



MT Records - a Labour of Love

The beginnings:

Musical Traditions Internet Magazine began out of a sense of pride and disappointment on my part. I had written an article, of which I was rather proud, on the dance tradition of Ponte Caffaro in northern Italy. It was due to be published in Musical Traditions No.13, some time in 1995/96 ... and I was greatly disappointed when the Editor decided to cease publication after No.12.

Musical Traditions had been a paper magazine covering many aspects of traditional music and traditions having some associated musical content. Its coverage was not limited to any one country or continent, and reflected the interests of its editor and contributors. It was the most recent in the noble line of privately produced British publications in this field; one might mention *Ethnic* (started 1959), *Abe's Folk Music* (mid '60s ?), *Traditional Music* (1975) - there were surely others too ...

Musical Traditions was first published by Keith Summers in 1983 and was the longest lived, running to 12 editions before folding in late 1994. Its content was wonderfully varied, ranging from the Tommy Talker Bands of the West Riding in No.1, to Christmas Sports in St Kitts-Nevis in No.12, and touching on the more well known Seamus Ennis, Walter Pardon, Coppers, John McKenna, Johnny Doughty, Dennis McGee, Junior Crehan and Lucy Farr (to name a few) in between. The subjects of its articles spanned the world, taking in Africa, West Indies, Ireland, USA, Hawaii, The Ukraine, France, Italy, Portugal, Argentina, Greece, Australia, Samarkand, Mexico and Armenia, as well as the UK. Its Record Review section was even more wide ranging.

In addition, it published two superb Supplements in association with Veteran Tapes and Topic Records - John Howson's *Many a Good Horseman* book/double cassette, and Reg Hall's *I Never Played to Many Posh Dances* book/double LP.

But MT failed due to the financial burden of paying for a print run of 1000 copies, followed by the problem of trying to sell them all, mostly in Britain. It was also unfortunate that Keith was plagued by a series of domestic catastrophes which reduced the amount of spare time he had to devote to the undertaking.

After MT's greatly lamented demise, it was less and less likely that people interested in the traditional aspects of 'folk music' were able to find much of interest to read about in today's music publications. It was also obvious that there has been quite a lot of stuff which might have been sent to MT if it had still been extant, or might be rejected by *fRoots* or other mainstream magazines as being too limited in appeal - or not submitted for that reason - which would have had no real chance of being published at all. Articles, pamphlets, work-in-progress, even whole books ...

How I got into HTML:

In 1985 My wife, Danny, decided to go to university as a mature student, to take a degree in English but, because of her MS, her handwriting had become so poor that her lecturers would find it difficult to read. Her day job, for a marine geology company, involved her getting to grips with some of the first word-processing software to be used in the UK, and so we decided to see what WP software was available for the simple computers then just becoming available here. The best we could find back then was an Amstrad machine boasting a huge 128Kb memory and floppy-disc input and a WP program called Tasword. This was well before Amstrad produced the integrated WP machine which became so widely used in Britain some years later. Once she'd got to grips with it I got her to teach me how to use it, as well.

I suffered from a relatively mild form of dyslexia - to the extent that, as a child, I hated Christmas and birthdays because of the several 'thank you' letters that I had to write. But I soon found that writing on the computer

was so much easier than by hand, and the spell-check quickly improved my poor spelling - to the extent that I was soon writing letters of several pages, just for the fun of it!

I also got involved, along with my friend Alan Lamb, in *Name Accordions* - importing Saltarelle accordions and selling them in the UK and Ireland. The old Amstrad had soon passed away and been replaced by a succession of early PCs (computers, despite being quite expensive in those days, never lasted for very long) which helped enormously with the business paperwork. Setting up a website would have been a next step, if a larger music company from 'up North' hadn't swooped in and taken my dealership away - but I did begin doing some very basic HTML coding, for interest's sake.

So it was that, in 1996, I approached Keith Summers with the idea of reviving *Musical Traditions* as a 'virtual' magazine on the Internet, where material could be presented quite simply, at very little cost. In homage to Keith and all his work in the area over the years, I wanted to retain the name 'Musical Traditions' for the e-zine, and I was very pleased when he agreed to become its assistant editor.

The magazine was initially published within my AOL account, under the 'mustrad' screen name. This gave us a limited amount of space - allowing for several main articles with graphics, plus news and comment, reviews etc. It was intended that, when the space was filled, the next new article would replace the oldest - giving the magazine a sort of RORO format. I subsequently found that more space was available through AOL and subsequently, much more through other ISPs - so in the end nothing has ever been removed and all the published content is still available on the site.

To begin with, virtually the entire content of the ill-fated No 13, including my treasured Ponte Caffaro article, was available at the site - somewhat ahead of schedule - on Christmas Eve 1996. Subsequently, new Articles, a considerable number of News and Comment pieces, and scores of record and book reviews were added. Our readership reached almost 2,000 on the AOL site. I think that's all that needs to be said about *Musical Traditions* Internet magazine at this point - you can find much more in the Magazine's 'About MT' page, if you're interested. So, let's look at MT Records.

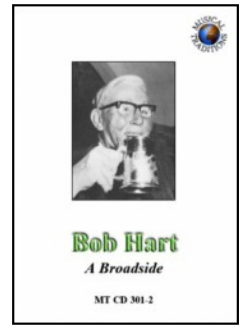
The start of MT Records:

As well as the magazine, Keith Summers had also published some recordings of music which was then unavailable in the UK ... a much praised series of five cassettes of American Old-Time music plus three from Freddy McKay, Peta Webb and Billy Harrison. In 1998, my next new PC came equipped with a CD-R drive, and I realised that I could now make CDs as an addition to Keith's 100 and 200 Series cassettes.

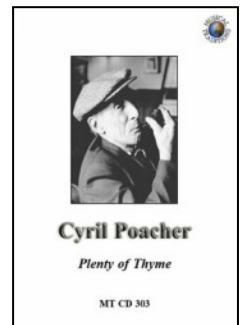
Twelve years earlier, Danny and I had made some recordings of the Suffolk traditional singer, Bob Hart and, subsequently, had taken Bill Leader to meet him and make some 'proper' recordings. In the event, these were never published on the Leader label, and so I had some 70 recordings of 46 of Bob's songs available for the first 300-Series of MT Records publications. But before going ahead I had a chat with Tony Engle of Topic and John Howson of Veteran, to point out that what I had in mind would not impinge upon their businesses. Topic was doing the commercially viable stuff, while Veteran was doing the less commercially viable stuff, but that didn't require too much other work. MT Records would do things that were obviously unsuitable for them - publishing CDs of less well-known performers, or ones that would involve so much research as to make them too expensive. Our *raison d'être* was to be 'hoping to bring important music which might never achieve a commercial publication to the small audience which values it'. Both Tony and John agreed that this all sounded fair enough.

Making CDs one-at-a-time and printing the associated labels, tray cards, inserts and booklets myself in small batches may sound terribly low-tech, but it's admirably suited to a situation like this where no-one has any money, funding is unavailable and the potential audience is minuscule. How many potential CD producers have been put off by the cost of the glass master and a minimum run of 500 copies - with a break-even point at sales figures of 300 or so? As I do it, I only have to sell around 20 to cover the cost of free copies to performers, their families, contributors and review copies - every further sale makes a tiny profit. I can make a CD which I know will only sell about 50 copies without the fear of being out of pocket at the end of the day. Nor do I have to invest a large initial sum which is then tied-up for months - or years! What I *do* have to invest is a huge amount of time printing, folding, stapling and cutting the booklets ... but I'm retired ... and no one else is going to do it! I decided that I would continue to release such CDs until I started to make a loss - and then I would stop. Fortunately, I've not yet had to. It has been, as several reviewers have commented, a labour of love.

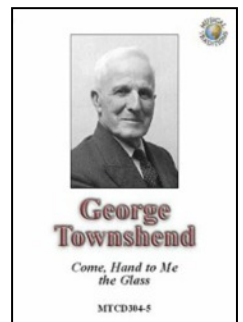
So, Bob Hart: *A Broadside* (MTCD301-2) was released in September 1998, and received considerable critical acclaim. Unsurprising, because he's a lovely singer with an interesting repertoire but, because it was a full double CD (144.5 minutes of singing) it gave a far clearer idea of what a traditional singer actually sang, and Ginnette Dunn's book *The Fellowship of Song* gave me a very clear idea of who Bob was, and what was his place in his society - making the accompanying booklet something quite special, at the time.



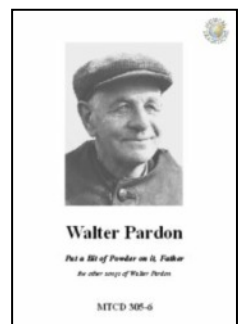
Making the CDs is not terribly time-consuming, even when it's done one-at-a-time as in this case, but the preparation of the booklet and the editing of the recordings seemed to take an age - so that I didn't feel like starting a second project for a few months. When I did, it proved even harder work than before, as I was dealing with recordings from some half dozen different sources and having to liaise with numerous other people, as well as learning how to do most of the digital sound editing myself. It also gave me my first encounter with academia, and the long search in Leeds University for the old cupboard where Ginnette Dunn's recordings were gathering dust. So it wasn't until the autumn of 1999 that the second CD - this time of Bob's near-neighbour Cyril Poacher and titled *Plenty of Thyme* (MTCD303) - appeared. This proved something of a watershed - clearly people viewed the first publication as a tentative, one-off initiative, but when they saw the second one they realised that I meant business and began to send me suggestions for further CDs ... a few even offered me their tapes! Within a couple of months I had a list of over twenty possible new projects to think about.



