competition in general, and within music in particular. Of course, what goes on in one's own mind during a performance might or might not be complimentary - but ranking is something different: someone loses. Folk music in particular is not about placement.

My cynicism is supported by some musical knowledge that tends to question the judgement of others. So in the 2nd Readifolk Hiring Fair I found myself in conflict with some of the decisions, as some of the musically more sophisticated acts were ranked second against others.

There was:

- the wonderful wordsmithing of Ray Martin;
- the delicate blending of The Elves, their balance between voice, guitar and fiddle enhancing the jazzy ingredients in *Zinzan Streetp*;
- the stunning supporting guitar presented by Gary Edwards, augmenting a wonderful selection of first rate material;
- the homely fun of Hickory Creek.

But all these were surpassed by joint winners Cruel Folk, presenting a selection of self penned if somewhat formulaic material, and Liz Simcock, whose charming voice and presentation captured the collective 'feel'.

I constantly ask myself what the criteria are - each act taking the laurel if the criteria are allowed to change. I personally look for musical content, invention and skill, but also that something which distinguishes folk musicians from others - communication. One without the other is a hollow in this genre. The eventual winners had this in more than modest proportions.

I do not want to create the impression that I am a Grumpy Old Man; the event itself confirmed my belief that we are living through a new renaissance. We were treated to a variety of rhythm, originality, and sometimes beauty. Evidence of the importance of the procedure to those taking part was obvious, and a great compliment to those present. And all for a pound. Mmmm.

Doug

Broom Bezzums

It was a complete surprise to us that there are only two, Andrew Cadie and Mark Bloomer, in Broom Bezzums. We were under the impression that there were at least half a dozen, although they made up for this by playing enough instruments for six musicians. Guitars, mandola, fiddles and Northumbrian small pipes. The latter always

being a joy to hear. They specialise in well known traditional songs played with their own interpretation, and their own compositions written in the traditional vein.

Two notable songs were *Jock O' Hazeldene*, which was slightly different to the more familiar version, and *Begging Song* of which we have heard several English versions and a Scottish variant called *To The Begging I Will Go*. In this slowed down version of this song the words could be taken as irony, in as much as the singer is saying "I don't want riches, I want nothing more than to live under the stars."

Sandgate Dandling Song was obviously the source of the better known *Liverpool Lullaby* written by Stan Kelly.

Binorie is a version of *The Two Sisters* (Child ballad #10). In this version the body of the unfortunate young lady is made into a harp. In other variants she becomes a fiddle. An American version from Michigan called *Peter And I* has a hapless maiden deposited in a well. The miscreant tells the story of her deed and of how she weds the man. Later when her crime is discovered he goes off to foreign parts and she dies by her own hand.



Rigs Of Time and *Chains Of Tyranny*, the latter being written by Andrew, are still very relevant and poignant songs which should be heard more often.

Broom Bezzums were entertaining with their witticisms

and anecdotes. Among the many songs were some lively tunes, some self-penned. Their technical and vocal abilities will surely safeguard the progression of folk music.

Overall a great night and hope to see them again.

Barbara & Bruce

Scarecrow

Glamour? Who needs it? Three fine examples of Oxfordshire manhood gave us an evening of contrasts. Why they should call themselves 'Scarecrow' is a mystery, apparently even to them. A far cry from Worzel Gummidge, or from Dr Syn of Russel Thorndyke's writings, these neat and surprisingly presentable young men gave us a magnificent performance of folk tinged with jazz and some modern popular music.

They combined the extraordinary mix common to folk clubs everywhere, where apparently sane and well-adjusted people gather together to listen to songs of horrible death and unrequited love accompanied by cheerful music. This evening, topics ranged from being blown up down the mines, and expected hanging come the morn, to gloriously happy jigs and hornpipes that make your feet itch to dance.

Scarecrow mix traditional folk tunes (*Down by the Salley Gardens*, my theme tune as a willow basketmaker!) with the modern *Paper Moon*. They combined the hard heavy tones of electric guitar with soft gentle flute. They introduced a 'Hummelchen' - named after a German bumble bee, these pipes look like a dead cat and sound like heaven. Best of all they demonstrated penny whistle playing as a competitive sport, in a mind-blowing combination of two jigs for the price of one.

A unique and wonderful evening.

Christine



Orkney Island Special

We were advised to arrive early because this evening would be popular, and rightly so.

