

No. 93 Spring 2018

OLD TIME NEWS

The only UK publication dedicated to American Old Time Music and Dance



An Exceptional Gainsborough – I rest my case!

The Field Recorders' Collective
Frank Noah Proffitt, Part 1
Musicians Beware!

The View from the Chair

It was a great start to the 2018 old-time season with another fine Gainsborough Festival, thanks to organiser Tim Rooke in particular. Our guest performers were excellent and the feedback from workshops suggests that everyone had plenty of opportunity to learn and spend time with them. It was a complete sell-out this year so we have discussed with the school the possibility of opening up more space, which would allow us to put on more dance activities, music workshops and provide more tickets.

I'm very glad to report that Spring and Summer Camp have been sorted for this year and you can read more on dates and venue on the next page but I feel it is a good temporary compromise. While prices are higher than Sacrewell the facilities are better and have everything we required including hook-ups, dry space, campfire. We have exclusive use of the top field. The one downside is that there is a midnight noise curfew. If members like the new site the owner is happy to discuss prices on future camps. There is also a strong possibility that Ira Bernstein and Riley Baugus will be joining us for the weekends of Summer Camp for some dance focused fun and party in the local village hall. More info will follow in the next magazine.

At the AGM this year, we received one new nomination for the Editor Post and Steve Wise was duly elected. I'm really pleased to have him join our team and I'm sure that between him and Judy the mag will continue to grow.

In the absence of any other nominations the current committee, myself included, put themselves forward and were elected for another year.

We have a committee meeting on 18th March when we will be discussing Gainsborough 2019, looking through web suggestions as sent in by members, planning the November workshops, finalising Orwell details and setting a privacy and data policy as required by new laws coming into force this year.

See you at Spring Camp folks.

Pete Haynes



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*Front cover: the ever-growing pile of instruments at Gainsborough
Photo Alan Spindler*

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Editorial

My first, very pleasant duty in taking over as editor is to thank the outgoing editor, Pete Haynes, for all his sterling work. During his stewardship the content and appearance of OTN have both improved considerably and we all owe him a debt of gratitude. One of the reasons for the improvements has been the appointment of Judy Spindler as magazine designer. Having worked with Judy on the CD review section I now appreciate that her work has gone far beyond the technical issues of designing and printing the magazine. In recognition of this I have decided to redesignate her role as Deputy Editor and I look forward to working with her to take the magazine forward.

I have noticed a distinct change in the Old Time News during my membership of FOAOTMAD. Whereas the focus used to be largely on FOAOTMAD itself, there has been a growth in features about old-time music generally. Partly I think this is because social media now play a larger role in helping keep members informed and partly because the UK old-time community has grown in number and in depth of knowledge about old-time music. I think this is a very healthy development and one I intend to encourage. So if you've been doing a bit of research into old-time music why not put pen to paper. You can always email me at editor@foaotmad.org.uk to run ideas past me.

Steve Wise

NEW VENUE! Spring & Summer Camps 2018

SPRING CAMP: Friday 25th May – Monday 28th May

SUMMER CAMP: Friday 10th August – Monday 20th August

We have found a suitable alternative to Sacrewell for the camps this year. It is a campsite and waterpark just off J9 of the M5 in Gloucestershire. It has many of the features that we were looking for – a separate field, good showers and toilet block, electric hook-ups and a campfire circle.

Croft Farm Waterpark is located just outside Tewkesbury in the scenic River Avon Valley, with a caravan and camping park adjacent to their own lake. The wide range of watersports activities and tuition on offer provide added interest for those wanting a more active holiday. Yes! Adults can swim in the lake in the mornings.

Prices per night are £20 per pitch for 2 people, £12 for singles.

Electric hook up is £2 per night.

Non members £2 per night supplement payable to FOAOTMAD in the field.

Extra occupants are £4, dogs £2 and extra cars £5 per day (1 is included in the pitch fee)

Prices go up to £24 per pitch in August with all the other prices remaining the same as the May rates.

Site rules are generally quiet by 11.30 but we have been allowed a midnight curfew.

To book a hook-up you will need to contact the site directly and mention you are with the FOAOTMAD/banjo group. If you do not need electrics then you can just turn up, pay at reception and join us in the field.

The majority of the site is wheelchair friendly with ramped access to the Lakeside Cafe and Bar. Gym and sauna also available. Children are catered for with play areas and activities on the lake. There are even lodges available to book.

Visit www.croftfarmleisure.co.uk to see the full range of facilities & contact details for electric bookings.



Croft Farm Waterpark
Bredons Hardwick
Tewkesbury
Glos GL20 7EE
T: 01684 772321
W: croftfarmleisure.co.uk

STOP PRESS:

New venue confirmed for the Knockdown Picking Weekend

15th - 18th June

at The Lenchford Inn, Shrawley, Worcs WR6 6TB

£10 per night camping, 1 male and 1 female outside toilet and water taps. No hook-ups.
This pub has enthusiastic hosts, a helpful and friendly team, good food and drink, great hospitality, plenty of space and a lovely riverside view.

Contact the Lenchford Inn to book your space mentioning Knockdown Picking Weekend.

T: 01905 620229 W: www.thelenchfordinn.co.uk



Fred Cockerham and Ray Alden

Dave Mepsted interviews John Schwab about the Field Recorders' Collective

When the idea of a piece on the Field Recorders' Collective ('FRC') was first mooted I jumped at the chance. The FRC is a group of enthusiasts devoted to the preservation and dissemination of recordings of American traditional musicians; recordings often made privately, informally and providing the chance to hear the artists talking about the material. For me, there's something about recordings made outside the constraints of the commercial process that appeals. It's not that the result is necessarily more authentic, but it certainly is different. I also love to hear artists, tunes and songs which are simply not available elsewhere.

After a brief exchange of emails I was put in touch with John Schwab, someone whose work will be familiar to many of our members [backupguitar.com]. John agreed to answer some questions for me. As you'll see, his responses were fascinating, and accordingly he deserves a substantial amount of the credit for what follows.

How did the FRC itself first come into being?

"Musicians entering the scene today will never get to spend time with the older musicians; they are now almost all gone. If you ask musicians new to old time music, 'Where did you learn that tune?' many will say, 'From so-and-so at such-and-such a festival.' If you are familiar with the source, often their version seems completely removed from the source, watered down and homogenized. John Cohen once told me that sometimes the most radical thing you can do to move ahead is to go backwards. I hope that the field recorders group can leave a legacy for future travelers, repaving the old time highway to reconstruct this music with the old timers as guides. In the end, I can only say it was a treasure for me to be shown this direction by them." – Ray Alden (from an interview in the Banjo Newsletter, November 2003)

The Field Recorders' Collective (FRC) was the brainchild of Ray Alden, a remarkable individual who grew up in New York, taught mathematics at Stuyvesant

High School in New York City, and who began learning to play the banjo in the early 1960s. In 1967 Ray attended a house concert by Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham and Oscar Jenkins that he said changed his life. In 1968 he made the first of many trips to the South, where he'd attend fiddlers conventions, visit with older-generation musicians in their homes, and take lessons from them. A warm, outgoing, generous, and passionate man, Ray made friends easily, and through his regular visits he developed deep friendships and ultimately played in bands with his musical role models.

Over the years Ray made hundreds of tape recordings to help him figure out the banjo styles of outstanding, traditional players such as Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, Oscar Jenkins and Kyle Creed; to capture the magic of the local fiddlers conventions; as well as to document his visits with the musicians whom he met on his travels.

Ray knew he was sitting on a cultural goldmine, and in the early 2000s he resolved to put it to use for the benefit of future generations. Many of the musicians whom he'd recorded had already passed on, and others would soon follow. Also, his recordings had been made not in studios but in homes and at local gatherings – i.e., on the musicians' home turf – and the recording engineer wasn't a paid professional but a trusted friend. As a result, these recordings possessed an unusual degree of intimacy. Taking it one step further, Ray knew that he was not alone in preserving traditional music, and that there were other, similarly-motivated individuals who had visited, befriended, and recorded musicians in their communities far and wide.

It was in 2003 (I believe) that Ray put all the pieces together and established the FRC, initially in collaboration with Tim Brown (5-String Productions). They recruited additional collectors (including the Brandywine Friends of Old Time Music, Andy Cahan, Peter Hoover, and Susie Goehring (on behalf of her late husband, Jeff Goehring)) to contribute their recordings. Ray also enlisted several friends with specialized knowledge and skills to supplement his own. But for the most part, the FRC was a "one-man show": Ray chose CD projects; digitized the tapes; selected tracks for inclusion; edited those tracks; mastered the CDs; corresponded with artists and collectors; solicited photos (or chose them from his own collection); wrote text for the CD sleeves; arranged for professional graphic design (by current FRC Board member Jim Garber); oversaw the manufacture of the CDs; and was a one-man marketing machine, including staffing the FRC booth at the big Clifftop, WV fiddlers convention. From 2004 through 2009 (the year of Ray's passing) Ray had issued 70 CDs on the FRC label, and in 2010 six more CDs (mostly Ray's work) came out! (A far more detailed discussion of the early history of the FRC can be found in a fine article by Norbert Sarsfield in the Old Time Herald, Vol. 12, No. 5.)

As he faced the end of his life, Ray planned for the future of the FRC. He recruited a small team of friends and family who believed in his vision and would work to keep it vibrant. The original seven included Diane Alden (Ray's wife), Ambrose Verdibello, Jim Garber, Lynn Frederick, Susie Goehring, Kilby Spencer and myself. Since then, Steve Kruger and Jeremy Stephens have joined the FRC's Board of Directors.

Our first order of business was to fulfill Ray's desire that we obtain official non-profit status from the US Internal Revenue Service. At the same time, we refined a number of policies and procedures that Ray (as a one-man FRC) had used but that he had never had the time or the need to put into writing. Among the most important of these was to formalize and update the FRC's longstanding policy of profit-sharing with artists (or far more often, their surviving family) as well as with the collectors who share their recordings.

Which were the first recordings to be made available by the FRC?

The following CDs were issued in 2004.

- FRC101 – Fred Cockerham (From the collection of Ray Alden)
- FRC102 – Band in Transition (From the collection of Ray Alden)
- FRC201 – Roan Mountain Hilltoppers in Concert (From the collection of the Brandywine Friends of Old Time Music)
- FRC202 – Old-Time Music from Clay & Calhoun Counties, WV (From the collection of the Brandywine Friends of Old Time Music)
- FRC301 – Norman Edmonds and the Old Timers, Volume 1 (From the collection of Andy Cahan)
- FRC302 – Norman Edmonds and the Old Timers, Volume 2 (From the collection of Andy Cahan)
- FRC401 – Jimmy Wheeler (From the collection of Jeff Goehring)
- FRC402 – Ward Jarvis (From the collection of Jeff Goehring)
- FRC501 – Uncle Charlie Higgins, Wade Ward & Dale Poe (From the collection of Peter Hoover)
- FRC502 – Marcus Martin (From the collection of Peter Hoover)

First, please tell me how, when, and why you became involved in the work of the FRC.

In the late 1990s I became interested in digital sound processing and had (in a not very sophisticated way) engineered recordings of the great North Carolina fiddler Marcus Martin for my own listening and to share with a few friends. I had also obtained from Indiana University cassette copies of Peter Hoover's entire set of field recordings, which I'd digitized, edited, and burned to CD. I mentioned this to Ray, and so he invited me to participate in a meeting that included himself and Tim Brown (5-String Productions), at the 2003 Mt. Airy

(NC) Fiddlers Convention. It was during that meeting that Ray described his vision for the FRC. Subsequently Ray went ahead and established the FRC, as I've already described. From time to time thereafter, Ray would ask me for my input regarding which of Peter Hoover's recordings I thought would make worthy FRC CDs.

What does it mean to you to be involved with the FRC?

I'm honored, on multiple levels, to be part of the FRC. First, Ray Alden was a Renaissance man who left an enormous impression on the world. You'll see what I mean when you look up a remembrance of Ray written by musician/journalist Paul Brown and published in the *Old-Time Herald* (Vol. 12, No. 2) shortly after Ray's passing. Reading Paul's piece always gives me chills. (To find this article, go to oldtimeherald.org, click on "Archive," and then on "Browse Back Issues.") It is a thrill and a solemn obligation to be one of Ray's chosen successors as a member of the FRC Board.

But even more important is extending the mission that Ray stated so beautifully: to leave "...a legacy for future travelers, repaving the old time highway to reconstruct this music with the old timers as guides." As a member of the Board I seek out and help select new projects and musicians to highlight. I serve the old-time music community by bringing folks' attention to musicians who are worth hearing but are almost always "under the radar." And I serve these musicians by showcasing their artistry.

There also can be great satisfaction in the production of these albums. One of the most moving experiences that I've had as an FRC "worker bee" was producing the Gaither Carlton album (FRC118). Mr. Carlton is a terrific example of someone who received very little "exposure" and recognition during his lifetime, but whose music truly deserves to be heard. He was best known, perhaps, as Doc Watson's father-in-law, and made the rounds of the folk festivals as a member of Doc's entourage. He's also heard quite briefly on about half a dozen anthologies, including the Watson Family recordings issued on Folkways, as well as John Cohen's brilliant "High Atmosphere" collection (Rounder). Some of my biggest thrills in producing the FRC's Gaither Carlton CD were communicating with Tom Carter (who had made a superb set of field recordings of Mr. Carlton) and Nancy Watson (Doc Watson's daughter, representing Mr. Carlton's surviving family). As a member of the Fuzzy Mountain String Band Tom had been one of my musical idols. And I will treasure the emotional, handwritten notes that I received from Ms. Watson, describing what it felt like to listen to her Grandpa's music, including some that she hadn't heard or thought about since his death over 30 years before.

How are the recordings for release selected, and who by?

This is a great question, and I will once again refer you

and the OTN's readers to Ray Alden's quote at the beginning of this interview. Though not intended as such, it strikes me as a fitting mission statement for the FRC.

All of the FRC's Board of Directors (with the exception of Diane Alden) are on the Project Committee (of which I'm the chair). We encourage suggestions of possible projects from within the Committee as well as from fans of the FRC.

During Ray's time, over 85% of the FRC's CDs featured older-generation, "source" musicians, and the remainder were by "younger-generation" (non-source) musicians (almost all of whom would be considered old-timers at this point!). Over the last several years, the preference among the Project Committee has been (in John Cohen's words) to move ahead by going backwards. Of the last 20 albums that we've issued only one features a "non-source" musician, and that musician (Craig Johnson; FRC711) spent a great deal of time learning directly from old-timers. More than anything, this trend reflects the expanded Board's interest and success in uncovering field- and home recordings of source musicians from all over the country.

The Project Committee maintains a list of potential projects that is updated as new ideas arise, and these projects are prioritized through discussions among the committee members. Some of the factors that are considered are the musical/historical/cultural significance of the music, the musician, and the performances; whether recordings of the artist are otherwise readily available; the sound quality of the source recordings; and the likelihood that permission will be granted by the artist's family and by the collector/recordist. To be honest, we do consider sales and marketing, but it's a secondary consideration. Still, our being a non-profit organization doesn't mean that we can afford to lose money on all of our projects!

There's a wealth of old time material in both old and new commercial recordings, what do you think the importance of private recordings is?

"Private" (i.e., field- and home-) recordings and commercial recordings in many ways are complementary. The years between 1922 and the very early 1930s were a golden age for commercial recording of what we now call old-time country music. In addition to their big-city recording studios, record companies sent representatives into rural areas, where they would set up storefront recording studios and see who walked in the door. Tony Russell's "Country Music Records: A Discography, 1921-1942" lists 2,500 artists, 5,000 "session" musicians, and 10,000 songs recorded during this period. These recordings were made to be sold, and marketability was a dominant factor in determining who would be recorded. Consider that the *Skillet Lickers*, a list of whose recordings takes up no less than four pages in Russell's discography, was cobbled together at the urging of Columbia Records, because they suspected that a high-powered string band would sell records. The members of

the Skillet Lickers didn't get along well with one another, and if it hadn't been for the money, the band never would have kept going. Thus, it can't be assumed that 78 rpm records give a representative view of old-time country music as it existed at that time. But think about how much of our cultural history and how much first-rate music we would be missing if we didn't have these recordings!

