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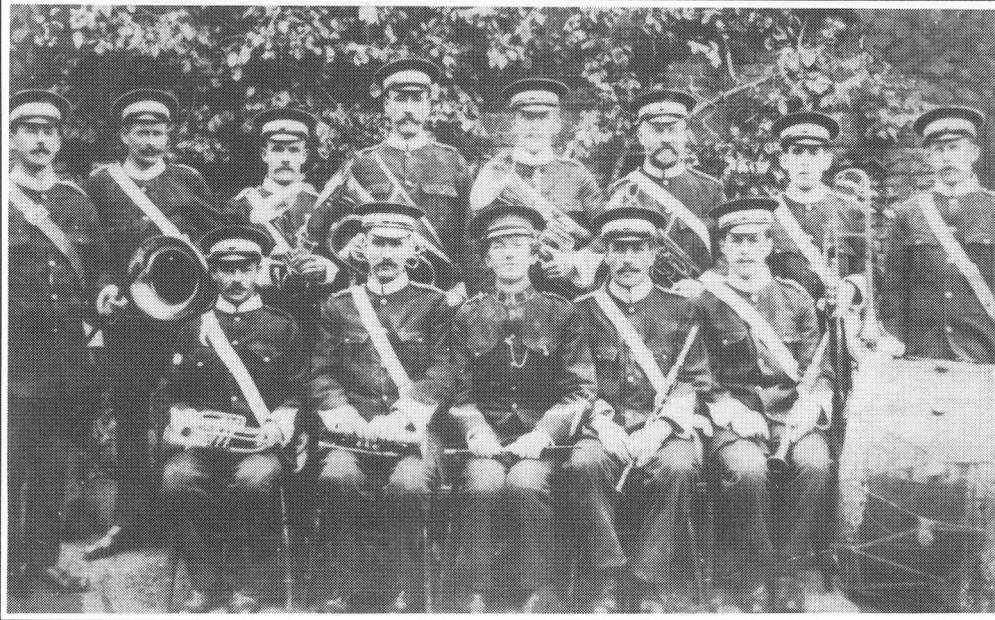
## Chapter 9: The 'other' music

During the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth, elite country society employed professional orchestras from London and Brighton or Army and Volunteer bands of professional standard for their balls and private parties. Further down the social scale, at the level of tradesmen, small-town jobbing, professional musicians were used in small combinations, joined sometimes by local literate musicians, who may have been semi-professional or even amateur. They circulated the latest published material and represented not only fashion, but respectability. These trained musicians did stray into the villages, and appeared at such events as workhouse concerts, even sharing an occasional press notice with a bones player or mouthorgan soloist.<sup>1</sup> They operated mainly in the small country towns of Uckfield, Haywards Heath, Newick and Forest Row and the closed village of Fletching, where the presence of the Earl of Sheffield was felt at formal village festivities.

Among the reported musicians were men otherwise engaged in the music business: T. E. Gearing (piano) from Lewes, R. Whiteside (piano) and Wallace Chisholm (violin) from Uckfield - all music teachers - and Horace Jackson, a piano dealer with a music shop in Lewes. Finch's Quadrille Band was led by a member of a flourishing building and retail firm in Haywards Heath, and W. Bates (violin) was a job master in Newick.<sup>2</sup> Although their identity remains a mystery, W. Allen's Quadrille Band's appearances at Tradesmen's Balls in the *Brambletye Hotel*, Forest Row, in 1897 and 1905 set them very clearly in an identifiable social stratum. The band that played for dancing at the Heathfield Football Club's annual dinner in 1901 consisted of B. H. Naylor and W. Lovell (violins), T. Sinden (cornet) and W. Sinden (piccolo), who were probably all members of the club. Thomas Sinden was an estate carpenter, an artisan rather than an independent tradesman, and he and the piccolo player may well have learnt their instruments in a town or village band.<sup>3</sup>

If Scan was central to the music making and dancing in the countryside around Horsted Keynes, Wallace Randolph Chisholm (1871-1934) held a similar position in the country town of Uckfield. These two individuals operated from very different value bases, however, one an ear-playing countryman, rooted in the oral tradition, utilising what he heard and what he could invent, the other a musically literate small-town working man tied to the restraints of the written score and academic technique. They lived close enough to each other to have had contact, but in the absence of positive evidence to the contrary, it would appear they functioned within different social networks, seldom overlapping geographically. Though both were working men, originally from similar backgrounds, they operated within two separate levels of working society and their social affiliation put them in different musical camps. Wallace Chisholm, perhaps, stood for what Scan meant by 'a posh dance' and what Daisy later called 'a dear dance'. The complete absence of newspaper coverage of Scan's activities indicates that he could function without outside attention, whereas the professionals, perhaps, were dependent to some extent on press notices, and may even have been instrumental in making sure the editor received them.<sup>4</sup>

Wallace Chisholm came to Uckfield with his family as a youth from Shipbourne, Kent, where his father, William (1832-1914), had been a gardener. A family story describes Wally sitting on the back doorstep at the age of five, holding a cigar box up to his chin and scraping it with a stick, as if it were a fiddle. The model for this game may well have been his father, who came as an adult from Shetland, where at that time there was a flourishing fiddle tradition. By what means and to what standard he received his music education is not known, but early on he made a career choice between music and Kent County cricket. In Uckfield, by then a member of the Academic College of Violinists, he set up in business as a music teacher, operating from his home at