Self-schooled fiddler Fiona Driver and guitarist Graham Simpson hail from the Orkneys, and were playing Readifolk at the end of a tour with close friend and singer Jo Philby, herself originally from Berkshire but now living in the Orkneys.

Guest host Sara Daniels' informal style set a warm, relaxed tone for the evening, opening with Sara's own lyrical song *Where Are You Going To?*, followed by two toe-tapping numbers from Chris and Danny, including a lively rendition of Dr Feelgood's *Back in the Night*, with guitar and mandola.

Jo's easy rapport with the audience introduced the guests' set, starting with a vivid portrait of summer romance in the Irish song *Summer at my Feet*. Graham joined Jo on guitar for Emily Smith's *A Day Like Today*, followed by two numbers with Fiona's interwoven fiddle melodies. We were treated here to Fiona's own jig *Waterside* slipped in between verses of Kate Rusby's song *I Courted a Sailor*. The first half concluded with an instrumental set from Fiona and Graham, combining traditional music with shades of jazz and ragtime, and including *Pauline's Waltz*, Fiona's tribute to the fiddle player who had first inspired her to play.

As the audience drifted back from the interval, the second half started off with another song from Sara and floor spots including two well-loved songs from Malcolm Smith, newly returned from his travels in Europe, an interlude of well-known instrumental pieces from accordion and banjo trio 3 2 1, and a passionate rendition from Readifolk regular Doug Brown of Robin Laing's true-story ballad *Jamie Penman*.

The second half of the guests' set started with a moving performance by Jo of *Orcadian Dream* a song composed for her by Sara Daniels during a visit to the Orkneys. Jo was joined on stage again by Graham and Fiona for songs including Bill Staines' song *River*. A lively and



varied instrumental session followed with a catchy rag, jigs and a peppy tune about a mouse in a toaster, penned by Fiona. The evening finished with the Irish song *Blackbirds and Thrushes* and a last tune from Fiona and Graham.

For me the joy of this evening was the infectious enjoyment of the music by the artists themselves. Put together, Jo's warm vocals, Graham's sensitive accompaniments on guitar, the interplay between Jo's voice and Fiona's fiddle, and then Fiona's simply stunning fiddle playing offset by Graham's accompaniment

made a varied, entertaining set that left the audience wanting more.

Alison

Magpie Lane

I had wondered, before the show, why the band was called Magpie Lane. Was it reflective of their collection of bright, shiny folksongs? As it turns out, it was merely the whim of one of the founders of the group, to name it after one of Oxford's narrowest and oldest lanes. I was told this by lead singer Ian Giles, who then lowered his voice to tell me what the historical name of the lane was, based on the sort of trade that went on there, largely conducted by young ladies. Later Victorian prudence changed it to something you could say in front of your grandmother. If you want to know more, there is an entry about this on Wikipedia, but if you are of a sensitive nature, you may want to cover your eyes while you look at it.

With five members in the current line-up, Magpie Lane started the evening with a wonderfully lush rendition of *When the Snows of*

Winter Fall; it seemed to wrap its musical warmth around you on a chill winter's evening in much the same way that a hot toddy does, and it set the scene for the rest of the evening. Songs of winter and Christmas time were in abundance, and the musicality of this quintet was quite superb. That should come as no surprise, as all of them have an armful of experience to draw upon, and while not all of them would be in with much of a chance at a beauty contest, where talent counts they'd be at the top of the heap.



The instruments they brought along covered all the essentials for a good night of folk music – scraping, squeezing, strumming and the occasional whacking, were all delivered with a reassuring confidence. But for me it was the voices that they brought along that were most notable, in particular Ian's gusty baritone, and also cellist Sophie Polhill's beautiful voice, not withstanding the cold that she was suffering with. But all five clearly know their way around a folksong.

Magpie Lane rounded off an excellent Autumn season's end at Readifolk, with not a Bah!-Humbug! to be heard.

Stewart

You can help...

When I first created Notes, I set out to make something that not only provided a way for the Readifolk organising team to keep in touch with Readifolk members, but also something that I hoped people would like to contribute to. Folk clubs are all about joining in, and speaking as someone with no noticeable musical ability, I find that the newsletter is an alternative way to contribute to the life of the club. People have written some cracking articles and reviews, and I am profoundly grateful to them for their input.

We have recently started to print paper copies of the newsletter, in addition to the one people receive by email, so that it can be distributed more widely. This, of course, means that it is taking up more time, and is starting to cost money. As the Readipounds are better spent elsewhere, I am currently not only editing and producing the newsletter, but providing ink, paper and printer time too.

