



The

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN OLDTIME MUSIC AND DANCE

OLD TIME News

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The Shivers, who must certainly take the award for best dressed Oldtime performers at Gainsborough 2008

New Friends...

Number	Name and Location
819	Melanie McKnight London
820	James Glancy Much Wenlock, Shropshire
821	Step This Way cloggers Consett, Co. Durham
822	Albert Hattersley Dronfield, Sheffield
823	Stuart Hall Daveyhulme, Manchester
824	Mrs. E. Parsons Tywyn, Gwynedd
825	Mr John McNally Cirencester, Gloucester
826	Mrs. J. McNally Cirencester, Gloucester
827	Joanne Cooper Tenby, Pembrokeshire
828	Tam LeBailly Hay-on-Wye, Herefordshire
829	Nigel Dodman New Radnor, Powys
830	Jonnie Pennie Radcliffe-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire
831	Jock Tyldesley Llansilin, Powys



Now that's fast...

The EDITOR'S ramblings

So, Gainsborough festival is over for another year. We have photos and your impressions and comments on P10

Two impressions of my own. There were fewer people attending than in previous years and there were more female players, on stage and in the sessions than I've seen before.

Next year's festival is likely to be the last at the present venue as the college is to be moved to a new site which we are told will be open by 2010. We wait to see how this will affect us. In the meantime, we have lost our present organiser with the resignation of **Nick Pilley**, who has done a fantastic job over the years.

The AGM decided that the best way forward would be to have a small working group to co-ordinate and manage future Gainsborough festivals, together with the committee, who will shortly draw up a remit for that group. If you feel you can contribute to future festivals please get in touch with one of the committee to offer your participation.

Sibs Riesen has stepped down from the role of Secretary, to be replaced by **Christine Bell**. We wish her every success with her new tasks and thank Sibs for all the hard work she has put in to our organisation.

Now is the time to plan for the various festivals that are planned for the next few months. Elsewhere we have a list of all those we know about but I want to welcome the arrival of a new festival, "**Going to the West Fest**" to be held in Pembrokeshire in June. Early indications are that there should be a great line up of acts. I hope we can get as many people there as possible to support the organisers, I know what a daunting task they face!

Thanks once again to Mo Jackson and Michi Matthias for their efforts in design and distribution respectively. We wish everybody a good summer with plenty of music.

"CALL FOR ARTICLES"

We hope to run a number of articles on "**Women in Old Time Music**".

Before we can do this however we need you to write them! At present I can see two main themes to this;

- female performers from the past who have perhaps been under reported on or under recorded
- secondly, reflections on the current UK old time scene and the role women play in this.



THE OLD TIME NEWS

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Distribution by Michi Matthias

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Publicity: Vacant
Festival: Vacant

To join Foatmad contact the Membership Secretary:
Eve Morris 67 Greenway, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton TA4 3DA Tel/Fax: 01823 432863

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Plus £5 for overseas/airmail

Chewing the Fat

APOLOGIES for the poor quality of pictures in the last issue. There was nothing wrong with the photos themselves, their dark appearance was due to the application of too much ink by the printer, for which they have apologised.

MANY THANKS to those people at Gainsborough who bought copies of the Yellowbellies charity cd or contributed their spare change towards the CLIC Sargent childrens' cancer appeal. Local coordinator Les Worrall took away over £70 and his total for the cd project is now over £800. He passes on his grateful thanks to everyone involved.

PETE SEEGER

A petition was started on the Internet last year to nominate Pete Seeger for the Nobel Peace Prize for his lifelong work for peace,

social justice, civil rights, human decency, and environmental responsibility. It has now developed into a grassroots movement with 15,000 + signatures. Word has spread exclusively by word of mouth and email; no money was spent on advertising.

The web site where you can view the petition is www.nobelprize4pete.org OTN suggests that all members might like to visit the site and add their support.

FRET OR NO FRET...

Having read Michi's article on learning to play the fiddle (page 12) I thought I would share with you some recent researches via Mudcat into the subject of fretted fiddles.

Apparently, over the years there have been various attempts to put frets on

fiddles and other string instruments that don't normally have them. Light gauge nylon fishing wire has been used on both fiddles and cellos, primarily to help people learn where to put their fingers. Some folk think that this prevents the proper execution of slides although I'm not sure why as it is perfectly possible to play slides on fretted instruments. To overcome this apparent problem some brave souls have cut slots in their finger boards, placing fingers exactly over the slots.

Now there is a company in Canada which makes fretted finger boards which can be stuck over existing finger boards. They are apparently easily removable when no longer required although some of us (well, me, actually) might want to keep this as a permanent addition. For more details contact them at:

info@frettedfiddle.com

Members Ads

Maximum of 50 words plus contact details, FREE to members. We drop older ads to make way for new UNLESS YOU RENEW YOUR REQUEST

OLD-TIME RECORDINGS - major and obscure American label CDs. Also, videos and tune books. SAE to: Eve Morris: 67 Greenway, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton TA4 3DA. Download a full catalogue of all items by clicking on Eve's advert at the bottom of the www.foootmad.org.uk page

RECORDS, TAPES AND CDS for sale - old-time, early country music, early bluegrass and a couple of contemporary bluegrass items. With only a couple of exceptions, all items £5 each. Send SAE for a list to: Andy Imms, 19 Springfield Road, Pamber Heath, Tadley, Hampshire RG26 3DL or email: guitar@imms12.wanadoo.co.uk

FOR SALE Windsor 3 with Pyxe tailpiece £450. Oakwood Hammer Dulcimer £300 Ring Pennie Gillis at 01902 340844 Email: penni@care4free.net

12-STRING GUITAR WANTED, preferably old and cheap-ish but playable! Around £150? Chris Taylor 01227 750392 email: christy8485@yahoo.com

NYLGUT STRINGS A big improvement - having the density and feel of real gut with more stability than metal strings. Excellent tone, good volume and easy on your nails! Standard Banjo: £6.50, Minstrel Banjo, heavy gauge for open E or D tunings: £7.00 Banjo-Uke: £5.30 all inc. P&P Cheque or cash to Barry M. Murphy, Dormers Farmhouse, Windmill Hill, Nr Herstmonceux, East Sussex BN 27 4RY E-mail barry.m.murphy@btinternet.com

MARTIN D28P 1988 6-STRING Serial no 482141. Rosewood back and sides. Some small playing marks, otherwise in super condition.

Classic Martin Dreadnought sound. Martin Hard Case. £1100. Contact Bob Ward on 01353 741640 (Ely) for more information.

STRING BAND MUSICIANS

WANTED for Shropshire based 'Kickin Alice' Appalachian dancers interested in playing Old Time and Bluegrass music. Contact Merrion Wood on 01743 354423 or merrion@talktalk.net

WANTED: "GOODBYE BABYLON" 6 CD Box set by Dust to Digital, US 2004. Contact Mike Feist Tel: 01943 464647.

APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN BANJOS

FOR SALE. 3 Models available: Basic: £400, deLux: £500, Fretless: £450 Helmut Rheingans 01433 631907

YEW PINEY MOUNTAIN by Dwight Diller. The book and CD bundle is available from <http://www.morningstarfolkarts.com> for \$30 plus \$10 postage, from Dwight himself at one of his workshops, or from David Dry at 4, Gill Lane, Startforth, Barnard Castle, DL12 9AS for £20 plus £2 postage. Make cheques payable to D.S.Dry.

1989 MARTIN HD-28 DREADNOUGHT

acoustic guitar, serial no. 488771, including Geib case. £1,100 Sterling. Contact: guitar@imms12.wanadoo.co.uk or call Andy Imms on 01189 701202 for details

BANJOS FOR SALE Early 1890's Cole 'Eclipse' 3000. Original 5-string. Serial no: 1870. 'Man in the Moon' on peghead and other engraved inlays. Very good condition. Skin head. 'Elite' tailpiece. £1100.

1992 Bart Reiter Special. 5-string. Very good condition. Serial no 821. Maple neck and pot. Rolled brass tone-ring. Tuners upgraded to 2-band. No Knot tailpiece (original is in the case), armrest. Hard case. Great sound. £775. Contact Bob Ward on 01353 741640 or email bobward321@hotmail.com for more information or pictures of either banjo.

FOR SALE: Martin HD-28VS vintage series guitar. 1998 serial no. 645298. Near mint condition. Including Geib HSC. Original owner. £1850 ovno. Contact Dave Marshall 01252 657609 or email davidkmarshall@hotmail.com

NEW GRIFFIN BANJOS - ready now NO WAITING LIST. Photos available.

'LEVELLER' - very well made, nice looking but not fancy; lovely to play, any style. £975.

'ARIEL' - shorter scale, 10" pot; delightful, neat little banjo designed to play in A - for when you have to play with those pesky fiddlers. £850.

'QUICKBEAM' - a unique, stunningly beautiful instrument, rowan wood with Whyte Laydie tone ring. Striking inlays and other decoration. Lovely sound and plays like a dream. £1995 ono. James Tel: 01588 680666. griffinbanjos@tiscali.co.uk

MANDOLIN. EASTMAN MD604. "A" model with oval sound hole. Very well made from nice woods. Lovely old time sound. As new condition. With good quality rectangular hard case. £400.

MANDOLIN. EASTMAN MD805. "A" model with "f" holes. Powerful sound. Very well made from nice woods. Excellent condition. With good quality rectangular hard case. £500.

Martin D35. Spruce top, rosewood (3-piece) back and sides. Fine example from 1988 -nicely played in. Excellent condition. With hard case. £1200.

Contact Stuart Wade stuartwade4@gmail.com 01246 563532 (Derbyshire).