Modern commercial recordings tend to have superior sound quality, and the performances are likely to be error-free (or nearly so); these features will be attractive to many listeners. Commercial recordings are marketed to the general public and often are relatively easy to obtain. But once again, marketing considerations influence decisions about which artists get recorded; the repertoire; and the specific arrangements. Also modern commercial recordings can be sterile.

Home- and field recordings are made for the purpose of documentation, often for and by families; or by libraries or arts foundations. As such, simply capturing repertoire or specific performances may not be sufficient. These recordings are made under less formal circumstances, often in homes or other comfortable settings, so non-professional artists may give more natural performances. Frequently you'll hear unintended sounds – the chime of a clock, a dog barking, a door opening or closing, a passing automobile; the voice of a family member – which will add a layer of context and richness that you just can't find in a studio recording. Most of the source recordings that I've worked with during my time with the FRC include interview segments, or chit-chat between the artist and the recordist. I always include some of this as a means of providing context for the music. In fact, the FRC's Bob Holt album (FRC721) has 28 tracks, 10 of which are chat between Mr. Holt and recordist/backup guitar player, Jim Nelson. I can't begin to tell you how many times I've listened to those chat tracks, but I still get a kick out of hearing them!

Which do you think is the more important aspect of such recordings - the window into the past they offer or the ability to carry traditions into the future...and what are the reasons for your answer?

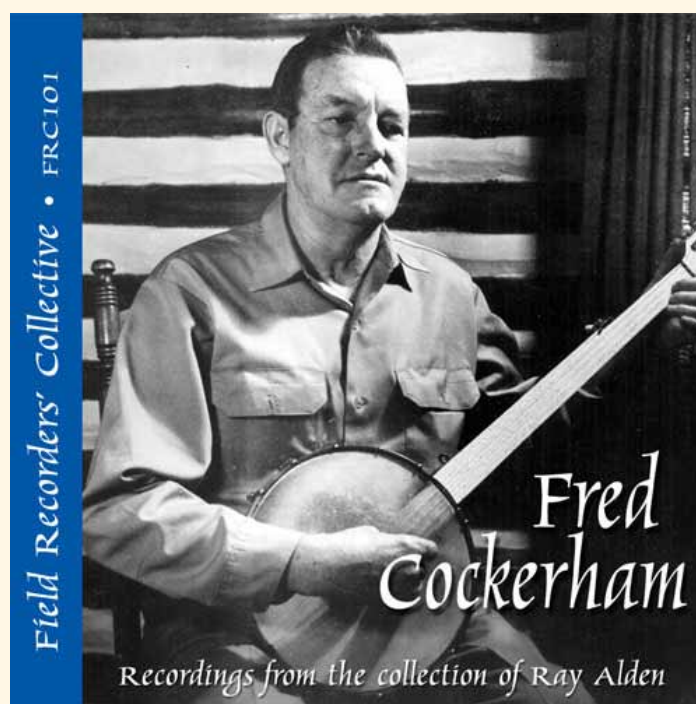
What we call old-time music is a traditional art form. Merriam-Webster gives this definition for "tradition": "The handing down of information, beliefs, or customs from one generation to another." The historical context is indispensable, and so is the future. Ed Haley was tremendously creative and didn't simply play tunes note-for-note as he'd heard his mentors play them. The same goes for Doc Roberts, Emmett Lundy, Marcus Martin, Bill Stepp, Luther Strong, and all of the other greats. But I guarantee you that they all knew the repertoires of their own communities and that their fiddling styles were based on those of their mentors and other influential musicians in their communities. Among contemporary musicians, Dan Gellert stands out as a uniquely creative and talented individual who places an undeniably

personal spin on all of his music. Still, everything he plays is absolutely and fundamentally old-time, and it is immediately clear that he is a serious student of traditional music of generations past.

This raises another point: the importance of regional musical dialects. In the 1960s and '70s there were very few readily available recordings of source music. County Records issued a bunch of recordings by some of the great Round Peak musicians, including Fred Cockerham, Tommy Jarrell, and Kyle Creed, prompting a wave of interest. And the music of Henry Reed was popularized by the Hollow Rock and Fuzzy Mountain String Band LPs. There were also reissue recordings of the Skillet Lickers, the North Carolina Ramblers (Charlie Poole), and some other bands from the '20s. It wasn't too hard to keep these various styles straight. However, in the 21st century, LPs and cassette tape-swapping have been superseded by the internet, and there seems to be no limit to the quantity and variety of traditional music that's readily available for listening and learning. A big challenge, then, is what I call the "blenderization" of old-time music. This is related to – but not the same as – the problem that Ray Alden referred to, which was learning tunes in jam sessions without regard for where they've come from. By focusing the FRC's albums on individual musicians or a specific community, we hope to document and preserve the individual and regional nuances that make our musical heritage so rich and diverse.

Do you have a sense of the typical FRC customer and if so can you describe them?

I honestly don't have a complete picture. Understanding our customer base – who they are and how they tend to get their music – is critically important for the FRC in regard to marketing and distribution. Historically, our albums have been distributed as CDs, but we are



One of the first recordings made available by the FRC in 2004

well aware that CD sales across the industry are way down and that CD players may soon go the way of the mastodon. Several years ago we began to offer albums via download ([http:// fieldrecorder.bandcamp.com](http://fieldrecorder.bandcamp.com)). Still, it's not clear how long this model will work for us, and we are well aware of the need to stay flexible and innovative.

Have you been able to hear musicians adopting tunes and/or stylistic elements from the FRC recordings? If you have, how does it feel when you spot it happening?

The one time I recall this happening was at a gathering (maybe Clifftop?) a couple of years ago where I heard a fellow play a tune or two from Vesta Johnson. It seemed most likely that he learned it (pretty accurately) from FRC715. I was thrilled to know that FRC CDs are having an impact and that Vesta's unusual North Missouri repertoire is getting some well-deserved recognition. I was excited, too, for Vesta, who's become a friend of mine through the process of producing the CD.

What are your personal favourites from amongst the FRC recordings?

I have a bunch of favorites, so I guess I'll just list some of them here, alphabetically.

- P.T. Bell (FRC410; vintage recordings of early, pre-contest-style Texas fiddling)
- Gaither Carlton (FRC118; NC mountain banjo, fiddle, and singing by a patriarch of the Watson family)
- Calvin Cole (FRC704; strong, clean, fast clawhammer banjo from SW)
- Banjo Bill Cornett (FRC304; powerful eastern Kentucky banjo playing and singing)
- Norman Edmonds & The Old Timers, vols. 1&2 (FRC301 & 302; radio transcriptions of an iconic, archaic SW Virginia stringband)
- Rector Hicks (FRC709; lovely fiddling by a West Virginian who moved for work to NE Ohio)
- Bob Holt (FRC721; driving Ozark dance fiddling with fine guitar backup)
- Esker Hutchins (FRC107; archaic Surry County, NC solo banjo and fiddle)
- Craig Johnson (FRC711; songs and tunes by a gifted songwriter and veteran of the Double Decker Stringband)
- Santford Kelly (FRC503; fine Kentucky fiddling)
- The Kimble and Wagoner Families (FRC106; fieldrecorder.org/the-kimble-wagoner-families/)
- Carlton Rawlings (FRC718; a recently-discovered KY fiddler considered the equal of Doc Roberts, Buddy Thomas, and Ed Haley)
- The Shelor-Blackard Family (FRC112; fieldrecorder.org/the-shelor-and-blackard-families/; a family band that still plays in the style of their 1927 commercial 78s)

- Dan Tate (FRC506; Banjo and singing from the NC-VA border area near Mt. Airy; gentle and simple)
- Buddy Thomas (FRC303; superb Kentucky fiddling)

If you were to recommend just one FRC recording to the readership of Old Time News which one would it be?

Probably your toughest question... My answer changes quite a bit, depending on what I've been listening to and who I've been playing with. To be safe, I'll just advise OTN readers to visit fieldrecorder.bandcamp.com and preview any of the albums that I've listed among personal favorites. How's that for weaseling out?!

What exciting new releases are coming up in 2018?

We have a bunch of great projects in the works, some of which are bound to be released in 2018.

We've been fortunate to gain access to some terrific Midwestern fiddle collections. Our catalog is rather short on women artists as well as singing, so I'm pleased that we're working on a project featuring a wonderful woman ballad singer/banjo player. We're moving along nicely on a very exciting project featuring African American fiddling from Texas. We're working with John Harrod on another CD or two in the "Kentucky Home Recordings" series, following up on the Carlton Rawlings CD (FRC718). (And if you haven't heard Carlton Rawlings, then you really need to do so!) There's another Hammons Family CD in the works, as well as more CDs from Peter Hoover's collection.

How important is it to you and others associated with the FRC to pass some of the income from sales to members of the performers' families?

From the very first days of the FRC this has been very, very important, since there is a long and unfortunate legacy of distrust on the part of rural folks who feel that they've been disrespected and exploited by outsiders. Ray was very aware of that legacy and made it his top priority to treat the musicians and collectors with great respect and fairness. He worked to balance the financial viability of the FRC with a formula to compensate the artists and families based on net earnings. Following Ray's overall philosophy, the current FRC now shares anticipated earnings with artists' families and with collectors right at the outset, when CDs are received from the manufacturer. □

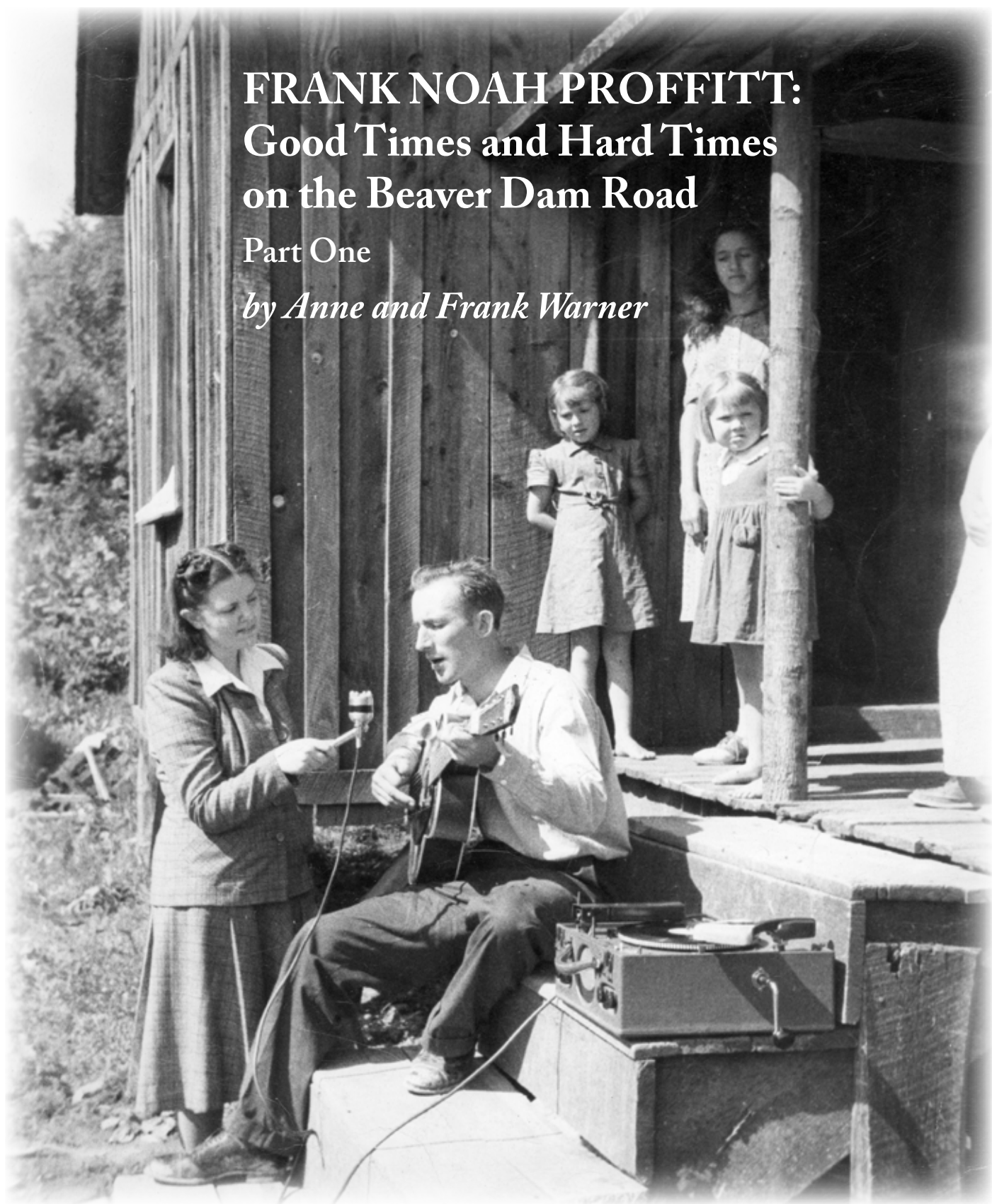
The Field Recorders Collective can be reached at <https://fieldrecorder.org/> where you can find links to all the recordings they currently have available, together with information about the musicians and the organisation itself.

FRC's Lowe Stokes's Georgia Fiddler album is reviewed on page 28 of this issue.

FRANK NOAH PROFFITT: Good Times and Hard Times on the Beaver Dam Road

Part One

by Anne and Frank Warner



Anne Warner recording Frank Proffitt's singing and playing on a small battery-powered recording machine in 1941, while some neighbor children listen. In the Beaver Dam section of Watauga County, N.C., known then as Pick Britches Valley, and now as Mountain Dale. Photo Frank Warner.

When Jeff Warner performs traditional American music in Britain today, he draws on the songs his parents collected in the mountains – including the music of Frank Proffitt from North Carolina, whom Jeff heard as a young man. In this article from the 1970s, his parents describe how meeting Proffitt helped bring mountain music into the world.

To all of those who's mind reaches above the hard facts of Life does a Ballad have its meanings. With thease songs did our Forebears cheer their weary hearts in the New Ground Clearings. Life to them was not dull for in their amagination they had a world of their own. This world they built is not for thouse who see only the dull drab facts of their surroundings, but only for folk of kindred minds seeking to preserve and

exault a people of undaunted spirit who accepted Life in a singing spirit, reaching in their hearts for things to brighten the days and years. I may neaver see the Lochs or Braes of my people. But in my amagination I have this world of old castles, of high Lord Chieftans, of those who used the sword . . . To thouse who sleep in the soil far from the Bonnie Braes, my hope is they have not lived for nothing.

Frank Proffitt wrote these lines on the first page of a notebook full of remembered songs he gave to us in 1964 - the fourth such book since 1940. The words express a deeply held philosophy that made Frank Proffitt a winning spokesman for his mountain people. Indeed, when he died in November of 1965, the *New York Times* carried a six-inch double-column obituary.

Frank Proffitt lived all his life in rural Watauga County, North Carolina. He had a sixth-grade education. He did hard scrabble farming on his steep and rocky land high in the mountains. Yet during the last five years of his life he had a profound effect on folk music in this country and beyond our shores and on uncounted individuals. How this came to be is an important story, particularly to us, for Frank's influence on our lives can never be fully told.

