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## Chapter 4: 1957-1972

In 1955 Mervyn Plunkett, who was living in West Hoathly, recorded two local singers.<sup>1</sup> Pop Maynard had a degree of local fame for his success in the World Marbles Championship, held each Good Friday at Tinsley Green, but at 83 he was also a remarkable singer with a large repertoire of old songs. He frequented the *Cherry Tree* at Copthorne, and his frail form, dignified posture and slightly introverted delivery, even of a comic song, commanded attention whenever he got up to sing. George Spicer was quite different. In the prime of life at 49

and working as a cowman, his singing, mostly at the *Punch Bowl*, Selsfield, was much more extrovert and abrasive.<sup>2</sup> These two singers did not exist in isolation; they performed at appropriate times among their friends on their home ground, and there were many other singers about. The new teacher at West Hoathly school, Jean Hopkins, from East Grinstead, stayed with Doë and Mervyn Plunkett, and with their encouragement started singing songs from, and in the style of, her grandfather and great-uncle, Harry and Charlie Burgess.

*Harry Holman (left) and Pop Maynard recording for the BBC in the Cherry Tree at Copthorne on 4 February 1956.*  
(Photograph: East Grinstead Courier)



I was living at home in Northfleet, Kent, and it was through Ken Stubbs, who worked nearby in Gravesend but lived in East Grinstead, that Mervyn and I met. Towards the end of 1955, Mervyn organised a do in the *Swan* at East Grinstead with Bob Copper, one of the now famous singing family from Rottingdean, as the guest, and I was invited to warm up the proceedings on the melodeon. Things took off from there. I began spending time in West Hoathly and Mervyn organised more pub sessions. In February 1956, Peter Kennedy recorded one of our sessions in the *Cherry Tree* for the BBC, and Pop, George Spicer, Jean and Mervyn appeared that June on the Sunday morning radio programme, *As I Roved Out*.

Pop Maynard had stepdanced and played the tambourine when he was younger, and there were still stepdancers in the *Cherry Tree*.<sup>3</sup> At the BBC recording session, one of the regulars from the nearby *Abergavenny Arms*, attracted to the *Cherry Tree* by the bar extension, picked up a tin tray and played it like a tambourine and sang 'From Wibbledon to Wob-

bledon is eighteen miles' when Peter Kennedy and I played *Soldier's Joy*, but at that stage we had not come across any other musicians.

It was impossible to follow-up every lead and invitation to meet singers. Every pub session produced something new and Mervyn met and recorded many old singers, the most notable being Brick Harber, Jim Wilson and George Tompsett. At Cuckfield he came across Jack Norris, Peter Gander and Bill Hawks, who sang regularly in their local.<sup>4</sup>

At 59, Jack Norris was twenty-odd years younger than his mates.<sup>5</sup> A foreman joiner and coffin maker by trade, he was friendly and humorous and loved the old songs, and new ones as well. He was a remarkable musician, the melodeon player that appeals to me more than any other I have heard. He could play any song-tune that came into his mind on his double-row C/C sharp Hohner, and sing at the same time. It was as if the fingering came automatically as he opened his mouth. He was essentially a

**10.30 AS I ROVED OUT**

You are invited to listen to songs and music still sung and played in the British Isles

**5—Songs from Sussex**

Peter Kennedy recalls an evening spent at *The Cherry Tree* in the village of Copthorne, and introduces some of the songs he heard  
 Dance interludes by The Haymakers  
 Directed by Peter Kennedy  
 Edited and introduced by Marie Slocombe  
 Produced by Harold Rogers  
 (BBC recording)

Radio Times, 22 June 1956



Opposite: Jack Norris, Halleigh's, Brook Street, Cuckfield; late 1950s.  
 Jack Norris and friends; late 1950s.  
 (Both courtesy Florence Norris)



singer and his repertoire of old-fashioned dance tunes was very small. He had the commonly known *Cock O' The North* and *Keel Row*, and a schottische, *Another Cup of Coffee and a Little More Tea*, but his best number was another schottische, which Mervyn named the *Brook Street Polka*.<sup>6</sup> He was usually reluctant to play his one and only stepdance tune.<sup>7</sup>

One Saturday afternoon in July 1957, Don Jones, delivering greengrocery at the Plunketts' back door, heard me playing a few tunes in the kitchen. 'Who's that? My wife's father plays like that!' His father-in-law was Will Tester. The subsequent events were particularly significant for Mervyn and me, and resulted in a burst of energy and interest for Scan which carried him through to the end of his life. Mervyn followed the lead to Scan, rather than to Will, and called on him one evening soon after at Cinder Hill, quart bottles of beer under his arm and his tape recorder in the car.<sup>8</sup> Whatever was said that night established in Scan's mind our interest in his old repertoire, and the four pieces he recorded on that occasion were *In and out the Windows*, the *Monkey Hornpipe*, *Brighton Camp* and *The Man in the Moon*.

On Saturday 24 August 1957, Mervyn assembled for the first time the West Hoathly Country Band of Music, or as Arch Sherlock was always to refer to it, the 'West Hoathly Scuffle Group'. I remember the evening at Bow Cottage, the Plunketts' home, as a heady, boozy do. Mervyn held the band together by thumping on my melodeon case. The music at times was marvellous, but sometimes it collapsed into total anarchy.