So, it is time for me to appeal more earnestly for help in order to secure the future of the newsletter. A few people could make a lot of difference. Notes is published four times a year, so nothing needs to be too demanding upon anyone's time. There are three main areas where additional regular input would be most welcome:

- *Printing and distribution - I'll supply you with a printer-ready file for your standard colour printer; you just have to click on the 'Print' button. Four or five people contributing 25 copies each, four times a year. And maybe taking some in to your local library, place of work, etc.*
- *Reviewing guest nights - it would be nice to have an organiser to help commission reviews, or a team of regular reviewers, as well as contributions from others.*
- *And if anyone wants to become involved in the lay-up, compiling and sub-editing, there is scope for involvement here, too.*

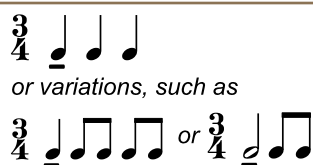
If you can help with any of the above, please contact me at stewart@readifolk.org.uk, or see me on a Readifolk evening. If you catch me at the bar, I'll buy you a drink.

THE RULES OF THE QUADRILLE and Other Dances Part 2

Continuing from the last issue, where Britt-Marie Papierowski, accordionist with 3 2 1, explained the rhythms of some familiar folk dances, she now looks further afield, and includes some more unusual ones.

I can't tell a waltz from a tango
I never know what my feet are gonna do
Oh I can't tell a waltz from a tango
Darling when I dance with you
As sung by Alma Cogan in the 1950's

For the final part of my introduction to familiar folk dance rhythms, I will start with the one which most people recognise, unless they are in a happily confused state as above, namely the waltz, which was considered very disreputable in Georgian times, but gradually became more refined and acceptable.



Waltz

The waltz is written in 3/4 time and has a strong 'um-pa-pa' feel. Some examples are: 'Planxty Fanny Power', 'Cader Idris', 'Give Me Your

Hand' (Rory Dall O'Cathain 17th Century), 'Michael Turner's Waltz', 'Skye Boat Song' and 'The Forest Flower' (a Finnish tune).

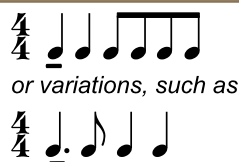


Polka

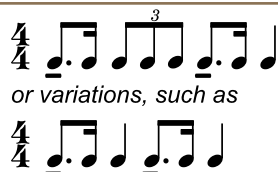
Is a light and fast dance which is more like a reel than a jig, since it's usually written in 2/4 time. The polka is a dance of Bohemian or Polish origin. It was introduced to Prague in about

1835, and in 1839 was brought to Vienna. In 1840 it was received with much applause at the Odeon Theatre in Paris and was soon the favourite dance at social events and gatherings. It spread rapidly through Europe and is now popular the world over.

Examples: 'Jenny Lind Polka' (this tune features in Jane & Amanda Threlfall's CD 'Revisited', 'Sternpolka', an Alpine-style tune, as are the trio of three Welsh Polkas which we often play, namely: 'Ymgyrchdon Y Waunlwyd', 'The Cefn-Coed Polka' and 'Ffiddl Ffadl'.



There also seem to be many tunes called 'polkas' which are in 4/4 time, like 'The Rattling Bog', 'Bonny Kate', 'John Ryan's Polka', and 'The Bluebell Polka' (made famous by the Scottish accordionist Jimmy Shand).



Schottische

Schottische is of Bohemian origin and was popular in Victorian era ballrooms (part of the Bohemian "folk-dance" craze) and left its traces in folk music of countries as

distant as France, Spain (chotis), Portugal (choutiça), Italy and Sweden. The schottische is considered by the Oxford Companion to Music to be a kind of slower polka, with continental origin.

The schottische music that I know of is in 4/4 time, and has a charming bouncy rhythm with triplets and dotted

quavers interspersed. Examples: 'Scan Tester's No. 1' (also Nos 2 and 3), 'Old Mrs. Huddledde' (same tune as Kafoozalum), 'Harry Cox's' and 'Washing Day'.