The first of these was a record from the late-fifties collection of Brian Matthews of Sussex. MT reader Steve Pennells told me that Brian had lugged a big domestic tape machine around the Sussex pubs, back in the day, and gave me a list of some of the singers he knew he had recorded (Brick Harber, Jim Wilson, Scan Tester, Pop Maynard, George Townshend), and kindly stated: "... if the tapes are still in existence, they should be of considerable interest to you and Musical Traditions - about the only people willing and able to deal properly with them". I contacted Brian, who sent me a box of eight tape reels containing, among much else, some good recordings of George Townshend ... indeed, he appeared to have pretty well all of George's known repertoire. This third CD progressed far more quickly as I had only one person to deal with and was learning fast how to deal with the technical aspects of the job. I was very pleased to be able to publish this disc, since I think that there have only been one or two songs from this fine Sussex singer widely available on record before. *Come, Hand to Me the Glass* (MTCD304) was released in April, 2000.



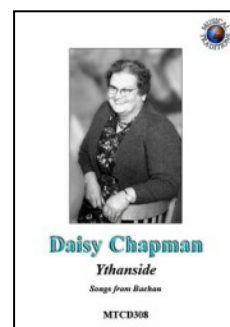
Always one to strike while the iron is hot, I had also started work on another project at more or less the same time - what eventually turned into a double CD of Walter Pardon. This was always intended as a supplement to the new Topic release and was timed so that the two could be published simultaneously. What was not intended was that it should be a double, but there was just far too much good stuff in Mike Yates' collection to ignore, so the first few months of the new millennium were just a little bit hectic for me! Mike was also extremely helpful in providing the text for a good deal of the booklet notes. *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father - the other songs of Walter Pardon* (MTCD305-6) was released in May, 2000.



At the same time, my magazine co-editor, Fred McCormick was also working on perhaps our most ambitious project to date - a double CD of the outstanding Galway *sean-nós* singer Joe Heaney. Joe had been living in London in the early-sixties and was interviewed on several occasions by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. Tapes of these interviews, totaling about five and a half hours and including some forty songs, had been made available to us by Peggy and provided both the material for the *The Road from Connemara* CDs and for the MT article on Joe containing the edited transcript of the entire interview series. Since this project was not one which could possibly be described as 'hoping to bring important music which might never achieve a commercial publication to the small audience which values it', we decided to forego some of the possibly large profits we might have made from publishing it entirely ourselves. In the interests of getting the records to as wide an audience as possible, we entered into a licensing and publication agreement with the Topic and Cló Iar-Chonnachta record labels to achieve world-wide distribution.



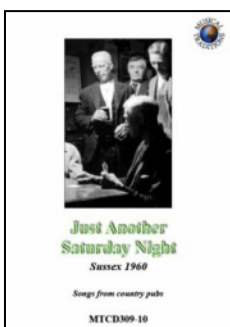
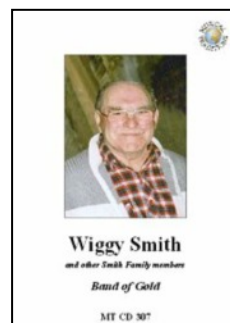
Another set of recordings I had made back in the seventies were of the Buchan singer Daisy Chapman - a great favourite of ours - and I'd wanted to produce a CD of her for some time. Despite getting access to further recordings, I had drawn a complete blank over information for the booklet. Our CDs all have a substantial booklet accompanying them, since I firmly believe that much of the enjoyment and appreciation of this music lies in having some sort of understanding of the background of the performers and the social situation which prompted and supported their music. That being the case, I wasn't prepared to publish the CD without more information on Daisy, so the project stalled for a number of months until I was lucky enough to get in contact with her niece who not only provided me with most of what was needed, but also had a family video of Daisy talking about her life and her songs! Thus a good deal of the booklet was able to be the transcript of this video - Daisy 'in her own words' - just as had been the case with Walter Pardon. I was also extremely fortunate to get the help of Peter Shephard (of Springthyme Records) whose local knowledge and input ensured a first-rate booklet, plus a further ten or so recordings. *Ythanside* (MTCD307) was published in July, 2000.



I should mention, regarding this CD, that Danny Stradling has been the sole transcriber of song texts for all our CDs and particularly, struggling with the Doric in this case, has been widely praised for the quality of her work. Tom Munnely wrote in his review of *The Hardy Sons of Dan*: 'Finally, the booklet is informative and witty, and *mirabile dictu*, the transcription of the texts is accurate to a degree which could well be emulated by those producing such booklets in the future.'

In the Cotswolds, where I live, the 'local' traditional singer was Wiggy Smith, who has been diligently recorded by Gwilym Davies and Paul Burgess; so it was fairly obvious that we should all get together in the production of a CD of his singing. Unfortunately, when it came down to looking at what was available, I found that his recorded repertoire was rather smaller than I had imagined and that a number of his songs were quite short - so that a CD would have been only 45 to 50 minutes in length. Since our Musical Traditions CDs had established a reputation of presenting a full 74 (now 80) minutes' worth of performance, I was not entirely happy about such a short production, and so asked Gwilym if he had recordings of any of the other singers in the family. He had, but not too many - so we decided to ask other collectors we knew who had recorded Smith Family members over the years, and were very pleased to get the co-operation of both Peter Shephard and Mike Yates, whose recordings were from a period well before Gwilym started work.

Thus, this (now full-length) CD contained songs by Wiggy, his father Wisdom, his uncles Denny and Biggun (Jabez), and one delightful track from two of his grandchildren, Jean Johns and Rachel Butler. Although a number of the songs may be familiar to listeners interested in the Traveller repertoire, the vast majority of these performances have never before been available. It was a great pleasure to be able to produce a record of someone still living - not just to see his pleasure at receiving the finished CD, but also for the ability to ask him details of where songs came from, where they were sung, or who a particular person in an old photo was. *Band of Gold* (MTCD308) was published in September, 2000. Subsequently, it was an almost equal pleasure to see the faces of his family when one of the CD's tracks was played during Wiggy's funeral.



In 2001, a selection of Brian Matthews' pub recordings appeared as the double CD *Just Another Saturday Night, Sussex 1960* (MTCD309-0) - possibly the only recording of real pub singing (not a specially set-up recording) ever published, and including the only known recordings of the English Gypsy Porter family, and principally, the wonderful Sarah Porter. I think that this may be one of MT Records' most 'important' releases.

Other developments:

Rather than continue to list and describe each of the subsequent *MT Records* publications at this point, I would like to detail a few important developments in the story. The first is that in 2002, noticing that my grandchildren's computer games sometimes came in DVD cases with an integral booklet, I decided to begin using this packaging format for my own CD productions. I had become aware that many customers managed to lose their booklets somehow, and that it was difficult to store the CD jewel cases and A5 booklets satisfactorily together. Unfortunately, the existing booklets wouldn't fit in the DVD cases, so I had to reformat

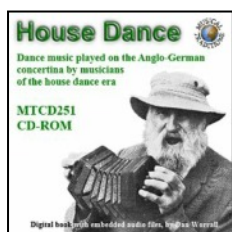
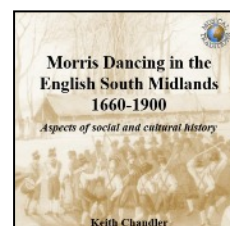
all the earlier booklets to the new size - while continuing to produce new publications; a process which took over 12 months to complete! I also had to acquire an old 'illegal' guillotine to cut the booklets to size - but, at least, it made them far tidier looking than the earlier ones.

Another change was the realisation that the *MT* booklets were beginning to be seen as equally important as the CDs, and that each time we managed to produce a really good one (Daisy Chapman, George Dunn and Lizzie Higgins being benchmark examples), the pressure to match this quality in future releases became almost unbearable - and a number of projects were substantially delayed because I didn't think that the first-draft booklets were good enough. This is a problem has stayed with us over time; for over a year I had a wonderful unpublished CD of May Bradley, the splendid Gypsy singer from the Marches, but with a booklet containing about 4 pages of information and one photograph! But it also gave me the opportunity to rewrite the booklets for my first two releases as these had originally appeared without song transcriptions or notes.

One of the things of which I have been most proud is the effect our CD booklets have had upon those produced by other record companies - it's quite rare to see a single folded insert card with little information beyond a track list these days.

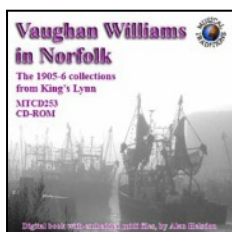
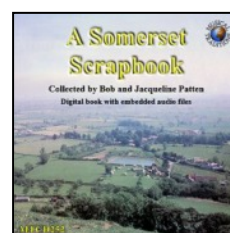
The CD-ROMs:

Another development happened in 2002, when Keith Chandler asked me to publish a 'virtual book' containing all his writings on the Cotswold Morris (MTCD250). This was pretty easy to do as it only involved text and a few photos, but was so well received that I was sure some more of the same might be a possibility for the future.



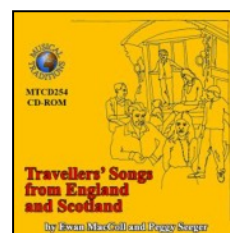
However, it was actually almost a decade until the American concertina expert, Dan Worrall, asked me to create a 'digital book with embedded sound files' featuring the music of the 'house dance' era. This resulted in the *House Dance* CD-ROM (MTCD251), after a great deal of work getting a huge project containing 13 chapters of text, 148 photos and graphics and 190 sound recordings, plus a Tutorial section, all linked together and working as intended.

But the learning involved allowed me to easily repeat the process with the 2013 re-publication in this format of the 25-year-old book and cassette, *A Somerset Scrapbook* (MTCD252), by Bob and Jacqueline Patten. Not quite a simple re-publication, as it also involved linking up 51 sound recordings.



This was followed in 2014 by Alan Helsdon's *Vaughan Williams in Norfolk* (MTCD253), a digital book with staff notation and embedded MIDI files of the 86 songs he collected in 1905-6. This was an incredible piece of work (for Alan, not for me) because Vaughan Williams rarely noted the words of the tunes he was interested in, and because he kept few notes about his itinerary. Alan pieced together a probable itinerary and found the texts most likely to have accompanied RVW's tunes. He even took photos of the various places RVW visited to do his collecting, and then removed any extraneous 21st century details from them. Amazing!