STEWART WOULD LIKE TO JOIN OR FORM A BAND

Stewart who lives north of Sheffield would like to join or form an Old Time String or Country band. He plays mandolin, banjo/uke, rock steady guitar, keyboards and sings as well! Anyone interested please ring 07964192538 or email stewartcrew2@googlemail.com

EVENTS AND TOURS 2008

BEVERLY SMITH AND CARL JONES

www.smithnjones.net



MAY

Thu 8 May Burnetts Hill Chapel, Martletwy, Pembroke
Fri 9 May Wildwood Flower Club, George Hotel, South Molton, Devon
Sat 10 May Arts Centre, Castle St, Bridgwater, Somerset
Thu 15 May Wolf Folk Club, Sandringham, Norfolk
Fri 16 May Full Circle Folk Club, Cutthorpe, Derbyshire
Sat 17 May Eardisley, Herefordshire
Wed 21 May Bridlington
Thu 22 May The Side Cafe, Newcastle on Tyne
Fri 23 May Berwick on Tweed
Sun 25 May Fishguard Folk Festival, S.Wales
Tue 27 May Dartford Folk Club, Kent
Thu 29 May Royal Oak Folk Club, Lewes, E. Sussex

DANA AND SUSAN ROBINSON

<http://www.robinsongs.com>



MAY

1st Thursday, Otterton Mill, nr Budleigh Salterton, Devon EX9 7HG
4th Sunday, Walthamstow Folk Club, The Plough Inn, 173 Wood Street, Walthamstow, London E17 3NU
6th Tuesday Hoy at Anchor Folk Club at The Ship Hotel, New Road, Leigh on Sea SS9 2EA
8th Thursday, Folk at the Oak, The Royal Oak, 72 High Street Corsham SN13 0HF
11th Sunday, Twickenham FC, Cabbage Patch, 67 London Rd Twickenham TW1 3SZ
12th Monday, Tudor Folk Club, White Hill Centre Chesham HP5 1AH
13th Tuesday, Dartford Folk Club, Working Men's Club, Essex Road, Dartford DA1 2AU
16th Friday, Bacca Pipes Folk Club, Ukrainian Club, 9 Henry Street, Keighley BD21 3DR
17th Saturday, Davy Lamp Folk Club, Washington Arts Centre, Biddick Lane, Fatfield
19th Monday, Folk Club at Colchester Arts Centre, Church Street, Colchester CO1 1NF
20th Tuesday, Brown Cow Folk Club, The Brown Cow, Ratcliffe Gate, Mansfield NG18 2JA
22nd Thursday, Black Swan Folk Club, Black Swan Inn, Peasholme Green, York YO1 7PR
25th Sunday Cleethorpes Folk Festival
Tue 27 Leith Folk Club, The Village, 16 South Fort Street, Edinburgh EH6 4DN
29th Thursday The Acoustic Music Club Kirkcaldy, in the Polish Club, Bennochy House, Kirkcaldy.

JUNE

14th Saturday, Gower Folk Festival, at Gower Heritage Centre, Parkmill, Gower, Swansea SA3 2EH

FESTIVALS AND PICKING WEEKENDS

May 3rd to 5th **Picking weekend, Sewerby Hall**, Bridlington, Yorks. . Contact John Yeaman 01482 871466

May 23rd to 26th **Spring Camp**, Sacrewell Farm, Peterborough. www.footmad.org.uk

June 13th to 15th **"Not Stancheater"** picking weekend, Stoke St. Mary, near Taunton, Somerset. Contact Derek Parsons 01823 442713

June 13th to 15th **Going to the West Fest**, Angle, Pembrokeshire, Contact Jackie 01646 661363 or Jo 01834 871616 www.myspace.com/goingtothewestfest goingtothewestfest@gmail.com

June 27th to 29th **Picking weekend, The Cherry Tree**, Catthorpe, near Rugby. Contact Penni Gillis penni_gillis@btinternet.com

July 11th to 13th **Picking weekend. Killington Lake**, Cumbria. . Contact cloggingchris@tiscali.co.uk

August 8th to 17th **Summer Camp**, Sacrewell Farm, Peterborough. www.footmad.org.uk

Sep 12th to 14th **Sweet Sunny South**, Hastings, Sussex. Contact 01424 423230 info@sweetsunnysouth.co.uk www.sweetsunnysouth.co.uk

• There is no Picking weekend at Howard Morton's this year. Back next year.

June 6th - 8th **Coastline Bluegrass Event**, Llandudno, Wales. <http://www.coastlinebluegrass.co.uk>

July 4th to 6th **North Wales Bluegrass Festival**. Conway, North Wales. <http://www.northwalesbluegrass.co.uk>

July 18th to 20th **Guildtown Bluegrass Festival**, Scotland. www.scottishbluegrass.com

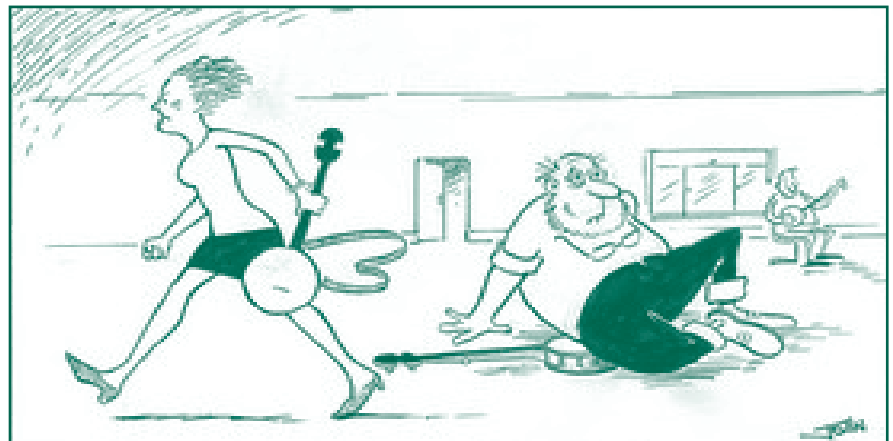
August 2nd to 3rd **Surrey Mini Bluegrass festival**, Mickleham, Dorking, Surrey. . Contact Chris Forbes 01737 813089 www.surreybluegrass.com

August 29th to 31st **Didmarton Bluegrass Festival**, Kemble Airfield, Gloucestershire. <http://www.didmarton-bluegrass.co.uk>

Sept 19th to 21st **Cornish Bluegrass Festival**, Newquay, Cornwall. . <http://cornishbluegrass.co.uk>

OFF KEY...

John Hill



Dwight told her he didn't like her Bum-titties...so she hit him!

WHERE CAN I FIND SOME CLOGGING?

If there are no contact details, email footfest@hotmail.com

Note that the locations are based on contact addresses and may not provide an exact location.

AVON
Bristol - Applejacks

CHESHIRE
Altrincham - Mind The Step www.mindthestep.co.uk

CORNWALL
Saltash - Kickin' Chicken www.kc.hey42.co.uk

CUMBRIA
Levens, Kendal - Legs Levens
cloggingchris@aol.com Chris Tel. 01539 560534

DERBYSHIRE
Chesterfield - Feet First
www.feetfirstdance.co.uk
Derby - Soled Out www.soledout.org.uk
Buxton - Wicked Soles
Bakewell - WellHeeled, web.ukonline.co.uk/whdt

DEVON
Totnes - Shuffle the Deck
Exeter - Alive And Kicking
www.alive-and-kicking.org.uk
Axminster - Rough Diamonds

DORSET
Christchurch - Spank The Planks
www.spanktheplanks.org.uk
Dorchester - Stampede

ESSEX
Colchester - Platypus Appalachian
Benfleet - Scrambled Leggs
www.scrambledleggs.flyer.co.uk

GLAMORGAN
Cardiff - Tiger Feet www.tigerfeet.4ever.org.uk

GLOUCESTERSHIRE
Woodmancote - First Class Stamp

GWENT
Newport - Brandywine Cloggers
www.brandywine-cloggers.co.uk
Newport - Shoosting

HAMPSHIRE
Alton - Knickerbocker Glory kbgdance.org.uk
Portsmouth - Chequered Flag
www.members.aol.com/CheqFlag/index.htm
New Milton - AppalTappers
(contemporary 'line' clogging)

HEREFORDSHIRE/SHROPSHIRE
Bridgnorth - Kickin' Alice www.kickinalice.co.uk

HERTFORDSHIRE
Hitchin: Regular workshops
Maggie Tel: 01908 582 757
Bricket Wood - Junction9 www.junction9.org.uk

KENT
Ash - Tanglefoot
mysite.freemove.com/tanglefoot
Rainham - TapRoots www.roots.ik.com

LANCASHIRE
Bolton - Leap To Your Feet
website www.leaptoyourfeet.co.uk

LINCOLNSHIRE
Scunthorpe - Bootleggers
www.bootleggersappalachian.co.uk
Spalding - Slapdash

LONDON (SW) - Reilly's C

MIDLOTHIAN
Edinburgh - Kick The Cat
www.users.waitrose.com/~app-clogging

NORFOLK
Norwich - Ebekneezer Steppers

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
Oundle - Rockingham Rapper (with some Clog)

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Castle Donington - Touchwood (no taps)
www.earwicker.org/touchwood.htm

OXFORDSHIRE
Haddenham - Haddenham Hoofers
Wantage - Cornucopia
www.cornucopia-dance.org.uk

POWYS
Ludlow - Raise The Dust www.raisedthedust.org.uk
Llandrindod Wells - Something's Afoot

REDCAR AND CLEVELAND

Saltburn by the Sea - Jump Back Georgia

SOMERSET

West Chinnock - No Mean Feet
www.nomeanfeet.org.uk

SUSSEX

Crawley - Hi Jinx
freespace.virgin.net/michael.bird/hijinx/hijinx.htm

TYNE & WEAR

Washington - Washington Downtown Cloggers
Newcastle - Pass The Buck
Durham, Nettleworth - Step This Way
stejan.hutchinson1@btopenworld.com
Janet. Tel. 0191 3880971

WARWICKSHIRE

Harbury/Leamington - Kick Start

WEST MIDLANDS

Stourbridge - Itchy Feet
www.itchyfeetappalachian.co.uk

WEST YORKSHIRE

Saltaire - Roll Back the Carpet
www.rbc.binless.co.uk
Shipley - Fiddle n' Feet
Otley - Kitchen Taps
www.kitchentaps.org.uk Claire Tel. 01943 467848
Janet Tel. 01943465342
Ripponden - Ryburn Three-Step
www.ryburn3step.org.uk
Tue. flatfooting classes. Tel: 01422 822569

WILTSHIRE

Chippenham - Footnotes
www.communigate.co.uk/wilts/footnotes

SWINDON - Off The Rails

WORCESTERSHIRE

Worcester - Soft Option
members.aol.com/woodlandjd
Chipping Campden - Kick The Bucket
Redditch - One Step Beyond
www.onestepbeyond.fsnet.co.uk

WHERE CAN I FIND AN OLD TIME BAND?