*Above: Uckfield Town Band; c. 1909.*

*Back row (left to right): G. Dumsday, E. Olive, E. Blackford, H. French, L. Blackford, P.H. Shoosmith, Paul Route, E. Avis; front row (left to right): A. Picknell, A. Olive, Wallace Chisholm, A. Wren, unidentified. Note the valve trombone, flute and clarinet.*

*(Courtesy Norman Edwards)*

*Below: Uckfield Town Band, Ringles Cross Sweet Pea Show; 1912.*

*Back row (left to right): E. Avis, unidentified, M. Grant, unidentified, A. Picknell, A. Olive, --- Burgess, C. Parsons, E. Blackford, P.H. Shoosmith, G. Dumsday; front row (left to right): E. Olive, L. Blackford, H. French, Wallace Chisholm, --- Dumsday, Paul Route, Harry Cousins (later bandmaster at Buxton).*

*(Photograph: Manoah Duplock, Five Ashes. Courtesy Norman Edwards)*



136 Framfield Road. His son, Hugh (born 1921), a church organist in demand in and around Uckfield until his death in September 1988, was thirteen when his father died and had only hazy pictures of his father's activities, but he filled in some background. He said his father taught the well-off children in their homes, but every child in all the families in Uckfield took lessons from him. 'If they couldn't afford it, it didn't matter. Mother said, "Where's the Sunday joint coming from?" And he would answer, "Cast your bread upon the waters, my dear."' 'Every child' is an exaggeration, in view of the fact that his contemporary and associate, R. Whiteside, was teaching just up the road at number 31.

In addition to teaching music, Wallace Chisholm led a band, taught dancing, including the *Quadrilles*, worked part-time as a photographer and was bandmaster of Uckfield Town Band. He is reputed to have been able to cope with any string or wind instrument and also composed organ music for the church.<sup>5</sup>

Respectability characterises the following 1910 newspaper account:

**Newick Dance.** A very enjoyable dance arranged by Messrs. A. E. Tidy, P. D. Turner, A. Gower and G. Bannister was held at the Reading Room on Thursday night. The room was admirably decorated for the occasion by Mr. William Chisholm and others including Mrs. A. Tidy, Miss Humphrey, the Misses Avery (2), Miss Landridge and Miss Beecham. The attendance numbered almost 60 and thanks largely to the diligence and zeal of the committee and efficient manner in which Mr. G. Bannister acted as hon. secretary, the event was in every way a great success. Dancing was from 8 to 3 o'clock, the music being supplied by Mr. Wallace Chisholm's Quadrille band. Light refreshments were served as required.<sup>6</sup>

Some of the participants can be identified: William Chisholm was a head gardener, Alfred Tidy was assistant overseer and clerk to the Parish Council for Fletching, Danehill and Newick, and kept a farm, while G. Bannister was a shopkeeper.<sup>7</sup>

Wallace Chisholm knew nothing of ear-playing. His large collection of sheet music was destroyed years ago, but in all probability he played from violin and piano scores, the standard items in music publishers' catalogues. A programme survives of the annual ball given by R. Whiteside in connection with

his dancing class in Uckfield Drill Hall in 1914. Chisholm and Whiteside played what looks like a typical selection of Edwardian written material, enlivened by a pseudo-ragtime hit for the *Lancers*:

- Waltz ..... *The Girl on the Film*
- Two-step ..... *The Goat's Wedding*
- Lancers ..... *Everybody's Doing It*
- Veleta ..... *Chiming*
- La favourite*
- Quadrilles ..... *Welcome Home*
- Waltz ..... *Little Grey Home in the West*
- One-step ..... *Tinkers*
- D'Alberts ..... selected
- Hurndilla*
- Waltz ..... *Nights of Gladness*
- Interval
- Lancers ..... *Marching*
- Waltz ..... *Flower of the Nile*
- Barn dance ..... *Spring Flowers*
- Quadrilles ..... *Top of the World*
- Waltz ..... *Smiles, then Kisses*
- Two-step ..... *Kelly Land*
- D'Alberts ..... selected
- Waltz Imperial*
- Waltz ..... *Where my Caravan has Rested*
- Lancers ..... *Gipsy Love*
- Waltz ..... *Sunshine Girl*
- God Save the King*<sup>8</sup>