There was little trouble finding common ground - we all knew *The Girl I left Behind Me* and *Cock of the North* - and we took risks, the most successful of which was our schottische rendering of Jack Norris's song, *The Fox*. The greatest risk, however, was in inviting a neighbour we knew nothing about. Doë Plunkett taught Bill McMahon's children and had heard he was good on the spoons, but for all we knew, and slightly suspected, he was terrible! He turned out to be dynamite, and good fun as well.<sup>9</sup> Keys were the main difficulty: Scan had his B flat/F music and an out-of-tune C/G, I had my usual G/D melodeon and a slow-action C/F, and Jack was more used to playing in C sharp than C, but had a G mouth-organ, as did Snowy Howick from West Hoathly. Michael Plunkett, who played with me, then as now, in *The Rakes*, could manage G on his recorder, but had to tune his fiddle down a tone to get C with his D fingering.<sup>10</sup>

We were all encouraged, and some of us very excited, by our first efforts, and over the next few months the band grew in size and we began to be known in the district. The personnel was fairly fluid depending on who was available and how many Mervyn could pack into his car. At Rusper we met Bill Agate. During the War he had played for route marches in the Home Guard band on the mouth-organ and tambourine, playing both instruments together in the old style! My lasting visual memory of Bill is of his enormous hand, fingers like a pound of pork sausages, whacking away at a tiny tambourine. He had a tendency to push the beat, but his music had plenty of life and drive, in complete contrast to his slow speech and infirm frame. Jack Norris's mates from Cuckfield, Peter Gander (triangle) and Horace Gladman (mouth-organ and silent jew's harp), took part, and the third member of *The Rakes*, Paul Gross, joined us on the fiddle. In several pubs other people, who remained strangers to us, would occasionally join in on the mouth-organ or take a turn on the melodeon, and any number of make-shift percussion instruments, such as the tea-chest bass and the penny and beer glass, appeared. Although we played in the *Crown*, *Horsted Keynes*, and the *Stone Quarry*, *Chelwood Gate*, we gravitated to *Copthorne*, *Balcombe*, *Cuckfield* and *Three Bridges*, very largely away from Scan's home area.<sup>11</sup>



Left to right: Jim Wilson, Michael Plunkett, George Spicer, Paul Gross and Reg Hall, at the Princess Louise, Holborn, London; 7 March 1958.

(Photograph: Eddis Thomas)

In October 1957 Mervyn arranged a coach trip to London. We entered Pop Maynard, Jean Hopkins, George Spicer, Bill Hawkes and the full band in a competitive festival at Cecil Sharp House, headquarters of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. We shocked many of the people there and confused some of the adjudicators, who were used to genteel settings of folk songs. One of them, *The Times* music critic, criticised Pop Maynard for allegedly not knowing his words and for having a poor standing posture. Very few of the audience had ever heard a country singer before, and even fewer had ever heard country pub music. Some of them, it seemed, were excited by it. It was a great day out, marred by some pretty tense moments. The band let its hair down in a pub outside Redhill on the way home and Jack Norris wise-cracked the last leg of the coach journey - 'This must be Cuckfield; there are houses on both sides of the street.' Later that month there was a lively session in the *Cat*, West Hoathly; Alan Lomax was impressed by Mervyn's tape of the occasion and broadcast the band's rendering of Bill Agate's favourite, *I Wish They'd do it Now*, in his BBC programme, *Ballad Hunter*.

In the *Crown*, Horsted Keynes, in February 1958, some of the young lads, apparently resentful of our intrusion on their territory, set out to sabotage the evening. Mervyn's song, *Will the Weaver*, was the first casualty, abandoned after a few verses amid hostile comments: 'We've never had this sort of music round here before'. A middle-aged woman, one of the regular customers, quietly went over to the piano while the row was going on, struck up *Will the Weaver* in Mervyn's key and stayed with him until he finished the song. Will Tester, on his one and only outing with the West Hoathly Country Band of Music, took hold of Mervyn's tambourine and gave us a tantalising glimpse of the old Tester family magic. The next month Mervyn took the Tester brothers to a session in Glynde to meet up with Jean

Hopkin's family, the Burgesses. Art Winter, known to the Testers way back, was the resident melodeon player at the *Trevor Arms* and his gutsy old-fashioned pub music prompted Will to make what was to be his final flurry on the tambourine. A year later he was dead.

Mervyn was asked to make a contribution to *A Sussex Concert* in Cecil Sharp House in March 1958, and thus we had another outing to London. Jim Wilson from Three Bridges, George Tompsett from Cuckfield and Pop Maynard had never sung in a formal concert before, but they put their songs over as if they were in a pub, and Bill Hawks and Peter Gander's rough Cuckfield pub harmony in *Come All You Jolly Ploughboys* was in striking contrast to the gentle South Downs style of Bob and Ron Copper, who were also in the concert.

Our band that day included Scan, Bill Agate, Snowy Howick, Michael Plunkett and Paul Gross. Seamus Ennis, the Dublin piper, also appeared, and Scan was quite taken by his Irish music. He had never seen or heard of uilleann pipes before, and after some thought said he would have had no difficulty as a young man picking up Seamus's tunes, if he heard them enough times.