Where there is no web contact or for further details, please email info@footmad.org.uk

BERKSHIRE

The Illbillies 01189 677408
colmdaly@ntlworld.com

CORNWALL

The Boardbeaters 07817 460351
graham@kftfiddles.freemove.co.uk

DERBYSHIRE

Down Trodden String Band Tel: 01629 812092
steve-wise@lycos.co.uk

HAMPSHIRE

Dave Marshall & Andy Imms Tel: 01252 657609
oldfivestring@ntworld.com

LONDON

Lost Marble String Band Tel: 01462 683074
staceybanjos@hotmail.com

IRELAND (EIRE)

Rough Deal String Band Tel: 00 353 1 8331920
banjabill@hotmail.com
www.roughdeal.com

KENT

Rattle On The Stovepipe Tel: 07765 377441
storyart@aol.com www.davearthur.net

TYNE & WEAR

Old Fiddle String Band
Tel: 07817 460351
graham@kftfiddles.freemove.co.uk

WEST MIDLANDS

New Corona String Band
Tel: 01902 340844
penni@care4free.net

SOMERSET/AVON

Buffalo Gals 01373 474110
info@buffalogals.co.uk
www.buffalogals.co.uk

SUSSEX

Old Faded Glory String Band
Tel: 01323 832388
barry.m.murphy@btinternet.com

SESSION FINDER

We rely on being informed of changes to this list. Please contact info@footmad.org.uk with any amendments or new entries.

BERKSHIRE

Reading: 1st Sunday 12 noon - The Retreat.
Colm Daly Tel: 0118 9677408

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Aylesbury: alternate Wednesdays - The Hop Pole. Mark Wallace wallace@zymosis.demon.co.uk

CLEVELAND

Saltburn-by-Sea: Wednesday - Spa Hotel: 'Pickin' Parlour - open mike' £1 cover charge. Occasional Friday guest artists. Stan Gee Tel: 01642 478859 stan.gee@btinternet.com

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridge: 2nd Tuesday - at The Zebra, Maids Causeway. oldtime/bluegrass. Michelina Craft
Tel: 01223 897840

CORNWALL

Bodmin: 2nd Thursday. Tony Taylor Tel: 01208 872252

CUMBRIA

Middleton-in-Lonsdale: Friday 9pm - The Head: old-time (dancers welcome).
Hugh Connor or Chris Riley Tel: 01539 560534

DERBYSHIRE

Bakewell: Thursday - Manners Hotel. Mac Battersby Email steve-wise@lycos.co.uk
Tel: 01629 812092

Baslow: Devonshire Arms, 1st Monday of each month.
enquiries@downtrodden.org.uk

DEVON

South Molton: 2nd Wednesday - George Hotel: oldtime/USA roots. Marianne and Martin Lucas
Tel: 01237 472083.

DURHAM Monday 7-9: Memorial Hall, Nettleworth, Chester-le-Street

Teignmouth: 1st Thursday - Devon Arms: USA roots.
Bob Matthews 01626 352007 or Howard Morton
Tel: 01803 329734

EAST SUSSEX 2nd Wednesday of the month. The Black Horse, High Street, Lewes. Tel: Michi Mathias Tel: 01273 471431

EIRE Dublin: Most Saturdays, 4 pm to 7pm Cobblestone Bar: Rough Deal String Band (not a session)
Tel: 353 1 8331920

HEREFORDSHIRE

Kington: monthly - The Royal Oak. Jim Allen Tel: 01568 750546

KENT

Rainham: 1st & 3rd Wednesday Oast Community Centre: old-time/bluegrass.

Graham Anstey Tel: 01634 260281

Tunbridge Wells: Last Wednesday, 8 pm Beacon Hotel, Tea Garden Lane: bluegrass/old-time. Rick Townend Tel: 01892 782412 banjos@supanet.com

LANCASHIRE

The Flowers, Todmorden Rd., Bacup. Clive Green 01706 814682

LONDON Sunday. The Shakespeare, 1 Arlington Way, Finsbury. FrankVWeston@aol.com

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Blisworth: 3rd Monday - The Walnut Tree Inn: old-time/bluegrass. Andrew Metcalfe Tel: 01604 862256
a.metcalfe340@btinternet.com

OXFORDSHIRE

Oxford: last Thursday - Fox & Hounds, Weirs Lane and Abingdon Rd bluegrass/old-time. Taube Marks Tel: 01865 552111

Wallingford: 2nd Tuesday - Cross Keys: bluegrass/oldtime. Lucy Quinn: tonyquinn@aol.com

SOMERSET

Taunton: Tuesday - The Bell, Creech St Michael. Derek Parsons Tel: 01823 442713 or Nick Pilley Tel: 01278 450780

SURREY

Ewshot: 1st Friday. Tel: 01276 609954

WORCESTERSHIRE

Tenbury: 2nd Friday - St. Michael's Village Hall. 'The Floor' regular concerts (not session), pre-book a 'spot' if you wish to perform. Jim Allen 01568 750546

YORKSHIRE

Ripponden: last Tuesday - Royal Hotel. Rishworth: Ryburn 3 Step Folk Club.

Pete Coe Tel: 01422 822569

Sheffield: 3rd Monday - Kelham Ireland Tavern, Russell Street. Dave Young Tel: 0114 2330596

York: Sunday - Golden Ball. Mike Tavener
Tel: 01904 798738

York: Tuesday - The Maltings, Lendal Bridge. Mike Tavener Tel: 01904 798738

Hebden Bridge: Wednesday - The Fox and Goose.
Tel: Clive Green 01706 814682

NORTH CAROLINA

Brevard: Tuesday - Celestial Mountain Music, 16 West Main St. Tel: 828-884-3575 celestial@citcom.net

Lancing: Friday - Phipps Country Store. Tel 336-384-2382
fiddlesilas@hotmail.com

so you want to go to America?

Our esteemed editor was looking for comments about the ins and outs of travelling to America. Some of you will be aware that Claire and I try and visit at least once a year and so, somehow, we were felt to have some useful knowledge to impart. Here are a few handy tips.

There are 3 areas to consider: flights, car hire, accommodation and shopping... 4 areas: flights car hire... but enough of this Monty Python plagiarism, let's start!

Let's assume you have a purpose for your visit or even just a vacation and you've done a bit of research checking out maps and the like. A festival or two can often provide the impetus. Unfortunately they often tend to coincide with peak holiday periods so up goes the expense. You could find an off-peak time but you may not find anything to base your trip around so it's a case of 'grit your teeth and bear it'.

The cost of the flight is generally the biggest chunk of the expense, especially as those stealth taxes keep creeping up. Once we've decided some approximate dates and a rough destination, we make use of the internet and look at as many possible permutations of dates and airports as possible. Recently we have been prepared to pay a little more and fly from our local airport (Bristol) rather than get better deals from London. The convenience, the smaller, more manageable airport, the easier parking and the fact that we can be home and unpacked in less than an hour can offset the slightly higher ticket price and a possible extra connection.

Moving a day each way might make a substantial difference and picking a less than convenient airport at the other end might do the same. Of course, you then have to factor in extra driving miles or car parking but eventually you come to a selection of prices and may be close to making that online booking. If you have to use a travel agent you may not have the same flexibility but you have someone else to do at least some of the work.

We tend to use a small selection of online booking agencies. Current favourites who have proved reliable in the past are Ebookers, Airline Network and Opodo (web addresses later). We may also use Travelsupermarket to compare all those (and others) but we're not convinced you get all the possible contenders and will often jump to the cheapest site and then start a further trawl. This may be spread over a number of days - or even weeks - until a suitable bargain presents itself and we book - sometimes online and sometimes over the phone.

Now we're on course. Time to organise a car unless we have the kindness of being loaned one by friends or are able to make use of public transport. Be warned though, big cities will have a public transport infrastructure but generally the options provided by Greyhound or Amtrak are few and far between - and in Amtrak's case surprisingly expensive. If you've never driven on the 'wrong side', a quiet first drive somewhere away from lots of traffic is good - sadly there's not often that choice straight out of an airport rental lot! Otherwise, you'll soon get the hang of it.

Whoever we use for the flights, we usually end up with Ebookers for the car - and we book online and in advance. That way we end up knowing that we will almost certainly have full cover in the minefield of American insurance waivers and a minimum of form filling when you stagger off that plane at least 5 hours out of phase and your ears too dull from the in flight noise to make out what these people are telling you in a range of different accents and auto-speak. Hand over the receipt that has hopefully been emailed to you in advance (chase it up beforehand if not!) and all should go swimmingly. Leave booking until you get there

and there's just a chance that you get a bargain but more likely you won't. We speak from experience...

Accommodation can cover a huge range of options. Camping at a festival is always an option. You can take a lightweight tent with you (we have) or buy one there and abandon it before returning. Wal-Mart can come up trumps with something basic and cheap which will last a week or so but that's less likely out of season. There is always the luxury of staying with friends that you get to know when they are 'over here' and this is especially helpful if you are able to return the compliment by setting up 'open house' at home. We wholeheartedly recommend that

approach because you get to meet some wonderful people.

Beyond that, there's hotels and motels. We've never come across one that might be a dead ringer for Psycho but we have driven past a few that we would rather sleep in the car than stop at. A good mid-range would be Super 8 or Motel 6. We've always found them fine. Both are part of large chains and are only too happy to make a booking somewhere else along the line for you.