Frank was born on June 1, 1913, in Laurel Bloomery, Tennessee, the son of Wiley and Rebecca Alice Creed Proffitt. His grandparents were John and Adeline Perdue Proffitt, who moved to the Cracker Neck section of the eastern Tennessee mountains from Wilkes County, North Carolina, shortly after the Civil War. Frank's grandfather, John Proffitt, went across the state line to join the boys in blue (as Frank sings in "Going Across the Mountains"), and was a member of the 13th Tennessee Cavalry, U.S.A. When Frank was a young boy the family moved back to North Carolina to the Beaver Dam Section of Watauga County just a few miles below the Tennessee border. There his father made a living as a farmer and cooper and tinker, "fixing anything that was brought in...along with it he made a banjer now and then."

Frank said that in his boyhood his life was like that of the pioneers "that had existed from the earliest mountain settlers.... These were the folk who asked nothing of other men and didn't bother you with trifles." Wiley, Frank's father, was middle aged "before he ever saw a good-sized town," Frank said, "yet he lived as interesting a life as one could ask for." Frank was sixteen when he walked barefoot across the mountains to see his first town - Mountain City, Tennessee. Frank moved in his relatively short life from a colonial pattern to the sophistication of the mid-twentieth century, to talking and singing to college audiences, to making commercial recordings, and to corresponding with people around the world.

In 1938 we [Anne and Frank Warner] were recently married and were living in Greenwich Village in New York City. That spring we met a professor from South Carolina, Maurice Matteson, who had come to New York from a song collecting trip in the southern mountains with a dulcimer made, he told us, by Nathan Hicks of Beech Mountain, North Carolina. We wrote to Nathan Hicks to see if he would make one for us, which he was

happy to do. We decided to go to visit as soon as we could.

It was June 5, 1938, when we first reached the house on Beech Mountain. A crowd of some twenty-five kinfolk and neighbors were waiting for us - with guitars, homemade banjos, dulcimers, fiddles, and French harps. The best singer and guitar player among them turned out to be Nathan's son-in-law, Frank Proffitt, who had walked ten miles across the mountains from his home in Pick Britches Valley to sing with us.

Before long everybody was making music. The sound, and the people, that afternoon gave us a feeling we have never lost. It was the beginning of our life-long interest in traditional music and the people who remember it. We had not come with the idea of collecting songs, but Anne couldn't help taking down in shorthand the words of three songs Frank Proffitt sang: "Dan Doo," a version of the Child ballad, "The Wife Wrapt in Wetherskin," "Moonshine," a story about the effect of homemade liquor; and "Hang Down Your Head, Tom Dooley," the song that twenty years later would have such an impact on Frank Proffitt, on us, and on the world.

By the time of another visit in 1940 we had a recording machine, a Wilcox Gay Recordio. This was pre-tape days and the machine cut grooves in small disks. There was no electricity on the Beech or in Pick Britches. So we took as many of the family as we could get in the station wagon and went down the mountain to Matney, to the home of friends named Rominger, who did have electricity. Once we went to a filling station on the highway. None of this was very satisfactory, but we did record many fine songs.

After sixth grade at a mountain schoolhouse Frank quit school to work full time on his father's farm, but his education never stopped. Throughout his life, he told us, he read whatever books and papers he could lay his hands on. He spoke, and wrote, in the style of early nineteenth-century America or, often, in an earlier pattern. He kept many of the idioms of the first comers who came to these shores not long after the era of the King James translation of the Bible, with its beautiful cadences.



Left to right: Jeff, Frank, and Gerret Warner, with Frank Proffitt on the foot-bridge leading from the road to the Proffitt house, 1959. Photo Anne Warner.

We had made up a list of words that occur frequently in folk songs and ballads, as a tool to help informants remember songs. Frank was intrigued. As Anne would go down the list – dagger, lady fair, the castle gate, salt sea, etc., he would stop her with “Yes, I know a song with that in it. It’s called...” Anne would list the titles and the next day, on our new little wind-up Philco, we would record the tunes of the songs, while Anne wrote down all the words.

In 1951, after the interruption of the war, the Warners, now four, headed back to the Blue Ridges. By this time, we had a tape machine. Tape opened a new world. With tape it didn’t matter if a singer could not remember a word or a line or a verse, since the tape would wait until he did remember it. Even more importantly, tape made it possible to record discussions and conversations and reminiscences.

We had written the Proffitts that we would be coming, but we found Frank was away. He had taken a job working on the road somewhere and, Bessie said, he had sold his guitar and wasn’t singing any more. That was sad news. We knew it was the terrible struggle to make a living that had forced him to give up his music. But Frank stayed in touch and we continued to visit.

“Tom Dooley” was one of the first songs Frank Proffitt gave us. Frank’s grandmother, Adeline Perdue, lived in Wilkes County and knew both Tom and Laura, for Tom Dooley – really Tom Dula – did live. Dula was called Dooley in the mountains, as Rosa is called Rosy, or Buna is called Buny. Tom was a native of Wilkes County and was known to be a wild one. He rode hard and drank hard and had a way with the ladies, especially Laura Foster. When the Civil War came he joined the Confederates and fought until he was taken prisoner and put in a stockade at Kinston, North Carolina. After the war he made his way home on foot, and took up his old ways. He renewed his relationship with Laura, but also was involved with Ann Melton, though she had a husband and two children. One day, at Ann’s instigation, many believed, Tom lured Laura Foster into riding off with him. On the hillside–again, it is said, with Ann’s help – he stabbed Laura and buried her in a shallow grave. Tom, to the end, refused to implicate Ann, though she had been arrested too, so eventually she was freed, and Tom was convicted and hanged in 1868.

Many songs were written about Tom Dooley, but it is the one that came down in Frank’s family that went around the world. Frank wrote:

My earliest recollection is of waking on a cold winter morning in a log cabin on old Beaver Dam and hearing the sad haunting tune of Tom Dooly picked by my father (Wiley) along with the frying of meat on the little stepstove and the noise of the little coffeemill grinding the Arbuckle [coffee]. What better world could they be for a small boy who was hungry for the fried meat and biscuit, and hungry also to make sounds like grown up on a curley walnut banjer.

In those days after the crop was laid by folks went a-visiting. Dad would hang the banjer around his neck, [take] a rifle and lantern and we would go to see the folks. As they gathered around the fireplace with a pine knot burning, us

younguns would get a place down on the floor and listen to Tom Dooly and other songs being played. I started soon to trying to pick the banjer. Soon the happy day came when Dad said, “I declare you air just about got Tom Dooly a-going.” ... Soon when the men came to get watches fixed I went to singing Tom for them ... and other songs. Along the road to school to the mill with my brother as at the store, they had me a-singing. They would say, that boy know all of that Tom Dooly....

Then Frank Warner come to the mountains and in him I saw a addgicated person who made me feel like somebody, and I open my heart to him and gave him the old songs of my people. His eyes sparkled as I sing Tom Dooly to him and told him of my Grandmaw Proffitt knowing Tom and Laura. I told him of my people and he and Anne didn’t seem to notice that we was pore and didnt know big words.... Time rolled on and I just quit trying to sing although my heart would about bust once in awhile... I got a television set for the kids. One night I was a-setting looking at some foolishness when three fellers stepped out with guitar and banjer and went to singing Tom Dooly and they clowned and hipswinged.... I began to feel sorty sick, like I’d lost a loved one. Tears came to my eyes, yes, I went out and balled on the Ridge, looking toward old Wilkes, land of Tom Dooly. I looked up across the mountains and said Lord, couldn’t they leave me the good memories....

Then Frank Warner wrote, he tells me that some way our song got picked up. The shock was over. I went back to my work. I begin to see the world was bigger than our mountains of Wilkes and Watauga. Folks was brothers, they all liked the plain ways. I begin to pity them that hadn’t dozed on the hearthstone.... Life was sharing the different thinking, the different ways. I looked in the mirror of my heart – You haint a boy no longer. Give folks like Frank Warner all you got. Quit thinking of Ridge to Ridge, think of ocean to ocean.

After Frank taught us his favorite mountain song it became one of our favorites. Frank Warner taught his version to Alan Lomax, who included it in Folk Song USA in 1947, with due credit. It was this version Frank Warner included in his Elektra album in 1952, with Frank Proffitt’s story in Anne’s jacket notes and which the Kingston Trio recorded for Capitol Records in 1958, both on an album and as a single which sold over three million copies. The song made the top of the hit parade, and is generally credited with initiating a world-wide wave of enthusiasm for American folk music.

To be continued

Jeff Warner tours Britain this May/June in the show Human Cargo with Matthew Crampton – see humancargo.co.uk. He’s playing solo gigs too and teaches at a weekend of Appalachian Music at Halsway Manor in May – see jeffwarner.com. Part II of this article will appear in the next issue of Old Time News.

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This article appeared in British Bluegrass News no 82, Autumn 2017 and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the author, Brian Taylor Goldstein and Dave Teague, BBMA Chairman. This information has important implications for anyone travelling to the States because it is not clear how these laws apply to anyone competing at a festival or playing in a session at a public venue. If you are planning on taking an instrument into the US, you are strongly advised to check beforehand on the website www.ggartslaw.com as it will contain any current updates and revised information.

Musicians Beware!

WHY ARE ARTISTS BEING DENIED ENTRY INTO THE US? HOW DID IT COME TO THIS AND WHO DO WE BLAME?

By now, you may all be aware that the incidents of artists and performers from a wide range of nationalities arriving in the United States as visitors (either on visitor visas (B-1/B-2) or through the visa waiver/ESTA program) and being refused entry are growing at an alarming rate. These artists are being pulled aside, subjected to hours of questioning, and, in many instances, being handcuffed and held overnight until return flights become available... all without the benefit of being able to contact anyone or seek counsel.

We should all be angry and outraged. However, the value of general cathartic explosions notwithstanding, it is important to know whom to blame and where to focus all of the outrage and anger.

First and foremost, unlike some artists and others have asserted, no laws or regulations have been changed with regard to the visa waiver/ESTA program. To the contrary, ever since the United States immigration laws were overhauled in the 1990s, it has always been the case that artists are not permitted to perform in the US either on visitor visas or through the visa waiver/ESTA program regardless of whether or not artists are paid or whether or not tickets are sold. In order to perform, artists must have an appropriate artist visa, which, in most cases, is going to be either an O visa or a P visa.

Very often, an artist, manager or presenter will contact our office in situations where there has been a last minute engagement opportunity and there is no time for an artist to obtain an O or P visa. They will almost always ask whether the artist can perform without an O visa or P visa if the artist does not get paid—or, worse, presume that this is the case. No! Payment—or lack thereof—is not the deciding factor. The deciding factor is whether or not there is an audience.

One of the few exceptions to this counter-intuitive restriction is that an artist may enter the US either on a visitor visa or through visa waiver/ESTA provided the artist's sole purpose is to audition or perform a showcase for the sole purpose of obtaining future work and engagements and provided ALL of the following requirements are met:

- (1) The artist is not being paid;
- (2) The performance is closed to the public; AND
- (3) The performance is restricted to promoters, managers, presenters, bookers or other industry professionals who book or engage artists.

Merely calling a performance a “showcase” does not make it a showcase. Performing, even for free, in the hopes of obtaining future engagements is not sufficient. Rather, the narrow crack in the otherwise strict prohibition against artists performing without an O visa or P visa was created purely to allow artists to attend booking conferences (such as Arts Midwest, PAE, or APAP) or a traditional audition where the artist performs before a few gruff and aloof producers or directors. If at any time, the general public is allowed to attend (even if no tickets are sold), then it is not considered an “audition” or “showcase” and the exception does not apply. Accordingly, promotional and publicity tours do not qualify either. Similarly, if an artist is entering to perform as part of training program and the performance is open to the public, the exception also does not apply.

As to why such onerous restrictions were ever enacted in the first place, the “official” argument is that it was to protect the United States labor market. True as this may be, it reflects an offensive disregard of the fact that artists are unique and all performances, good or bad, are distinctive. Unlike non-US manufacturing labor who arguably may have similar training and experience as their US counterparts, non-US artists cannot merely be substituted or swapped for a US alternative who just happen to have similar technical abilities. If you have seen one artist, you most definitely have not seen them all. However, without in the least defending these regulations, it is worth bearing in mind that the United States has no Ministry of Culture to advocate policy on behalf of arts and artists. Rather, the arts must rely upon a loose coalition of independently funded arts advocates and institutions whose impassioned pleas are shouted from the wastelands of Whoville. While we also have a National Endowment for the Arts titularly funded by the government, it is purely a granting institution which admirably struggles to disburse crumbs and scraps to the artists crowded at the children's table—and which, as of today, President Trump has proposed to eliminate entirely.

Nevertheless, for many years, festivals, presenters, venues, schools, and others have expanded and relied upon the narrow “audition” or “showcase” exception by providing artists with a letter asserting that an artist is entering to perform an “audition” or “showcase”, is not being paid, and that the audience is restricted only to industry professionals.

With only the rarest of exceptions, this usually worked. To be fair, it probably shouldn't have worked as often as it did, but no harm no foul.

Then came President Trump.

Without having to amend or change any existing laws, the recent Executive Orders have imposed immediate "heightened scrutiny" and "extreme vetting" at all levels of the immigration process by mandating strict enforcement of laws and regulations already in place. (Sadly, these particular directives are not amongst those subject to the recent judicial restraining orders and stays.) As a result, we have entered a new era whereby all immigration officers, examiners, and other officials have now been instructed to "believe none" and "suspect all."

For those of us in the arts and entertainment field, this means that artists who have hitherto had little trouble entering and performing either on a visitor visa or through visa waiver/ESTA—even in those instances where they were never supposed to do so—are now being stopped, questioned, and turned away. Just as bad, artists such as authors, painters, and designers who are legitimately entering the United States as visitors to attend conferences or to attend performances or exhibitions of works they created entirely outside of the US are now at a greater risk of being turned away merely by admitting that they are artists and do not have an artist visa.

As I was once taught by a senior attorney whom, in retrospect, should never really have been mentoring anyone in the first place, solving any problem first requires the assessment of blame. In this case, as frustrating as it is, it is not entirely appropriate to blame immigration or consular officers who, however aggressively, are being instructed to enforce laws that have always been there to enforce. Nor is it reasonable to presume a vast conspiracy focused on artists from specific countries. Rather, a more reasonable assessment of culpability would be as follows:

(1) The immigration laws and regulations that have always been unreasonable and unduly burdensome for decades with regard to artists, but which have gone unchallenged and mostly unnoticed because they were unenforced without any degree of consistency.

(2) The venues, record labels, managers, and others who offhandedly give artists bad advice with the air of authority, but without the burden of accuracy.

(3) The artists who are all too willing to accept without challenge the venues, record labels, and managers so long as they are being told what they want to hear.

(4) The United States government which, as opposed to targeting artists with the explicit intention of thwarting efforts to promote tolerance and understanding through artistic exchange, is oblivious that the arts exist in the first place, much less serve any purpose.

(5) The White House for boastfully implementing a new paradigm whereby all are presumed guilty until proven innocent.

Aside from continuing to shout, scream, and protest through every available platform, what's to be done?

(1) Whether you believe an artist requires a visa or not,

if it is at all possible for an artist to obtain a visa, do so.

• Having an O or P visa does not guarantee entry, as both consulate officers and immigration officers have the unrestricted authority to deny visas or deny entry at any time for any reason. However, having an actual O or P visa in an artist's passport will go a long way towards ameliorating the immediate presumption of an immigration officer that an artist arriving as a visitor is doing purely to threaten our way of life.

(2) If an artist legitimately meets the narrow "audition" or "showcase" exception, then the artist needs to be properly briefed and prepared as to what to expect and how best to answer invasive and probing questions in an atmosphere of stress and intimidation

• This means that, in addition to providing a letter from the festival, presenter, or venue, the artist should also be armed with documentation about the booking conference or audition itself—such as a list of attendees, information about the production or entity for whom the artist is auditioning, etc.