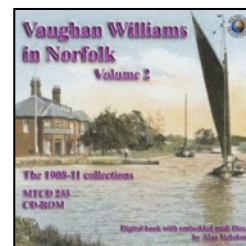
An even bigger project came up in 2015 with the republication of Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger's 1977 book *Travellers' Songs of England and Scotland*, of 374 pages! This, as MTCD254, involved not only all the work needed for *House Dance*, but also that of finding and editing the 155 sound recordings that Ewan and Peggy had made at the time. Not too much of a problem, one would have thought, since the British Library houses the MacColl/Seeger Archive in its National Sound Archive, and has always been willing to provide us with digital copies at little or no charge. Sadly, they could only find about 25 of the 155 total. Mercifully, Ruskin College Library in Oxford also has a copy, and this was being digitised when I contacted them. They were able to send me most of the missing ones, and I must thank Jim Carroll for the remaining dozen or so to complete the total. As I recall, it took slightly longer to get the recordings together than it did for all the rest of the project!



I should also mention at this point that it was one of the many *MT Records* publications that owes its very existence to all the pioneering work done back in the 1950s by Peggy Seeger, along with Ewan MacColl, and her kindness to me in allowing us to publish so much recorded material from the MacColl/Seeger Archive. I attended the *Singers' Club* most weeks for almost three years from 1964 to 1967 and, quite by chance, found

myself walking beside Peggy at a demo somewhere in London during that period. "Excuse me, but aren't you Peggy Seeger?" I said, and she recognised me from the club's audience, and we got chatting. We kept lightly in touch over the years, and when I had cause to ask her about recordings of George Dunn, many years later, she was very kind in helping out and allowing us to publish four or five tracks.

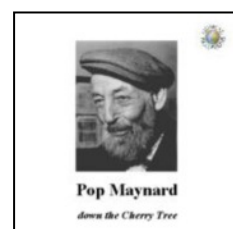
Vaughan Williams in Norfolk, volume 2 (MTCD255) followed in 2017, another digital book with staff notation and embedded MIDI files of the 93 songs RVW collected in 1908-11.



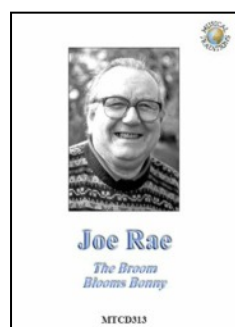
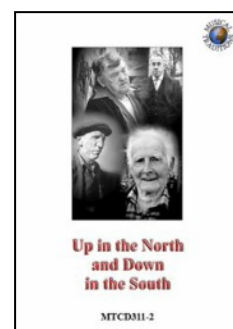
In addition, in the magazine's first 12 years, we made CD-ROMs of the entire content of the website for interested readers who didn't have Internet access, or wished to avoid the cost of paid-for dial-up access, which was all that most people could get before Broadband came along.

Back to the CDs:

2001 saw the arrival of Pop Maynard: *Down the Cherry Tree* (MTCD401-2), a simple double CD set for 'completists', containing all the recordings of this fine Sussex singer that Brian Matthews had made back in the late-fifties.

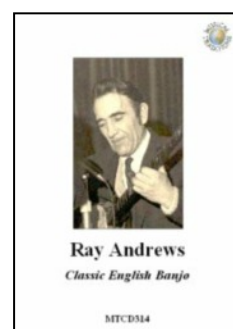


This was followed by *Up in the North, Down in the South* (MTCD311-2), the second of many great CD sets we've been privileged to publish containing recordings made by Mike Yates. I had met Mike, quite by accident, at a Traditional Song Forum meeting, probably in 1998. He told me that he'd become disillusioned by Topic's deletion of most of the LPs he'd recorded for them in the past, and that he had sold all his recording equipment and decided to devote his time to his other great interest, African art. So it was a considerable surprise - not to mention a delight - to find that Mike had been so pleased with our collaboration on the Walter Pardon project that he's bought himself some digital recording equipment and gone out collecting again. The tracks by Willie Beattie on *Up in the North* were a result of this new enthusiasm.

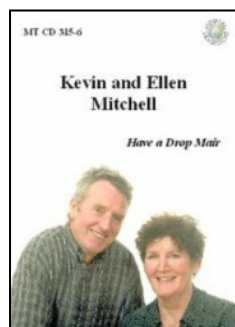


Shortly afterwards, Mike turned up with Joe Rae: *The Broom Blooms Bonny* (MTCD313), this time a full CD made on his new digital set-up, and featuring an Ayrshire singer with a very interesting repertoire, and also a blindingly good storyteller. Mike Yates is, and remains, one of our most frequent and reliable collaborators - maybe some 16 of our CDs exist wholly or in part due to his kindness. He has refused the 10% sales royalty he is due, and is satisfied with a free copy of the resulting CD publication, and the knowledge that his recordings are again available to anyone who values them.

Then, in 2002, I got an unusual project from a rather unusual source; Roger Digby suggested *Classic English Banjo* (MTCD314) by Ray Andrews, a local musician from Bristol, with recordings from all over the place, including some made at our second *English Country Music Weekend*, based in our home town of Cricklade, Wiltshire. Another Bristol friend, Geoff Woolfe, had made a study of Ray Andrews - and wrote the entirety of the very detailed booklet for me.

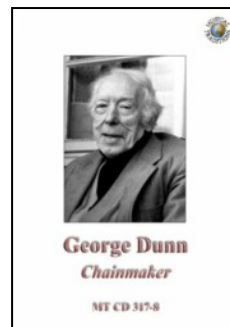


2002 also provided me with the opportunity to try making a CD from scratch, entirely on my own. The 'huge' profits MT Records had been making in these early years had enabled me to upgrade some of my equipment, and buy some new stuff - in this case, a Sony portable DAT recorder. Our friends, Kevin and Ellen Mitchell, had frequently delighted me with their singing of traditional songs and, as Kevin had only one available CD and Ellen had none, I decided to try a double CD of them both. The result was *Have a Drop Mair* (MTCD315-6), containing 20 songs from Kevin and 19 from Ellen. I was a little wary of releasing a CD of people who were not strictly 'traditional' singers ... I thought of them as 'successors' to what had gone before - but there were no problems. The CDs sold well, and some reviews even commented favourably on the quality of my recordings.

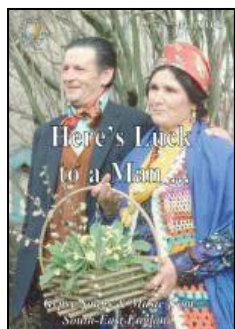


Next came a collaboration with Roy Palmer, who I knew slightly as he lived not so far away to the north of Gloucester, but had not worked with before. Roy was very interested in George Dunn, the Black Country

singer, and so George Dunn: *Chainmaker* (MTCD317-8) appeared, with Roy writing the entire exemplary booklet and providing all the photos and many of the recordings. This was another of what was quickly becoming our trade-mark, a 'complete recorded repertoire' release, enabled in this instance by the inclusion of a number of Peggy Seeger's recordings.



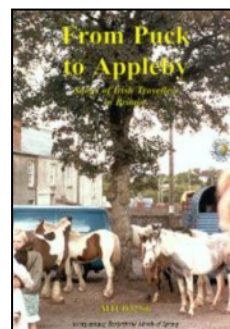
The extremely busy year of 2002 was completed by a further huge contribution by Mike Yates: *Here's Luck to a Man ...* (MTCD320) featured many of his English Gypsy recordings - nearly half of the 39 tracks being from the wonderful Mary Ann Haynes. A cracking record which is still selling well.



But the most important part of that 'huge contribution' mentioned above became the first of our new American recordings. *Far in the Mountains Vols 1 & 2* (MTCD321-2) and *Far in the Mountains Vols 3 & 4* (MTCD323-4) remain our best-selling 'un-sponsored' publications - by which I mean, other than the Mitchells' CDs and the two Jim Carroll & Pat MacKenzie Irish ones, both of whom sell them at gigs and appearances throughout the year. These four CDs, recorded during Mike Yates' three visits to the Appalachian mountains in 1979, 1980 and 1983, have proved amazingly popular, driven to some extent, I think, by Mike's aim of following the path taken by Cecil Sharp back in the early years of the 20th century, and recording the families and successors of those that Sharp had encountered more than half a century before. In 2013, Mike added *Far in the Mountains Vol 5* (MTCD513) to the canon.



In 2003, I was able to add another well-selling 2-CD Set to our catalogue, *From Puck to Appleby* (MTCD325-6) songs of Irish Travellers in England. I had attempted to work with Jim Carroll and Pat MacKenzie on the Walter Pardon CD, back in 2000, but poor communications during their move to Ireland (on my part as well as theirs) had got in the way, so it was a surprise, as well as a delight, when Jim contacted me about publishing some of the recordings they'd started making back in 1973, of Irish Travellers living over here in England. This is a really splendid set of recordings, particularly those by Mary Delaney. I'm not alone in thinking this; both Lynched (now Lankum) and Thomas McCarthy are very enthusiastic, too.

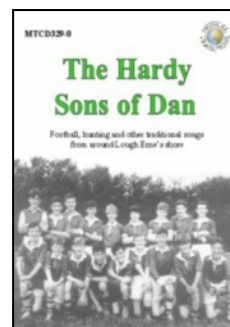


Next came Oak: *Country Songs and Music* (MTCD327-8), and I suppose that I should mention that I was a member, together with my wife Danny, of this group. It was published, not because our Topic LP *Welcome to Our Fair* was no longer available, but because I found, suddenly, that two sets of good quality recordings of Oak gigs were available to me. Naturally, we were unaware of it at the time, but it appears that the group were quite influential amongst others of our generation becoming interested in English country songs and music, some three decades earlier. So this 2-CD Set has 17 extra tracks, in addition to the 15 on the LP. Another (almost) complete recorded repertoire.