*Uckfield Chamber of Commerce Guide; 1924.*

*(Courtesy Norman Edwards)*

UCKFIELD & DISTRICT

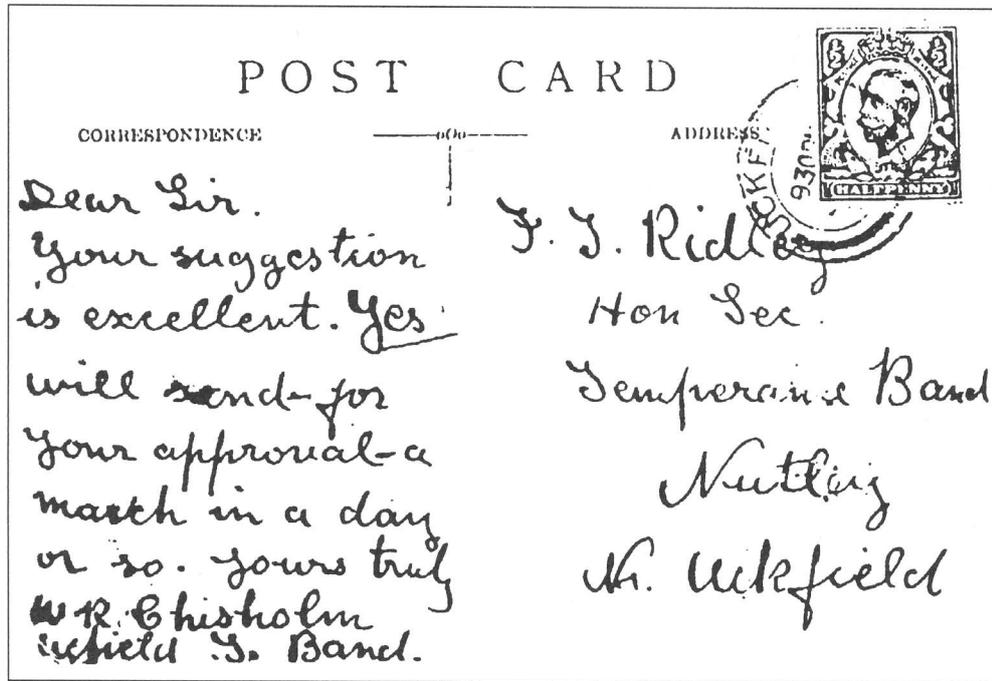
PIANOFORTE TUNING  
— AND REPAIRS —  
SINGLY OR BY CONTRACT

**Wallace R. Chisholm.**

ORCHESTRA for BALL ROOM  
and  
GARDEN PARTIES.

HIGHEST REFERENCES.

136 Framfield Road,  
UCKFIELD.



Postcard from Wallace Chisholm; c. 1912.  
(Courtesy Norman Edwards)

So much for repertoire, but what about style? There is a family story about the time he put his thumb out of joint at football and went ahead with a planned violin recital at Framfield Church the same night, with the bow attached to his hand with rubber bands. This illustrates the true professional's stance - the show must go on - but what does it say about his bowing technique? Was it, in fact, closer to that of Walter Bulwer than that of Yehudi Menuhin?

Hugh Chisholm was reasonably certain that the final version of his father's dance band was a trio: his father (violin), Mrs Crowhurst from Framfield on the piano and her son, Bertie, on the drums. George Avis, one of Wallace Chisholm's violin pupils, played at a dance with this combination in 1927 when he was about fifteen and he thought the band usually consisted of two violins, piano and drums.

## NOTES

1. I have assumed that workhouse concerts were charity events for the inmates; even so, the audience may have included the Guardians and other local dignitaries.
2. A job master ran a carriage and haulage business, with a fleet of varied horse-drawn vehicles.
3. Occupation identifications from *Kelly's Directory of Sussex*. The following are *Sussex Express* notices:
  - 20.2.1897: W. Allen's Quadrille Band at Forest Row.
  - 15.5.1897: W. Bates, violin, and T.E. Gearing, piano, at the Ladies' Social Club, Newick.
  - 5.1.1901: W. Bates at a social, Fletching Schools.
  - 30.3.1901: Heathfield Football Club Dinner (see text).
  - 7.1.1905: W. Bates, violin, T.E. Gearing, piano, and George Isgar, cornet, at the village ball, supported by Earl of Sheffield, at Fletching Schools.
  - 7.1.1905: Finches Quadrille Band at a Fancy Dress Ball in Lindfield.
- 28.1.1905: Horace Jackson's String Quartette at Chailey workhouse.
- 4.2.1905: T.E. Gearing at a Football Smoker in Lewes.
- 8.2.1905: W. Bates, violin, C. Pickett, cello, Kemp E. Brooks, cornet, at a smoking concert in Newick.
- 11.2.1905: Finch's Quadrille Band at the Volunteer's Ball, Cuckfield.
- 25.2.1905: W. Allen's Quadrille Band at Forest Row.
- 11.3.1905: W. Bates, violin, and T.E. Gearing, piano, at a Cinderella Dance for the Quadrille class at Fletching Schools.
- 1.4.1905: W. Bates, violin, C. Pickett, cello, Kemp E. Brooks, cornet, and H. Robinson, piano, at the Hand-in-Hand Slate Club smoking concert in Newick.
4. It is curious that in the period from the 1890s to the 1920s, *Kelly's* listed dancing and music teachers, but made no reference to musicians, bands or orchestras.
5. Hugh Chisholm.

6. *Sussex Express*, 21.1.1910.

The following *Sussex Express* notices place Wallace Chisholm in a variety of contexts:

3.2.1911: a dance at Blackboys.

24.2.1911: with Mrs. C. Van Loock and Miss Eyre, he played 'up to date music' at the second of a series of socials and whist drives at Framfield.

14.4.1911: the Rat and Sparrow [shooting] Club dinner in the *Griffin*, Fletching. Sixty sat down. 'Some enjoyable music was given during the evening, and included violin solos by Mr. Chisholm, recitation by Mr. Parker, and songs by Messrs. Reddich, Weller, Smith, C. Wood, Relf and others. Mr. St. John presided at the piano.'

11.1.1914 and 16.4.1914: Mr. Chisholm's Quadrille Band at the National Schools, Fletching.

11.2.1921: with R. and H. Whiteside at a Fancy Dress Ball in Uckfield.

8.4.1921: with Henry Whiteside, piano, at an Easter dance in Uckfield Town Hall, arranged by R. Whiteside.

11.3.1927, 1.4.1927, 20.5.1927, 14.10.1927 and 28.10.1927: Wallace R. Chisholm's Orchestra at the *British Legion*, Isfield.

6.5.1927 and 10.6.1927: Wallace R. Chisholm's Orchestra at Nutley.

9.12.1927: Mr. W. R. Chisholm's Dance Band at Framfield.

3.1.1930: Wallace R. Chisholm's Dance Band at New Year's Eve function for the British Legion at Framfield.