Shopping...well now, currently the pound to dollar is in our favour but bear in mind that almost everything will have taxes added to the price and they vary by state. We invariably have at least one of our baggage allowances almost empty to be able to fill up with goodies to bring back. Clothes are a favourite and if you can salve your conscience about shopping at Wal-Mart then there's plenty to get. A little more upmarket is Target and then almost anywhere else. Buying electricals is less of a bargain because of the different voltage and TV system but CDs are universal, NTSC VHS tapes will generally play on UK vcrs, and DVDs can often play on UK

...You can take a lightweight tent with you (we have) or buy one there and abandon it before returning. Wal-Mart can come up trumps with something basic and cheap which will last a week or so but that's less likely out of season...

machines especially if the disc is region-free or the player is multi-region and so on.

Cameras, portable recorders etc which are mains adaptor powered will often have a twin voltage adaptor (or buy a replacement over here) and batteries are universal. You could well not have a UK guarantee if it fails, so be judicious. Buying instruments can be a good deal but you have to consider that your 'bargain price' Gibson or Martin may end up being thrown around in an aircraft hold and end up trashed. Generally there's only space for small instruments in the overheads. And finally, there are limits to what you can bring back though customs without paying duty. Having said that, paying the duty (and VAT) is still likely to leave you in pocket. And having said that, I've never seen anyone get stopped in the 'Nothing To Declare' lane...but there's always the first time so on your own head be it.

As for taking money, generally there is no shortage of ATMs, certainly in more built up areas, and if your credit/debit card shows Visa, MC, Cirrus or Maestro they should work as normal. There may or may not be a small charge for them. For your debit card you want the 'cash from checking' (cheque book account) option. Quick cash options usually are a fixed amount, maybe \$60. There will be a daily limit based on something similar to what you have here.

We rarely take more than \$60 to \$100 with us when we go and often less, the Post Office is useful for small amounts like that. As long as we have enough for coffee or phone calls we'll get money on arrival. Travellers cheques may be helpful because of their security aspects but unless you intend carrying large amounts of cash (not recommended), you can get by with buying on your card and the occasional trip to the ATM.

Finally, don't forget that you will need at least 6 months still left on your passport even if you only intend staying a few days. And your driving licence if you intend driving.

Web sites:

www.ebookers.com

www.airnet.co.uk

www.opodo.com

www.travelsupermarket.co.uk

Piney Woods at the Crabshell

Neil White

There was yet another astonishing sell-out concert at the Crabshell Inn, Kingsbridge in south Devon, this Sunday (17 February). Thanks for so many messages of goodwill and expressions of appreciation from those who were there (and for the messages of regret from those who couldn't get booked in).

Kate Lissauer, from Maryland via Frome, along with West Virginians Dave and Tim Bing, and Jim Martin too (on double-bass fiddle and double-bass vocals), played and sang for us just as good as it can get. We're still revelling, here, in their music, their company, their fun, ayend that acciyent, even though they've now moved on ... for now...We think and hope they'll be back!

We are proud and privileged to have exceptional musicians of this stature come to us, so far off the usual beaten track.

Grateful appreciation too to so many players who travelled far to turn up in the bar beforehand to commit American Oldtime music, whether they'd remembered to book for the concert or not (and mostly not, dozy crew!). They certainly bemused and amused the regulars and droppers-in who had

just popped in for a quiet Sunday drink!

Thanks too to Richard Spilsbury, of nearby Chillington, for lending and delivering his big double-bass fiddle. Such an item is hard to bring on the plane from West Virginia. Jim Martin declared it the best he'd been loaned to play on the whole UK tour, but he probably said the same at each venue.

We had a substantial list of people waiting and hoping to pick up cancelled tickets after our habitual advance sell out. It helps a lot if folks can let us know as soon as possible if they can't show up. Most telephone or email to let us know (thank you) but some don't. We'd far rather trust to "book, pick up and pay at the door" than switch to "payment in advance (and forfeit if you don't show)" as many others seem to do.

You may (or may not) care to look at www.kebc.co.uk a new website for the "Kingsbridge Estuary Boat Club", which is based at the Crabshell. There are some easily found references there to our music events.

More top traditional American Music coming up later this year at the Crabshell

Sunday 27 April

Sara Grey, Kieron Means and Ben Paley (Wow!)

Sunday 01 June

Jeff Warner (He's back, because we all wanted him to come back!)

Sunday 05 October

Debby McClatchy (Y'all know Debby, and this time, by popular request, she's solo!)



...Oh how times have changed!

Colm Daly - Silver Surfer

After reading Steve Wise's excellent article in the last issue of his internet activities I have been struck with the contrast between the fairly recent past and right now.

If you cast your minds back a decade or two you'll remember cassettes, and further back vinyl albums, or may be not if you are a spring chicken. Who would now ever believe the stir that the introduction of the double-cassette deck once caused, and who would be seen dead with one now? Back then, before the Digital Revolution got off the ground, you had to put-up or shut up and be thankful for very small mercies. Had you even the where-with-all to indulge yourself with the latest hardware you were still stranded for choice. Even if your local music store had a token jazz or folk section downstairs that attracted 'unwashed-hairy types', rare imports were few if not expensive, and were usually only on vinyl.

A trip to your local public library's music section might have revealed a modicum of some decent folk or Irish stuff but it seldom went far enough. Still, to a penniless urchin like me, public libraries provided many a happy weekend copying and labelling cassettes, and compared to earlier collectors who had to buy everything, this was indeed a godsend. Those earlier collectors had to firstly write to distributors or record labels and order a catalogue (one week); because they were usually in The States you had to obtain the requisite dollars from down the bank (another week), then you send in your order by post and wait (another week if you were lucky), and in the meantime as luck would have it, someone from your local old-time session passes you from under the table down a copy of the very same thing you just ordered!...Oh how times have changed!

I laugh now to recall the trip three of us teenage Dubliners made back in the 80's to London. One Easter bank holiday we set for London in our quest for records and browse through one of those mega unwashed-hairy type record shops. Collett's springs to mind, but there were several others around Shaftesbury Avenue and Denmark Street that would swallow up the one day of shopping left. After train/ferry fares there was only a meagre £10 each to shop with. Either way, the sleeping rough in some church porch was well rewarded by my acquisition of a single piano blues LP on vinyl of Jimmy Yancey, a Chicago bluesman. The thrill of returning with an entire album of someone who I had only previously read about before, had me salivating all the way home in anticipation of listening to it, and knowing that I was probably the only one in our far flung island on the edge of Europe that had a copy made me feel real smug...tee heee heee...Oh how times have changed!

Initially my interest was in blues piano. The lure of trying to fathom its simple appeal had me gagging for more. To my ears the sounds delivered by seemingly uneducated or illiterate players struck a chord; as if to say that it was for the love of the pure sound rather than the exhibitionist aspect that appealed; as if to say that similar commercial recordings were twee, as if to say commercial music was affected by a strange virus. As many more forms of good music became more accessible it was Old Time that eventually became the one of choice simply because I discovered live sessions in that vernacular near to my new home in Camden Town, London. There I was lucky to meet a small fraternity who slavishly copied imported albums and cassettes for each other and thought it just couldn't get better...Oh how times have changed!

When the digital revolution first dawned in the form of CD technology few of us could afford a player, and for a decade or two many of us just ignored it. Once prices dropped and we awoke to the potential of it, and as the volume of new releases and reissues took on gigantic proportions, I bought into it and I thought that surely now the sky's the limit, but it wasn't to stop there. If you could spend half your life getting your head around it all, internet shopping and MP3 technology was just around the corner and before you knew it your keyboard was transformed into a magic wand for all your musical wishes...Oh how times have changed!

As Steve says, whole live concerts can be downloaded but even the once very rare "Talking Feet" documentary about Appalachian Clog Dance is now free to download from www.folkstreams.net/pub/FilmsByTitle.php (although I have the original video cassette it's in NTSC format and not playable on our older VCRs). YouTube video clips with the likes of Doc Watson abound and heck, you can watch Sprout Wings and Fly (a whole documentary on Tommy Jarrell) at www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDJPNg3RDxU. Audiophiles can tune into webcasts like Sugar in the Gourd's 24/7 Old time internet radio, or download radio-like shows called podcasts, and that's only the tip of the iceberg.

Almost overnight, third millennium Joe Bloggs can get just about anything he wants musically for a tiny fraction of the time and cost of before, and have no compatibility issues to contend with either! The savvy freeloader can download tons of rarities; can copy them a million times, can produce CDs or DVDs that hold multiple albums (ripping and burning) while keeping each album's integrity and track info in tact; MP3 them to your portable player; slow them down keeping pitch; you name it and it can be done. Irrespective of the questionable legality of much of what goes on in Peer to Peer networks, one has to acknowledge that the battle to keep music as the preserve of private property is being lost, and this is a momentous and historic change not seen since the reverse happened, when common

grazing grounds were enclosed in the 18th century. Calling this a mere technological revolution is not good enough; this is a brand spanking new Cultural Revolution that for once returns power to the people...Oh how times have changed!

The latest statistic from Ofcom this week reports that 4 out of 10 Britons use Social Networking (Facebook etc) and with more than 50% of us on broadband we are the biggest users in the world, which tells us more about our greater leisure time than anything else. Considering that most of my generation, and older, can be excluded from those figures because we are scared stiff of keyboards, never mind being told what to do by some Bill Gates bloke, is saying something about the measure of this change. I'm in the minority; they call us silver-surfers, for if the payoff is to indulge my musical palette and waste my time gainfully then the technical challenges are worth it.

Being eager recently for some early Jamaican Mento music (for they often use fiddle and banjo) I clicked on the search and whoopee down came The Jolly Boys in one fell swoop (actually it took a couple of hours). I already have the original on cassette of course (true), but what a pain it would have been to rip from the tape myself, almost worse than my backache! I know there is a loophole in that many users download from Peer to Peer networks and don't have the originals, but I don't see them as doing much harm other than upsetting the advertising community. Torrent users have a (type of peer-to-peer network where only anonymous links are shared as opposed to the actual end product) seem the most immune to unfair pricing (as what happened to the likes of Napster, AudioGalaxy, Grokster, Kazaa etc,) for not only do they not provide the end product, they merely route to the downloader a tiny little bit of the end product from each anonymous provider, of which there could be millions. Proscribing that is like proscribing fresh air in legal terms.