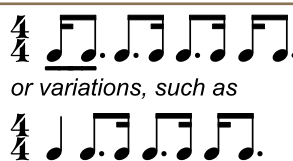


Rant

The 'rant' is a common term used in the north of England to specify a particular reel or hornpipe form which matches the energetic stepping used in the dances of Northumberland and the

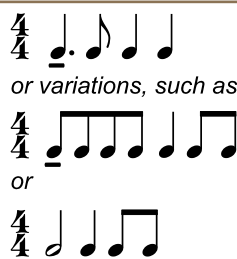
Borders. The rant involves a very 'economical' movement to allow for performance in smaller halls and farmhouse kitchens and emphasises the first three beats in the bar.

Some examples of rants are: 'Roxburgh Castle', 'Soldier's Joy' and 'The Morpeth Rant' (there is a Welsh version of this tune regarded as a reel called 'Pibddawns Morfudd').



Strathspey

A strathspey is a Scottish dance tune in 4/4 time and is a slower stylised version of the reel. Some examples are 'Monymusk' and 'The Laird of Drumblair'.



Ganglätär

These are 'walking tunes' from Sweden in common 4/4 time, and should be played at a comfortable walking tempo. I mention this form of dance for several reasons: it's part of our repertoire, it indicates the wider fields of dance music from other lands, and because my mother was from that country.

Examples: 'Gärdebylätär' and 'Äppelbolätär'



To conclude, I hope I have given out useful and more or less correct information – it has been a helpful exercise for me – although I wouldn't claim to be able to recognise many of the categories without referring to how other authorities have defined them.

So enjoy the music, and if you can dance to it – all the better!

A Song Worth Singing

Here's The Tender Coming A bit of social history...

Here's the Tender Coming is a traditional song from the Northeast of England, and sung by many acts from there, including Jez Lowe, Kathryn Tickell, Broom Bezzums and Bob Fox, as well as The Unthanks, who use it as the title track of their latest album. It is a simple song, with its origins long lost, but like so many folk songs, it provides us with a rather sobering and poignant history lesson.

It is hard to imagine now, but time was when most people were disenfranchised, power was granted by grace and favour, and all people were ultimately subject to the whims and wants of the monarch. The Navy of the time was not a defender of the nation, but an advocate of the crown, and the power that lay with it.

As an island nation, Britain has a long and resilient seafaring history, which is embedded in the psyche of many a schoolchild, and commemorated by statues, streets and squares. But this heritage was not only the achievement of the great who are remembered, but also of uncounted, miserable, labouring men, who had been pressed into service by connivance and force.

The tyranny of the pressgang was, from Anglo-Saxon times, an informal affair of brute force, where men were taken in, what today we would call, an act of abduction and often violence. During Elizabeth's reign, in the late 16th century, the formality of laws were enacted and impressment became a statutory power. During long periods of warfare at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th, which ended with the Napoleonic wars and included the battle of Trafalgar, impressment was at its height, when the demand for seafarers resulted in over 1% of the entire population of the country being in service to the navy. Only half of these were volunteers.

In every port in the country, an office of the Impressment Service was established, with a Regulating Officer and his Lieutenants. They administered their work from a building called the Rendezvous, and were charged with seizing suitable men for service on board ship. This was achieved by commissioning gangs to do the work. Gang members earned a bonus for every man seized, and every mile travelled, and they were assured of not being subject to their own

impressment. Tyneside was particularly hard hit by pressgangs, and during one raid in 1796, 250 men were seized from North Shields.

Although rules evolved to regulate who could be pressed into service, these were seldom much of a safeguard, and exempt men would often be taken. This was particularly so during times of war, when the gangs were instructed to seize, or 'hot press' otherwise exempt men. In principle, only capable men with seafaring experience were their targets, but often landsmen were taken as well. They could also board homeward-bound merchant ships to take the crew, leaving behind only a minimal steerage crew.

The tender referred to in the title of the song, was the vessel used by the gangs to hold and transport the men to their ships. When one was seen approaching, the pressgang was on its way. To the men on board, it could have been little more than a prison. There was seldom much a man could do to resist a pressgang, and there are numerous reports of skirmishes involving them. If a man was taken, he would receive a wage, but a lower wage than men who volunteered for service, and would face the real prospect of never seeing home again. Even if he survived the appalling mortality rate amongst servicemen, he could be kept aboard ship for many years before eventually being released from duty. Behind would be left wives and families, often destitute.

Here's The Tender Coming is often sung in conjunction with *Captain Bover*, a fragment of a longer song mostly lost to time, and also originating from the same area. This tells of a Regulating Officer (possibly one Captain Bouvier, who is commemorated by a plaque in St. Nicholas' Cathedral, Newcastle upon Tyne), who some say brought an element of leniency to a harsh job.