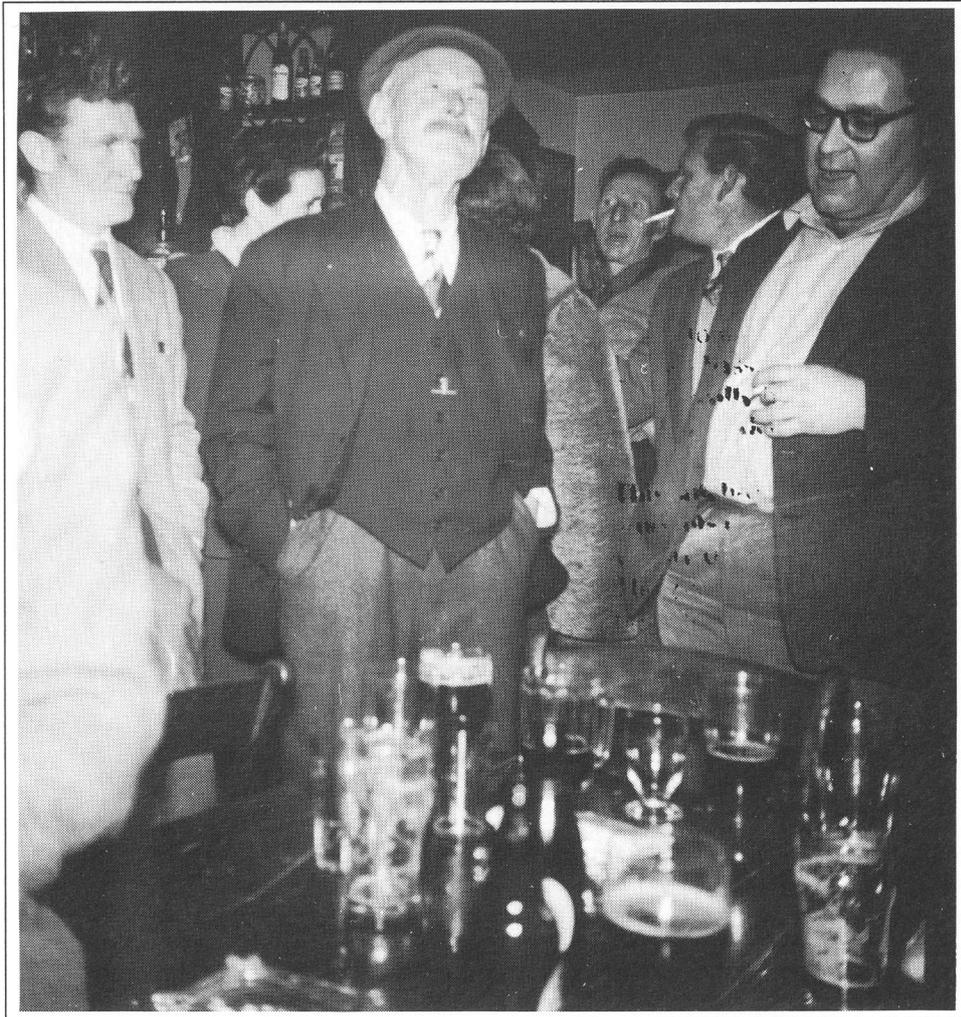
17.1.1930: with P. G. Ladbrook, piano, at a social, whist drive and dance at Laughton.

7.2.1930: Wallace R. Chisholm's Orchestra at Uckfield Public Hall.

7. Occupation identifications from *Kelly's*.

8. *Sussex Express*, 19.2.1914.

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## Chapter 10: Songs and singers

**T**he bias in this text so far has been towards dancing and instrumental music, to the exclusion of songs and singing. Mervyn Plunkett's search for singers barely touched Horsted Keynes and, as far as I can tell, did not extend to Danehill, Nutley and Fairwarp. Scan had spoken to him of his boyhood friend, Harry Knight, who was a good singer, but to the best of my knowledge the only singer he recorded from that area was Scan himself. Mervyn knew the *Sloop* had, or had had, a reputation for good singers, but he was unable to follow up the lead.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the singers he recorded in neighbouring parts of Sussex were in their seventies and eighties. Some, like Pop Maynard, Jim Wilson, Peter Gander and Bill Hawkes, were active in public, singing in their local pub as and when the occasion was right, on a Saturday night or Bank Holiday Monday. Some, however, like Mrs Lester of East Grinstead, had probably never sung in public in their lives, restrict-

ing their performances to home and family. Mervyn went out of his way to speak to a great variety of people about old country songs, and thus in a short time came across many singers and recorded a considerable number of songs. All the indications were that had he had the time and energy, the trawl would have been endless. A real constraint was the limited number of social relationships he could sustain with the singers who gave him their songs.

The problems are threefold in trying to reconstruct the patterns of singing behaviour, repertoires and styles in Scan's experience. The first is the heavily biased reporting of song collectors, essentially people on the outside who occasionally had opportunities to look in. Mervyn, certainly the most radical person involved in this pursuit in the 1950s and 1960s, was critical of the distorted representation of the singing tradition contained in the published work of earlier English folksong collectors.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in the nature of things, Mervyn introduced distortions in his own



*A session in the Half Moon at Balcombe in 1959.*

*Bill McMahon, Snowy Howick and Mervyn Plunkett listen, while Dot Wood of West Hoathly sings.*

*Opposite: Bill McMahon, Jim Wilson and Mervyn Plunkett.*

*(Photographs: Reg Hall)*

work and his collecting was based on his own aesthetic values. Fairly early in his progress as a collector of songs, he drew conclusions and operated from assumptions, particularly about the nature of singing in pubs, which could be challenged.<sup>3</sup>

The second problem concerns the dearth of contemporary documentary evidence. Newspapers, of course, never reported singing in domestic situations or in the taprooms of public houses. They did, however, cover public events of a certain social standing, though in spite of the singers and the songs being listed, there was never any real critical assessment or hard evidence of what went on. The song titles give clues to repertoire, but not to style.