I realise it was rather stupid of me back in 2004 but, although I was *aware* that one or two of Keith Summers' recordings on *Voice of the People* came from Co Fermanagh, I didn't really *know* that he'd done so much recording there. So it came as something of a shock when he sent me two C60 cassettes of the stuff as an indicator of how he wanted his new double CD project to end up.

Even more of a shock was the sheer quality of what was on offer! Anyone who was impressed by Seán Corcoran's *Here is a Health* cassette will be sure to enjoy what Keith has put together from his six years of intermittent working in the north of Ireland: 1977-1983 recordings of 14 singers from Fermanagh and surrounding areas. It includes the likes of Maggie Murphy, Phil McDermott, James and Paddy Halpin, Mary Ann Connolly, Big John Maguire ... and is titled *The Hardy Sons of Dan - football, hunting and other traditional songs from around Lough Erne's shore* (MTCD329-0).

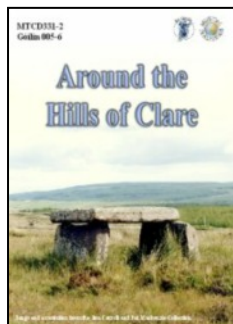
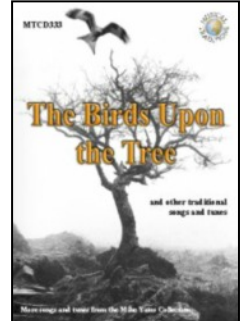


I would hasten to assure more sensitive souls that it is the 'other traditional songs' which comprise the great majority of the 37 tracks, and that there are only two football and four hunting songs included - but all are excellent examples of the genre. The 'Hardy Sons' were the 'Drumlane Sons of O'Connell' a Gaelic Football team, formed in 1886, and named after Daniel O'Connell [1775-1847] the

Kerry-born politician known as 'The Liberator' who founded the Catholic Association in 1823, aiming to secure Catholic Emancipation in Ireland.

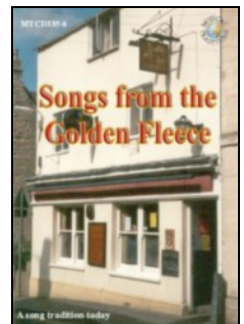
Keith Summers will be remembered for the wonderful work he did collecting songs in East Anglia and Fermanagh, and as the founding editor of the *Musical Traditions Magazine*. Those readers who have seen the booklet notes to *The Hardy Sons of Dan*, may have noted the unusually large number of names in the Credits section; this was because there was an all-out effort to get the CDs published while Keith was still alive to see them. My thanks to all concerned that the job was accomplished with a couple of weeks to spare - and Keith was absolutely delighted with the result.

Still in 2004, Mike Yates came up with *The Birds Upon the Tree* (MTCD333), a further selection from the Mike Yates Collection, featuring Fred Jordan, Packie Manus Byrne, George Fradley, Charlie Bridger, Scan Tester & Rabbidy Baxter, Archer Goode, George Spicer, Bob Blake, Debbie & Pennie Davis, Freda Palmer, Harry Cockerill, Ray Driscoll, Jacquy Gabriel, Alice Francombe, Ivor Hill & family. 22 of the 27 tracks were previously unreleased.



Then Jim Carroll and Pat MacKenzie provided me with *Around the Hills of Clare* (MTCD331-2), some forty-seven 1973-2004 recordings of 16 singers from west Co Clare, including Tom Lenihan, Nora Cleary, Straighty Flanagan, Ollie Conway, Martin Howley ... It was published in collaboration with the *An Góilín* traditional singers' club in Dublin.

The year 2005 produced only two releases, but important ones, I think. *Songs From the Golden Fleece* (MTCD335-6) was my second self-recorded effort, and presented some of the singers from the session just across the road from our house in Stroud, and subtitled *A song tradition today*. I felt it was important that the purchasers of our traditional recordings should realise that the same sort of thing was still going on in the 21st century.



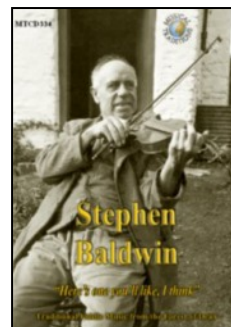
Much, if not most, revivalist singing is to gig audiences which are largely different each time. Having got the song as the singer wants it, there's no particular incentive to continue to change and develop it further. Compare this with a traditional (southern English, at least) singer's performance situation: for the most part there was none of today's separation between singer and listeners - no 'audience' in the modern sense, just other singers and interested family, or community, members; everyone had a share in the ownership of the songs even when protocols meant that they couldn't sing them - "that's one of our songs, though it's not one of mine"; the group make-up was almost wholly static. Clearly, this is a markedly different context to that experienced by most revival singers today. Most, but not all ... Some of us find ourselves in singing contexts which are - if you make allowances for today's different social organisation and transport options - not too dissimilar to those found in the 'singing pubs' of half a century ago - which is what these two CDs were intended to show.

I know what it's like to be in the same singing company regularly, and to sing two or three songs most weeks for a number of years. The room is full of your peers, and all are singers; you have every incentive to try and prevent your songs becoming boring to the rest of the company, not to mention yourself; to develop them, to improve your performance of them. You also, inevitably, pick up some of the stylistic traits of the group as a whole, which changes the way you sing. This, I think, was what may have happened in places like Blaxhall, Snape, Eastbridge, Catfield - and on the trawlers? and in the bothies? This may have been how traditional performances developed their texture - and why they bear so much close inspection.

There is another factor to bear in mind as well. So many studio recordings seem too 'careful' or 'rehearsed' - more concerned with getting it right for the CD than with getting it *right!* Clearly, having to take particular care over a performance is likely to rule out the sort of inventiveness that a relaxed social situation would normally allow; even encourage. And as to rehearsal ... well, that just makes you sound rehearsed!

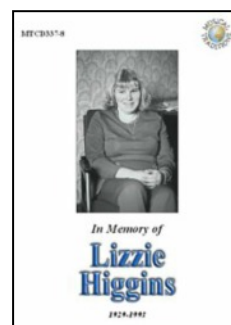
A singer in the traditional situation didn't have these concerns - s/he could say, with justification, "Well, you've heard me sing that better, and you've heard me sing it worse, too. And I'm pretty sure you'll hear me sing it even better still - maybe next time!" And you would know that this was as true for them as it was for you.

The other release that year was Stephen Baldwin: *Here's One You'll Like ...* (MTCD334). It was my first collaboration with Phil Heath-Coleman, a fiddler I'd exchanged emails with, but never met. It proved to be a very interesting project - and a rewarding one, as it became another 'complete recorded repertoire' release, and it spawned several other CDs in future years. It was also a very pleasurable one - as Phil wrote the entire booklet with little in the way of input from me! Finally, it enabled me to correct an error in the folk consciousness that had been planted there by Peter Kennedy.



I had been surprised to find that the Russell Wortley recordings of Stephen Baldwin showed him consistently playing in the keys of C and F, while those published by Peter Kennedy were all in G or D, and were all played a bit faster. A bit of research revealed that the early Kennedy cassette version had also all been in C or F, but turned out to be in G or D on the later Folktrax CD, which was what most people had bought. Clearly, Kennedy had speeded up the sound files on the CD - presumably to make it easier for players to learn them by ear. Nothing at all wrong with that - except that *nobody was told* of this alteration in what was supposed to be an archive recording of a traditional performer. We re-formatted the sound files into the keys of C and F, and found that they were now almost exactly the same speed as the Russell Wortley recordings.

2006 was a quiet year, with only Lizzie Higgins: *In Memory of ...* (MTCD337-8) released, but which turned out to have another 'benchmark' booklet. It involved a good deal of work to get the sound files for the CDs, including trips to the School of Scottish Studies, where we found that many of the tapes were suffering from 'sticky tape syndrome' and were thus un-usable. But in the end, with some last minute additions from Peter Shephard and Peter Cooke, we got almost 160 minutes of recordings of this lovely singer (who we had booked at our King's Head Folk Club in London, back in 1970). The 'benchmark' booklet came from Dr Ian Olson, who had known Lizzie for many years and did a wonderful job.



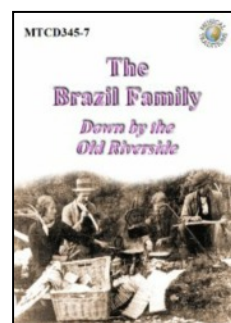
2007 was a much busier year, with a total of one treble and three double CDs published. The first double was a collection of Keith Summers' East Anglian collections: Keith Summers: *A Story to Tell* (MTCD339-0). It was a splendid story, told in the booklet in Keith's own hilarious prose, and on the CDs by 75 terrific recordings.

Next came four 'Folk-songs of the Upper South' American CDs; *Meeting's a Pleasure Vols 1 & 2* (MTCD505-6) and *Meeting's a Pleasure Vols 3 & 4* (MTCD507-8), Mark Wilson's superb compilations from the Rounder North American Traditions Series, which Rounder Records, under new ownership, had decided to ditch.



Four more of these invaluable CDs were also in the pipeline, so I decided to create a new '500 Series' to accommodate all our American releases - necessitating the renumbering of the 2002 *Far in the Mountains* sets as MTCD501-2 and MTCD503-4. Sadly, the *Meeting's a Pleasure* sets have never sold half as well as the *Far in the Mountains* ones despite, in my opinion, being just as good and interesting!

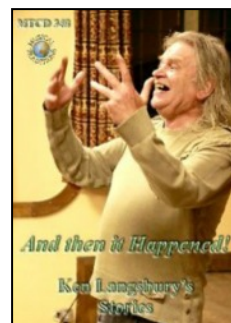
And finally came our very first 3-CD Set - *The Brazil Family: Down by the Old Riverside* (MTCD345-7), a huge compilation of recordings by Gloucester's Brazil family members, including two recorded in the berryfields of Blairgowrie. Almost all of the 99 tracks had never before been heard by any but a handful of enthusiasts, let alone published. All the numerous contributors of sound files, text and photos worked seamlessly, and this enormous project came together far more easily than some single CDs! Pete Shephard's contribution of text and recordings deserves special praise - without it, these CDs would never exist.