• Make sure there are no press releases, announcements, or other information on either the artist's or venue's website (or anywhere on the internet for that matter) suggesting or announcing that that artist is "touring" or "appearing" in the United States, much less providing a schedule of US engagements—particularly since, legally, there can be no US engagements!

• The artist should have return tickets already booked to establish that the artist will only be staying in the United States for the time necessary to arrive, audition, and leave.

(3) Review an artist's prior travel to the United States to make sure they have not previously engaged in any unauthorized performances and, if so, be prepared to address this.

(4) Make sure an artist has at least a few materials (such as reviews or CDs) establishing that the artist is, in fact, an artist.

(5) Whether you're dealing with immigration, royalties, contracts, or licensing, Artists need to be at the forefront of their own business. Don't presume the people advising you are knowledgeable or even have your best interest in mind. At the end of the day, if you have to cancel a performance or, worse, get deported, the festival, venue, or manager will move on. It's YOUR career on the line!

(6) Lastly, if an artist does get stopped, pulled aside and faces the possibility of a refused admission, the artist should voluntarily request to withdraw his or her request to enter the United States and voluntarily offer to return home. Voluntarily withdrawing a request to enter does not count as a "denied entry" and will not blemish an artist's immigration record for future travel. On the other hand, insisting on entry and then being "denied entry" and forcibly returned can have serious implications on future travel. □

Brian Taylor Goldstein

Brian Goldstein is a New York Attorney whose firm specialises in Immigration matters. This information is correct at the time of going to press.

Gainsborough – an overview

This year's Gainsborough Festival started again for me on Friday afternoon with a lively session at The Ship at Morton. The pub opens especially for the event and was packed with players. It was a great start to the weekend, meeting up with old friends and doing what old-time musicians do best: play. It was then onto the school, where people were gathering and booking in. A meal from the canteen and more greetings took us into the evening concert.

The acts started with The Riverboat Ramblers having the unenviable task of getting the audience warmed up, they were followed by The Brickyard Rounders. Both groups are from the UK and gave mixture of old-time, ragtime and other closely related songs and tunes. Next up on the Friday night concert was The Bigfoot String Band from America who for me were one of the highlights of the weekend. Twin fiddles always seem to work well and here was no exception. Rhys Jones played a standard fiddle and Cleek Schrey played a Hardanger style 10 string fiddle. (Five of the strings run under the fingerboard to resonate in sympathy with the five strings being played traditionally.) In addition the band had superb banjo playing from John Herrmann and solid rhythm and bass from Meredith McIntosh and Susie Goerhing. Last up this night were the Turf Rollers, mainly from Denmark, who brought a different dimension to their old time renditions. Hard driving melody and rhythm produced by some electrified instruments gave familiar tunes an edge that you either loved or hated. What was in no doubt was their desire to entertain, which they did with good humoured banter and competent playing if a little heavy for some tastes.

Saturday afternoon saw the stage filled with ensembles from some of the workshops. First up were singers from the old-time harmony singing followed by the dancers from the flat footing then the body percussionists. One act I sadly missed was The Outlaw Sisters



*The Outlaw Sisters on stage on Saturday afternoon.
Below: Jams took place in every available space, this one in the corridor just outside the gents and ladies toilets, with Colm Daly leading on piano.*

(Issy Howie, Rose Ardrone and Jane Foggin, pictured here) who, I'm told, gave a solid, very watchable show of superb close harmony singing.

Saturday evening's concert was kicked off by Enoch's Gold Hill Trappers, again an English band who offered the audience a nice mixture of Americana style tunes including, western swing, rockabilly and old-time.

By now it was known that one of the weekend's main acts, Ben Paley, Tab Hunter and Dan Stewart, had dropped out, leaving event organiser Tim Rooke with a big hole to fill in the Saturday night concert. His

get out of jail card came in the form of Jock's Hot Sauce Proudly Presents Old-Time Band, comprising Jock Tyldesley, Charlotte Carrivick, Kieran Towers, Debra Clifford, Becca Wintle and John Breese – a brand new, possibly for-one-night-only line-up of home-grown talent who happily stepped in. Firstly Jock and most of the band started but they were soon joined by Charlotte Carrivick and Kieran Towers. Charlotte and Kieran went on to do a number of duets that demonstrate why these two are so highly regarded. I personally never tire of hearing Charlotte's superb banjo playing so was more than happy that they took to the stage.

Next up were The Turf Rollers, this time with their extra amplification removed, who showed they can play traditional old-time music in the traditional way. The final act was The Bigfoot String Band. More superb renditions of well known and not so well known tunes from the twin fiddles, banjo, guitar and bass finished off the evening in style.

For me this was another great Gainsborough Festival. It's worth repeating how grateful we are for the time and effort put in by the organisers, particularly Tim Rooke who does the lions share of the work for this event. Looking forward to next year's 25th Gainsborough Festival already! □

Alan Pridgeon



*Over 20 workshops were on offer at Gainsborough over the weekend
and one of them is reviewed here*

The Twin Fiddle Workshop

with Rhys Jones and Cleek Schrey



After finding a great spot in the gym to put my camp bed, the next thing I was in a hurry to do at Gainsborough was sort out which workshops to attend – the sooner you can do this, the more chance there is of getting in to some of the more popular ones, although they did manage to squeeze in just about everyone, in the end. The 9.30am slot on Saturday morning was a no-brainer for me; the best brace of fiddlers currently playing old-time together are Rhys Jones (from Fauquier County, Virginia) and Cleek Schrey (from New York) from the Bigfoot String Band so I joined the queue and signed up.

I had seen them before at Clifftop when they formed Bigfoot as a scratch band to enter the competition and won it, and they'd stayed with me at our house in Doncaster on Thursday night at the welcome request of Jackie Kempton – a memorable experience! A lot of recordings of their Clifftop rehearsal sessions had done the rounds and these now form a great source of tunes for young (and not so young) players.

As I expected, the room became totally filled with fiddlers crammed into every possible space, but I'd got there early enough to get a good seat – luck had nothing to do with it! Rhys Jones conducted the workshop, with Cleek adding his thoughts and his fiddling where required.

The selected tune was *Morgan on the Railroad*, from Madison County, Kentucky, originally heard from an African-American fiddler called Jim Booker and played by John Masters and Buck Barnes, it was also

played by Jeff Winegar and Martin Fox on “The Way It Was” (2008). I've since listened to some of the source recordings and realised that Rhys and Cleek have taken a “quite nice” tune and turned it into something magical. Rhys told us that the tune was chosen because of its good possibilities for twin fiddle, having a well-defined chord sequence that could be used by a second fiddler to create some great harmonies and variations. They played it through and showed us how it's really done, then Rhys taught the class a good version of the tune, which is quite crooked and a little bit confusing at first, but he didn't rush us through it; by the end we'd mostly got enough to go away and work on.

A few hints on making a tune sound better arose from the process, such as it's good when double stopping to keep the balance constant between the two strings, and the effect of creating tension by playing two strings together which clash a little, followed by resolution to two non-clashing strings e.g. D and E resolving to D and F#. Rhys' humorous teaching style kept the class awake, working and wanting more.

Rhys and Cleek finished by playing a couple more tunes: *Fine Times at Our House* (Edden Hammons) and *Hookers Hornpipe* (Taylor McBaine) which were played with the swing, precision and mind-reading that ten years of twin fiddling can do if you're this good, and left me with some great recordings. □

Ray Banks



The Bigfoot String Band



Jack Tyldesley and friends



Charlotte Carrivick & Kieran Towers



Enoch's Gold Hill Trappers



The Brickyard Rounders



The Riverboat Ramblers



*The popular Slow Jam on Saturday afternoon was lead by the Brickyard Rounders.
Left: Mark Wallace's three fiddles lined up on stage.
Photos by Alan Spindler*

Gainsborough – a non-musician's perspective

It's February so it must be time for the Gainsborough Festival. Once again we spent a few days beforehand near Louth and arrived at The Ship just after lunch on Friday. There was already a good gathering of old-timers playing great tunes as well as much laughter and chatter with friends. At the school we had a lovely supper followed by an evening of wonderful music.

Saturday dawned dry and cold but once inside we soon warmed up. I had a very enjoyable singing workshop run by Roger Jackson who is an exceptional teacher. This was followed by body percussion entertainingly taught by Sara Rose. Who knew slapping yourself could provide such interesting sounds! These new skills were shared

in the afternoon with anyone who wanted to watch us. There was also a chance to see how the dancers had progressed in their workshop. The evening concert was extremely good with a great variety of music and bands.

Sunday morning was taken up with the AGM, always informative and interesting followed by final workshops. After a quick lunch we said our goodbyes and made our way home, driving through a blizzard at one point, but then it is February!

A huge thank you must go to the organisers, sound people, caterers, maintenance staff, etc as none of this would be possible without them. □

Maureen Pridgeon

Impressions of Gainsborough from a first-timer

I heard about the Gainsborough festival from people that I met through the Old Time Slow Jam sessions at the Prince of Wales Feathers in Central London. I was in two minds about attending as, although I have been playing the guitar a long time, I have only developed an interest in American old-time music within the last couple of years and only started playing the banjo last April.

I needn't have worried though; from the moment I arrived I found everyone I met very welcoming and friendly, and I got a huge amount out of the three banjo workshops that I attended. John Herrmann is my new banjo hero!

I also really enjoyed the evening concerts, especially the Bigfoot String Band and the scratch performance from Keith Towers & Charlotte Carrivick – I'm ashamed to say that I hadn't heard of them before but I will certainly be looking out for them in the future. It was lovely to come across them playing a few tunes with their friends in the lobby area outside the hall – and the other groups of players in various corners and corridors. It all contributed to the convivial atmosphere that I felt throughout the weekend. I will definitely be coming to the next one! □

Bridget Stutt



DANCE

Dancing Around

by Clare Sheridan, FOAOTMAD Dance Rep

As your FOAOTMAD dance rep I try to get people together to enjoy the fantastic music and to have a dance party in order to enjoy it fully.

In 2017 we had three such dance parties: one in Malvern in March and two in Gloucestershire in July and October, which were all successful. Different people came to each one but a core of musicians and dancers came to all of them. We share food, socialise, play and dance. If anyone would like to have one in their area do please get in touch. Contact Clare Sheridan, email clare@solarious.co.uk, tel 01453 827286.

Gainsborough Festival 2018

Well, what a fabulous weekend! In spite of my knee injury and Paul recovering from flu we had a brilliant time. More sedentary than usual we stayed for the whole of Friday and Saturday night concerts and were part of the Saturday afternoon concert which was very entertaining having three lots of showcasing what people had learnt at flatfooting, body percussion and singing workshops.

Paul did an amazing burst of energetic flatfooting with Bigfoot String Band on Friday evening, which took everyone by surprise as it was not on the programme.

We had nine people at our Beginners flatfooting workshop Saturday morning, including several complete beginners who we hope to see again.

FOAOTMAD supports Ira Bernstein and Riley Baugus coming to England

At the recent AGM it was agreed to spend the unused dance budget of £500 on bringing Ira and Riley over. A group of dancers had already raised £1300 towards this.

Paul and I did a week long workshop with Ira in 1995, to the outstanding music of Trevor Stuart where

we learnt our basics and our fancy steps, the history and nuances of the Appalachian influence on dance in North Carolina and West Virginia. Countless other dancers have benefited from similar input from Ira, and we continue to pass on the skills that we learnt twenty odd years ago.

Very unfortunately, Ira is experiencing Parkinson's Disease and can no longer dance professionally as he did with his ten toe percussion.

However he has an enormous amount of knowledge that he will be able to pass on using various dancers to demonstrate the steps.

The intention is to have a dance party during Summer Camp which is from Friday 11th August until Sunday 20th August at the new venue near Tewkesbury. The dance party date will be confirmed as soon as have it.



World Day of Dance

On 29th April this year the World Day of Dance is being celebrated. Go on, take a spin round the kitchen with your loved one. If you are in a dance team it would be good to celebrate the day. For more information go to:

www.danceday.cid-portal.org

www.facebook.com/DanceDayOfficial/

Dance Party in Gloucestershire

We will be having a Dance Party to celebrate Dance Day on **Saturday 28th April 2018** at Eastington Village Hall, Eastington, GL10 from 6.30 till 10.30pm (www.grcc.org.uk/village-hall-finder/village-hall/eastington-village-hall)

Bring food to share, your own drink although tea/coffee available, instruments, hard soled shoes preferable, there is a lovely wooden floor. Contact Clare Sheridan on clare@solarious.co.uk or tel 01453 827286. □

Bill Cox 1947-2017

William J Cox, known to his many friends as Bill, died suddenly in hospital on December 6th, aged 70. A family man, husband to Joan, father to Nova and young Will, Bill lived all his life in Sheffield, his home town.

Bill will be fondly remembered by the small group of old-timers who came together to form FOAOTMAD and organise the first festivals at Gainsborough. He was elected Membership Secretary and, through his efforts with his banjo buddy, Nigel Duffield (then resident in Wansford) they secured the first Summer Camp at Sacrewell.

My own memories of Bill and those early days, are of the old-time sessions at the Red House, Solly Street, Sheffield with Bill (guitar), Nigel (banjo), Dave Young (fiddle) and visits from Eve Morris (York), Rita and



Dave Proctor (Derby), Keith Johnson (Gainsborough), Jan and Kieran Clements (Rotherham) and many others.

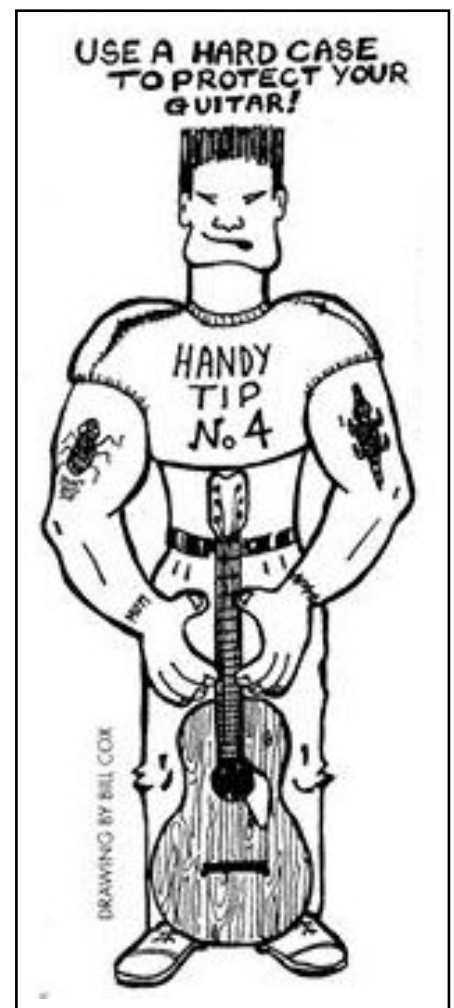
A kind and funny man with a host of stories, Bill seemed to know everyone in Sheffield who wandered into the session but, after all, he was typically Sheffield through and through.

At his funeral the coffin wore his favourite FOAOTMAD t-shirt whilst *Roll em Boys Roll em* played by Old Red Eye, (Jim, Dave and himself) from the Ripples CD filled the chapel. Ever the joker, *The Heat is On* was Bill's final 'Goodbye' to us all.

We will miss you Bill. □

Jim Pycroft

Bill also used to draw cartoons for the Old Time News and we include a couple here for your enjoyment. Thanks to Hugh O'Connor for the scans.





The session: a mellow Sunday ensemble in the hospitable Roadside Tavern - rubbing shoulders with the legendary Johnny Moynihan (foreground), Andy Lambert (organiser on bouzouki), Dan Levenson et al

Blissdoonvarna !