The third difficulty is in taking adequate, reliable oral testimony so long after the event. Those local people I have spoken to recently are either too young, having been born in the 1920s and grown up in the 1930s and 1940s, or, like Daisy Sherlock, seldom frequented pubs. These informants, when they can remember what they heard in their youth, usually mention the titles or a few lines of drawing room ballads and music hall songs. The two polar extremes in the musical culture of country working men and women, the oral tradition and the literate, already discussed in relation to instrumental music, are evident in song and singing. The older, earthier, oral tradition had always operated as a cultural underground, not easily visible to the rest of the world. Singing in church and the performance of the latest, topical, composed comic songs and parlour ballads at formal suppers and smoking concerts carried social kudos. The underground, however, was resilient in the face of a variety of cultural assaults, and was very near the surface, often breaking through veneers of respectability after a few drinks had been taken.

At the musical evenings in the blacksmith's shop in Horsted Keynes before the Great War, Arch Blayber's gramophone provided some of the entertainment; bottles of home-made wine assured the nights were pretty raucous.<sup>4</sup> What, however, went on at the Horsted Keynes Cricket Club concert, arranged by Mrs Noakes, the postmaster's wife, 'which gave so much pleasure to local residents' in April 1910?<sup>5</sup> The same month a newspaper report of a social evening at Heathfield Star Football Club, very much a working men's organisation, listed the patriotic parlour ballads and coon-songs rendered by the members, but among them was a country song, *If I was a Blackbird*, sung by Mr R. Robins, and a stepdance, more commonly associated with the taproom, by Mr J. Porter.<sup>6</sup> Edwardian propriety, sentimentality and jingoism plainly co-existed with the alternative values of many village people.

### HORSTED KEYNES.

A SOCIAL took place on Whitsun Monday at the Parish Room, and it gave great pleasure to a large number of parishioners. At Horsted Keynes folks know how to make merry in a decent sort of way.

Sussex Express, 4 June 1914

The smoker - the smoking concert at slate club share-outs at Christmas-time - was one formal occasion for singing. The share-out at the *Star Inn*, Piltown, in 1909 was 18s. 6d. - almost a week's wages for its 43 members - and 'during the evening plenty of singers were found and a very enjoyable evening was indulged in.'<sup>7</sup> Arch Sherlock attended the smokers in the *Crown*, Horsted Keynes, which ceased to be held in the 1920s, and he could name the songs and the singers. Bert Gurr (born 1907) has been able to flesh out the bones. Johnny Clark, Lord of the Manor, bought old ale for everyone in the *Legion* at Christmas and he was the slate-club president. Reuben Baker, with his finger in anything in the village where fun was concerned, was the chairman. Bert Gurr thinks of his father as having had the most prodigious repertoire locally. 'Father used to sing all sorts ... They used to pester the life out of him to sing in the *Green Man*.'

**Arch Sherlock:** When I was in my teens, you know, one of the boys ... old Jack Gurr, we used to get him over the *Green Man* and to get him to sing we used to pull the blinds and get him filled up with beer. Saturday dinner-times. He used to play quoits out in front of the *Green Man*, you see, and you know how they used to mark; they marked the stick by notching it, twenty-one up. Well, he was so bloody drunk, he didn't notch the stick; he notched his finger! That's true! He used to sing that one, *Give Me a Keg or Can*. He had dozens of songs he used to sing. We used to try and egg him on, you know; get him about three parts cut and keep on winding another pint into him.

Among the songs Bert Gurr recalls his father singing were *Dot and Carry One*, about someone with a wooden leg, *The Ivy and the Mistletoe*, *The Mistletoe Bough*, *Brighton's Fine Town*, *Old Queen Victoria's Jubilee Song* and *By Studying Economy I Lived Like a Lord*, the latter to the tune Pop Maynard used for *Shooting Goachen's Cocks Up*.<sup>8</sup> There was also the *Prince of Wales's Ball*, which he got from his father, a policeman, who had sung it on the stage at the Marylebone Theatre in London. Bert's cousin, Freddie Gates, who had come back from the war with experience as a farrier and taken over the smithy, usually sang *Comrades* at the smoker; Trayt Moore,

not generally renowned for singing, used to give *Don't Go Down in the Mine*. Alf Alexander had songs with the banjo, and then years later, a much younger man, George Payne, sang *The Little Pigs Make the Best of Pork*.

Given that Joe Marten was a life-long friend of Scan's - Scan left a concertina with him on permanent loan till Joe died - some sort of understanding of his musical activity is relevant. In common with Will Tester, reconstruction of part of his life story based on the evidence of his children is unbalanced, primarily because the social conventions separated pub life from home life. Children, including Daisy Sherlock, had little first-hand experience of how their fathers behaved in pubs. Joe Marten married in early middle age, in 1910, by which time he had probably ceased being 'one of the lads' (implicit in his association with Trayton and Scan). His children's memories are of his singing at home. His daughter, Mary, confirms 'he had a nice voice' and would 'sing in parts', and his son, Will, recalls he did not sing any of 'the old, real country songs.' If he ever had a repertoire of such material, it did not intrude into his home life.