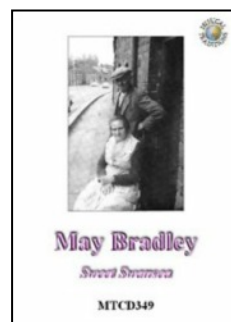
2008 might be seen as an exceptional year, in that we had no releases of *traditional* music or song, but there was one publication with which I was particularly associated. My dance band, Phoenix, published its first CD *after the fire* (FBR 001). Almost all of the tunes on the CD were traditional in origin, and relatively so in style, and so I felt this release was probably better than having a year with none at all. What's more, the music is pretty good, too.



Indeed, we almost had a year with no releases at all in 2009, only managing to publish one CD of stories - Ken Langsbury: *And then it Happened!* (MTCD348) - but was a bloody good one! I first met Ken Langsbury in 1966 when Danny and I and Arthur Knevett did a weekend mini-tour of Swindon and Cheltenham folk clubs. He immediately impressed us with his singing style, his broad accent and his wonderful stories. We met on numerous occasions subsequently and, when we moved to Wiltshire in 1973, Ken was one of the first people we called on. When the weekly session in Cheltenham's *Old Swan Inn* gave birth to a band, one of the most enjoyable things we did was acting as back-up to Ken at several of his gigs.



In 2010 I published two of the aforementioned NATS CDs: Roger Cooper: *Essence of Old Kentucky* (MTCD510) and Art Galbraith: *Dixey Blossoms* (MTCD509). And, in addition, one of our most important CD releases, the complete recorded repertoire of the truly wonderful Gypsy singer from the Marches, May Bradley: *Sweet Swansea* (MTCD349). I was very lucky to be given access to and publication permission from the family of Fred Hamer; the only person May would let record her. As mentioned earlier, this CD sat unissued for some time because the booklet was so meagre but, in the end, Keith Chandler was able to add substantially to it and we ended up with 20 pages - though, unfortunately, still only the one photo.



2011 was a rather different matter; we were able to publish two more of the NATS recordings - Nimrod Workman: *Mother Jones' Will* (MTCD512) and Morgan MacQuarrie: *Over the Cabot Trail* (MTCD511). I was particularly pleased to publish the latter as it contains some of the nicest Cape Breton music I've yet heard, played in a very old style by a man no older than me, who thought nothing of the new 'Celtic renaissance' movement, but liked to hang out with the old guys of his father's generation who, he thought, were much more fun! In doing so, he picked up their style of playing and their repertoire. This is a very lovely record.

As well as that, Paul Carter, the early Topic recordist, wrote to me saying that he was disappointed at how few of Sarah Makem's songs appeared in the *Voice of the People* 20-CD set, and that he had five tracks not used on the 1968 LP, and could I do anything with them? Since Topic had only recently acquired the rights to the Peter Kennedy Archive, which contained quite a number of recordings of other songs by Sarah Makem, this seemed an opportune moment to pursue this project.

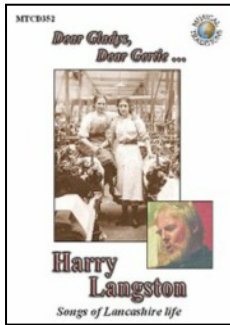
'Not much has been written about Sarah Makem, and some of what there is, is sadly inaccurate' wrote Aideen D'Arcy in the Acknowledgements section of her Case Study, compiled for the South Armagh Genealogy Project, in 2007. I can vouch for this; when I began assembling information for these CDs' booklet, all I could find were the same few paragraphs, recycled over a dozen websites. Indeed, it was not until I stumbled upon the South Armagh Genealogy Project website that I found anything different or more substantial. Sadly, the Project closed down a few years before, but I was able to trace their genealogist, Feargal O'Donnell, who managed to get me the full text of Aideen D'Arcy's Case Study. This was indeed a real goldmine of information, and produced much of the booklet.

Also, Fintan Vallely put me in touch with Stéphanie Makem, Sarah's great-grand-daughter, who sings many of Sarah's songs, and who was able to help with both photographs and recordings from the family, and some interesting recollections, which I have added to the D'Arcy text. These recordings are fascinating, since many were recorded when Sarah was in her seventies, or even early eighties, and many are of local and unusual songs which, it appears, Sarah never recorded for any of the 'collectors' who visited her. They were made on various cassette recorders, so the technical quality is not very good (we have cleaned them up as much as possible), but they do enable us to hear another section of Sarah's repertoire, and allow us to fulfil MT Records' remit of presenting as full an account of a singer's musical life as is possible.

Further, Nicholas Carolan at the Irish Traditional Music Archive in Dublin kindly supplied me with 33 recordings made by the American collector, Diane Hamilton, on reel-to-reel tape in the Makem family home in Keady, Co Armagh, in 1955, 1956 and 1962, together making up almost half of the songs on these records. My thanks to Donal Lunny for his immediate permission to use these recordings. As with the family recordings mentioned above, some of these are of songs not recorded elsewhere, again broadening our knowledge of Sarah's repertoire. The final result was our second 3-CD Set, Sarah



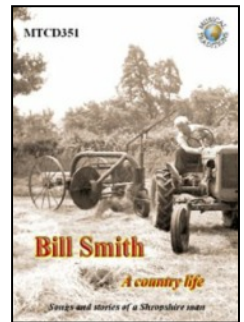
Makem: *As I Roved Out* (MTCD353-5). I'm pleased to say that this has proved to be one of our 'best sellers', as well as making us many new friends in Ireland.



Also in 2011, we published Harry Langston: *Dear Gladys, Dear Gertie ...* (MTCD352). Harry is one of our regulars at our Stroud singing session and, as well as singing traditional songs, has a long-standing interest in Lancashire dialect poetry, which he turns into songs by writing the most beautiful tunes for them. Nothing traditional at all on this CD ... but lots of glorious words and music. Another one I recorded myself.

I mentioned Phil Heath-Coleman with reference to the Stephern Baldwin CD, and he was largely responsible for Fred 'Pip' Whiting: *Old Time Hornpipes ...* (MTCD350), a lovely record of old country fiddle music by a left-handed player from Suffolk.

Then came what might be one of our most interesting publications - Bill Smith: *A Country Life* (MTCD351). Mediation is a word we encounter quite a lot these days - in our context it means selecting songs or tunes to suit an intended audience. That doesn't sound too bad - not like the old days, when Sharp *et al* deliberately changed words and arranged the songs for the middle-class drawing room, with piano-forte accompaniment! Whilst it's possible to understand their motivations, it's also apparent that much which they actually heard back then has been effectively lost to us for ever.



But by the time that most of the sound recordings of traditional performers were made, collectors had realised their predecessors' mistakes - and the recordings made it possible to hear exactly what was sung or played. Or did they? Because almost every collector, amateur or professional, made their own decisions about what to actually record, and what to ignore, of their informants' repertoires. Moreover, a number of collectors can be quoted as saying, approximately: "S/he soon realised what sort of songs I was interested in, and thereafter only offered them for recording."

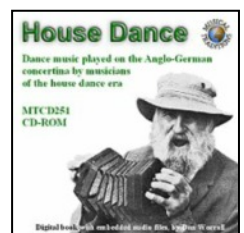
Then, when record companies began issuing these recordings, they also made decisions about which items of those that the collectors offered them would make a suitable, and saleable, LP or CD ... products which rarely exceeded 45 minutes duration! Thus, the question; how much did we know of what else the traditional singers actually sang, when there had been so much selection and mediation along the way?

When I published the first MT CD of Bob Hart, back in 1998, I had access to about 60 recordings of him, and it seemed a shame to omit any of them, so I made it a double CD - mainly because I was fond of Bob and liked his singing! Only later did I realise that it was really rather important to include as much as possible of a performer's recorded work - and avoid the mediation which had been the usual practice of record producers up to that point. All further MT releases continued this practice - to include all (or as much as was reasonably practicable) of a performer's recorded repertoire. I believe that only this approach affords the performers the proper respect they are rightfully due.

Bill Smith was a Shropshire farm worker (and briefly a farmer in his own right), and a contemporary of Fred Jordan. Bill's son, Andrew, decided to record him in the late-1970s. Andrew wasn't a song collector, and didn't choose what to record and what to omit - he just recorded what Bill remembered: songs, recitations, stories, jokes ... The mediation of past collectors and record producers is clearly demonstrated by the fact that Steve Roud had to allocate no fewer than 21 new Roud numbers for some of the 65 items you'll find on this CD.

This makes this CD perhaps the only available example of the completely unmediated repertoire of an ordinary countryman, from the centre of England, in the middle of the 20th century. I think that this fact makes Bill Smith: *A Country Life* one of the most important CDs we have ever produced!

In 2012 we published the aforementioned *House Dance* CD-ROM (MTCD251), a difficult job, technically, but well worthwhile in view of similar projects which came along later, and because it was a fascinating look at a period when dance music was the 'world music' of its day.



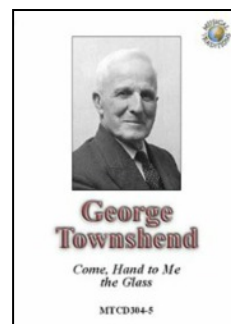
Then came the opportunity of converting George Townshend's MTCD304 into a double CD (MTCD304-5). I made a CD of the fine Sussex singer, George Townshend, back in 2000 but, as we were constrained to 70 minutes duration CDs in those days, I made the final track as a compilation of a verse each

of five songs which were interesting, but not very well recorded. When the 80 minute CDs came along, I wondered about having a look at reinstating them in full ... but never got round to it!