Resigned as I am, although never immune, to the hassle of airports and the stress of watching a (well cased) banjo disappear on a conveyor belt – en route to FOAOTMAD events in England – there was a rare relaxation in packing instruments into the car boot for my first trip to Lisdoonvarna, County Clare and the inaugural Irish Appalachian Old Time Gathering over the weekend 16th to 18th February past. In Irish terms, the four and a half hour (250 mile) drive from Belfast is a bit of an odyssey. However the Celtic Tiger (in its previous life) has bequeathed an impressive network of readily navigable motorways – free of the tailbacks so frequently encountered in England. Hence the journey into the glorious and legendary Burren landscape was a relative (if toll-intensive) pleasure.

Dispersed as the Irish old-time scene historically and unfortunately is, news of this event percolated northwards last December and immediate contact was made with the organisers, Andy Lambert and Bob Denton. The background is a story in itself. Andy (a Londoner of Scottish descent) made a new home in Kilfenora, close to Lisdoonvarna, back in 2000 and soon became involved in the local music scene. Bob Denton, an old-time musician resident in Tuscon, Arizona and – as it turned out, kindred spirit – spent a three month holiday in Clare over Christmas/New Year 2016/17. Bob's formative musical years were spent in the Blue Ridge Mountains. He won first place in the banjo competition at the National Old Time Fiddle Contest and Festival in Weiser, Idaho in 2016, and he won ribbons at the Galax and Union Grove fiddlers' convention. He subsequently invited Andy to the 2017 Clifftop Festival, and there the idea for the inaugural Irish Old Time Gathering was conceived and launched – not as a festival, but rather a “coming together” for sessions, workshops and building an Irish old-time network. Bob created a website, Richard Hawkins (he of the Bluegrass Ireland Blog) helped to put the word out through his extensive network – and the show was on the road.

The small spa town of Lisdoonvarna (population 300) and County Clare, apart from being the subjects of

great songs by Christy Moore and Ralph McTell, have become famous (not least) for the annual Matchmaking Festival, one of Ireland's oldest festivals which takes place every September. That festival, now over 150 years old, attracts up to 60,000 people from all over the world, who come for the music, the dancing and the ‘craic’. Dancing takes place in venues all over the town and in the newly reopened Spa Wells. Third generation matchmaker Willie Daly is on hand to bring hopeful singles together and apparently boasts many marriages to date. (Perhaps February is the better time to visit!). However, to get to the point...

Through Bob, contact was made with the great Dan Levenson – no stranger to FOAOTMAD and Gainsborough as a renowned fiddle, clawhammer and old-time guitar player – and he agreed to come over as one of the focal points for the sessions and workshops. As readers will know, Dan has written many of the Mel Bay books on old-time music for fiddle, banjo and guitar and is a wealth of information on our music. Alongside, it transpired that Erynn Marshall and Carl Jones (also fondly known to FOAOTMAD) would be passing through Ireland at that very time. They completed a world class line up for a full programme of workshops, together with a Saturday night concert and barn dance.

Now, Lisdoonvarna being a tourist town on the exposed south west Atlantic coast, many establishments close for the winter months. However, Andy had done his groundwork and made arrangements with the Roadside Tavern and adjacent Burren Storehouse to be the main centres of activity. And so, Andy was on “registration” at the Tavern entrance from late Friday afternoon to welcome folks from all parts – including my good friend Dave Teague, who agreeably left his BBMA mayoral chain at home in Tamworth and navigated his motor home across on the Holyhead/Dublin ferry, and Tim Mason, fellow Foaotmader, who flew “solo” from Heathrow to Shannon (fretting about his banjo in the hold!). Impressively, as this was a new event – but not unexpectedly being old-time – introductions became spontaneous friendships which morphed into music in

short order and so the Roadside “rocked” into the night as Dan Levenson and Bob Denton led a wonderful “welcome” session.

The excellent and hospitable Burren Hostel, only a short stagger from the Roadside Tavern, accommodated the majority of the 40ish weekenders in an agreeable array of rooming alternatives and, after breakfast on the Saturday morning, impromptu sessions “escalated” around the place. It was a particular pleasure, nay privilege, to join the evergreen Alec Somerville (at a sprightly 87 years of age) who had made the journey down from Donegal and treated us to his wide repertoire of pure, unadulterated old-time songs and tunes on a fine 1880s Buckbee banjer – some quarter century after he compered the first Gainsborough with the late Keith Johnson.

And hence to choose from a comprehensive set of Saturday workshops – Dan Levenson covering fiddle and banjo, Erynn Marshall on “alternate fiddle tunings” and flatfoot dance and Carl Jones ranging across mandolin and guitar accompaniment for tunes and songs. Excellent accommodation for these was kindly provided by the Hostel and the Burren Smoke House (with tempting scents of cold and/or hot smoked Atlantic salmon wafting among the Appalachian airs of Dan Levenson’s banjo workshop). After a fine dinner in the Irish Arms, it was straight to the evening concert in the impressive new Burren Storehouse. Our American visitors, joined by Anna Falkenau (fine fiddle player residing in Galway), gave virtuoso performances in various combinations (through an impressive sound system fine-tuned by the ubiquitous Andy Lambert himself) and then, to round the evening off, amalgamated to provide vibrant accompaniment for the Barn Dance. Saturday night went the way of all good “festival/gatherings” and sessions took on lives of their own around the town until the wee small

hours of a frosty Irish morning.

Further workshops were available on the Sunday morning, for those who hadn’t already succumbed to the weekend rigours, before the conclusion of the formal programme at midday. However, as so often is the case at such weekends, there was more joy to come in the smaller (but far from reduced) company remaining through to Monday. The afternoon session in the Tavern, again led by the indefatigable Dan Levenson, was graced by the veteran Irish folk icon Johnny Moynihan aka “The Bard of Dalymount” (i.e. of Sweeney’s Men, Planxty, De Dannan etc). Johnny, a multi-instrumentalist credited with introducing the GDAD bouzouki into Irish music in the late ’60s folk revival – deferred to the old-time context and respectfully added a fiddle overtone on Dan’s tunes. Sunday dinner was by arrangement with Dave Teague (in his commodious motor home) who kindly shared a generous portion of best Tamworth lamb’s liver, onion gravy, mash and mushy peas in exchange for a goblet (or two) of good Percheron red!.

And so to conclude... the rearguard evacuated Lisdoonvarna on a sunny Monday morning with deep gratitude to Andrew Lambert (and Bob Denton) for hosting this first (and probably largest hitherto) Irish Old-Time Gathering. The great Ralph McTell sings “It’s a long, long way from Clare to here” – but it isn’t really, any more. Good road links from the ferry terminals and airports into the scenic coastal splendour of the Burren attract hundreds of thousands during the peak tourist season, making this Gathering a welcome opportunity to sample the ambience in the quiet month of February – the tranquility broken only by the vigorous, sonorous coming together of the best of Irish and Appalachian. Surely this must become an annual fixture?! □

William Duddy



The workshop: Dan Levenson gives a masterclass in the Burren Smoke House.

The pub: The Matchmaker Bar, colourful even in the closed season.

The band: the “All Star” line up for the Barn Dance: L-R Siona Knepper (Cork), Derek Copley (Dublin), Aisling Keogh (Dublin), Carl Jones (Galax, WV), Dan Levenson (Tuscon Az), Anna Falkenau (Galway), Erynn Marshall (Galax, WV) calling.



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Membership Fees Update

The proposal to increase membership fees was raised at the recent AGM and after some discussion the motion was passed by a majority vote. However the chairman would like a further debate at the committee meeting on 18th March, after this issue has gone to press.

Fees have remained the same for the last 10 years and during that time paper, printing and mailing costs have risen significantly. The question is therefore not whether the fees will have to increase, but when and by how much. We promise to keep the rise as small as possible and will update you in the next issue. Ed.

Clawhammer Banjo, Mandolin & Guitar Tuition

Lessons in Hemel Hempstead, Herts. Chris Lawrance is a music teacher with 40 years experience, specialising in old-time, bluegrass and blues. Beginners of any age welcome.
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Chris Lawrance

The Whisky Seller (from the playing of Tom Paley)

The original version of this tune was taken from Vance Randolph's two-volume collection of tunes from the Ozarks. It is a temperance piece originally played to tune "Little Brown Jug". The tab is taken from the playing of Tom Paley taken from The New Lost City Ramblers' recording Moonshine and Prohibition released in 1962. He plays it in the key of A# or as American's say Bb. I have tabbed it out in key of A for convenience sake. The introduction does not quite fit words but I feel most people will be able work this out once the intro is learnt.

The Whisky Seller

Banjo Capo 2 key A (Tom Paley version)

Ozark Temperance song 1880s


Capo. 2 fret

♩ = 120

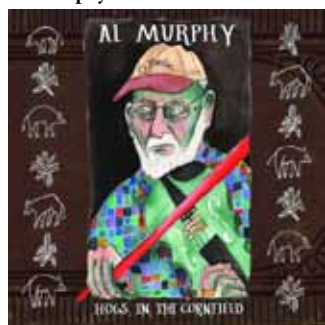
INTRODUCTION

[illegible][illegible]

The first system of the musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is shown. It consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written in a simple, folk-like style. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. The system ends with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket labeled '1.'.

2. 

Al Murphy



Hogs in the Cornfield (Harvest Home Productions)

Al Murphy: fiddle; Marc Janssen: mandolin; Warren Hanlin: guitar; Brandi Janssen: banjo; Aleta Murphy: bass

Nine Mile / Hogs in the Cornfield / Mag Brown / Uncle Herm's Hornpipe / Blue Rose Waltz #1 / Gotta Quit Kickin' My Dog Around / Lowery's Quadrille / Steamboat Quickstep / Old Mother Logo / Kansas City Rag / The Rough Scotsman / Albert's Breakdown / Sadie's In The Kitchen - Rough and Ready / Woodland Whispers / Delbert's Rag / Call Your Dogs And Let's Go Hunting / Mountain Grove Waltz / Bucks In The Brush / Getting Out Of The Way Of The Federals / Walk Along John

A fine selection of Midwestern fiddle tunes, performed in easy, unshowy style by a veteran player and friends. Al Murphy has enjoyed a storied career through bluegrass, old-time and americana from the 1970s on, persevering through a diagnosis of MS in 2000; his commitment to this music is moving, and this CD feels like a conscious effort to pass on some choice material to future generations of players, as these tunes were handed down to him. Though 20 instrumental tracks with little variation in arrangement could risk wearing on the listener, the variety of tune styles and pace keeps the show rolling. Murphy's sources date back into the late 19th century, so even the more familiar tunes have archaic quirks that reward your attention. *Steamboat Quickstep*, for example, is actually a jig with roots in Ireland and New England. This is by no means wall-to-wall breakdowns. I can't help but feel that the fiddling's eccentric, faltering phrasing would be better supported by a little more drive in the accompaniment – but this is not dance music, in the main.

The accompanying booklet and sleeve feature the wonderfully eccentric portrait art of Howard Rains, familiar from many of the recent Old Time Tiki Parlour releases. These illustrate liner notes that lean heavily toward descriptions of players and their lives, rather than discussion of the tunes themselves, reflecting the personal nature of this music and this project. The capsule biographies of Murphy's

tune sources paint a vivid picture of his life in music, and the vital role of music in the lives of these earlier players. One for the tune hounds more than the casual listener, perhaps, but rewarding in that context.

Liam Kirby

Available from: Bandcamp

Jim Kweskin



Unjugged (Hornbeam)

Bonnie Dobson: vocals; Ben Paley: fiddle; Tali Trow: double bass, vocals; Bill Denton: harmonica; Sean Read, Maddy Read-Carke, SkiWilliams, Rose O'Briaen: vocals, whispers.

Days Of '49 / The Wreck Of The Number / Staggerlee / Now She's Gone / Living In The Country / The Mermaid Song / You're Gonna Quit Me Baby / Is It True What They Say About Dixie? / The Tenderfoot (Cowboy) / With Her Head Tucked Underneath Her Arm / The Wreck Of The Number Nine / The Way You Look Tonight / Going Going Gone / Spike Drivers Blues / Colours

Jim Kweskin's name, for those of us old enough to remember is usually associated with The Jim Kweskin Jug Band which operated out of Boston USA in the 1960s and included Geoff and Maria Muldaur. Emerging at the time there and in New York were artists such as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Eric Von Schmidt, The New Lost City Ramblers et al. Appropriate then that one of the principal musicians here is Ben Paley, son of NLC Rambler, the revered and sadly missed Tom Paley. Ben is a much in demand session man due to his mastery of many styles and sensitive and tasteful backing featured on many tracks here.

Essentially though, this is Jim's solo album. It features his rock-steady finger picking in folk styles including some Blind Blake and Mississippi John Hurt tributes, backed by fiddle, bass, harmonica and vocals on some tracks. This is a laid back and relaxing romp through the (mostly) American pop/folk songbook. If you were lucky enough to catch Jim on his 2017 UK tour you will know what to expect. You will also probably have been amazed to see this seventy something year old still playing with such youthful verve and vitality. Jim is a great raconteur in song and his takes on

classics such as *Staggerlee* are unusual and entertaining. He has distilled his musical apprenticeship spent with the great and good of the folk scene into his own relaxed style which is always instilled with warmth and humour. Every phrase is nuanced, weighed and delivered with just the right feel for the material.

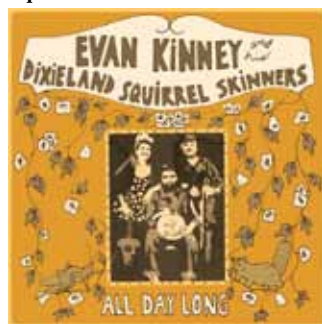
Jim's choice of material is fairly eclectic, ranging from folk through blues and jazz and includes a visit to Tin Pan Alley. Favourite tracks are *The Mermaid Song* which wrestles with the physical problems of having a mermaid girlfriend. There's *Staggerlee* who on his descent into hell, unapologetically offers to run the place. My favourite is the amusingly satirical *Is It True What They Say About Dixie? With Her Head Tucked Underneath Her Arm* (about Anne Boleyn) is funny and – yes – scary, while *The Way You Look Tonight*, which Jim sings for his wife, is touching. If you want fiddle and banjo stuff look elsewhere, but if you want to hear a master of folk styles playing his favourites culled from decades in the business, you will enjoy this CD as much as I do.

The sound is great and Jim's voice, guitar and all other instruments are immaculately recorded and mixed. The fold-out CD sleeve has been lovingly produced, with extensive notes about each song by Jim and some nice colour photos. On the inner sleeve Dave Peabody who will be known to blues aficionados provides extensive biographical and historical notes taken from a fRoots article about Jim.

Andy Wilson

Available from: www.hornbeamrecordings.com, Amazon

Evan Kinney and the his Dixieland Squirrel Skinners



All Day Long

Evan Kinney: fiddle, harmonica; Camden Pugh: banjo, harmonica; Ali Kafka: guitar; Mickey Nelligan: banjo, fiddle

Down In Atlanta Georgia / Gray Cat On A Tennessee Farm / Picking Up Peanuts / Wabash Blues / Shortenin' Bread / In the Morning / Arkansas Traveler / Cindy / You Ain't Talking To Me / Sally Goodin / Bust Down Stomp / Slim Gal / Take Me Back To Georgia /

Rock About My Saro Jane / Billy In The Lowground / Nancy Rollin / I'm Getting Ready To Go / Goodbye Booze / Johnny Get Your Gun

Based in Atlanta, Georgia, this young trio (boosted to a quartet for much of this record) bring some distinct tricks and twists to a sound that still owes much to the textures of the past. For the first handful of tracks here, you think you have this band's measure: rowdy, rumbunctious arrangements that hark back to early jug band records, propelled by Evan Kinney's marvellously slippery, raggy fiddling, that sounds very much like a more polished (but not too polished) throwback to that of his father, Mick. The vocals are hollered with more concern for energy than diction, and the odd bum-note is gleefully embraced: ragged but right, if you will. If the whole record played out like this, it would be more than enough, but then we hit track 6, *In The Morning*, and the breadth of this group's ability bursts out: a bug-eyed Minstrel-era number borrowed from the 1928 recording of Johnson, Nelson & Porkchop, performed in mush-mouth baritone with a funeral, moaning chorus – it is spare, stark and thrilling. The album takes its title from the lyrics of this number, so you get the impression the band know this one stands out.