**Mary Elphick:** All songs, the time when he was singing, they were all very sad.

**Will Marten:** They were all based on that sort of thing. All tunes were based on something that was sad.

**Mary Elphick:** You see, during the last century there was a lot of poverty, terrible poverty and ...

*Jack Norris entertains at Cuckfield in the 1960s.  
(Courtesy Florence Norris)*



**Will Marten:** It was based on that.

**Mary Elphick:** The songs, they were based on that sort of thing.

**Will Marten:** Well, that's the one: 'Father, dear father, come home from the pub/ The clock in the steeple strikes one.' What it was, the old father was in the pub all the time; the boy ran to him asking him to come home, 'cause his son is dying.

**Mary Elphick:** Yes, and he died in the end.

**Will Marten:** And at twelve o'clock, he said 'Dad! He's dead,' wasn't it? It went right through the hours, you see, as he sang it. Proper old pub song!<sup>9</sup>

Further local snippets come from Christopher Stephens of Fairwarp, who cites his father's party pieces as *The Broom Dasher that Lived in the Wood* and *Buttercup Joe*, and Fanny Lander, who mentioned a singer, Sam Cork, who lived at Birchgrove in Horsted Keynes before the Great War, who 'was a great pal of Tester's.' Around 1910 she used to watch out for a street singer in Chelwood:

There used to be a man come up from Brighton every Thursday, and he used to sing over the post office. His name was Oliver and he sang that special song everywhere. I can't remember what it was now.

Finally, Polly Marten's father, Mr Pollard, from Danehill:

**Will Marten:** The wife's dad belonged to the choir ... He was the background to the choir ... Big man, big chested man - bass. Oh, he was smashing ... He really had got a voice ... It was a nice, rich deep voice.

This hotch-potch of recollections, although it hardly amounts to conclusive evidence, does point to a diversity of practices and attitudes towards singing. The piece about the street singer from Brighton poses more questions than it answers, and Joe Marten's 'part-singing' leaves us guessing. However, two pieces of information about Nelson Stephens - first that he was a member of Ashdown Forest Temperance Band, and second that he sang at least two old-fashioned country songs - provide an illustration of the two musical traditions being contained within one person.

Scan, of course, sang a few songs in his time. *Bold Robert Emmett*, probably his father's song, had been his great favourite, but late in life the words and tune

eluded him. He had fragments of *Tally Ho, Oxford City* and *They've All Got a Mate but Me*, a ditty remembered from childhood:

*The last I had, she drove me mad.  
In vain I tried to stop her,  
For she run away in a very funny way,  
And got slowly boiled to death in a copper.*<sup>10</sup>  
[DN]

As an old man, rather surprised to think that anyone would want to hear him sing, his two stand-bys were his brother Bert's song, *The Old Rustic Bridge*, which he delivered with great rhythmic control and dignity, and *The Lakes of Coalflin*, learnt when he was a young man at a wedding party from a young woman who wrote out the words for him. *Barbara*

*Allen*, which he sings on the Topic record, was not one of his songs. It came to him during the car journey to the *Fox*, Islington Green, and he rehearsed it in his mind, only to forget the last verse during the performance later the same evening.

Scan's singing at the *Fox* in 1965 was a great surprise to Daisy. 'He used to whistle a lot', but she had never heard him sing before.<sup>11</sup> The real singer in the Tester family was Bert, usually known as Tiger, but at this distance in time it is impossible to judge what his singing was like. Scan told Peter Kennedy he sang *Kitty Wells, I'm a Man that's Done Wrong to my Parents, The Sailor's Grave* and *I've been Lonely Since my Mother Died*.<sup>12</sup> Arch Sherlock remembered that his usual songs were *Some Soldiers were Seated around the Camp Fire* and *If Those Lips Could Only Speak*.

## NOTES

1. The following singers were listed as having performed at a smoker at the *Sloop*: 'Messrs. R. Setford, M. Setford, Elphick, Marten, E. Hills, jun, Marchant, Tully, W. Farmer and 'Little Jack'.' (*Sussex Express*, 25.2.1905).

2. For discussion of distortion in folksong collecting see Vic Gammon, 'Folk Song Collecting in Sussex and Surrey, 1843-1914', *History Workshop*, 10, (Autumn 1980); David Harker, 'Cecil Sharp in Somerset; Some Conclusions' *Folk Music Journal*, II, 3 (1972), pp. 220-240. David Harker, *Fakesong: The manufacture of British 'folksong' to the present day* (1985).

3. Mervyn left an unpublished book on English traditional singing, which it was his intention to revise and publish.

4. Arch Sherlock.

5. *Sussex Express*, 8.4.1910.

A similar event was reported in 1911 (*Sussex Express*, 12.5.1911).

Scan was living in Horsted Keynes at the time of the first of these concerts and probably at Chelwood Gate for the second. Was he included among the entertainers?

A 1909 press report places a member of the Noakes family in a different social context from Scan: Miss Noakes provided the accompaniment for the songs and dances of 'the girls of Horsted Keynes who took part in the Morris games and rendered folk songs in the Assembly Room the other evening...' (*Sussex Express*, 10.12.1909) While local working people played out their own music and dance tradition, as part of their normal life-style, members of the lower middle class favoured the reconstruction of the English rural tradition represented by the Cecil Sharp / Mary Neal folk song and dance movement.

6. *Sussex Express*, 15.4.1910.

At a smoking concert at the *May Garland Inn*, Horam Road, among a list of low-brow composed material, Mr. Godly sang *The Waterford Boys* (*Sussex Express*, 27.3.1897).