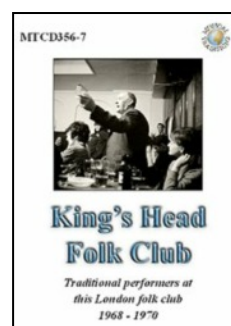
I revisited those old Brian Matthews tapes in 2012, and found that, with more modern de-noising programs, and help with this from Jim Ward of Country Branch Records, I was been able to resurrect those 5 songs - and another 5 more - by George:

The Brickmaker's Dream (Roud 971); *The Burial of Sir John Moore* (Roud 1979); *General Munro* (Roud 1166); *The Gypsy's Warning* (Roud 2141); *I Wish I was Single Again* (Roud 437); *John Barleycorn* (Roud 3792); *The Merry Mountain Band/Horn* (Roud 23596); *The Old Rustic Bridge* (Roud 1764); *Pleasant & Delightful* (Roud 660); *The Anchor's Weighed* (Roud 23595).

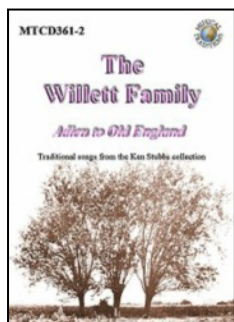
As this made far more than will fit onto a single CD, I was wondering about turning it into a double by adding some further recordings. After some enquiries amongst colleagues who might know about such things, I got an e-mail from Reg Hall saying: "I have got Bill Leader's copy of Ken Stubbs' tapes. I own the rights and you are welcome to use them." The result is that we then had alternative recordings of 18 of George's songs - and a toast. So the new version of the George Townshend set had CD One as it was, but with the final 5-song compilation being replaced by full versions of four of them. CD Two starts with the remaining six 'extra' songs, followed by all the Ken Stubbs recordings. A very satisfactory outcome.



Finally, in 2012, and again with the use of more modern de-noising programs, I was able to produce a double CD of recordings I and others had made of the traditional guests we had booked at the folk club we ran in Islington in the late-Sixties - King's Head Folk Club: *Traditional Performers* (MTCD356-7). It was a delight to hear all those voices again after so many years, even though it sold very few copies.

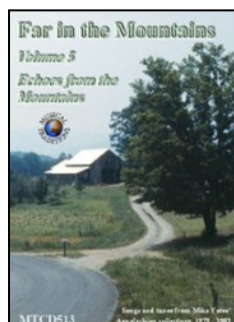
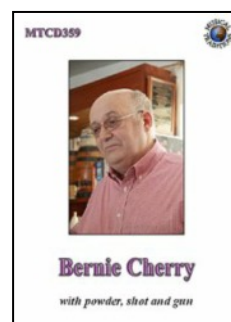


In 2013 came another 2-CD Set I had been looking forward to - The Willett Family: *Adieu to Old England* (MTCD361-2). When, in 1963, Topic Records released their first ever LP of English traditional singers, it was The Willett Family whose songs were presented. On the front page of the inserted booklet, it stated: 'Topic Records Ltd acknowledges the help of Ken Stubbs, of Lingfield, Surrey, who first located and recorded the Willetts.' Musical Traditions Records was - 50 years later - very pleased to be able to present those first Ken Stubbs recordings of Tom, Chris and Ben Willett, with thanks to Reg Hall for making them available, and to Jim Ward for noise reduction on the old tapes.



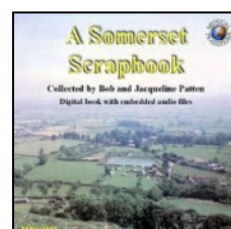
In addition, for the sake of presenting the Willett Family's complete recorded repertoire, we added four songs not found amongst these 31 recordings. With thanks to Topic Records we're pleased to be able to add recordings of Tom Willett singing *Died for Love*, made by Paul Carter in 1962, and Chris Willett singing *Once I Was A Servant* and *The American Stranger*, made by Mike Yates in 1978. And we also added Mike's recording of Chris singing *A-Swinging Down the Lane* from MTCD320.

Another of my own recordings followed - Bernie Cherry: *With Powder, Shot and Gun* (MTCD359). I was very pleased to publish this; Bernie is an old friend and a fine singer with a very interesting repertoire. Needless to say, it didn't sell very well, but did get him a gig at the FifeSing event the next year. It really does seem a shame that, after years of producing some very fine CDs, purchasers don't trust us when we come up with someone they've not heard of!



As I mentioned earlier, we also published Mike Yates' *Far in the Mountains Vol 5* (MTCD513) this year, which has sold fairly well, though on nothing like the scale of the earlier volumes.

Finally in 2013 came *A Somerset Scrapbook* CD-ROM (MTCD252), Bob and Jaqueline Patten's original 120-page book and cassette release from back in 1987, though fundamentally updated and re-formatted for release in this new medium.



In 2014 we really went to town with a series of very important releases. It had been ages since I decided to do a re-release of the Leader Records / BBC recordings of Cecilia Costello, but the amount of work involved was far greater than I could possibly have imagined.

A bit of history, for those readers unfamiliar with the situation. Shortly after the publication of the 1975 Leader Records' LP *Cecilia Costello*, the company ceased trading, and was subsequently bought by Dave Bulmer of Celtic Music - though few of the records were ever re-released. Following Bulmer's death that summer, questions were raised regarding the fate of the Leader catalogue. I was interested in some of the traditional records, and realised that the 13 BBC recordings of Cecilia Costello were now out of copyright, so I began looking for further material to complete a full CD (80 minutes) of her singing. I was surprised to find that so much existed; mainly because Cecilia Costello was recorded by no fewer than five collectors that I have become aware of:

Peter Kennedy on 11th August 1951

Marie Slocombe and Pat Shuldham-Shaw on 30th November 1951

Charles Parker and Pamela Bishop in June and August 1967

Jon Raven in July 1967

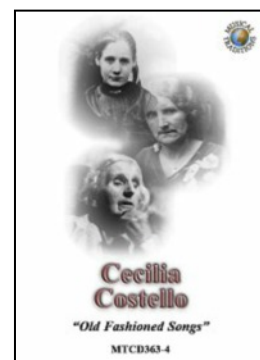
Roy Palmer early in 1971

Kennedy and Slocombe accounted for some 29 published recordings (although it soon became clear that 6 of Kennedy's recordings were actually just doctored copies of those made by Slocombe), plus a further 63 duplicate recordings and pieces of speech. Charles Parker provided a further 163 recordings, Jon Raven a further 26, and Roy Palmer 84 more. This gave a total of 365 recordings of some 85 different songs, each of which had to be listened to and compared with the numerous other similar recordings, to find the 'best' version to include on the CDs.

As well as that, only the Roy Palmer recordings were directly available - all the others resided in the archives of various public institutions. While this was in no way problematic, it did take a considerable amount of time and patience in the liaison work involved. The 'ready by Christmas' deadline I'd been working towards clearly became impossible to meet. In truth, I wonder if the project would have been finished at all, were it not for the sterling work by Patrick Costello (Cecilia's grandson) in listening to each of the 27 CDs in the Library of Birmingham archive containing the Charles Parker material, to locate all the viable song recordings. It took him almost a month!

The recordings dated from three distinct periods: the early Fifties, when she was 67; the late Sixties, when she was 83; and the early Seventies, when she was 87. Mrs Costello's voice and memory were in quite different condition on each of these three occasions. Also, it would seem that the 'mediation' so often encountered in the earlier years of the Folk Revival, ensured that it was the 'folk songs' in her repertoire which were recorded by Kennedy and Slocombe, while the later collectors encountered few of these, but lots of music hall and 'pop' songs from her youth. Accordingly, I decided to make CD1 contain only the 1951 recordings, and CD2 the later material. The reason for this was that I felt that an interesting recording of an old pop song, more recited than sung in 1971, might sit rather uncomfortably next to a brilliant performance of a classic ballad, recorded twenty years earlier, when Mrs Costello was in her prime.

In the end, we are able to publish two CDs, each running to almost 80 minutes duration. The first contained 26 Kennedy and Slocombe recordings, presented in the order they appeared on the Leader and Folktrax releases - the 24 songs plus two pieces of speech. The second contained 63 songs and fragments, a few of which have pieces of speech associated with them, and none of which have been previously released.



The Folklore Society Non-Print Media Award:

Then something quite unexpected happened. I was asked to suggest one of our CDs as an entry for the Folklore Society Non-Print Media Award. This is a biennial prize established by the Folklore Society to encourage the study of folklore, to help improve the standard of folklore publications in media other than print in Britain and Ireland, and to establish the Folklore Society as an arbiter of excellence. For the purposes of the award, 'folklore studies' are interpreted broadly, to include all aspects of traditional and popular culture, narrative, beliefs, customs and folk arts, including studies with a literary, anthropological, linguistic, sociological

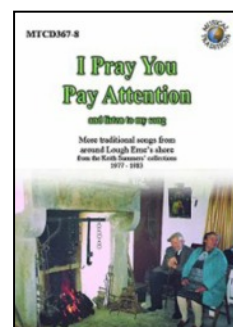


or geographical bias. Each year there are three judges appointed by the Society's Committee. The winning publication will be that which, in the opinion of the judges, has made the most distinguished contribution to folklore studies in the years in question.

The award is open to all non-print media English-language publications on folklore in a permanent and durable form (CD, DVD etc), having their first, original and initial publication in the United Kingdom or Republic of Ireland in the two-year period from 1 June 2012 to 31 May 2014, for award in November 2014, and for subsequent two-year periods, beginning 1 June 2014. The Cecilia Costello 2-CD Set's publication fell happily just before the 31 May 2014 deadline.

And I'm truly proud to tell you that our 2-CD Set, Cecilia Costello : "*Old Fashioned Songs*" (MTCD363-4) came first of a short-list of 5 entries. The Award was presented during the FLS's lecture and prize-giving event at The Warburg Institute, London.

Our next publication was *I Pray You Pay Attention and listen to my song* (MTCD367-8), our follow-up to *The Hardy Sons of Dan*. Unfortunately, Keith Summers was no longer alive to select the recordings to include, so that task fell to Paul Marsh, who had collaborated with Keith on the earlier publication and was a close friend. Paul did a magnificent job, including contacting many of the singers and their families, and liaising with Jenny Hicks about the who, where and when of the un-labeled tapes he had to work with.