Later in the year we had a second crack at the EFDSS English Music Festival. Some of the rules had been ironed out and the conditions were much more relaxed and comfortable (although Cecil Sharp House is never that comfortable). Scan and I played a duet on tambourine and melodeon that was broadcast that night on the BBC Overseas Service, but the highlight of the day was the 'alternative festival', a party at my house in Croydon. It went on into the early hours with Harry Cox, Pop Maynard, Ernie Glew from Shoreham, Scan, Cyril Phillips and Fred Jordan, many of my Brixton relatives and plenty of other singers and musicians besides.<sup>12</sup>

The following afternoon, 11 October 1958, there was a grand concert of British music at the Royal Festival Hall. Pop Maynard sang a verse or two of *Rolling in the Dew* before Jeannie Robertson was brought on to finish the song!<sup>13</sup> Pop was confused and upset and Jeannie was clearly embarrassed by such unimaginably crass stage direction. Scan, however, was given a respectable length of time. Left alone on the stage before an audience of over 2,000, he stepped towards the microphone and said, 'I'll play you No. 3 *Stepdance* . . . Now I'll play No. 5 *Polka*', and finally, 'I'll play you a very old waltz tune', and went into *I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now!*<sup>14</sup>

At Christmas 1956 and New Year 1959, Mervyn captained a team of mummers, The West Hoathly Tipteerers.<sup>15</sup> For a couple of nights we went round various pubs and houses by arrangement. At the *Punch Bowl*, Selsfield, they had no idea we were coming. Mervyn burst into the public bar, heavily disguised, and declaimed, 'In comes I, Old Father Christmas', and George Spicer, standing at the bar, drinking with his mates, shouted out, 'It's old Plunkett!' At the *Vinals Cross*, Sharpthorne, we did the whole thing - surprise entrance, sword fight, the lot, and nobody took a blind bit of notice. Yet the same night, a youth club crowd turned the record player off and made us do it twice! We performed before the assembled family and servants in one big house and the butler served bottles of brown ale in his pantry - and half of us good socialists! Scan came out with us the second year. I remember waiting outside the *Green Man* in Horsted Keynes, freezing cold in the pitch dark, waiting our turn to make an entrance. I was in Marks & Spencer pyjamas as the Little Turkish Knight, and Scan, as the Little Turkish Knight's Mother, was in an old fur coat, looking like

a cross between Arthur Askey and Bud Flanagan. We were both the worse for drink and I had no idea where we were. 'Do you know this pub, Scan?' 'I blooming well ought to, I used to live here!'

It would have been impossible to keep so many of us together for long. Some of the old chaps were in their late seventies and eighties, and sadly many were not to be around for much longer. Brick Harber and Peter Gander died within four months of each other in 1960. Pop Maynard sang a faltering *Shooting Goacher's Cocks Up* at his ninetieth birthday party at the *Cherry Tree* in January 1962, and before the year was out he had gone. And so they all went. Most of the organising energy and inspiration had come from Mervyn and, when he moved to Cambridgeshire in 1959 and then to Scotland in 1960, it became difficult for him to keep up his activities in Sussex, although he was still around, on and off, for the next five or six years. He had come across Cyril Phillips, who was then farming 360 acres at Firle, and was invited with Scan to a supper Cyril put on for his employees and friends. Cyril, whilst being a perfectly genuine countryman, had a rustic stage-countryman act with a load of comic songs. Being a farmer, he got on quite well with the Young Farmers and members of the Pony Club, and he arranged several engagements for us to play for dancing at harvest homes and hunt suppers. My mother's brother-in-law, Bob Keightley from Brixton, and Steve Pennells from Carshalton, Surrey, both fiddle players, Hilda Gibson, a friend of Scan's from Twickenham, who played the concertina, and Bob Davenport, a singer from County Durham then living in London, sometimes came out with us.<sup>16</sup>



Reg and Scan, music festival,  
Cecil Sharp House, Camden Town, London;  
10 October 1958.

(Photograph: Eddis Thomas)



The sessions organised by Ken Stubbs from 1960 onwards, after Mervyn had left the area, were always in pubs where there were local singers, although normally there was only singing at tontine share-out time. Ken had been associated with our West Hoathly music-making from the very beginning and he knew Pop Maynard very well, having spent time digging his garden and taking down his songs.<sup>17</sup> Naturally enough, his first sessions were with Pop and Harry Holman, the potman in the *Cherry Tree* at Copthorne. It was Pop who put Ken on to Jim Wilson, his friend from years back, when Ken had asked about the song *Barbara Allen*. Jim, a retired railwayman, used to drink in the *Plough* at Three Bridges, and he would quip and wisecrack with his mates all round the bar, procrastinating until he had built up enough interest and anticipation to burst into *The Keyhole in the Door* or *Never Go A-rushing*. The *Half Moon* at Balcombe was convenient for Bill Agate and a couple of singers, Corn Botting and Jack Arnoll. At the *Cherry Tree* in Rusper, Harry Manville played music-hall songs and between-the-Wars stuff in a rough, lively style on the melodeon and sang about his 'cock-a-doodle-do'.