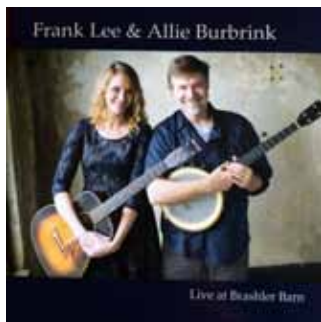
The rest of the album rolls on in much the same way – a fun, compulsively listenable romp, punctuated with moments that really make you sit up and take notice, not least a manic dual-harmonica arrangement of *Billy in the Lowground*. Evan Kinney's fiddle style is a frequent delight: even on a track like *Take Me Back To Georgia*, which had plenty of swing when Lowe Stokes cut his rendition in 1929, he finds places to lean in and syncopate in a manner reminiscent of Dan Gellert, master of the funky fiddle. The vocals provided by guitarist Ali Kafka jump out also, not least because she sings lead on only a couple of numbers, and that scarcity makes her contributions all the more striking. Her voice is a little hoarse, a little brittle, untrained in a way you might hear on an old field recording, and it brings an earnest, personal quality to lyrics, as on *Cindy*, we've all otherwise heard a hundred times or more.

The final track, *Johnny Get Your Gun*, ends with the band breaking into laughter at the lunatic pace they just set. It's a sound that you feel probably had to be edited off a lot of these takes, and one that captures the sense of fun and abandon that imbues the album.

Liam Kirby

Available from: Bandcamp

Frank Lee and Allie Burbrink



Live at Brashler Barn

Frank Lee: banjo, guitar, slide guitar, vocals; Allie Burbrink: guitar, banjo, harmonica, vocals

Standing On A Mountain / Sing To The Fallen Eagle / Can't Nobody Hide From God / Elkhorn Ridge / I've Always Been A Rambler / Waves On The Sea / Sailor And The Soldier / Keep Your Lamp Trimmed And Burning / Sandy Boys / I'm Getting Ready To Go / Come And Go With Me

Frank Lee will be best known as the founder and banjo player in powerhouse string band The Freight Hoppers who rose to prominence with two critically acclaimed albums in the 1990s. The band took a break while fiddler Dave Bass underwent major surgery but have since reformed. In their current format Allie Burbrink is the guitar player although she actually comes from a bluegrass background.

These tracks were recorded during a house concert at the home of Mike and Lois Brashler and they have all the intimacy and immediacy which this suggests. In fact Frank admitted in his email when sending the CD that he didn't even realise that the recordings were being made, and only decided to turn them into a CD after hearing them. After listening to it I'd say he made a good call.

The two artists command a wide range of instruments between them, as well as both being able to sing, and they use this range of musical resources well to turn in a varied and interesting set. As well as old-time tunes (*Elkhorn Ridge*, *Sandy Boys*) we have blues (*Keep Your Lamp Trimmed and Burning*), a bluegrass standard (*Standing On A Mountain*) and a Stephen Stills number (*Sing to the Fallen Eagle* from his album *Manassas*). Despite this wide range of material the album has a coherent feel to it as the pair tackle the numbers in their own particular style. Take *Standing On A Mountain* for instance. In its commonest manifestation this is a bluegrass belter full of high harmonies and fast instrumental breaks, but take all that away and what you're left with is a folk song about the sorrow of lost love and this is how it is played. As an opener it works well, a bouncy banjo and guitar duet, showing of the each player's strongest suit instrumentally complete with close harmonies throughout. Someone is clearly a Blind Willie Johnson fan, since there are three of his songs. One of these,

Can't Nobody Hide from God is one of the highlights for me, with Allie showing that she can produce a fine, bluesy tone in her voice as well as the sweeter tones she employs on other tracks. One small criticism is that no information is provided on the sleeve about the source of the material, or the instrumentation.

The only tracks which you would describe as old-time are *Sandy Boys* and *Elkhorn Ridge*, both done as banjo duets, so this will not be the CD for diehard old-time fans. However for anyone whose taste runs across a wider range of American styles, this CD can be recommended as a very enjoyable listen.

Steve Wise

Available from:

www.frankleeandallieburbrink.com

Lydia Sylvia Martin



Chasing the Ghost

Lydia Sylvia Martin: banjo, piano, vocals; Phil Wiggins: harmonica; Dirk Powell: guitar, fiddle, vocals; Claude Martin: fiddle, vocals; Tony DeMarco: fiddle; Cleek Schrey: fiddle; Joey Abarta: uilleann pipes; Jeanne Martin: vocals; Eli Smith: guitar; Dom Flemons: bones

Undone in Sorrow / Dark Holler Blues / Liza Jane / Jo Bones / Fisher's Hornpipe - Barlow Knife / Strawberry Blues / Lonesome Road Blues / Cherry River Line / Hillsville John Henry / Cranberry Medley / C and O Train / Win Sisters

Lovely record. I thoroughly enjoyed this first solo album by a talented young musician who I have not come across before. Lovely rhythmic banjo playing in a variety of banjo styles, from frailing to two- and three-finger picking. Lydia also plays piano on a couple of tracks. I love hearing piano in old-time music ensembles. And great vocals. Lydia says that she doesn't consider herself a singer but rather uses her voice as a second instrument to her banjo. Nevertheless it's a most individual voice that comes across clear as a bell especially when she's singing in harmony with someone else. As I read in one of the reviews on the internet '...With a voice as pure as an Appalachian spring...'

Attractively produced CD case. How nice it is to hold a CD in my hand rather than all these wretched digital-only editions. There are good notes for each track, although I had to resort to a magnifying glass to read them, not because of size but through bad printing. When will CD producers

ever understand that reversing out the text from a coloured photo can't work unless you have perfectly registered. If you want the lyrics, you can find them on the Bandcamp website

Carole Chant

Available from: Bandcamp

Simon Robinson



The Wandering Boy

Simon Robinson: vocals, banjo, guitar
Brother Green / Little Satchel / John Riley the Shepherd / Drunkard's Lone Child / Cindy / Little Birdie / Hills of Mexico / The Wandering Boy / Bonnie Prince Charlie - Gospel Plough

This album was recorded with one banjo, one voice, one mic and in one take, with the exception of guitar overdubs on *The Wandering Boy*, by Leeds based musician Simon Robinson. I first came across Simon when he was still a teenager, accompanied by his parents, in a folk session in Sheffield. It was quite apparent that here was a young man with a real talent, singing with a high, clear voice and playing some very accomplished guitar work. Now in his twenties, he has since taken up the banjo and here presents a selection of songs, along with a couple of tunes, played with a rolling clawhammer style and sung with a clear, unhurried voice. The material is sourced from some of the old masters and the songs here come from the likes of Doc Boggs, Roscoe Holcomb, Fred Cockerham, Buell Kazee and Frank Proffitt as well as contemporary players such as Adam Hurt and Bruce Molsky.

The whole album has a lovely relaxed feel to it, with some really nice playing and singing as well as an interesting selection of material. There are seldom-heard songs such as *Brother Green* (a version of *The Dying Soldier*) and *Hills of Mexico* and some more familiar titles such as *Little Satchel*, *Little Birdie* and *Gospel Plough*. There are also a couple of tunes which are new to me, *John Riley the Shepherd* and *Bonnie Prince Charlie*, both from the playing of Adam Hurt, as well as the familiar *Cindy*. The title track, originally recorded by Frank Jenkins in 1927 and more recently by Bruce Molsky, sounds quite straightforward at first before a few sneaky crooked sections are thrown in. This is also the only track that has an overdubbed guitar which, personally, I don't think it needs, as it seems to break the flow of the album as a whole. A minor fault in what is a

very accomplished album from a young musician to watch out for.

Dave Young

Available from: Bandcamp

The Glade City Rounders



Don't Get Weary (Green Fly Productions)

William "Tennessee Bill" See: fiddle, harmonica, bass, kazoo, vocals; Josh Smith: guitar, bass, jug, vocals; Richard "Squirrel" McLain: banjo, gourd banjo, kazoo, ukulele, vocals

Georgia Crawl / Old Joe / Don't Get Weary / Blues in a Bottle / Ruffle Drawers / Viola Lee Blues / Sand Mountain Drag / She Done Sold It Out

The Glade City Rounders, who are from middle Tennessee, describe their music as "the finest in old-time blues, jug and string band music". I should say from the outset that this kind of mash-up is right up my street. I take a very broad view of what constitutes old-time, and am baffled by some of the boundaries which get drawn by folks who take a more purist view. So any criticisms which I make of the album in what follows are due purely to how I hear the music, not to genre boundary issues.

There is a nice balance of songs and tunes, and some of the tracks will certainly be familiar. *Ruffle Drawers* is a track title I hadn't come across before: it turns out to be *New Five Cents*! My favourite track on the album is *Georgia Crawl*. The fiddling is of a high standard and in the old-time idiom. The banjo playing (which is described in the band's publicity material as "Up Stroke") sometimes comes out too "strummy" for my taste, particularly in the old-time instrumentals. Of course there isn't anything wrong or inauthentic about this, as recordings from the 1920s have all kinds of banjo playing on them. It's just that one has become used to hearing a certain style behind mainstream old-time fiddle tunes. These tracks finish up sounding like a band from another genre playing old-time. I've noticed that some very good banjo players have more one style and vary them to fit best with each number. There is some very nice guitar lines on some tracks. I find some of the singing a bit overdone, again very much a personal taste thing.

Recording quality is good, sometimes with a tad more reverb than I would like. When these tracks were recorded the band didn't have a dedicated bass player, so this recording has

necessarily been made with a degree of overdubbing. They aren't afraid to bring up things in the mix, for example some of the good bits of guitar which might otherwise be lost in the background. The album cover tells us who played what, and the source recordings, which mostly date from 1928 to 1930.

The album is short by modern standards, coming in at just over 24 minutes but this is compensated for by a price of \$9.99 (around £7.50), which is reasonable value. There are some good things in here, and if this is musical territory you haven't ventured into it would be a relatively inexpensive introduction. So not an unqualified recommendation, but I bet they're great fun to see live.

Stuart Wade

Available from: Amazon.com

Mark Olitsky and Cary Moskowitz



Duets

Mark Olitsky: minstrel banjo; Cary Moskowitz: plectrum banjo, vocal

Barlow Knife / Sadie at the Back Door / Lost Indian / Elk River Blues / Farewell Trion / Hand Me Down My Walking Cane / Dull Chisel / Garfield's Blackberry Blossum / Somewhere Over the Rainbow / Little Billy Wilson / Big Scioto / Black Eyed Susie / Falls of Richmond / Blackberry Blossum / Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine / Hop High Lulu Gal / Oompik Waltz

This is the first album by this duo and apparently came out of a chance meeting at the Appalachian String Band Music Festival (better known as Clifftop). It is the kind of album you buy when you've been to see a good performance and you want to take home the memories. However I wouldn't recommend buying this for anyone else unless they happen to be a banjo fanatic, because it is a little out of the ordinary. The instruments are a 5-string "minstrel" style banjo tuned low, with a big, skin head and synthetic "gut" strings, played (and made) by Mark Olitsky and a four-string plectrum banjo played by Cary Moskowitz. This somewhat idiosyncratic combination is unlikely to appeal to old-time banjo players as a source from which to enlarge their repertoire or extend their style but I enjoyed listening to it.

On tracks like *Sadie at the Back Door* you get a real feel for the potential in the counterpoint passages which set off the two banjos' distinctive tones against each other. *Richmond Falls* is another. The more upbeat

Garfield's Blackberry Blossum works for me, whereas *Farewell Trion* – a favourite of mine – is disappointing in this rendering. The surprise offering is a version of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*. I love this tune whoever does it and that lovely run down through a minor interval harmony works well in this instrumentation. But nothing will come near the version by Braddah Iz (the late, great, house-sized Hawaiian).

A couple of the tracks are songs. The singer is Cary Moskowitz whose voice, to my ear at least, gives a bluesy flavour to the tunes. It works well for him on *Hand Me Down My Walking Cane* but without a second voice (it's more often done as a vocal duet) something is lost. There are no notes on the CD cover and I find this disappointing (I had to glean the instrument information from publicity provided by the guys themselves). As most of the songs are probably classed as traditional this can be overlooked in terms of credits (*Over the Rainbow* being an exception – Arlen and Harburg if you're wondering), but I think such a distinctive sound would be better supported with some technical detail – just for the enthusiasts. And if you are not a banjo junkie? Well – it's OK music for a long journey in the car.

Rob Luxton

Available from: Bandcamp

Fiddle Whamdiddle



Not My Monkey (Owl Mountain Music)

Vi Wickam: fiddle, vocals; Steve Eulberg: hammered dulcimer, mountain dulcimer, guitar, vocals

Soldier's Joy / Woodchopper's Reel / Shenandoah / 8th of January / Old Joe Clark / Matthew / Cold Frosty Morning / Arkansas Traveller / Aura Lea / Redwing / Not My Monkey / The Blackest Crow / Temperance Reel / June Apple

Vi Wickam is a Colorado State champion fiddle player with quite a presence on the web (www.vithedfiddler.com) including his "Fiddle Tune a Day" project. He plays other styles as well as old-time, and you can hear that on this CD; I'd put his playing more towards the bluegrass end of traditional fiddling, with him playing some very nifty licks within the tunes. Impressive. Steve Eulberg is an award-winning multi-instrumentalist and a renowned singer-songwriter. On this CD you can hear him as an expert on the hammered dulcimer (the whamdiddle), and six tracks highlight

his mountain dulcimer (the hog fiddle) abilities. He is also the founder of Owl Mountain Music Inc.

Many of these tracks take me back to the foot-tappingly good 1973 recording *The Hammered Dulcimer* featuring Bill Spence and Fennig's All Star String Band. *Not My Monkey* is also a lively, feel-good, well-thought-out selection of tunes recorded with nice clarity and mostly mixed very well with a clear balance between the two main instruments. Their selection of instrumental tunes is excellent for those who prefer traditional old favourites. There are also a couple of songs; both of these performers have good, strong, tuneful voices, with Steve doing the main vocals for their very enjoyable version of John Denver's *Matthew*. The track *Not My Monkey* was written by Steve and Vi together and they sing and harmonize together in a powerful blues-flavoured rocky style.

The liner notes don't contain very much detail and I had to contact Steve for more information on who was doing what on each track. I also discovered that all the tracks were recorded with them playing together live, but in separate rooms. If you would like more information on the mountain dulcimer styles and tunings that Steve used, I would recommend that you contact him via his website.

The first two tracks set the overall animated pace for the CD. The interplay between Steve's instrument (whether hammered dulcimer or mountain dulcimer) and Vi's fiddle is a marvellous example of how two instrumentalists can create more than just the sum of their musical parts.

Shenandoah starts more sedately with the hammered dulcimer, giving some contrast to the other foot-tapping tunes and broadening the rhythmic feeling of the CD. Vi's fiddle playing is suitably elegant throughout this track, completing a rather majestic offering from this duo.

The cover of John Denver's *Matthew* begins with some tasteful finger-picked guitar and Vi's mellow fiddle support and Steve's voice sounds full and melodic. Vi also adds attractive harmony vocals and with Sascha Jacobsen playing bass this becomes a charming classic of a country song. One more track that deserves mentioning is *Aura Lea*. Vi Wickam's great-great-great-uncle George R. Poulton wrote the music for *Aura Lea* and it formed the melodic basis for Elvis's *Love Me Tender*.