At a Rabbit Supper at the *Bat and Ball Inn*, Chiddingfold, Mr. Goldsmith sang *When Jones' Ale Was New* (*Sussex Express*, 6.3.1897).

A concert at Waldron included material by Gounod and the first appearance of the local minstrel troupe. 'Mr. H. E. Rogers caused roars of laughter with his humorous song, The pantomime and gave an encore *The Village Pump*.' (*Sussex Express*, 28.4.1911).

7. *Sussex Express*, 24.12.1909.

8. George Maynard, *Ye Subjects of England* (1956, 1962), Topic 12T286.

The Rt. Hon. George Joachim Goachen, M.P., J.P., lived at Seacox, Flimwell (*Kelly's*, 1895, p. 356).

9. *Come Home, Father* was written by Henry Clay Work in 1864 (W. K. McNeil, accompanying notes for *The Cold Water Pledge*, vol 2, Marimac Recordings 9105 (cassette). This cassette includes a recording by Bela Lam and His Greene County Singers (Virginia), *Poor Little Bennie*, Okeh 45136 (1927)) (Graeme Kirkham and Keith Chandler).

10. Written by J. B. Geoghagan; sung by a music hall artist, Sam Torr, in the 1880s.

I think Scan learnt *The False Bride* from Jean Hopkins in the late 1950s, although he had heard it before (Folktracks FSA 085 (cassette)).

11. Daisy Sherlock to David Nuttall.

P.W. Joyce noted the song from the singing of Peggy Cudmore, 13, in Glensheen, Co. Limerick, in 1854 (*Old Irish Folk Music and Songs* (1909), p. 227).

Recorded examples include:

Paddy Beades (Ireland), *The Lakes of Cool-Finn* (1938), Regal Zonophone IZI081.

Amy Birch (Devon), *Royal Comrade* (c. 1975), Topic 12TS349.

12. Folktracks FSA 085 (cassette).

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## Chapter 11: Calendar customs

Christmas received barely a passing mention in the *Sussex Express* at the beginning of this century. In the villages, brass bands and carol singers went round the pubs and big houses, Danehill handbell ringers played at the *Coach and Horses* on Boxing Day and there were servants' balls and long nights into the New Year. In Cuckfield, Peter Gander, Bill Hawks, Jack Norris and their mates had some special Christmas and New Year songs for the pub. *While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks by Night* to the tune *Lyngham* and *The Trees Are All Bare* were among them, and Scan knew and played both tunes.

An old winter custom, Apple Howling, was still practised at the turn of the century. At Danehill the visiting howlers sang:

*Root fast, root bear,  
Every twig, apple big,  
Every bough, apples enow,  
Hatfuls, capfuls, five bushel sackfuls.<sup>1</sup>*

Giles Moore, rector of Horsted Keynes, paid the 'Howling Boyes' sixpence on 5 January 1657 and again on Christmas Eve, 1659, for their visit to his orchard.<sup>2</sup> Two hundred and fifty years later their descendants were calling on Scan's father:

**Scan:** When we was at the *Green Man* we used to have a lot of apple trees and that, fruit trees. Well, everybody did that time of day. I mean to say, they don't plant no young trees now in cottages. Every cottage had apple and pear trees, and my father planted a lot of apples. In fact, there's some there now what he planted. [RH]

Apple howling - that's what we used to call it. They used to thresh the trees till they brought out some beer or wine or something. That was the idea of that.

That was New Year's time. That happened lots of places; it was a recognised thing like carol singing and I've never seen it except about once or twice, but I know while we was at the *Green Man*, I can remember father coming in and he says, 'You better draw off a gallon of beer, you boys.' He says, 'They'll be just coming round the back now.' But he was artful; he'd had the beer drawn off and called them in. He says, 'You needn't trouble to go down the garden. You can come inside here.' They didn't hurt the trees; they never hit them hard enough to hurt them. You wouldn't see where they'd knocked any bark off or anything. But I dare say some of them [i.e. the trees] used to cop it, you know, especially if they'd had a tidy drink. [RH]

### MAY DAY

May Day in Horsted Keynes was marked by a May Queen on a farm wagon and a maypole on the Green, according to Daisy Sherlock, who remembered it around 1923 or 1924. In Fletching it had been a much grander affair, sponsored by the Earl of Sheffield:

Notwithstanding the rough weather on Monday, the village children turned out with their garlands and Maypoles. They started at an early hour in the morning, visiting all the houses in the village, and then journeyed to Sheffield Park, where each one received a small sum of money, special prizes were kindly given by the Earl of Sheffield and Miss Allenborough for the best garlands and Maypoles.<sup>3</sup>

One of the participants, recalling the event in old age, described it as follows:

The children would decorate small poles with wild flowers and early in the morning of May Day they would form a procession and go all round the village carrying their decorated poles and singing 'the first of May is here today, please remember the May Pole'. People would give them a penny or twopence and things to eat and drink. They would go as far as Searles, then back through the village to Sheffield Place. There they would lay their decorated poles on the lawn and Lord Sheffield would judge which was the prettiest. They would have May Pole dancing on the lawn of Sheffield Place and afterwards came a lovely tea. Grown ups would decorate prams and bicycles and there would be more flowers and Jack o' Greens and the adults would join in the fun.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE ANNUAL FAIR