Britain abandoned the use of impressment during the first half of the 19th century, after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, although it remained on the statute books for half a century more.

Stewart

Arrangement by Ed

Here's the tender coming, pressing all the men; Oh de - ar hinny, what shall we do then?

Here's the tender coming, off at Shield's Bar, Here's the tender coming, full of men of war.

Here's the tender coming, pressing all the men;
Oh dear hinny, what shall we do then?
Here's the tender coming, off at Shield's Bar,
Here's the tender coming, full of men of war.

Hide thee, canny Geordie, hide thyself away;
Hide thee till the tender makes for Druid's Bay.
If they take thee, Geordie, who's to win our bread?
Me and little Jackie better off be dead.

Here's the tender coming, stealing off my dear;
Oh dear hinny, they'll ship you out of here.
They will ship you foreign, that is what it means;
Here's the tender coming, full of red marines.

Hey, bonny lassie, let's go to the Lawe,
See the tender lying, off at Shield's Bar,
With her colours flying, anchor at her bow.
They took my bonny laddie, best of all the crew.

Here's the tender coming, pressing all the men;
Oh dear hinny, what shall we do then?
Here's the tender coming, off at Shield's Bar,
Here's the tender coming, full of men of war.

Readifolk Newsletter

Extra mince pies for everyone who contributed to this issue, whether they knew they did or not. Readifolk is now officially recognised as an antidote to the iPod culture. It is also effective against problems like The X-Factor. If you experience similar symptoms, please attend our Sunday evening clinics for a suitable prescription.

READIFOLK

READING'S FOLK SONG & MUSIC CLUB



Every Sunday 8:00 - 10:30 p.m.

Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC)

35-39 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS

PROGRAMME JANUARY - MARCH 2010

<u>3 Jan</u>	THEME 'WHAT'S NEW?'	<i>It's the New Year, so come and sing about what's new for you.</i>
<u>10 Jan</u>	DAVID FERRARD www.davidferrard.com	<i>A rising star! David sings a mixture of his acclaimed self-penned songs as well as more traditional folk material.</i>
<u>17 Jan</u>	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>
<u>24 Jan</u>	WENDY ARROWSMITH www.wendyarrowsmith.com	<i>Another star in the making! This Scottish singer has an easy relaxed style with a beautiful and powerful voice.</i>
<u>31 Jan</u>	TANDARA MANDARA www.tandaramandara.net	<i>An exciting trio playing a variety of Eastern European songs and music with fiddle, accordion and double bass accompaniment.</i>

<u>7 Feb</u>	THEME 'FOR LOVE OR MONEY'	<i>A theme that covers a wide spectrum. You may even be able to combine both topics.</i>
<u>14 Feb</u>	NORAH RENDELL & BRIAN MILLER www.norahrendell.com	<i>Vancouver singer and flautist Norah joins forces with Minnesotan guitarist Brian to provide wonderful singing and playing of traditional music with an Irish flavour.</i>
<u>21 Feb</u>	MISTAKEN IDENTITY www.mistaken-identity.info	<i>A new 'old boy' band comprising four fellas singing mainly a capella four-part harmony arrangements of your favourite songs.</i>
<u>28 Feb</u>	SINGERS NIGHT	<i>Another of the ever-popular Readifolk singarounds.</i>

<u>7 Mar</u>	LYNNE HERAUD & PAT TURNER www.lynneandpat.co.uk	<i>Lynne and Pat offer a wide range of musical material - Traditional, Victorian, Edwardian, Contemporary, Rude, Silly, and Self-Penned, all delivered with their unique blend of harmony and humour.</i>
<u>14 Mar</u>	THEME 'A LIKELY STORY'	<i>Come and confound us with your tales of the unexpected.</i>
<u>21 Mar</u>	MOONRAKERS www.moonrakers.net	<i>Moonrakers is an Oxford-based multi-instrumental group playing Celtic traditional music and some original tunes and songs in the idiom. They play harp, fiddle, mandola, guitar, whistles and sing in close harmony with male and female voices.</i>
<u>28 Mar</u>	THE ASKEW SISTERS www.myspace.com/askewsisters	<i>A very welcome return of Hazel and Emily who continue to make waves on the folk scene with their energetic brand of English folk music.</i>

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

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

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