Ken's postcard invitations went out to the faithful, and Scan, dependent on others for transport, turned up nearly every month. He appeared to know the tunes of all the old country songs, even those sung by strangers, and often he would join in with the concertina behind Pop and the others in songs more usually sung unaccompanied. At the *Stone Quarry*, Chelwood Gate, Ken heard an old man sing *While Gamekeepers Lie Sleeping* identically to the performance he had just recorded from Tom Willett on a caravan-site miles away in Middlesex. The singer, it transpired, was Noah Willett, Tom's brother!<sup>18</sup>

In January 1965 I took Scan to the *Fox* at Islington Green in north London. Thursday evening was club night in the upstairs room; there was a small admission charge at the door, a few regular singers and musicians, and a master of ceremonies kept the pace going. Each week a different guest was invited and went home better-off by a few pounds. Scan went down so well he was invited back on eleven more occasions, sometimes with Cyril Phillips, and once or twice with Daisy and Arch. Our band was made up of Scan's London mates - Steve Pennells, Bob



Keightley, David Nuttall, Bob Davenport, Michael Plunkett and Paul Gross - and Scan was usually encouraged to give a song or two. On his eightieth birthday we gave him a big party, and when the club at the *Fox* closed down in March 1968, some others, the Tappers, Rod Stradling and Tony Engle among them, continued to invite him for another couple of years to the *King's Head*, just along the road.

Melody Maker, September, 1965.

**THE FOX**, Islington Green, N.1. New Lost City Ramblers, Bill Clifton, Bob Davenport and The Rakes. Next week: **THE WATERSON FAMILY, JACK ELLIOTT**, from Birtley. **SCAN TESTER**. Residents. Members 6s. 6d., Guests 7s. 6d. Come Early!!

Opposite, top: At the Fox, Islington; 1965.

Bottom: Steve Pennells and Scan, the Fox; 1965.

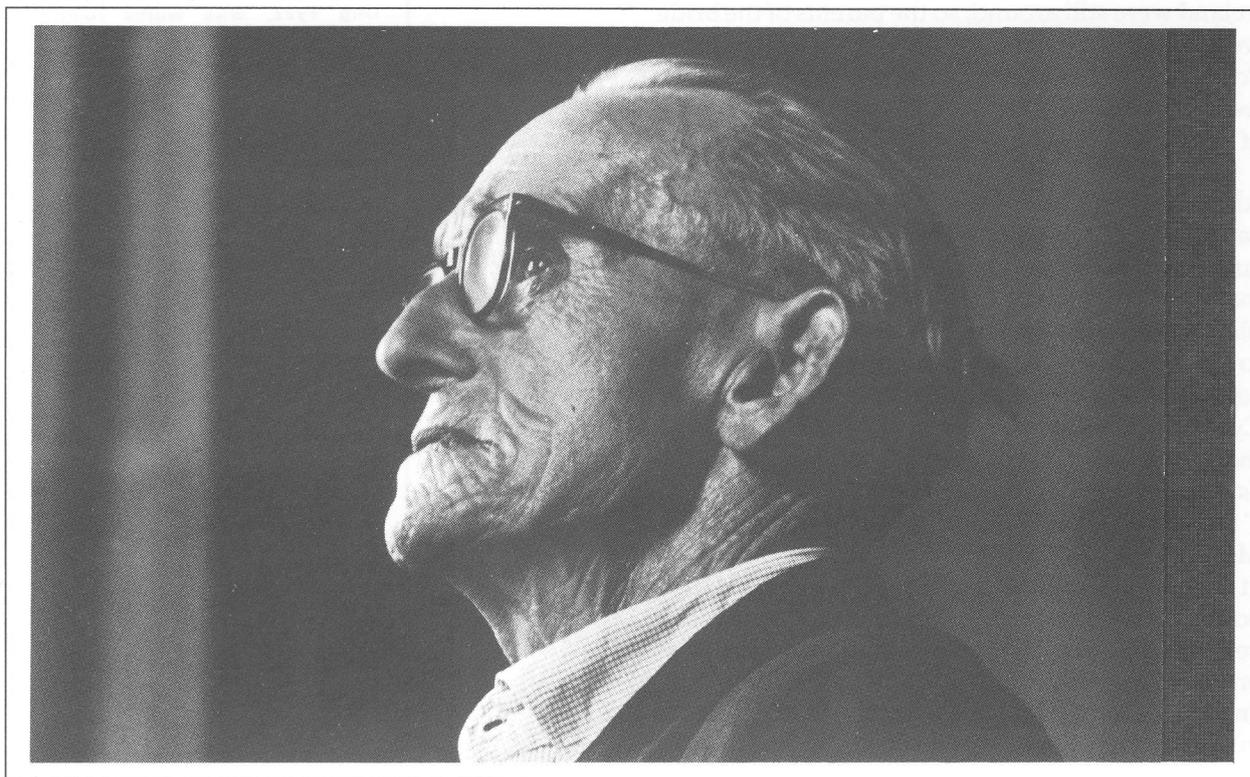
(Photographs: Douglas Baton. Courtesy David Nuttall)