Although fairs at Horsted Keynes, Chelwood Gate and Lindfield received a boost from their association with the Friendly Societies' feast days, the fair day was not abandoned with the demise of the societies.<sup>5</sup> In Horsted Keynes, in the years just after the Great War, a handful of volunteers mowed the Green a few days before the last Monday in May, 'for the sake of the children' and for free beer from the parish funds. A collection was taken up round the big houses and village by the schoolmaster, the parson and a few others, which paid for free rides on the roundabout for all the village children until tea-time.<sup>6</sup>

The gypsies used to congregate in Bonfire Lane during the previous week, under the eagle eye of Mr. Turner, our village policeman; he was a thorn in the side of all gypsies in the district.<sup>7</sup>

**Scan:** The same people came every year ... They come from Merton, Surrey ... [The man] that had the roundabout, his name was Alf Bond, but I can remember it before ever he came. It used to be Harris's and Bailey's people used to come there with the roundabout, and there was an old man come from this

side of Edenbridge. He used to have a big hand roundabout and two blokes ... they used to have one each side of the roundabout and turn this by hand. Only it was extraordinary big roundabout. [RH]

Reuben Baker (1877-1955), a coal merchant, nicknamed the 'Mayor of Horsted', was behind much of the organised social activity among the village people. After Horsted Band disbanded, they hired Ardingly Band and Reuben Baker provided them with free beer. At the end of one fair day they refused to play one more 'last tune'. 'Bugger 'em,' said the Mayor, and that was the last of their free beer.<sup>8</sup>

#### BONFIRE NIGHT

For many years the bonfire societies in Lewes have dominated activities on November the Fifth for miles around. The importance of Bonfire Night to the working people of the town is illustrated by the extensive newspaper coverage over several weeks in 1900, compared to the passing reference to Christmas. In Lewes the event has an overtly anti-Papist theme, with ritualised declamatory speeches in memory of the Lewes Protestant martyrs of 1555-7 and the burning of a large effigy of a currently unpopular national or international figure. It is also a winter fire festival with trolleys of burning embers pulled recklessly through the streets, firecrackers and a torch-light procession in fancy costume with banners and brass bands.<sup>9</sup>

Bonfire Night was also hazardous in Horsted Keynes in Scan's youth, the result of high spirits and drinking. He once went dressed up in a paper pierrot's costume carrying a real banjo, which ended up on the bonfire when his back was turned, and Arch remembers, when he was young, the lads would 'run through the ashes when they got drunk'. All the shops used to close, but on one occasion the grocer's on the Green stayed open, which was frowned on by local residents. Scan and some of his young mates rigged up a large rocket, a 'Lewes rouser', on wheels and lined it up on the Green. It sped across the road, straight through the open door and into a display of biscuit tins at the back of the shop.<sup>10</sup>

Many villages, including Horsted Keynes, had bonfire societies at one time. By the 1930s, the forces of respectability had triumphed over the disreputable elements essential to the spirit of Bonfire Night. The Fairwarp Band, for example, gave up its annual



'Fifth of November custom at Brighton' by H.G. Hines.  
Illustrated London News, 5 November 1853.

torch-light procession to Maresfield, after the year the hedgerow lining the route caught light. Before the War, bonfire night in most places had become a domestic affair with fireworks and bonfire in the backgarden. Few villages have retained their bon-

fire societies and surviving societies celebrate in the weeks preceding November the Fifth, so they can be free to join the huge crowds attracted to Lewes Bonfire Night.

## NOTES

1. Anonymous, 'Memories of My Village' (c. 1956), East Sussex Records Office, ref. W.I. 53/7. Quoted in *Danehill Parish Historical Society Magazine* (Feb. 1987), p. 23.
2. *The Journal of Giles Moore*, ed. Ruth Bird, (1971), pp. 315, 319.  
Moore gave 4d. on Boxing Day, 1661, (p. 323) and 4d. on 20 December 1665 (p. 329).
3. 'May day was celebrated... by the customary exhibition of [4] decorated carts, [15] garlands and [40] maypoles...' (*Sussex Express*, 6.5.1905).
4. Hylda Rawlings, 'A Born Teacher: The Memories of Louise Downer...', *Danehill P.H.S.M.*, II, 10 (1985), pp. 31-2.
5. Horsted Keynes Fair Day used to be on 1 May. Moore recorded the following entries in his journal:  
1 May 1656, 'Giv'n my wyfe for a FAIRING 3s. and the Boy 6d.' (p. 313); 1 May 1657, 'my wyves Boy a fairing 4d.' (p. 315). He also recorded an August fair in 1664, 'Giv'n Philip Godleyes wyfe at Horsted faire 1s.' (p. 327).
6. Daisy and Arch Sherlock.
7. Mrs Coon, 'Memories of my Village: Horsted Keynes' (1956), *Danehill P.H.S.M.*, II, 10, p. 1.
8. 'In the evening there was dancing, the Ardingley Band supplying the music' at a Horsted Keynes garden fete (*Sussex Express*, 9.7.1914).
9. Of the first five bands I heard on the street at Lewes Bonfire Night in 1987, four were playing tunes from Scan's working repertoire: *Sussex by the Sea*, *Tipperary*, *Under the Double Eagle* and *Scotland the Brave*.
10. Bob Fry.

*The Five Ashes Minstrel Band celebrating the Silver Jubilee in June 1935.  
Standing (left to right): John Fenner, melodeon; Lewis Wren, banjo (organiser);  
Bert Moore, side drum; Bill Ticehurst, melodeon;  
Alf Berwick, landlord of Five Ashes Inn; Wilf Wren, bass drum;  
Harry Wicker; Amos Fenner, melodeon.  
Kneeling, front: Harold Read.  
(Sussex Express, c. 1977)*