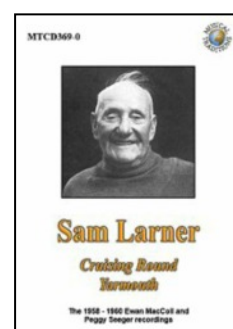


Then came *Caroline Hughes: Sheep-Crook and Black Dog* (MTCD365-6), containing 91 recordings of one of England's most unique and outstanding singers. MT Records were extremely proud to be able to publish the rarely heard 1963 and 1966 recordings of 'Queen' Caroline Hughes made by Ewan MacColl, Peggy Seeger and Charles Parker. In addition, we included a few songs from her husband, brother-in-law, daughter, and Emily Baker, another singer in their Traveller group. This was the third CD Set for which Peggy Seeger has allowed MT Records to use recordings from the MacColl/Seeger Archive and, in this instance, also to quote at length from the splendid book *Travellers' Songs from England and Scotland*. I must here express my (our!) gratitude towards her generosity in this respect.



Caroline Hughes was a legendary Gypsy singer, thought by many to be the finest exponent of the art. All her best-known songs were here - a total of 91 songs and fragments - 60 of which don't appear on the recent Topic CD, including eight never before heard, which had to be allocated new Roud Numbers. If the fragmentary nature of some of her songs should displease you, just enjoy the wonderful tunes, the variable verse lengths, long and short lines, and her brilliant musicianship.

And finally - yes I did say that 2014 was a pretty special year - we published Sam Larner: *Cruising Round Yarmouth* (MTCD3690). Once again, through the kindness and generosity of Peggy Seeger, and - just in time for that Christmas present - I was very pleased to announce the publication of *Cruising Round Yarmouth* - a double CD of all the recordings Ewan MacColl, Peggy Seeger and Charles Parker made of Sam Larner in 1958-60. The more-or-less complete recorded repertoire of this wonderful Norfolk singer is here - 65 songs and fragments, plus four spoken passages, give a great impression of Sam's life and times. But, most of all, it's the startling quality of his singing which is so impressive. This was all backed up by a truly splendid biography of Sam's life and legacy by Chris Holderness.



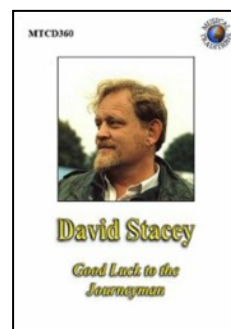
And, since its publication fell within the Folklore Society Non-Print Media Award 1 June 2014 to 31 May 2016 window, I entered it for that as well. And, damn me if we didn't win again!

I'm glad to say that 2015 wasn't *such* a busy year, but we did almost manage to release five CDs, though they were all singles. Two of them took quite a lot of work to produce, while the other three were delightfully simple.

As I wrote in my 2014 Review of the Year, 'Unfortunately, apart from the above-mentioned CD-ROM, and one other possible CD publication, I don't know of anything else lurking in the shadows for the future.' That CD-ROM, *Vaughan Williams in Norfolk* (MTCD253), was published in early-January - but other things did not

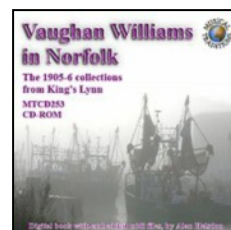
go to plan on the new releases front. The 'one other possible CD' failed to materialise, and another CD-ROM project had taken over seven months in preparation, and was still not quite ready by Christmas.

However, in July another CD popped up completely unexpectedly, David Stacey - *Good Luck to the Journeyman* (MTCD360) is unusual in a number of ways. David was born and brought up in Saffron Walden, Essex, in 1943. From his twenties he spent many years alternating between archaeology in Israel and apple and hop picking in Kent. There he met Mary Ann Haynes' son Ted, and Nelson Ridley's nephew Henry - and through them, many other Gypsies and Travellers in the area. He was privy to many of the sing-songs they participated in, and learned a good number of their songs. Back home, in later life, he encountered a number of other Travellers in north Essex and Cambridgeshire, and a local traditional singer, Walter Jarvis - learning more songs on the way - in addition to the repertoire he'd acquired from books and records. Most of the songs were in slightly unfamiliar versions (to me, at least) with some excellent variations of the tunes, and have been learned directly - face to face - from traditional singers.



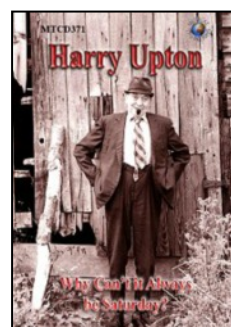
As with our excellent Bernie Cherry CD of 2013, David Stacey is not a traditional singer, but might well have been considered one if he'd been born 20 years earlier. This was a most interesting and unusual CD. And it was easy because David had made a CD of his singing as a present for a girlfriend, and all I had to do was to copy it!

The CD-ROM mentioned above was *Vaughan Williams in Norfolk* (MTCD253), and January 7th 2015 was exactly 110 years since Ralph Vaughan Williams made his first song collecting trip to King's Lynn and environs. To mark and celebrate this event, we published this CD-ROM - a 'digital book with embedded midi files' dealing with Ralph Vaughan Williams' 1905-06 collecting trips to King's Lynn - *Vaughan Williams in Norfolk* (MTCD253).



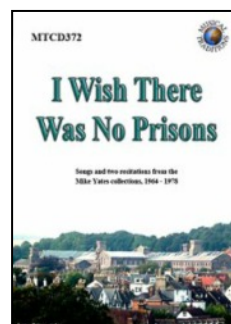
This excellent piece of work, by Alan Helsdon, contains staff notations, texts and playable MIDI files of the 90 items RVW collected - 73 songs in 86 versions, plus 4 dance tunes. As well as an Itinerary and Narrative of his trip, it has remarkable mini-biographies of the 20 singers he collected from. Further, due to RVW being far more interested in the tunes than the words of the songs, he seldom noted these - so the author has hunted through available sources to provide the most likely versions of the texts concerned, and furnished a hugely detailed Sources page.

The other easy publications were, firstly Harry Upton: *Why Can't it Always be Saturday?* (MTCD371). Harry Upton was born in 1900 in Hove, Sussex. His father, Frank, from whom he learned most of his songs, was a shepherd from West Blatchington and must have been born c.1865 and, to Harry's knowledge, had been a shepherd on the South Downs all his life. By the time he was 13, Harry had left school and was working as his father's shepherd boy. He worked with his father for about five years and then left to become a carter, working with horses on the Dyke Hills, beyond Brighton. Harry worked with horses until his marriage in 1927 when he moved to Balcombe to work as a tractor driver, a job that was to last for 40 years. Although officially retired, Harry spent a further seven years rearing calves on the Balcombe Estate until he finally retired in 1975.



He was collected by Ken Stubbs, Mervyn Plunkett and Peter Kennedy, though it was only Mike Yates who he let record more than a couple of his songs. This CD contains almost all of the songs he recorded, including all of those from the Topic anthology LPs, *Sussex Harvest - A Collection of Traditional Songs from Sussex* (Topic 12T258), *Green Grow the Laurels - Country Singers from the South* (Topic 12TS285) and the limited edition LP of Harry's other songs, released to accompany an article Mike wrote for Traditional Music magazine. This was *Why Can't it Always be Saturday?* (Topic SP 104). Only 250 copies were pressed, and the album soon sold out. (Imagine selling 250 copies of a little-known traditional singer's CD today!)

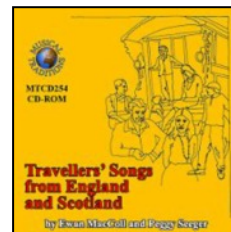
The second easy one was *I Wish There Was No Prisons* (MTCD372). The Harry Upton CD did not have enough room to include all of Harry's songs - *Buttercup Joe* and *The Banks of Sweet Dundee* were omitted - and so we thought that a follow-up CD, containing these two tracks, might be needed. Mike Yates decided that the remaining tracks on this CD should be relevant to Harry and his songs. Accordingly, some of the songs are



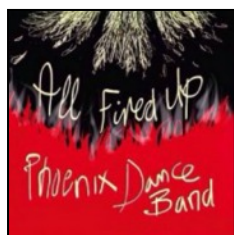
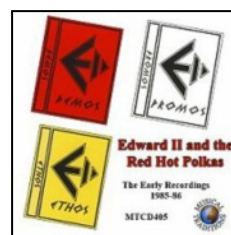
versions of songs which Harry sang, others are sung by people that Harry knew and, finally, there songs that Harry would probably have recognised as being the sort of thing that he liked to sing.

So, just in time for that Christmas present, *I Wish There Was No Prisons* (MTCD372) contained tracks from Harry Upton, Johnny Doughty, George Spicer, Louise Fuller, George Attrill, Fred Jordan, William Harding, Bill Whiting, Percy Bridges, The Cantwell Family, Alice Green, Cyril Nunn, Freda Palmer, Son Townsend, Fred Welfare, and Ruth and Clare Pinner. None of these recordings were currently available on CD.

2016 began with the release of the CD-ROM project 'which took over seven months in preparation, and was still not quite ready by Christmas' and was *Travellers' Songs from England and Scotland* CD-ROM (MTCD254), which has been mentioned earlier. Despite being a pretty complicated project technically, it took slightly longer to get the recordings together than it did for all the rest of the project! All that work, and it's still only sold about 100 copies.



Sadly, it appeared that there were no more caches of traditional song or music recordings up-coming in 2016, so I made up for it by releasing two CDs by revivalists. First, in February, came Edward II and the Red Hot Polkas : *The Early Recordings* (MTCD405), which happened because Dion Cochrane, one of the EII original members, asked me for a copy of the *Demos* cassette, as his tape had broken and, having to record it in real time, it meant that I got the chance to listen to it for the first time in 30 years. I was gratified to hear how good the band sounded - so I then played the other two cassettes as well - and continued to be happily surprised. Remembering how well the Oak CDs had sold (over 340 copies!), I thought that at least some MT readers might enjoy listening to these early E II recordings as well.