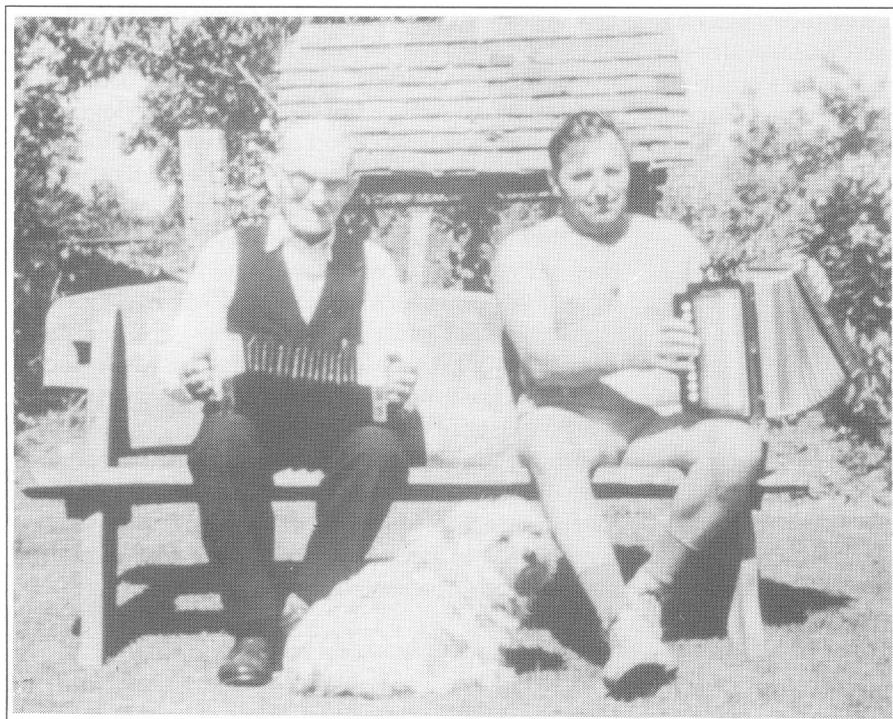
Below: At the Keele Festival, July 1965.

(Photograph: Brian Shuel)

The event that Scan seemed to enjoy most of all was the Keele Festival, in Staffordshire, in July 1965. It was a three-day affair, Friday night, Saturday and Sunday. We lived-in, full board, on the college campus, with good food, good company and music and dancing everywhere. Scan, Steve Pennells (fiddle), Bob Davenport (singer and triangle) and I went together and played for the Friday night dance, and then played as and when we liked in the bar and at a couple of more formal concerts.<sup>19</sup> Michael Gorman (fiddle), Felix Doran (uilleann pipes) and Margaret Barry (banjo), three of the finest Irish musicians around at the time, were on the concerts with us, and a tape exists of Scan playing the tambourine with them. Although there was very little call for Scan to play in Horsted Keynes at that time, there was great local interest in his trip to Keele, and there was a waiting list of people in the village to borrow the souvenir album printed later in the year.

There were a few more concerts and festivals in which we were involved together: Guildford, in October 1965, where Jack Elliott, a retired miner from County Durham, sat in with the band on the ukelele-banjo; Devonport, in December 1965; and a return to Keele, this time with The Rakes, in July 1966. Cyril Phillips had given up farming and, with time on his hands, he was able to partner Scan fairly often. After Jack Norris died, Cyril had his melodeon and learnt to accompany himself on some of his own songs. They went to Ted and Ivy Poole's club in Swindon, Wiltshire, and the next day a





Scan and Cyril Phillips; 1967.

(Courtesy Daisy & Arch Sherlock)

Below: Melody Maker, 10 July 1967.

special session was laid on for them at the *Eagle* at Bampton in Oxfordshire. They were guests at the Cecil Sharp House festival a couple of more times, and at the Sidmouth Festival in Devon.

Cyril and Scan stayed at my house when they came to London, and after the 1963 festival we ended up playing at a wedding party, or, more correctly, a day-after-the-wedding party, at the *Constitution* in Camden Town. There was still plenty of food and drink left, and the guests who had come over from Ireland were still around, so the parents of the bride were delighted when we turned up with Jimmy Power (fiddle) and Johnny Gorman (concert flute), two well-known local musicians, and Scan's singing of *The Lakes of Coalflin* pleased the Irish crowd.

After the 1966 festival I took them to my regular Saturday night pub job at the *Grave Maurice* in Poplar in the East End. The crowd, all locals, were mainly Irish, and the band, led by Jimmy Power, played Irish dance music, but was always called on to accompany two Cockney singers on *Ragtime Cowboy Joe* and *I Left My Heart in San Francisco*. Scan and Cyril went down well, as they did the following morning at our other regular Irish session in the *Favourite*, off the Holloway Road in north London.

Mervyn Plunkett's meeting Walter and Daisy Bulwer at their home in Shipdham, Norfolk, in 1958 led to us both visiting them several times over the next few years; the LP *English Country Music* resulted from one such trip.<sup>20</sup> Walter (born 1888), a retired tailor and barber who still kept his hand in, had a range of interests, the greatest perhaps being the fiddle and

## SCAN TESTER

ON and around his eightieth birthday, many folk fans are gathering in various places to do honour to Scan Tester, that fine traditional performer on the concertina. But nowhere will tribute be paid more meaningfully than among his own folk—as it was last Sunday at the New Inn, Hurstpierrepont.

Scan was himself in great form—a short man with twinkling eyes, who walks firmly and quite briskly, contradicting every one of his eighty years. His singing voice (for which he is hardly known at all) is quite remarkable.

Among those who shared his birthday cake and presented him with a handsome carved-wood plate were Dick Richardson, a fine trad-style singer; Ray Chandler, who picks banjo in an original virtuoso manner that is as English as Barney McKenna is Irish; Roger Watson, a grand singer/songwriter from Nottingham. Harry Monsdell and Derek Lockwood steered the event cheerfully. And a host of youngsters—fifteen to nineteen-year-olds—came gladly to sing for this man four times their age.