I would recommend this CD to anyone who is interested in listening to imaginative interpretations of traditional tunes played very competently and with obvious enjoyment. In addition to that, people interested in picking up some new catchy motifs for their fiddle-playing and/or some ideas for their dulcimer playing (whether using a noter or fingers and a flatpick) could benefit from getting this CD.

However, I can't say that it fits completely within the old-time genre, and the notes with the CD should perhaps give more detail about the original sources of the tunes or their history, particularly *Aura Lea*. As mentioned above, more details should have been given in the liner notes about the instrumentation for each track, since dulcimers (both hammered and mountain) need to be brought in from the rather obscure margins of folk music and into the limelight much more.

Jan Howard

Available from: www.owlmountainmusic.com, www.vithedfiddler.com

The Alferd Packer Memorial String Band



I Miss Pluto

Lauralyn Bodle: fiddle, bass, vocals; Matt Kirby: hammered dulcimer, accordion, snare drum, bodhran, vocals; Steve Mason: fiddle, guitar, bass, mandolin, vocals; Mike Yoder: guitar, mandolin, bass, vocals; Noah Musser: banjo, bass, vocals. (This depth of detail about who plays which instruments does not appear amongst the CD notes, but is given on their informative website www.alferdpackerband.com)

The Joan Tattoo / I Miss Pluto / The Ballad of Gregor Mendel / Planets That We Know / Amphioxus / Masgurdson Jam / The Laurel & the Hardy / A Chicken Is a Fowl Companion / Up on the Second Floor / Superconductivity / Trashy Music / Old Cane Press / Flint Hills Cowboy

The band takes its name from a colourful character to say the least. In 1874, Alferd Packer was hired as a guide for five gold prospectors in Colorado. The winter was very hard and Alferd Packer was the only one to survive the journey, with the other five men ending up in his stomach. An apocryphal story is that the judge sentencing Packer for cannibalism summed up by saying "Alferd Packer, you voracious man-eater, there were only seven Democrats in Hinsdale County, and you done et five of 'em."

This is a very eccentric and stimulating set of recordings by the Alferd Packer Memorial String Band. Their CD brightens up our car journeys and entertains our friends when they visit. I can't say that the style of the music is old-time but you will recognise quite a few of the melodies which

the lyrics are hung on and at least one old favourite also appears as a little musical interlude within a song. It is cheerful, fast-paced and packed-full of humorous and eruditely useful lyrics; you'll learn various interesting things, including many mnemonics for the planets in our solar system. There are thirteen tracks in all and just one is an instrumental (*Masgurdsen Jam*). The twelve songs are all relatively modern, mostly written by members of the band and demonstrate that they have deep interests in science, quirkiness and fun. If you think of Tom Lehrer, Richard Stilgoe and maybe Frank Zappa and Neil Innes, you'll get an idea about the sort of songs and musicality that appear on this CD.

The CD cover is very well presented, with six sides of elegant artwork, photography and design. There are full details of all the lyrics to each song and some of these songs have accompanying background histories and explanations. This is an indication of the importance of the words, sentiments and beliefs being presented by the performers, all of whom are accomplished singers and multi-instrumentalists. The recordings themselves were done at Mike West's Ninth Ward Pickin' Parlour, Lawrence, Kansas in 2017 and Mike West obviously has high quality recording and production values which is evident through the whole CD package.

There are a few tracks which deserve special mention. As for *The Joan Tattoo*, which is a cautionary tale for all those people considering doing their own tattoos, I worried that perhaps it should not have been the first track on the CD but only because it doesn't rhyme as well as many of the other songs. I imagine Frank Zappa could have thought up the lyrics to *The Joan Tattoo*. *Amphioxus* re-uses a well-known melody and coupled with this the words make it a song I'd like to learn for performing at jam sessions. However, I wouldn't choose it if the people at the session were followers of creationism and intelligent design, views which might still be quite popular in Kansas. *A Chicken is a Fowl Companion* has got some excellent humour and musical interludes in it, but also has the worst impression of Paul McCartney that you can imagine and a whole verse sung by a chicken. *Superconductivity* is a witty song written to another well-known melody and is the first time I've ever heard a count-in using the first few digits of π . *Trashy Music* could have been written by Neil Innes (but wasn't) and is another song that I like but wouldn't choose to perform if the audience was made up of bluegrass/country music fans.

Altogether a highly enjoyable CD.

Jan Howard

Available from: CD Baby, Amazon, iTunes

The Dust Settlers



Who Will Sing My Song

Alex Meine: fiddle, guitar, vocals; Tanner Brethorst: banjo, vocals.

Cold Frosty Morn - The Cuckoo / Who Shit In Grandpa's Hat / Reuben's Train / The Old Swing Bridge / Red Rocking Chair / Uncle Charlie - Sugar Hill / Muskrat / Hangman's Reel / Sittin' On Top Of The World / Here Today And Gone The Next

The Dust Settlers are Alex Meine and Tanner Brethorst. They live in Winona, Minnesota on the Mississippi river where they have been playing old-time and traditional styles for over a decade. Alex plays fiddle and guitar. Tanner says he became obsessed with clawhammer banjo after he heard Clarence Ashley and Doc Watson play *The Cuckoo*. They have also absorbed the influences of other performers such as The Kruger Brothers, Jimmy Wheeler, The Tillers, Big Medicine, Sammy Lind of the Foghorn String Band, and Max Evans of the All Day Breakfast String Band.

For their recordings they have chosen a refreshing selection that provides a pleasant mix of brisk toe-tappers and some more contemplative tracks. There are six songs and four instrumentals. Most are traditional tunes and songs (some from the bluegrass or country end of the Americana spectrum) but they have also included two very interesting original compositions. As with many digital downloads from Bandcamp, the supporting material (one jpeg and one short Word document) is limited, but they do give a brief description of each track and its key.

Alex and Tanner have well-suited singing voices which support each other well in their vocal harmonies. Their expertise on each of their instruments is clearly evident and the recording and production are of a consistent high quality.

A few of the tracks deserve special mention; *Who Shit In Grandpa's Hat* was found by Alex when he was digging through digital archives on Penn State website. It also goes by the title *Fire in the Log*. As a grandpa myself, with a hat, I prefer to think of the tune as *Fire in the Log*. Nevertheless it is a very cheerful tune and worth learning as a session tune. *The Old Swing Bridge* is an original tune composed by Tanner in the key of C. His banjo has a lovely sound that complements the gentle feel of his tasteful composition perfectly. *Uncle*

Charlie - Sugar Hill: Alex modelled these from the fiddling of Sammy Lind and Max Evans. When I first heard *Uncle Charlie* I thought it was the tune *Dry and Dusty* but a search on the internet confirmed it as Uncle Charlie Barnett Lowe's Tune, and Charlie Barnett Lowe was Tommy Jarrell's father-in-law. It was on the internet, so it must be true. Alex and Tanner first heard *Hangman's Reel* at Larryfest in La Farge, Wisconsin and decided to add it to their repertoire. I associate the tune with Shetland fiddler Aly Bain and French-Canadian Jean Carignan who both use a very catchy plucked string motif in the tune and idiosyncratic bowing with their fiddles tuned to Calico AEAc#. The Dust Settlers' version has a flavour which makes it eminently more suitable for old-time sessions and gigs. Alex composed *Here Today And Gone The Next*; it is a very likeable sentimental song with clever lyrics that mirror classic country-style songs from the past. I admire the melody and chord sequences he has created for the song but I fear there are too many chords for it to catch on with old-time players.

This download captures further development in The Dust Settlers' playing. They have been building up the recordings over a few months during 2017, as a search on Bandcamp reveals an earlier version with only four tracks and a 2015 production too. I recommend their music to OTN readers so as to support The Dust Settlers as up-and-coming artists, but if I knew Alex and Tanner last year I would have advised them that one or two of the tracks could be re-recorded to improve some small intonation and playing issues. Additionally, there are twelve clips on YouTube of another band called The Dust Settlers in 2011 which might cause some confusion.

Jan Howard

Available from: Bandcamp

The Folding Mirrors Old Time Band



The Folding Mirrors EP

Mike Bailey, fiddle and vocals; Todd Giles, banjo and vocals; Art Willems, Guitar; Jan der Boer, double bass; Herman van Rijn, banjo ukulele;

Say Darling Say / Greasy Coat / Jimmy Sutton / Jawbone / Jimmy Johnson / Let Me Fall

As you might guess from the names this band contains a mixture of American and Dutch artists. All of

the artists live in The Hague and seem to have played in several different Hague-based bands so there is quite a lot of experience here. When you look at the photos of the group it is interesting to see the Dutch as looking more American and the Americans looking more like Dutch but that is a rather nice match. It is also nice to see old-time flowing over England and lapping at the shores of Europe and interesting to note how American folk of all kinds appeals to the Nordic part of Europe.

The Folding Mirrors have a website which is a bit hard to find (Google searches produce a lot of sites concerning bedroom furniture) and, once found, is unrevealing consisting mostly of photos and posts from friends. It certainly doesn't show the list of artists and their background that I was sent in order to do this review.

This is a digital download EP (an expression I thought had disappeared in the sixties) with 6 tracks costing 5 euros (about £4.50). This is quite a short album which is just as well because the tracks sound pretty much the same. That being said there is a nice driving quality about the music and the bass sound in particular. The fiddle has a nice melodic sound in *Jimmy Johnson* and *Say Darlin Say* which I would like to have heard more of, but I felt that it tended to get drowned out in the recording. Each track has some sung words the quality of which was sometimes a little uncertain but all in all it was an attractive sound if a bit predictable. In summary this felt like a courageous and energetic first attempt and quite possibly we will hear more from them in the future. I hope so.

Angus Baxter

Available from: Bandcamp

The Modock Rounders



Home Music (Buffalo Skinner)

Jesse Pearson: fiddle, guitar; Cody Jordan: guitar, fiddle; Kim Johnson: banjo; David O'Dell: bass, guitar

Blue-Eyed Gal / Barlow Knife / Keep That Skillet Good and Greasy / Tom the Booger / Sow 'Em on the Mountain / Ryestraw / Rose Connelly / John Henry / Sally Comin' Thru the Rye / Gospel Plow / Cherry River Line / Jordan Am a Hard Road to Travel / Jimmy Johnson / Brand New Five Cents / Walk Around My Bedside

This is a band which has grown out of the musical friendship of the three core members, Jesse, Cody and Kim.

All three are natives of West Virginia and are well-versed in the old-time heritage of that state. Both Jesse and Kim learned directly from the old guys and Kim was taught for many years by fiddler Wilson Douglas, a name which will be familiar to many OTN readers. They are joined for this CD by David O'Dell on bass and Karen (no surname provided) on harmony vocals.

The end result is a collection of largely standard tunes and songs performed with a nice, solid string band groove. Jesse takes fiddle lead on all but three tracks – *Barlow Knife*, *Jordan Am A Hard Road To Travel* and on the unnamed 18th track on this 15-track CD. Perhaps this will be issued later. One title which was new to me was *Tom The Booger*. From the notes supplied to me by the band (but not included on the CD cover) I learn that this comes from Harvey Sampson of Calhoun County, WV whose rendition on a 1986 Augusta Heritage LP of traditional Calhoun County tunes seems to be the only one prior to this. It's a simple little tune with a nice groove to it.

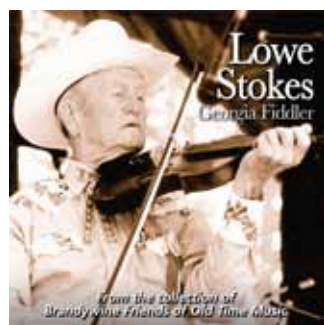
There is some nice variety in the introductions, which are sometimes solo fiddle or fiddle and banjo duet, and Jimmy Johnson uses fiddlesticks, but otherwise the CD features that full string-band sound. Perhaps it's the WV repertoire or maybe it's the line-up but the overall sound is very reminiscent of the Reed Island Rounders, which is no bad thing. The album is generally well produced, although on the songs the instruments needed to be eased off behind the vocals – at times it sounds as if the singer is straining to be heard. The CD package is very attractive but strangely light on information. In particular no information is given about the source of the tracks which is a shame since some were learned first-hand from local fiddlers.

This is not a CD which is going to set the world on fire but it can be recommended as a well-performed collection of WV tunes and songs.

Steve Wise

Available from: CD Baby, Bandcamp

Lowe Stokes



Lowe Stokes, Georgia Fiddler (Field Recorders' Collective)

Lowe Stokes: fiddle; Joe LaRose: guitar; Mac Benford: banjo; Gary Hopkins: bass

Bert Layne intro to Evening Presentation

(talk) / Sally Goodin / *Learning to play, early recording sessions* (talk) / Katy Hill / *Billy in the Lowground* / *More about Joe Lee, recording sessions* (talk) / *Down to the Wildwood to Shoot the Buffalo* / *Workshop Introduction of Lowe and Joe* (talk) / *Dance All Night* / Sally Goodin / *Learning Katy Hill from Joe Lee* (talk) / Katy Hill / *The Bucking Mule* / *In the Woodpile* / *Intro to Down to the Wildwood ...* (talk) / *Down to the Wildwood to Shoot the Buffalo* / *Billy in the Lowground* / *Pop Goes the Weasel* / *Liberty* / *Over the Waves* / *Shortening Bread* / *Georgia Wagoner* / *Down Yonder* / *How Lowe started playing again* (talk) / *Soldier's Joy* / Sally Goodin / *Hell Broke Loose in Georgia* / *House of David Blues* / *Georgia Wagoner*

The tracks presented here were all recorded at the Brandywine Mountain Music Festival in July 1982, when Lowe was 84 years old, just a year before his death in 1983. Stokes recorded extensively in the 1920s and early 1930s under his own name, with various bands such as the North Georgians and the Hometown Boys, but most famously as one of the lead fiddlers with the Skillet Lickers, whose multi fiddle sound still remains a high point from the 'Golden Age' of old-time string band music.

What makes these recordings remarkable is not just the performer's age, but also that despite losing his bowing hand in an altercation with a shotgun in 1930 (have a listen to the interview with fellow Skillet Licker, Bert Layne, to learn more – it can be found on YouTube), he continued to play with the aid of an adapted prosthetic and a special rig on the end of the fiddle fingerboard. And, what's more, these recordings were made only five months or so after a 17 year gap of not playing at all!

The selections here are taken from three different performances at the festival and includes interviews and a good representation of tunes that were commonly played around north Georgia and feature on some of the classic Skillet Licker recordings such as Sally Goodin, *Georgia Wagoner* and *Down Yonder*. A few tunes, in particular, stand out, one being Lowe's version of *Billy in the Lowground*, with its extra phrase, *Hell Broke Loose in Georgia* (the tune with which Lowe won the 1924 Atlanta Old Time Fiddlers Convention) and *Down to the Wildwood to Shoot the Buffalo*, which turns out to be the original name for what he recorded as *Citaco*.

The interviews are just as interesting (and funny), with anecdotes about his mentor, Joe Lee, recording with the Skillet Lickers and how he got back to playing again. Lowe is accompanied throughout by Joe LaRose on guitar and later on they are joined by Mac Benford on banjo and Gary Hopkins on bass. Mac Benford also provides some sleeve notes and on The Field Collectors' website there is an extended article by Joe LaRose which gives a biography of Lowe and describes how these recordings came about.

In his prime, Lowe was, without doubt, one of the greatest fiddle players we've ever known. These recordings are, obviously, of a much older man but you can still hear the same strong, rhythmic bowing that is so much part of the Georgia style. In the words of Bert Layne – "Talk about a man that had a constitution – I never saw nothing like it".