They reckon that over 50% of all broadband activity is due to torrent downloads whizzing around (my Jolly Boys were quite dizzy when they arrived) and what with big-time torrent sites the likes of The Pirate Bay, who have been hitting the news of late for turning the tables on big media companies by countering their actions and winning, begs the question can anyone own such an intangible thing as original digital data; if it goes about spawning millions of identical clones, then which one was the original? Lets face it, its like the wild west frontier out der, and dem der big ranch owners wants to carve it all up for demselves!...how times...have NOT changed!



CD Review



Land of the Sky

The Downtrodden String Band

Hold the Woodpile Down,
Logan County Blues, Waterbound,
Duck Shoes Rag
Lazy John, Falls of Richmond
Handsome Molly, Grey Eagle, Sugar
Babe, I've Got No Honeybaby Now
Down In Little Egypt, My Homes
Across the Blue Ridge Mountains,
Johnson Boys
New Five Cent, Chased Old Satan
Through the Door
Booth Shot Lincoln,
Goodbye Miss Liza Jane.

The Downtrodden String Band are **Trefor Griffith, Helmut Rheingans, Stuart Wade** and **Steve Wise** and this is their first CD. Seventeen tracks of mostly songs though some good tunes too, featuring the bands trade mark sound of mandolin and octave mandolin as well as guitar and banjo.

The CD comes with an eight page booklet with information on source musicians and interesting albeit rather small pictures from a booklet titled "Western North Carolina Railroad Scenery - Land of the Sky" from which the CD takes its name.

The playing is crisp and tight and the singing is clear and the harmonies work well, with each of the band taking lead singing duties. What comes across, apart from their musical skills, is the fact that they enjoy what they are doing and so will you as anyone who saw them at Gainsborough recently will tell you. Anyone with a reasonably large collection of old time recordings is likely to have other versions of the material here so you can make your own comparisons. What I think you will find is that this is no mere copying exercise but a British band bringing their own interpretations to some good material.

I don't think they will stay downtrodden for long, I reckon they are stepping up to the plate and expect to see them at many festivals in the near future. "Land of the Sky" is available via the web site www.downtrodden.org.uk

Chairman Ray

What a Festival!

This year's Gainsborough Old Time Festival was a triumph in many ways. **Nick Pilley** who organised it with the sterling help of **Claire Rudd** created an excellent and varied program of concerts and workshops with some of the finest possible performers.

Piney Woods delivered a combination of tunes and songs with joy and Old Time polish (very different from the modern variety) that made me feel that sitting in the concert hall was even better than jamming in a session, and the full room and the audience response told me that many others felt the same. The festival highlights for me were **Tim** and **Dave Bing** playing together in their workshop as if they could read each other's minds, and **Adam Hurt's** gently expressive and precise playing of both banjo and fiddle tunes with **Beth Hartness'** exquisite guitar backing. **The Shivers, The Down Trodden String Band, The Kittyhawks** and **Kerry Fletcher/Tim Brooks** also gave excellent value. Unfortunately fewer than 200 people attended over the weekend, causing the society to lose around £1100, the first loss for several years. If you weren't there, perhaps you should have been ... for your sake if not the society's.

Exit Stage Left

An attentive member of the audience at the festival will have noticed a subtle nuance in **Chance** and **Susette Shiver's** fine performance one evening, when **Susette** executed a backward somersault off the stage from a sitting position and her banjo never hit the ground. This fine example of athletic musicianship was brought about by some 'undocumented features' present in the school's aged stage equipment, and the society needs to rectify this problem by the next festival. If any member has access to any low cost but safe and sturdy staging that's up to holding a stomping string band, please let our secretary know.

Committee Changes

This year's AGM saw the resignation of **Nick Pilley** as Publicity Officer and **Sibylle Riesen** as Secretary. **Sibs** became Secretary three years ago, after **Nick** moved to Publicity, as a temporary position until we found somebody who wanted to do it more permanently. Moving to Cornwall has made it very difficult to attend Committee meetings, and she reasonably decided the time had come to hand over. She has done the job as beautifully as she does everything (if you haven't seen her dance then go and see **Buffalo Gals**), and we thank her for her services. She has now been replaced by **Christine Bell**, who was previously

elected as a dance representative in 2007. **Christine's** old position has now been filled by **Josie Anstee**, who has held a co-opted post for a year.

Nick, who's had to resign because of growing work pressure, has been an essential pillar of Foaotmad for many years, first as Secretary then as Publicity Officer. While holding both these posts he also ran a fine series of Gainsborough Old Time Festivals. Doing far more essential tasks than he was ever elected for, he's helped to make the Festival what it is, something of which many American and British Old Time artists are proud to have been a part. I'd like to offer **Nick** the gratitude of Foaotmad for all he's done, and I'm sure will do in the future. **Nick's** position as publicity officer was not filled at the AGM, so we need a volunteer prepared to be co-opted until the next one. **Nick** is prepared to continue with his weekly email circulation of the list of Old Time events.

Festival Organiser

Because **Nick** will not be running the festival next year, we need someone prepared to take on the job and, if necessary, lead a working group. Whoever does it can count on assistance from committee members, and can use the Old Time News and **Nick's** email circular to request volunteer assistance from members prepared to offer their time. **Nick** has prepared a summary of the tasks currently involved which should help the Organiser to get off to a good start. A copy of this will be available from the Secretary (see page 2 for contact details) for anyone interested. **Nick** has kindly offered to be available for the occasional phone call to help answer the more difficult questions that may arise. The Festival Organiser would sit on the Committee as a co-opted member.

Chairman Who?

If you were at this year's Annual General Meeting you would have heard me give the society a year's notice that I will not be standing as chairman in 2009. I will have held the post for five years and I feel the time will have come for someone else to inject some new ideas into our beloved Foaotmad. So if you love Old Time music and want to do something to ensure the Friends are alive and well, have a good think about it over the next year. If you want some inside information about what the job entails, please talk to me. I'll be at camps and festivals all over the place this summer. To stand for this or any other post, you need to send a letter to **Christine Bell**, our new Secretary, with the names of two Foaotmad members who will propose and second you, well in advance of next year's AGM.

GAINSBOROUGH FESTIVAL 2008

Chance Shiver

First and foremost for Susette and me, the Gainsborough Old Time Festival will stand out in our memory because of the wonderfully welcoming people there.



From Friday to Sunday we moved through a friendly sea of FOAOTMADs. And friends of the music and us they were. The school, while spacious, having many rooms and halls for jamming and gathering, still is an intimate environment for fiddles and banjos and clogging boards. Somehow the space and the warmth of the individuals set a beautiful tone.

Nick and Claire, the coordinators of the festival, were simply stellar. Years of experience and a genuine desire to facilitate a beautiful festival experience were evident in their hospitality and organization. For Susette and me, it was as good as it gets. Period.

Susette and I truly enjoyed our time on stage, and were pleased with the sound and overall production. Our MC, **Bob Ward**, gave informative and well-informed introductions, and brought us and all the acts on stage with a rousing welcome.

It was tremendously gratifying to us that the UK audience enjoyed our take on Old Time Country Music and found our brand of humor enjoyable. Our workshop, Old Time Country

Music Singing, was great fun for us. Susette's yodeling instruction may have started the latest craze; several folks told me they had carried on yodeling on Sunday.

Gainsborough is Banjo Land, my friends. Witness how **Tim Bing's** Banjo Workshop was jammed, 36 banjos in one room. I'm not sure that's even legal in the states. If the Gainsborough festival isn't Banjo



Heaven, then you can surely see it from there.

There were other opportunities for great workshops; one of Susette's favorites was Round Peak repertoire on Sunday with **Adam Hurt** and **Beth Hartness** providing a rare look at this almost unique and closely guarded body of tunes. Unfortunately I missed Beth's Round Peak guitar style workshop. would like to know how much Round Peak has influenced her style. Beth's guitar backup to Adam's fiddle or banjo is clean and crisp and interactive. She weaves root notes and harmony notes into her bass runs, while holding the rhythm solid, and syncopates the cadence of the tunes. If you want to know how to play old time backup give Beth a listen. She's the real deal.

Adam's banjo playing is melodic and often wonderfully gentle, lending warmth to the tunes. And his recordings with Beth and others which came away with Susette have been providing the musical backdrop around our house since our return. Beautiful music.

In concert, Kate Lissauer's singing and playing along with the Bing Brothers fine instrumental work was a highlight of the festival for me. Her voice and vocal style hits you right where old time music ought to, and reminds me strongly of another Marylander, Ola Belle Reed. Her banjo and guitar were extra fine, as well.

I got a kick out of the **Downtrodden String Band**. They were a great deal of fun to hang out with, and I learned that **Stuart Wade**, the mandolin player, is planning a visit to Asheville NC where we've made plans to meet up, since Susette and I spend as much time down on our side of Hanlon Mountain just 17 minutes from downtown Asheville as we can.

Chats in the corridors and sitting in the dining hall were often strikingly memorable and filled out the corners of a genuinely rewarding festival experience. In the end, it's a simple equation, really. Excellent people, excellent music, excellent location and excellent organization equal a great festival. Susette and I hope to see you all again.

Festival Snipits Dave Dry

The familiar sight of Ray Banks' blue Cabanon tent made us too keen to get in, and we scraped the sump again on that blasted speed-ramp.

Nick Pilley was rushing round like a BAF erecting the stage and climbing ladders to put up the resplendent new FOAOTMAD stage backdrop. Later he looked even more stressed, trying to herd together our American guests "who are on stage in less than an hour."

A group from Derbyshire new to the festival, **The Downtrodden String Band**, opened Friday's concert. They played an excellent set of songs and instrumentals, led by mandolin and mandola - a sound reminiscent of **The Midnight Plumbers** from Otley.





The Kittyhawks continue to establish themselves with their forte - close harmony singing led by Mo Jackson and Lucy Ray, both nattily dressed for the occasion, and ably backed by the Sorefingers Team!