The most touching moment of all came when the Chancetonbury Ring Morris Men danced a spectacular leapfrog specially for Scan. As they passed his "flower-power" birthday chair at the start of the dance, each in turn made a graceful bow to Scan, echoing the good wishes of the scores of singers present—and indeed of the whole folk scene for a fine old man.

—ERIC WINTER

piano duets he played with his wife. He had been taught the fiddle, with some violin technique, by his father as a small child, but soon after that, while still very young, he began to play by ear and to invent and improvise second parts, which later he also managed on the viola, cello and double bass. Much of his experience matched Scan's: he had played in all sixteen of the Shipdham pubs, and before the Great War had played at servants' balls and on the piccolo, clarinet and slide trombone in the village bands. Between the wars he had been a member of a string orchestra organised at the church and well into the post-war years he had led his own dance band of cornet, fiddle and piano, first on mandolin and later from behind a set of drums; he claimed he had played at a hundred weddings. Although he shared many musical values with Wallace Chisholm (see chapter 9), he leaned heavily towards Scan's way of thinking and doing things, and he would have been in his element in the *Nutley Inn* band.

It was Daisy Bulwer who suggested I should take 'Stan' - they could never get his name - to see them for a get-together. Scan was always game for anything. 'If you're ever going anywhere, I'll always mate you', he often said to me, and we made the trip to Shipdham in July 1966. The three of them established social and musical rapport very easily, and they all recognised the uniqueness of their encounter. Initially I helped them - perhaps directed them would be more honest - into common ground, and there was complete compatibility in their renderings of the old country potboilers, *Jenny Lind*, *Brighton Camp* and the *Heel and Toe Polka*, for example, and not surprisingly the more recent but old popular songs. Music hall singalongs, *Tipperary* and the like, sounded both spontaneous and well-practiced. They even strung their Harry Lauder songs in the same order as each other!

Gradually they moved into more challenging territory, trying to recall the complexities, the introductions and bridge passages, the key changes and the various strains of *Hiawatha (A Summer Idyll)*, *Stars and Stripes*, *Washington Post* and *Boston Two-Step* and similar composed pieces.<sup>21</sup> Clearly they had once experienced a demand for this sort of material. Walter could remember the melody lines from the printed scores, but his fiddle harmonies were certainly not as written, and Scan had demolished some of the chromatic structure and plastered over the cracks. Given more time together they would have almost certainly compromised on working arrangements of a good number of march and old-time dance compositions. Strangely they did not stray beyond the First World War, except for Scan's foray into the Swinging Sixties with his then current favourite, taken from a singing group he fancied, *The Seekers*.



Jack Norris playing for an old people's do at Cuckfield; late 1960s - early 1970s. (Courtesy Florence Norris)

From about 1966 Ken Stubbs's pub sessions settled down to a regular pattern of two or three a month, alternating between the *Cherry Tree* at Copthorne and the *Crown* at Edenbridge.<sup>22</sup> Cyril Phillips, George Spicer, Steve Pennells, Alan Waller (fiddle) and I from the old gang used to go occasionally, and there were a few other local singers like Louise Saunders (later Fuller), and Toby Hayward, a mandolin player from South Godstone in Surrey, who shared much of Scan's later repertoire.<sup>23</sup> Transport was difficult and Scan was dependent on others to pick him up and see him home.

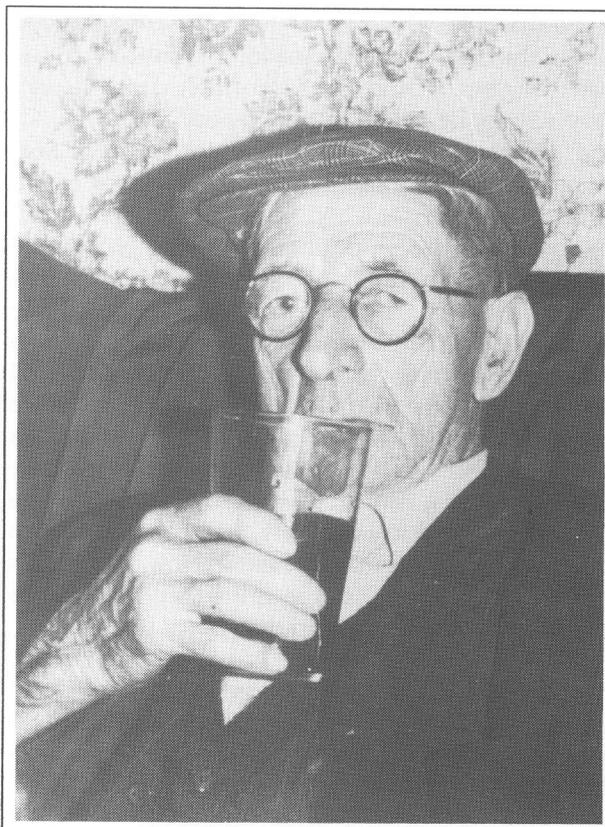
These sessions were more formal than most of us were used to. Ken acted as master of ceremonies and encouraged everyone to give a song or play a tune. Several younger musicians, some sympathetic and sensitive, others competent in their own way but musically incompatible with Scan, used to join in. At these dos and at various folk song clubs - the *Lewes Arms* in Lewes and the *Central Club*, Peacehaven, for example - Scan's music was admired and welcomed, but he was usually called on to do a turn rather than to play for the entire evening. As a result his working repertoire was reduced to a couple of dozen old faithfuls. The skills he had acquired in a lifetime of pubbing - pacing an evening, building an atmosphere, exploiting an endless repertoire, playing the crowd, side-stepping hostility, etc. - were never put to use, but it probably suited him well enough. At that time of life he enjoyed the attention and conviviality, and he could afford to coast.