Dave Young

Available from: fieldrecorder.org

Various Artists



Rough Guide to Hillbilly Blues (World Music Network)

Roy Harvey & Jess Johnson: *Guitar Rag* / Allen Brothers: *Bow Wow Blues* / Dick Justice: *Cocaine* / Dock Boggs: *Down South Blues* / Frank Hutchison: *Stackalee* / Jimmie Rodgers: *Mule Skinner Blues* (Blue Yodel #8) / Chris Bouchillon: *Born In Hard Luck* / Clarence Greene: *Johnson City Blues* / Charlie Poole & The North Carolina Ramblers: *If The River Was Whiskey* / Sam McGee: *Buck Dancer's Choice* / Darby And Tarlton: *Slow Wicked Blues* / Walter Smith: *The Cat's Got The Measles And The Dog's Got Whoopin' Cough* / Larry Hensley: *Match Box Blues* / Bayless Rose: *Black Dog Blues* / South Georgia Highballers: *Blue Grass Twist* / Dixon Brothers: *Weave Room Blues* / Tom Ashley: *Haunted Road Blues* / John Dillesshaw & The String Marvel: *Spanish Fandango* / Cliff Carlisle: *Trouble Minded Blues* / Riley Puckett: *The Darkey's Wail* / Williamson Brothers & Curry: *Lonesome Road Blues* / Lester McFarland: *K.C. Whistle Blues* / David Miller: *Cannon Ball Rag* / Narmour & Smith: *The New Carroll County Blues* - No. 1 / Emry Arthur: *Reuben, Oh Reuben*

After listening through these recordings a few times, you'll find yourself humming them while you get on with dusting your broom or digging your potatoes. This CD is a clever collection compiled by Neil Record, with re-mastered versions of 1920s and 1930s original recordings by white artists (mostly Appalachian) in country blues styles. The quality of the sound is very good considering the ages of the tracks, and there is a wide selection of blues styles and tempos represented here, all with good solid rhythms.

The notes accompanying the CD give an insight into the social history of black and white performers during the early 20th century. Perhaps it was record companies dividing

recordings into the 'Race' series for black audiences and the 'Hillbilly' series aimed at white audiences that gave the impression that the two communities were split. The CD notes maintain that it was likely that there was a huge interaction between white and black musicians at the time. The black and white working class musicians toiling on farms, in the mines or in the mills could find a way of expressing the hardships of daily life through the blues. The notes also give details of which white musicians on the CD had picked up ideas from black performers like Blind Lemon Jefferson and Luke Jordan. There is also the yodelling influence of white Jimmie Rodgers (the Father of Country Music) on blues legend Howlin' Wolf chronicled here, though Howlin' Wolf doesn't appear on this CD. Big names that do appear on this CD include Charlie Poole, Dock Boggs, Cliff Carlisle and even Riley Puckett of the Skillet Lickers.

You get 25 tracks on this CD, almost 80% songs and the remainder instrumentals. The instrumentation is mostly guitar as backup, with some tasty slide guitar licks in some tracks, but there are also banjo parts, a little fiddle, and some nifty blues harmonicas too. You even get a train whistle and a kazoo. I'd have liked more blues fiddle though; even blues guitar players like Big Bill Broonzy, Lonnie Johnson and Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown were fiddle players as well, so I'd hoped there would be some prominent white blues fiddlers too during this period. The CD notes also refer to the parlour guitar and how it was used to develop the thumbed bass lines that were incorporated into the blues styles. The guitar players on this CD give us convincing bluesy finger-style and slide techniques. The songs contain plenty of examples of those floating lyrics that crop up again and again in blues: "She sleeps in the kitchen with her feet in the hall", "I'm going where the weather suits my clothes", "If the river was whiskey and I was duck", and of course "I woke up this morning".

If I restrict myself to highlighting just a few tracks, perhaps Chris Bouchillon's *Born in Hard Luck* deserves mentioning because of his talking blues style. He relates some funny tales about how unlucky he's been, whilst playing some authentic raggy blues finger-style guitar. Although it's not mentioned in these CD notes, Chris Bouchillon's talking blues style inspired such other performers as Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan. *Spanish Fandango* by John Dillesshaw and The String Marvel is interesting as a finger-picked guitar (maybe with a bottle-neck too?) instrumental. David Bragger does a lovely banjo version of this tune on his debut CD "Big Fancy". Another track worth mentioning is Cliff Carlisle's *Trouble Minded Blues* which seems to have been some sort of inspiration maybe for Big Bill Broonzy's melody for *Key to the Highway*. I often mistakenly

think that the earliest recording of a song or tune must be the source of it, and in effect it is for us these days, but who knows whether Cliff Carlisle or Big Bill Broonzy had 'lifted' the tune from some anonymous musician who was never actually recorded?

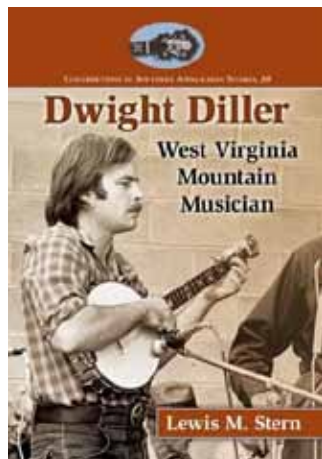
I'd thoroughly recommend this CD to anyone wanting to get a taste of authentic early country blues. It could also augment your existing collection of blues recordings, whether you've got any Blind Lemon Jefferson, Bessie Smith, Big Bill Broonzy, Howlin' Wolf, Papa John Creach or Don 'Sugarcane' Harris or not.

Jan Howard

Available from: Amazon, World Music Network

Book Review

Dwight Diller - West Virginia Mountain Musician



Lewis M. Stern (McFarland)

Before I begin this review I need to declare an interest. I have been a long-term member of Dwight's UK banjo workshops (actually mentioned in the book). I have benefited from his teaching and friendship over the years and I am indebted to him. I believe this book is a 'must' for any student of Dwight's camps or workshops, or, indeed, anyone who wishes to learn about this enigmatic character, his background and the context to his music, his teaching and his life by getting to know Dwight in a readable way.

As I began to read the book I realised that it should taken seriously. Lew Stern had meticulously researched and consulted with many people (including our own Nick Pilley!) some of whom are considered to be authorities in old-time music. It needed to be treated seriously because it is a scholarly work. It is written in an academic style which gives it an interesting dimension and sometimes means you have to read things carefully to get what is being said. However it is always worth doing this!

Lew Stern shows a fondness for his subject and is able to convey the twists and turns of Dwight's life, and of getting to know him, in a readable way. This affection comes through very quickly and demonstrates the experiences Lew has gone through when working with Dwight over a period of years. This allowed me to reminisce of my time with Dwight and his teaching and I was grateful for this. Lew appears to have been down the same pathways and therefore it was refreshing to re-engage with how I came to appreciate West Virginia music and how it came to mean so much to me. I hope it does the same for you!

To give an idea of the comprehensive nature of the book, it is broken down into the following chapters: 1 Early Life, 2 Learning Music, 3 Playing Music, 4 Studying Religion, and 5 A Life of Teaching. It is prefaced by: Acknowledgements and Introduction and is followed by: Conclusions, Discography, Chapter Notes, Bibliography, Interviewees.

Lew Stern carefully explains exactly how he approached the book. He does this in a precise way so there is no misinterpretation. He creates a very good context from which the reader gets an excellent insight into Dwight's background and influences. The origin of several of the expressions he uses, CD titles etc resonate from the page. He gives a great sense of sharing the journey with Dwight when he is learning old-time and its instruments by 'Total Immersion'. His relationship with the Hammons Family as a 'virtual grandson' and Lee Hammons (who had the 'greatest impact on Dwight') are explored, together with the genesis of his particular style of playing (which was, at times called, 'sledgehammer' and 'snotty'), its early development and reception.

He describes the development of the US old-time music scene and notable individuals and string bands, many still active today. It was very interesting reading about Dwight learning the banjo and fiddle, his attitude to old-time, his respect for it, the relation to the frontier, his 'guardianship' of the music and finding 'his music'. Lew also explains how Dwight was 'called to the ministry' and how he came to develop his particular style of ministry to his students.

It is extremely well written and explained, and gives a solid background to someone that you may have got to know through learning the banjo or fiddle, and his music. It allows the reader to know a little more of his roots and achievements, what he stands for, what drives him and where his life has taken him. It is well worth a read!

Bob Ward

Available from: Amazon

In Brief...

As well as the full reviews we have a section for short reviews of items which are not strictly old-time but which might be of interest to FOAOTMAD members. Suggestions for items for this section should be sent to reviews@foaotmad.org.uk.



Good Medicine - David Holt and Josh Goforth (High Windy Audio)

David Holt will be well-known to many OTN readers and has been collecting and performing the music of the Blue Ridge Mountains since the 1960s. In 2016 he was inducted into the North Carolina Music Hall of Fame. His younger partner also has an impressive background. He is the folk music director at the Academy for the Arts in Asheville, NC and his music featured on the film Songcatcher. The publicity which I was sent summarised the CD very well: 'Josh and David prove once again that mountain music includes many different kinds of music, not just old-time and bluegrass. Their creative blend of ballads, blues, and banjos with a dash of Tin Pan Alley and bluegrass delivers a powerful tonic'. A few of the tracks do have old-time origins - *Stepstone*, collected by Bascom Lamar Lunsford, *Hula Lou* from the Carolina Tar heels and *Whoop 'Em Up Cindy* from Uncle Dave Macon. However the style of presentation is very modern, with many tracks being played with a distinct swing and drum and/or bass backing. It is extremely well done - both musicians are top-notch players and sing well to make an enjoyable listen. Personally I would have preferred to hear these two in a more traditional, acoustic setting but it will doubtless have a broader appeal as it is.

Steve Wise



Various Artists Rough Guide to Jug Band Blues (World Music Network)

I always think that jug band music has some similarities to some types of old-time. Some of the repertoire is the same - popular songs of the 1920s, minstrel songs - and in addition to the jug, washboard and kazoo many jug bands use guitar, fiddle and banjo. This collection is of recordings made in the 1920s and 1930s, the heyday of the jug band. During this period jug band was mainly played by black musicians and of the 24 tracks here, only one is by a white band - the Prairie Ramblers who were an early country band but seemed to have recorded just one jug number in their prodigious output. The other name familiar to old-time fans will be Jimmie Rodgers who sings *My Good Gal's Gone Blues* backed by The Louisville Jug Band. The bands represented here include some of the best-known jug bands of the time - Cannon's Jug Stompers, The Memphis Jug Band and Earl McDonald's Original Louisville Jug Band who are credited with developing the jug band sound at the turn of the twentieth century. The Memphis Jug Band actually appear on five tracks, each time under a different alias. The selection covers a broad range of musical landscapes from the country-tinged *Jug Rag* from the Prairie Ramblers through hokum blues (Tampa Red doing his famous *It's Tight Like That*), comedy songs (*He's In The Jailhouse Now* from the Memphis Sheiks) to what is effectively early jazz in *Beale Street Breakdown* by Jed Davenport and his Beale Street Jug Band. I thoroughly enjoyed this CD. If you are new to early jug band music then I would strongly recommend this as a good place to start. If you already know the genre you may find something new in this collection.

Steve Wise

Available from: www.worldmusic.net, Amazon

We already have three CD reviews waiting in the wings - Frails and Frolics from Ken Perlman, Wooden Nickels from Laura Feddersen, Joel Wennerstrom and Owen Marshall, and Short Time Here from Don Pedi - so expect another packed review section in the next issue. Ed.

Dates for your Diary 2018

Information correct at time of going to press

MARCH

30th-31st Richmond Old-Time Music Gathering

APRIL

2nd-7th Sore Fingers Summer Schools

OT fiddle Tatiana Hargreaves; OT banjo Chris Coole and Allison De Groot.
Details of other classes, tutors & booking form on www.sorefingers.co.uk

MAY

4th-7th Crossover Bluegrass & Old-Time Music Festival

Congleton, Cheshire. Details on www.crossoverfest.com

11th-13th Orwell Bluegrass & Old-Time Music Festival

Details on www.orwellbluegrass.co.uk

18th-20th Ghost Hill American Old-Time Picking Weekend

Sea View Farm, Ghost Hill, Predannack, Mullion, Cornwall TR12 7EY

25th-28th FOAOTMAD Spring Camp

NEW VENUE: Croft Farm Leisure, Bredons Hardwick, Tewkesbury Glos GL20 7EE

JUNE

15th-18th Knockdown Picking Weekend

NEW VENUE: The Lenchford Inn, Shrawley, Worcs WR6 6TB

15th-17th Old-Time Fiddle Weekend Workshop

Tutor Jock Tyldesley. Music at the Buildings, West Sussex RH20 3AW

JULY

12th-16th Alsia Fest

Penzance, Cornwall. Details on guy@alsiafarm.com

27th-30th Windermere Old-Time Music & Dance Weekend

YMCA Lakeside Centre

AUGUST

9th-12th Glebe Farm Bluegrass & Old-Timey Camp

CW12 4RQ. Details on www.pickerpower.co.uk

10th-20th FOAOTMAD Summer Camp

NEW VENUE: Croft Farm Leisure, Bredons Hardwick, Tewkesbury Glos GL20 7EE

SEPTEMBER

7th-9th Sweet Sunny South

NEW VENUE: Music at the Buildings, West Sussex RH20 3AW



HUMAN CARGO with Matthew Crampton & Jeff Warner tours in May and June

This epic night of story and song blends the traditional American music of Jeff Warner with the storytelling of Matthew Crampton, whose last show *The Transports* won Five Stars from *The Guardian*. *Human Cargo* gives voice to past exiles – emigrants, slaves, transportees – to shed fresh light on today's migrations. Each gig links with local refugee support groups. Details at matthewcrampton.com.

MAY 11 St Albans Maltings; 12 Blackburn Mellor Brook CC; 13 Settle Victoria Hall; 16 Cardigan Mwdan; 17 Bristol St George's; 23 Torrington Plough Arts;

JUNE 3 Beverley East Riding Theatre; 5 Liverpool Phil; 7 Shoreham Ropetackle; 12 Exeter Phoenix; 13 Dorchester Shire Hall; 14 Halesworth The Cut; 15 London Kings Place; 16 Matlock Florence Nightingale Hall; 17 Bedford The Place.

MORE DATES COMING – check at matthewcrampton.com



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Old-Time Gatherings without entrance charge: 1/4 page listing free. Contact editor@foaotmad.org.uk

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RICHMOND OLD TIME MUSIC & DANCE PRESENTS THE **SECOND**
RICHMOND OLD TIME MUSIC GATHERING
 Good Friday & Easter Saturday, 30th-31st March 2018
 ODDFELLOWS HALL, 15 PARKSHOT, RICHMOND TW9 2RG
 12 NOON TIL 10.30 PM

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POSTER DESIGN WWW.NICKGRANTILLUSTRATOR.COM

Contact: oldtimerichmond@gmail.com  Richmond Old Time Music & Dance

THE RICHMOND OLD TIME MUSIC GATHERING IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT, VOLUNTEER-RUN EVENT

Ghost Hill

American Old Time Picking & Fiddling Weekend

18 - 20th May 2018
 Sea View Farm, Ghost Hill
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This event is open to everyone that plays, sings or dances Old Time. It is also open to all visitors and locals that may be interested in coming along to listen to early American folk music played on fiddle, banjo, guitar & double bass.



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For more information
 Google: Old Time Music Cornwall

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Alsia Fest

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Penzance, Cornwall
 Camping/ BBQ /picking & fiddling/weekend

for full details please RSVP guy@alsiafarm.com
 Free event, but contributions gratefully accepted
 Hosted by Guy & Xanthe Ponsford and Old Time Music Cornwall
 Marquees Fire Water & Loos provided




 [alsiafest](https://www.facebook.com/alsiafest)
www.oldtimemusic-cornwall.weebly.com



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