Next on were **Tim Brooks**, a fine fiddler playing for the delightful and talented **Kerry Fletcher**, giving us a real flatfooting treat.

Chance Shiver (guitar) and his wife **Susette** (autoharp) sang a medley of songs "on the porch," sadly interrupted by Susette having a nasty fall when her chair slipped through a gap in the stage. The side of her head hit the floor quite hard. Though visibly shaken, she managed to complete the set and deserves a medal for courage. I think someone was taking care from above as shortly before her fall, she had put down the autoharp and picked up a banjo, which was undamaged. What a trouper.

Adam Hurt and Beth Hartness combined on banjo/fiddle and guitar to give us several distinctive, serene renditions. Their crystal clear sound is different to anything I have heard before, and was an interesting contrast to the more driving Piney Woods who followed.

Piney Woods were understandably very wary where they positioned themselves on the stage! But what energy they generated. We are familiar with the talents of **Dave Bing** and **Kate Lissauer**, but with **Tim Bing** on banjo and **Jim Martin** on bass the band was just stunning. **Sibs Riesen** wasn't the only one wanting to dance. And how does she continue to get better still?

Kate's "Singing with the banjo" class was informative and great fun. She had the whole class singing, even the timid and tone-deaf like me, though at times we forgot to play our banjos. There was almost as much laughing as singing. Very enjoyable.

After many years of the highest recommendation by **Dwight Diller**, we finally came face to face with **Tim Bing** in his banjo class. What an extraordinary talent. We played a few tunes together, asked loads of

questions and Tim played a mix of Hammons family tunes learned directly from Sherman, good old standards and some requests including Cranberry Rock, which Dwight steadfastly refuses to teach! Please come back to visit us again.

Adam Hurt showed what an excellent teacher he is in his "Kyle Creed's Cumberland Gap" class, in g#, C#, F#, BE tuning, key of E. As with his playing, he is precise and clear. In less than 15 minutes he had a large class playing the tune.

It is always good to know a few tunes in any given tuning, and Adam demonstrated several more tunes. He also explained that certain D tunes could be played by dropping this tuning by 2 frets to f#, BEAD, giving us more demonstrations. I do hope we see him again.

Dave and Tim Bings' "Duo" class was a real wow! More a concert with questions and asides e.g. having to cut recording sessions short because of Jim Martin's over-generous hospitality, but they were not complaining! It was a real privilege to listen to them and witness them bouncing off each other. They had a second sense of what the other was going to do. I even bought their CD! (I bought Adam's too.)

Thanks to **Brenda and Rob Johnson**, and **Tony** from "The Ship" for keeping us well fed and watered and to all who organised a very successful 14th Festival.

On a sadder note, it was a shame **Keith Johnson** was prevented from attending, as he was still incapacitated from a replacement knee operation. The NHS doesn't time these things, but if anyone recorded or filmed concerts/sessions/classes, I am sure he would appreciate a copy.

The Bings said two things I will remember forever.

Tim - "If God had intended you to play Bluegrass, He would have put your fingernails on the other way round."

Dave - "There are no rules. Just shut up and play."

Photos, from the top:

- Changing room frolics - Mo Jackson
- The Kittyhawks - Ray Banks
- Dave and Tim Bing - Ray Banks
- The Down Trodden String Band - Ray Banks
- That corridor moment - Mo Jackson
- Swinging your partners! - Claire Rudd

The Open Stage... Mo Jackson

After last year's Open Stage success Lucy and myself were somewhat disappointed with the up-take this year. By Saturday afternoon we only had two performers signed up. After a bit of arm twisting we upped that to the grand total of three.

Undaunted we kicked off, fully anticipating that we'd go round and round with the three participants until they ran out of tunes. However we needn't have worried because as the workshops finished and people began to

emerge, we ended up with a full compliment of performers who kept every one entertained until just after 6pm. Well done to everyone who participated...some performers from last year, armed with new material, and some new faces too.

The open stage gives the audience the chance to see people who they may never normally see perform. It also gives exposure to existing performers and a chance of gaining some stage experience to new performers. The Down Trodden String band who performed on the open stage last year, were on the main stage this year. We like to think the Open Stage had a small part to play in that.

So if you want to strut your stuff next year, get practicing now, you never know were it might lead!



From the Top:

- Moonshine Creek
- John Yeaman
- Native Grass
- Josie Anstee
- Cut the Shuffle
- Marianne and Martyn

Photos Mo Jackson

On Learning to Play the Fiddle

Michi Matthias

Ten years!... I realised with a shock recently that ten years is how long I've been going to the November fiddle workshops at Gainsborough. This annual weekend learning from Dave Bing and playing with good friends for hours and hours is one of the highlights of my year, not to be missed for anything, and has proven to be a real measure of progress. It's got me thinking about the whole process of learning the fiddle. Like, why the hell is it taking so long?!

I first arrived at East Stockwith village hall knowing where the fingers go but little more. Playing by ear was a very new concept, so I was thrilled to be able to pick up part of an actual tune, lurking at the back of an actual session. But some people could play so FAST! Boy, was I impressed.

The following year I noticed that speed wasn't everything. Rather, there was a swingy off beat rhythm going on, so I worked to get that into my playing. But after that, I realised it wasn't that straightforward all the time; the rhythms were varied and often syncopated - bowed across the beat. Eventually there was no denying that bowing patterns would have to be faced seriously, as it's the simple difference between notes joined together and notes attacked individually that defines much of the rhythm.

Meanwhile, at each year's workshop I found I could hear intervals to find notes more quickly, and pick up the bowing instruction, and finally even manage both at the same time! Unfortunately, once I could more or less do what I had so envied others for doing, I also understood that's only the very beginning of being able to fiddle the tune. The goalposts continue as always to shift ever further away.

But something makes so many of us want to do this. You banjo players sooner or later give in and try the fiddle, and others come to it without the advantage of tunes already in their heads. In an effort to save beginners from despair (and I haven't even mentioned the various tunings, double stops and drones, slides and hammer-ons, the odd ornament, anticipating the beat, phrase endings, etc that need to be learnt) I've asked a number of fiddle players, some of whom have played for 20 or 30 years or more, others rather less, to remember what it was like to start learning and what they wish they'd known then, and to offer suggestions.

Listen lots and Play lots

- Listen, listen, listen as much as possible to recordings of the old guys. There is an incredible wealth of old-time recordings from the last 80 years readily available. It's the only way to get the subtleties of rhythm and tone.

- It's far easier to learn a tune already in your head. Take a few days to listen and internalise the music before trying to play it.
- Listen a lot to anything you like the sound of and then try to copy it by practicing a lot and then practice some more. It might never end up sounding exactly like what you're listening to but it doesn't matter - no two fiddlers sound the same.
- Learning the basic tunes is not too difficult. But if you memorise dozens out of a book without understanding the phrasing and emphasis, they can all sound disappointingly the same.
- A recent study showed that children who were getting on best had also done the most practice. There was a very simple correlation between number of hours they put in and how fast they progress.
- You are much more likely to play if the fiddle and bow are readily accessible, hanging on the wall or on a shelf. The extra effort involved in getting it out of the case means you won't want to pick it up for those spontaneous and useful five or ten minutes' practice.
- It's probably worth learning to read music because you can get tunes out of books, but NOT if you are going to get lazy and only get them out of books without listening as well.

Play what you enjoy - Enjoy what you play

- Make sure you are having fun with wherever you are and what you can do right now. Setting your sights impossibly high too soon leads to frustration and quitting.
- Play what really motivates you. If that means working on a "too difficult" tune that you love and that will make you pick up the fiddle, do it.
- If you find practicing to be a chore rather than a pleasure you won't get very far.
- Play in public sooner rather than later. Nerves will probably make you sound worse than you can really play, so just have fun with it. There's less to worry about if you have a go before you feel you have too much to lose.

Practicing effectively

- It is very difficult to play quietly and get a good tone. Find a time and place to play without needing to be quiet and self-conscious. (Mutes cut out lots of the overtones, and may make it harder to hear when you're out of tune.)
- An electric fiddle, not plugged in, is very useful for repeating passages ad nauseum to get them right without disturbing anyone. And the quiet sound forces your bowing arm to work.
- A few months of violin lessons to get started, mainly to get help on holding the fiddle and bow, can be useful. Classical violin techniques can always be used, but without listening to the old guys you'll never get it.
- Some of the best traditional fiddlers would have been thrown out of a violin class because of how they hold the bow or finger the instrument. You should do what feels comfortable to you.

- Try to find a teacher who teaches how you learn best, which is inevitably trial and error. A wonderful fiddler whom you love to listen to might have a teaching style that doesn't suit you.
- If you already play the mandolin, or can get one to practice on, you'll see clearly where to put your fingers and get insights into how the all-important chords work. And you can sit and play a mandolin while watching telly.
- You can make rapid progress in a year, but possibly spend another ten years trying to undo bad habits picked up.
- Play in front of a large mirror to make sure bow is parallel to the bridge - is it twisting as you go up and down. Keep your wrist flexible and think of pulling the bow, not pushing it, in both directions.
- Playing on your own allows liberties to be taken with the beat without even knowing it. Play with others to make yourself find ways of getting through the tricky bits without slowing down for them.
- Relax! If your fingering hand is too tense, also check your wrist, forearm and shoulder. A common factor in just about everything to do with fiddling is about finding where you are tense and relaxing it, and this not only applies to fingering, bowing and posture but to your aspirations too.

Bowing Technique

- The right hand stuff is the hardest. Most of the tone depends on how you use the bowing hand, as well. This is where you get rhythm, expression, dynamics - all the stuff that turns a series of notes into music.
- Bowing is the key. The tunes themselves are often quite simple and repetitive but what gives them their appeal is in how they are bowed.
- If you learn some bowing patterns as part of learning some tunes, they will eventually become habit and be there in your head ready to go into other tunes. Experiment to find what works where.
- The humble saw stroke - all long bows—will show up any unevenness in your bowing and teach you control of the bow which is needed for more complex patterns.
- The basic "Nashville shuffle" (long-short-short, long-short-short) is useful and is worth learning, but avoid getting stuck with any one pattern exclusively or you could find it hard to do others.
- Playing very simple tunes with different kinds of bowing is a good way to demonstrate to yourself the difference bowing makes.