Around this time, David Nuttall, from Merton Park in Surrey, a banjo player in his early twenties and briefly the fourth member of The Rakes, began playing the concertina. He went to the *Stone Quarry* fairly often from about 1967 to play with Scan and Bill Avis. 'Cor, you don't want to catch that last train home tonight. You can stay with us'; so David used to put up for the night with Charlie Wheeler, a tambourine player whose uncle, Jack Wheeler, had been Scan's mate on the melodeon years before.

**Scan:** I always go there every Saturday night, unless I've got something on special like. I do stay away sometimes, when I've got a job and that I can earn a few bob at, like, because I don't earn much up there, but they treat me good and the old landlord's a good bloke and I like it; that's why I go up there. I've got pals come up there. [R&DS]

I always get a good crowd up there, and I don't mind as long as I get a good crowd to play to. I don't like sitting playing to myself. [VS]

Bill Avis (died 1986) from Maresfield was Scan's regular partner at that time. The crowd wanted a sing-song with the old pub favourites, and Bill could oblige on the piano-accordion. He and Scan were good pals, but there were differences in their rhythmic approach and Bill's style, typical of 1940s piano-accordion players, lacked Scan's sense of urgency and pulse. 'You know, I've tried to liven him up. I keep telling him, but it's no use.' [RH]



*Denner Head frequented the Stone Quarry in the 1960s when Scan was playing there.*

*(Courtesy Audrey Castle & Peggy Head)*

*Below: Toby Hayward at the Men's Club, Edenbridge, Kent; 17 February 1968.*

*(Photograph: David Nuttall)*



**David Nuttall:** Scan would start things off with a few of his dance tunes, which Bill didn't play, after which it was mostly songs for the rest of the evening; I was simply expected to join in - and they had a few years start on me! 'Reg brought this kiddy along who was dead keen to learn,' I overheard Scan telling Denner Head one night. 'Play in or you won't learn 'em,' was Scan's advice to me. Well, I learnt them.

One Sunday while Scan and I were taking a walk round by the church in Horsted Keynes, sharing twenty Senior Service, payment from the night before, 'These blokes, David,' he said, 'These blokes think I can play concertina, but I can't play anymore, not how I used to, like. Mind you keep it up now; it'll be an interest for you when you retire.

On one visit to Horsted Keynes we all went to a pub in Crawley to sit in with a band in a pub there led by a piano-accordion player ... Bill [Avis] wisely played the washboard ... Scan was in with every number. I particularly remember them doing a break-neck *Who's Sorry Now*. Scan was with them all the way.

Like so many of his neighbours, Scan was an enthusiastic and expert gardener, with a plot of land behind the parish hall, and two gardens at Victoria Cottages which he divided with Arch Sherlock. He always prided himself on his skill and the quality of his produce, and in his eighties he was still active.

**Scan:** Well, I've got a bit of an allotment up the village, and I go up there and spar about. That's all I do. I don't work for nobody; I don't want the money. I go up there; there's plenty wants doing, but I don't do it all in one day. I've got a chair up there, and I just have a go, and then I think to myself, 'Well, I'm going to have a smoke now.' I sit down in the sun. Yes, I never worry. I think, 'Well, there's another day left, and if I don't finish it, someone else will.' I never worry about it. [VS]

It's surprising what you can grow, but I want manure now, and that's expensive stuff. I wouldn't mind buying a couple of loads, if it was any good, but that last load I had, I didn't know I had it. Well, it's only wet hay. You can't farm like that. If you go on taking stuff out the ground, you want to put something back, whatever gardening it is. What I do, I've got an old bin made of eight foot

*The Stone Quarry, Chelwood Gate; 1971.*

*(Photograph: Hamish Black)*



I NEVER PLAYED TO MANY POSH DANCES....



lengths of galvanised, and I chuck everything in there. Every little while I get my fork out, and I turn one end in, and, do you know, that's damn good stuff when you get it out and dig it in.  
[VS]

Each winter towards the end of Scan's life, the cold and the damp wore him down a little more; the rheumatism in his finger joints got worse and playing the concertina was very painful. He seldom went out in the wintertime, but as the warm weather broke through, he sprang back to life, and his neighbour and friend, Bob Fry, would take him to various music evenings.

**Bob Fry:** Towards the end, you see, when I used to take old Scan out - in fact, the very last one we did, just before old Scan died - he'd begun to fail a bit and he hadn't been too well. There was a do on at the Coppers', and Scan had been a bit rough, and I rang through, actually, and told them. Course, Daisy was a bit

worried and she said, 'I don't know whether Dad will be able to go' ... I went to see her in the afternoon before he was due down there, and I said, 'Well ... what you reckon?' and she said, 'Well, Dad said he'd like to go.' She never minded if he went with me, and we went down there and we had a terrific evening, absolutely terrific. Scan was really on form ... It was really amazing, because he really hadn't been at all too good, but as the evening sort of wore on, it began to give him a lift you know, and it wasn't, well, only a week or two after that he died. That was his last public do.<sup>24</sup>

Scan died at home after a very brief illness on 7 May 1972 and was buried five days later in Horsted Keynes churchyard.<sup>25</sup>

Cor, there was several there. They come from miles around. Yes, there was a tidy crowd alright.<sup>26</sup>

## NOTES

1. Mervyn Plunkett (1920-86) tape recorded many singers and musicians in Sussex, Norfolk, Dorset, Cornwall, Oxfordshire and Hampshire. He and I jointly produced four issues of *Ethnic: A Quarterly Survey of English Folk Music, Dance and Drama* in 1959 and an EP, *4 Sussex Singers* (Collector Records JEB7) in 1961, featuring George Spicer, Pop Maynard, Jean Hopkins and Jim Wilson. Plans are in hand to deposit his papers and recordings in a public archive and to issue the recordings on cassette. His obituary appeared in *Folk Music Journal*, V, 4 (1988), pp. 538-540.
2. LPs by these singers were issued in the mid-1970s: George Maynard, *Ye Subjects of England* (Topic 12T286); George Spicer, *Blackberry Fold* (Topic 12T235).
3. 'Best music there is - fiddle and tambourine.' (Pop Maynard to me, 1956.)
4. The Cuckfield *Parliamentary Register*, 1915, lists Bill Gorrington, Peter Gander and Bill Hawks as living at Whiteman's Green.
5. William George 'Jack' Norris was born in November 1898 at Chiltington, West Sussex, and moved to Cuckfield with his parents as a child. His father was a steamroller driver and played the melodeon at home. Jack was an aircraft mechanic in the Royal Flying Corps in the Great War. He worked for 33 years for Stephen Knight, builders and undertakers, in Cuckfield. He was in demand to provide music at weddings and in pubs. He died in January 1972. (Florence Norris)
6. The first part of *Another Cup of Coffee* is the second part of the *Original Schottische Polka*, which appears in the manuscript book of Michael Turner, the nineteenth-century fiddler from Warnham, Sussex (Anne Loughran and Vic Gammon, *A Sussex Tune Book* (1982), tune no. 34.).  
Jack Norris to me: 'It takes a good melodeon player to play *The Girl I Left Behind Me*.'
7. This stepdance tune was played by Scan (Topic 12T455/6, side 4, track 2) and Bill Gorrington (side 2, track 2c).
8. Mervyn was accompanied by his friend Dougie Moncrieff. In later years Arch Sherlock remembered the second person as Peter Kennedy. In fact, Peter Kennedy called on Scan much later.
9. Bill McMahon was born in Liverpool in 1920, landed in Normandy on D-Day and after the War moved to West Hoathly. 'Round the house! Mind those chaise, please!', which he shouted before every performance, harked back to the Irish country kitchen dances of his father's early days. Bill's ambition at the time was to play the spoons with a trad jazz band. He could also stepdance.
10. The Rakes, a London-based barndance band, was formed in 1956 and is still active.
11. The informal leadership drifted between Mervyn, Scan and me. In retrospect I can see that from Scan's point of view, he played in *our* band. Apart from a few sessions in the *Stone Quarry*, we never played much on Scan's territory and I thus never met any of his old music-making partners, except Bill Gorrington.

*Opposite: At Dave Wall's Club in Edenbridge, Kent; early 1970s.*

*(Photograph: Ian Mason)*

12. Harry Cox (born 1885), retired farmworker, singer and fiddle/melodeon/tinwhistle player from Norfolk; Ernie Glew, singer from Shoreham, Sussex; Fred Jordan, farmworker and singer from Shropshire.
13. Singer from Aberdeenshire.
14. *I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now* was published in 1923, and was popular again in the 1950s. Testers' Imperial used it for the last waltz (David Nuttall).
15. The text and description of the play came from Harry Burgess, Firle, Sussex.
16. Bob Keightley (1914-89), market trader. His school violin teacher refused to continue teaching him when she caught him playing *Hold That Tiger* by ear. Though never a pub pianist, he had a remarkable London pub piano style and he sang some little-known London comic songs, two of which are featured in *The Bolden Lad* (Arts Council film, directed by John Tchalenko, 1980). Bob and I lived in the same house from 1958 to 1967, and thus Bob got to know Scan.
17. Ken Stubbs: 'The Life and Songs of George Maynard', *Folk Music Journal*, IX, 4, (1963), pp. 180-196.
18. The LP *The Roving Journeymen - The Willett Family* was recorded in 1962 (Topic 12T84).
19. Scan gives a colourful account of our arrival and the dance in an interview with Rod and Danny Stradling, published in *Folk Roots*, 31, (Jan. 1986), p. 12.
20. Topic 12T296.
21. There were at least two early 78 rpm records of *Hiawatha* issued in Britain, which could have been influential in popularising the tune among country musicians: Vess L. Ossman (USA), G&T.GC6387 (1903); Band of H. M. Coldstream Guards (UK) (1910), reissued on World Records SHB41. Mike Yates recorded a version under the title *The Pony March* from Jasper Smith (southern England) in the mid-1970s (Topic 12TS304).
22. Ken Stubbs ran sessions in a number of Sussex pubs until about 1978.
23. Toby Hayward played in a dance band before the Second World War. Ken Stubbs and I recorded him in the early 1960s at his home in a non-stop medley of 75 popular songs and tunes.
24. Interview with Bob Fry by Sean Goddard, 12.11.1985.
25. His obituary in *New Musical Express* ran to six-and-a-half column inches.
26. Scan quoted out of context.