Keep going - when the going gets tough

- If you're getting frustrated, try playing a completely different kind of tune or an easy one you know but in a different key or different way of playing it. Keep it fun, and you might find it's really helped the next time you try the hard stuff.
- No one is ever satisfied with their playing, not even the fiddle players we all admire. So don't think this is a process that will ever finish.

- There's no need to try to get every single little note at once. Play what you hear most plainly when you listen to a cd to pick up a tune, and the more you listen, the more details become audible as you're ready to add them to your playing.
- Be sure you're playing for the right reasons, i.e. that you love it. Planning to be a great performer will probably lead to disappointment. Play for yourself and the people with you in a session, not for anyone who's listening
- Play with lots of people. If they're better than you you can learn from them; if not as good as you, then you have the fun of helping and the realisation that you've come this far.
- Progress comes in fits and starts. You can plateau and feel you're not improving for ages, but eventually realise there's something you can manage that you couldn't do before.
- If you find a sequence of notes or even a jump from one note to another that you just can't do, find an alternative that fits in with the tune. If particular techniques are too difficult, you may have to lower expectations at least for now. Even decades of practice won't solve every personal limitation but remember there is no one correct way to play a tune.
- There are always things you can do without thinking, things you're working on, and things you can't ever imagine doing. It's like a fractal: no matter how far you go into it there is always the same level of detail visible, and the same amount of stuff you can sense just beyond the range of your vision...

Many thanks to Alan Green, Pete Budd, Colm Daly, Dave Bing, Ben Paley, Ray Banks and Sibs Riesen for their perspectives, and apologies to all those I would have liked to have asked but didn't. Please do send in your own views on learning, and especially anything obvious that we've missed.



Step This Way

Step This Way, a relatively new Appalachian Dance Team from Durham were asked to do a dance demonstration for two "Santa Special" family trips on the Wear Valley Railway which runs between Stanhope and Frosterley in upper Weardale.

The main demo was on the platform at Stanhope Station - fortunately under a glass canopy, as it was icy-cold and windy with snow flurries, but we managed by getting well wrapped up and warming hands on mugs of coffee between dances. To add to our discomfort, the heating on the train had broken down, but we played and

danced as best we could in the restaurant car. Not an ideal venue, but plenty of families had a look in and enjoyed it. We were treated to hot drinks and Christmas cake, but dancing on a shaking train, having to hold on to the backs of seats ain't easy.

The second demo was equally cold but the heating on the train had, to our relief, been fixed. With the benefit of hindsight, we skipped the tunes between dances and kept it continuous to keep warm.

It was enjoyed by most, despite the freezing conditions. Whether we now stick to summer events remains undecided.

Dave Dry



Dancing till the break of dawn

What an excellent festival this year. It was great to see so many young people joining in with the fun.

Focusing on the dance side of the festival. It was great to see so many people eager to learn beginners flatfoot, I hope all of you who came to my workshop are still tapping your feet! **Kerry Fletcher** ran two interesting workshops exploring rhythms and dance, this culminated in the workshopers doing a fantastic performance with Kerry in the Saturday evening concert. The square dance on Saturday night was a blast with top quality musicianship and high energy dancing, I only saw a bit of it but there have been lots of positive reports. The square dances are going from strength to strength each year.

Saturday night for me ended up in the smallest and warmest corridor. We had so much fun, people were getting up

and dancing, musicians just kept playing and the energy just kept flowing...sensibly I retired at a respectable 4 am knowing that I would have to be up again in a few hours for the AGM. I only just made that in time and I turned up in my pyjamas! I heard that the session was still going on until 6 am- wow!

Having changed out of pyjamas, Sunday was a gentle morning of dance and music before I had to return home. It didn't stop there though, Tuesday night I took a trip to **The Devonshire Arms** in Baslow, it was like a mini Gainsborough seeing so many familiar faces who had turned up to see the **Down Trodden String Band and Piney Woods**. What an excellent evening that was and thank you to **Kate Lissauer** and the band for playing a cracking fast number for me to dance to.

Roll on Gainsborough 2009.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for developing the dance element of the festival please let me know.

Sara Marshall

photo Mo Jackson

really put us in the mood for the terrific weekend that lay ahead.

Although much of the programme was already known in advance, it's always fun to see what the weekend will hold in the way of workshops and the way the concerts line up. Some of the bands were already known and firm favourites such as **Down Trodden String Band and Kitty Hawks**. As a dancer from the south I knew, and had my first introduction to Appalachian dancing from **Kerry Fletcher**, so I was really looking forward to her set with fiddle player **Tim Brooks**. I have become accustomed to seeing Kerry dance to **Graham Anstee's** banjo playing but I believe that she and Tim go back a long way and have been playing and dancing together for some years. I also hoped that seeing another dance duo would engender some enthusiasm into my own banjo player as he tends to favour hibernation in the winter months, preferably in staggering distance of the **Fremlins Brewery** at Faversham!

New to me were **Chance and Susette Shiver**, and **Adam Hurt** and **Beth Hartness**, and what a treat they all turned out to be, with wonderful banjo and guitar playing from **Adam and Beth** and certainly the best dressed and most charming man of the weekend in **Chance Shiver**, who along with **Susette** set the scene for some real old time tunes from the **Carter family**.

That left of course **Piney Woods** for whom I had convinced my banjo player to make the pilgrimage north and away from southern beer, to the stuff that passes for real ale 'oop north' although I did notice he quite got the taste for it after four or five pints. The combination

Gainsborough 2008

Christine Bell

It was such a better start to the weekend for everyone from the south this year, perfect weather and no road works that caused such havoc last year on the A1. A stop at the American diner just outside of Peterborough helped to put us in the right frame of mind for the weekend, accompanied of course by 'Old Time' cds playing in the car for the whole journey,



of **Kate Lissauer** and **Dave Bing** was enough to get him excited but add Tim, Dave's brother, who by Dave's own admission was a better banjo player than he was, and you had a band that just had to be seen [not forgetting bass player **Jim Martin**, the best bass player in West Virginia, although he said there were only two of them and the other one only had one arm!] The two sets by these wonderfully talented musicians was added to by **Sibs Riesen** providing the percussion by dancing, which as everyone knows really makes all the difference to an old time band.

In fact it was a pretty good dancing weekend with clogging and flat-footing featured in the concerts, as well as workshops by **Sara Marshall** and **Kerry Fletcher** which were well attended and great fun. Added to that was the square dance on Saturday night, called by **Kate Lissauer**, which was very popular and led to a request for the reinstatement of the Friday night square dance again.

Kerry's workshop on Saturday concentrated on rhythm and different ways of expressing the rhythm in the music to provide percussion. It was an interesting idea and provided food for thought especially if you then try expressing it using your feet and not your hands. Her workshop on Sunday initially concentrated on certain steps to a particular piece of music which, working in pairs we could then use and adapt as we wanted to the same piece of music. Again an interesting idea, which meant that even if you only changed the pattern of the steps, you could create quite a different effect; lots of ideas to go away with and play with.

So was it worth the effort to travel north to the 14th Gainsborough festival, an emphatic "yes" to that. It really does have the effect of reinforcing old time because of the quality of the artists that are invited and it is worth every penny of the Associations' money to pay for permits for these people to come over from the States and perform for us. I know we have brilliant old time musicians in this country, as my banjo player frequently tells me, but he has to agree that it is the 'real deal' bringing people over here from the States, as they are steeped in the music in a way that simply does not exist here (although he has added a pair of bib and brace overalls, as worn by **Tim Bing**, to his Christmas list as it may improve his playing] well anything is worth a try for that!

Straw Bear Festival Whittlesea 2008

Jude Hawes

Tanglefoot Appalachian Cloggers

What a lovely surprise, not only was the weather behaving itself but there were lots of old friends and some new ones.

Dancing outside in January usually throws up some problems with snow, rain and wind. This year we had SUNSHINE! Thank you to whoever organised that.

Performing with other sides also presents problems. How many teams out there dance to **Old Joe Clark**?

This set us thinking about "new" old time tunes. I couldn't wait to get home and start researching. Changing our style to accommodate new music wasn't an issue as we already have some "contemporary" stepping in our repertoire.

Back to the festival

We shared our dance time with **Haddenham Hoofers** (top) and **Kick Start** (middle) in the morning and were joined by **Slap Dash** in the afternoon. **Tanglefoot** (bottom).

After the morning session we helped transport the boards to the **Childers Club** ready for the afternoon spot

which we shared with a variety of dance teams. We always get a good reception from the audience in the club and this year was no exception. At the end of the day quite a few of us made our way home as it's only about an hour and a half away. Some of us stayed on and really enjoyed the evening entertainment.

Roll on next January but make this year as successful as the last one!



Calling dancers and musicians in Derby...

I am currently in the throes of setting up a new Appalachian Clogging team in Derby. We meet on Wednesday evenings 8.00 - 10.00pm, currently in my back room. I will be moving to a hall somewhere in Derby city soon. I just have to find one that will let us wear taps for practise! If you are interested in joining the team please contact me and I will give any details

that I have to date.
sarammarshall@hotmail.co.uk
or phone 07803 137354

I am also available to run workshops in both Clogging and flatfoot/freestyle if you are interested please contact me as above.

Sara Marshall FOAOTMAD dance rep

MAKE YOUR BAND WORK

(part 1) by John Wirtz

What's it all about?

A lot of traditional music is played informally at sessions, in people's houses, schools, etc. Many bands first get together by meeting regularly at a session, festival or even at Sore Fingers Week.

Sessions provide an ideal platform for beginners to gain confidence and learn to play by ear. As you progress though, you may become frustrated with informal sessions because despite there being a protocol (i.e: not playing so loud as to drown out other participants), there is little opportunity to develop

interesting arrangements of tunes or songs and over a period of time, it can begin to feel as though you are just going through the motions of playing the same tunes and songs over and over again.

Beyond this stage lies the world of formal arranged music and this approach requires commitment, method, planning, discipline, creativity and skill. These attributes are not the sole confine of exceptional musicians. There are many bands with less skilled musicians who turn out excellent performances because they work as a good team and capitalise on their strengths.

Getting it together

Eventually, someone is bound to suggest forming a band and this enterprising individual will probably choose a team of people he gets on with and who play the right combination of instruments. The bit that usually gets missed out is the preliminary band meeting which should take place before the first practice. That is when you have a chat about each prospective members ambitions, expectations and the like.

If one of you is really wanting to carve out a professional career in music and the others are contemplating the band just as a hobby, you need to clear the air sooner rather than later. You also need to set some of the ground rules such as how often you will practice, talk about commitment, availability etc. Does each one of you have the necessary spare time taking into account other things such as jobs and family commitments? A general rule of thumb would be to allow for at least one two hour practice a week, with extra time allocated for individual practice and as gigs start to materialise, you will need to set aside even more time for the band. Don't underestimate the demand on your spare time a band will place upon you. Once you're in and taken the "Shilling" there's no going back.

...Don't underestimate the demand on your spare time a band will place upon you. Once you're in and taken the "Shilling" there's no going back.

Another subject you will need to cover is the role of each member with respect to non musical activity such as promoting the band, looking for gigs, sorting out the PA, etc...It is impractical for just one person to take on all this work and you should try to share the load

across the whole band and making use of outside contacts. This is not to say that these responsibilities can be shared equally but each member should be prepared to do what they can where and when they can. Some people are better at certain things than others and levels of motivation are different. If someone really doesn't want to do something don't force them to do it on principal and, always remember, it is their playing skill you need first and foremost.

Finally, you need to take account of financial matters. In the early days, the expense is all yours, getting to practices, paying for photos or band leaflets and recording a demo. When gig money begins to come in, if you have decided in advance how the cash will be allocated, you are less likely to get into arguments. It is a good idea to get some agreement written down at the outset.

I mentioned commitment, method, discipline, creativity and skill above and here are some definitions.

Commitment:

You must really want to be in a band and this implies becoming an integral part of a team. The band will not be able to operate without you and you cannot turn up when you feel like it. You really have to make the band a priority over other activities as you will be letting other people down if you don't.

Method:

Approach your role within the band seriously. Don't digress at practices playing material not on the agreed list for example. Plan your contribution, get advice from experienced players, apply this knowledge wisely. Be prepared to put some individual practice time for things you find difficult.

Discipline: Get organised, always turn up on time, don't forget things like spare strings, picks or capos. Keep your band notes on arrangements and lyrics in a folder and make sure they are always available and up to date. Know what is expected of you and play your role to the best of your ability.

Professionalism: Keep the tools of your trade well maintained and top condition. This includes your instrument, electronic gadgets, leads, and have a few tools with you to make a repair in emergencies. Don't neglect a potential problem, it will only get worse if ignored and will let you down and ultimately the band when you least expect it!

Creativity: Listen to how the band sounds, try and make suggestions for improvements to arrangements, look for excitement and experimentation. Push the limits. Don't be afraid to write a new song. Each member should be part of the band's creative effort.

Skill: Strive to continuously improve your playing and singing technique. Allow your colleagues to push you right up to your limitations, you will become a better musician that way. Take extra lessons if needed.

Another important aspect of being in a band is the emotional factor. Music is a very personal thing because the medium has the power to bring out emotion in an individual. Have you ever been brought to tears by a particularly sensitive song or even felt the shivers down your back when you heard someone really good play? Over a period of time, a closeness develops, which you will need learn to cope with.

You will spend extended periods of time together in the van on the road to gigs or at festivals and being able to mix with each other socially will be a great help to the success of the band. Go to gigs together and meet up outside of and practices and learn to enjoy each other's company.

Getting the band together for a first practice

Arrange a time, a place and don't invite any hangers on, just the people who are going to play in the band. Each member should bring along some songs or tunes they would like the band to do, not too many, a couple of numbers will be enough to begin with. If there are four of you that will make eight pieces to work on, a reasonable challenge for a first meeting.

If you are really organised, you will have written out the words and annotated the lyric sheet (see example lyric sheet) with the chords and made enough copies for everyone. You might also add details of where you think the various instrumental breaks could go, whether you want to split the breaks, intros and outros, etc. On arrival, write all the numbers down on a big sheet of paper and pin the list to the wall for reference. The host should prepare the practice room and make sure everything you will need is at hand, don't wait until the practice is in full swing to go into the attic on a search for that old music stand your grandmother left you in 1962!

Plan for rest breaks and have tea/coffee and biscuits on the go and some mineral water for the singers. Avoid alcohol, if you want a drink, go to the pub instead! Playing music is energetic and requires a great deal of concentration, so pace yourselves accordingly. You will also need paper and something to write with, a CD and/or a cassette player to listen to recordings of tracks you want to do and obviously, your instrument and accessories. A metronome and an electronic tuner could also prove useful. If you have access to a recording set up, this is also useful to record the practises. It is also important to take breaks to talk about what you are doing. Take the time to sit quietly and listen to a track you have just recorded and then discuss how you might

change things to make the number more exciting.

One thing which is more difficult to define early in a band's life is that of direction and style. Most bands will have some idea of what they want to achieve when they start out but as time goes by, the style will be influenced by the individuals who make up the band and eventually, you will develop a style of your own. This may end up being some way from that which was expected at the outset. But as long as

Plan for rest breaks and have tea/coffee and biscuits on the go and some mineral water for the singers. Avoid alcohol, if you want a drink, go to the pub instead!

you are still enjoying the music, it matters little and, in fact, is probably a good thing.

At the first practice you should warm up and play a few things you all know in common to loosen up and then move onto the serious work. Try and structure your chosen material

before you start - intro, breaks, chorus, etc. Then play the song/tune until everyone is familiar with the chords and the arrangement. Give people space and be patient, some are not as quick on the uptake as others and by structuring the music, you are doing something more challenging than just jamming.

If you are stalling on something, move on. Sometimes things just don't work and there is no particular explanation for this. Spend about half an hour on each number, if it's not coming together, it may be too difficult or just does not suit the band. You can always come back to it later. Document all arrangements or any changes you make for future reference. I don't recommend recording anything until you are familiar with chords and arrangements. A recording is particularly unforgiving and you will not gain any encouragement from hearing a tape full of bum chords and hesitant lead breaks.

Two to three hours with a couple of tea breaks is plenty for a first practice, when people get tired their capacity to get things right suffers and persevering could be counterproductive. I always like to go down the pub with the band after a practice; it's a good way to wind down.

Subsequent practices

These should be organised in a similar way and as you become more proficient and used to each other,

things will become easier and arrangements will fall into place more naturally. Don't neglect the task of documenting arrangements as you may not play a number for some time and forget the detail. This avoids having to start all over again

If all goes well, after two or three practices, you should be ready to record some of your material onto tape, not to make a commercial recording, but to use as a reference. Recording things can be very disheartening and don't expect too much at your first attempt.

On the other hand, a recording is a valuable tool to give you an idea of how you sound as a unit:

- Is the arrangement tidy?
- Is there space in the arrangement?
- Is somebody playing too loud?
- Are the vocals balanced?
- Is the rhythm tight?

After recording, sit down, leave instruments well alone and listen carefully and be prepared to accept some constructive criticism. Improving collectively will involve some level of critical analysis of each and everyone's performance. If you identify an area of weakness, work on it, individually or as a group as necessary.

A common failing with fresh bands is that of the members not listening to each other properly. Listen carefully to the bass, the rhythm guitar, the vocal and play appropriately. This becomes easier with time and practice. With several practices under your belt, you should start thinking about a practice with P.A. which will be of great benefit when you do your first gig. Things can sound very different and you will need to get used to that.

If you don't have your own PA, you can still work on mic technique by taping some beer cans to broom sticks and working these as you would with the real thing. Decide how you want to stand on stage and to work this out you could practice playing in a line as if facing an imaginary audience to see how things feel when you don't have direct eye contact with each other. When you have reached a satisfactory compromise, draw out a stage plan. Do remember the PA alone will not make you sound better than you are acoustically.

You should aim to practice once a week at minimum at the beginning. Be prepared to have to practice individually in between band practices, to work on a lead break for example. If you can keep up the weekly practices all the better.

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Going to the West Fest . June 13-15th 2008

Castle Farm, Angle, Pembrokeshire

Hello Everybody...

Welcome to the first mail-out for Going to the West Fest, Pembrokeshire's first Old-Time Festival which will be held June 13-15th 2008 in Angle.

The festival organisation process is now well under way, after a late start. The festival is being organised by Pembrokeshire Eclectic Music Society (PEMS), a new voluntary organisation which aims to inform people about different kinds of music and dance and expand their experience through organising events in Pembrokeshire and West Wales.

We are currently in the process of sourcing sponsorship and funding for the festival. The line up is nearly confirmed, although a few last details are still to be organised.

- **MOONSHINE**
- **SARA GREY AND BEN PALEY**
- **JOCK TYLDESLEY AND VERA VAN HEERINGEN**
- **THE KITTYPHAWKS**
- **THE GRUMPY BUSH STRING BAND**

These artists will perform and lead workshops on a variety of instruments and dance, giving an opportunity for learning at all levels.

There will be a concert on Friday night, followed by a square dance, workshops in the day time on Saturday, a concert on Saturday night followed by a square dance, and a workshop or singing group and an open stage on Sunday, as well of lots and lots of tunes!

Angle is a spectacular location right on the end of the southern Pembrokeshire peninsula in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. Both West Angle Bay (which holds a Green Coast Award) and the nearby Freshwater West beach and sand dunes have been designated SSSIs. The estuary of the river Cleddau is known for its interesting and abundant bird life. The village has two pubs and a shop.

Please do check Our Website where you will find lots of photos of Angle and its surrounding area, as well as links to other sites which may be of interest.

Now for the important logistical information:

Castle Farm, Angle is just around the corner from the village hall and provides camping at just **£3 per person per night**. The farm also has a few caravans and a five bedroom bungalow – contact **01646 641220** for more details.

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