The second one, in June was, ten years after their first CD, *after the fire*, my then present band, Phoenix, returned with *All Fired Up*, released on our sister label, Firebird Records FBR 005, containing 43 more less-than-well-known tunes, forged into 15 new dance sets by several years of playing for dancing at numerous clubs and festivals.

MT Records & Magazine - and the future:

Getting towards the end of the story, Let's step away from the record releases for a moment and have a look at something rather different about MT Records and Magazine - and the future.

Having passed my 'allotted span of three-score years and ten' some while ago, I had been giving some thought to what I'd like to happen when I die - or when I can no longer manage to produce MT CDs and edit the magazine. This was not any sort of emergency - but I wanted to get the future sorted out (and do the necessary work involved) well in advance.

Rather obviously, passing the whole thing on to someone else to run is the most obvious solution. But this might be something of a poisoned chalice, in that there's really quite a lot of work involved - for very little return. And that's just for making and selling the existing CDs, let alone producing any new ones.

Of course, setting up a system to enable online sales of the individual tracks as downloadable MP3 files is a possibility. I'm very much against this idea, as has been outlined in the 'About' page in MT Magazine for a number of years. It turns the music into a mere commodity, does not ensure that the complete repertoire of a performer is delivered, nor that the booklet would ever be read by the purchaser. It would not afford the performers the respect I believe they richly deserve.

But I'd be very concerned about passing on all the formatting, printing, stapling, and guillotining work demanded by our 44-page booklets, to someone else. I'm also - tangentially - concerned that the current very low sales of our CDs in the present economic climate may be being caused, in part, by the fairly hefty £16 price-tag of most of our releases. So I was considering other ways of presenting MT material, which could minimise the work involved, and lower the selling price.

As well as 'normal' music CDs with booklets, some of my recent releases have been CD-ROMs of 'digital books with embedded sound files'. As you may realise, if you've encountered them, these are really just very

long articles in HTML format with links to MP3 sound files. They are really just big versions of MT Magazine articles, loaded onto a CD.

It struck me that I could very easily present the contents of a CD booklet as that 'very long article' with the links to all the CD's audio files as full-length MP3s. Now I do know that MP3s are not as high resolution as CD audio - but since almost none of the 50-odd-year-old sound files I get to use are remotely 'HI-FI' in the first place, I don't believe that any listener would be able to tell the difference.

Publishing MT CDs in this way:

1. Would mean that all our releases would fit on one, rather than two or three, CDs.
2. This could be packaged in a regular 'jewel case' rather than the expensive DVD cases.
3. Would require the physical printing of just two pieces of paper for the Insert and Tray, as opposed to a 44-page booklet.
4. Would result in a product which could sell for less than normal and still be profitable.
5. Being both smaller and lighter, would cost considerably less to post to purchasers.

Furthermore, the publication of any future new CDs would be so much simpler: all the time-consuming and headache-inducing formatting issues involved in producing the paper booklets would be avoided. However: many people listen to music on iPads or tablets these days. A digital version of the CD-ROM's contents could be made available as an online download for less than the price of the CD-ROM - though it would involve the HTML file and its associated Graphics and Sound folders all being put into the same folder on the purchaser's device.

I'm told that iPads, tablets, e-book readers and smartphones are the future. The format of choice for all of these is the PDF - a single file that contains everything needed to hear the songs and read the booklet simultaneously. I've tried, and I can produce such a PDF file - but it would not be useable on your stereo or car player.

To sum up and clarify - I was looking for a way of minimising the work needed by whoever takes over MT Records in producing our publications. Also, for a format that is useable in the maximum number of devices.

It seems there are several options - produce:

A CD-ROM similar to the ones I have already published: This would require the printing of just two pieces of paper, plus cutting, packing and posting the result - not too much work for my successor. It's not a great deal of work for me to create. But it's only useable on a computer.

The contents of the above as a digital download: This involves no work at all for my successor. It's not a great deal of work for me to create. But it's somewhat limited in terms of useable devices.

The contents of the above as a single PDF: This involves no work at all for my successor. But it is difficult, time-consuming and expensive for me to create in the first place. It should work - and look exactly the same - on all devices.

MT Records' downloadable MTDL600 Series:

As you'll see from the discussion piece above, I'd been thinking hard about the future of MT Records and the Magazine. Put simply: alongside continuing to produce the booklet and CD(s) in a DVD case releases, I wanted to provide a simple vehicle for the sale of the records which would involve the least work for my successor; which would produce some income to pay for the continued publication of the MT Magazine; and which I can get up-and-running immediately, whilst I have the time and the ability. My successor, who ever s/he might be, could then continue in the direction Keith Summers and I have been following - or take things forward in his/her own way.

I decided on a solution, which is to provide a downloadable HTML version of all the 300 Series booklets, with embedded sound files. This format was not as universal as I would like, but it goes a fair way towards it, and was do-able immediately. This work started in 2016. Then I added downloadable versions of the 100, 200, 400 and 500 Series CDs, and the 250 Series CD-ROMs. Stage 2 would be to convert all these into PDF downloads with embedded sound files. That will have to be something for the future.

So - as well as continuing to produce the usual CDs and booklets in DVD cases, we are now also providing a new downloadable format for MT Records' releases, which contain the complete (and updated) booklet text from the original albums, with all the songs/tunes available as links to complete MP3 recordings from within the text. The 600 Series numbers relate to the 300 Series numbers - so, for example, MTDL605-6 is the complete updated text and photo contents of the MTCD305-6 booklet and the 49 songs from Walter Pardon. As usual, sound links are shown by the name of the song/tune being in underlined bold italic red text. Click the name and your installed MP3 player will start. Place cursor on red asterisks for any footnotes. Place cursor on graphics for citation and further information ('touch and hold' for tablets).

Since downloads require no booklet production, case covers, CDs, DVD cases or postage, they sell for a far lower price. Compared to £12, £16 and £20 for the 300 Series publications, the downloads of single CDs are £2.00, double CDs are £4.00, and 3-CD Sets are £6.00. The facility exists to pay more than these prices, if you'd like to!

Each Download comprises a ZIP file containing one or more HTML files, a 'sound' folder and a 'graphics' folder. They can be un-ZIP-ed into a single destination (folder) on your device, and run from there. Alternately (if you buy more than one download) you could create a single folder called (for example) 'MT Downloads', containing both a 'sound' folder and a 'graphics' folder, and then put all the HTML files into that, all the .mp3 files into the 'sound' folder and all the .jpg/.png/.gif files into the 'graphics' folder. All files have individual names, so no problems should occur, no matter how many downloads you eventually buy. Needless to say, all the MP3 sound files could also be copied to any other device you might wish to use.

All the 77 downloads (bear in mind that most of these are double CDs and two are triple) are now available from the **gumroad.com** website, via links in the special 'Downloads page' on the MT Records website. If you want one - or more - downloads, all you need to do is click on them, pay at Gumroad and it/they will be downloaded to you immediately.

Postal charges:

OK, we all know that postage charges go up every year, but recently increases have been huge - particularly as regards Europe and Rest of World rates and the removal of certain cheaper options. Posting to Ireland now costs the same as the rest of Europe.

For me to sell a £12 CD to a UK customer costs £1.24 + a 25p padded bag ... £1.50 is not too bad, you might think. But to send it to Europe now costs me £4, and to the States costs me £5. That doesn't leave a lot of profit on a £12 CD, particularly when the PayPal charges are taken off as well.

PayPal UK doesn't help either; despite repeated requests from users over a 10 year period, they still don't provide alternative P&P rates for different areas, as they have done with PayPal US for ages. Accordingly I've had to charge an 'average' rate (20%) for all purchases. This has meant the UK customers have had to pay twice as much postage as they needed to, while US customers cost me about £2 for every sale. It's time for a different approach.

Although it involved a huge amount of work creating new files, I've altered the way the MT Records website works. When the 'ADD' button next to a CD is clicked, it now takes the purchaser to a new page offering three 'ADD' buttons - one for the UK, one for Europe and one for Rest of World. Using a double CD at £16 as an example, the UK button will add £1.50 P&P to the cost of the CDs, the Europe button will add £4.00 P&P, and the Rest of World button will add £5.00 P&P, whilst over-riding the normal 20% charge.

These added P&P charges are only what the CDs cost me to post ... and will make MT CDs considerably cheaper for UK purchasers at the MT Records' website than they are from other sources. However, please note the Warning on the new page ... this will only work if purchasers are honest about where their CDs are to be posted.


The only problem I could foresee was when a customer wants to purchase a significant number of CDs at the same time - actual postal costs would be exceeded. In this case, I suggested customers email me their order and I'll let them know the actual postal costs and full order price, which they can pay me via PayPal. this would take a little longer, but would save them money.

MT Records mobile-friendly website:

And, hidden away as I am, in my little Cotswold valley, it wouldn't surprise me if I was thought to be out of touch with the ways of the wider world. Slightly behind the times I may be, but I do eventually get to know what's going on - and even react to some of the changes. An example is the recent implementation of MT Records' Downloads page - now these young people who don't even remember what a CD is can get access to the wealth of the Catalogue straight to their devices of choice without having to bother with paper and bits of plastic. All well and good - although it did take an awful lot of time and effort. But now an associated problem needed to be addressed - making all the riches of MT's productions available to those who only use Tablets and Smartphones to interact with the world.

Now, before you mention it, I had realised that very little of the MT Magazine would be suitable for use on a Smartphone - imagine trying to read one of our 10-page reviews or articles on a 5" screen! However, I thought it should be possible to make a pared-down mobile friendly version of the MT Records website suitable for use on a phone ... so I started working on it. Many, many hours and a great deal of research later, in 2017 the new slimmed-down 'mobile-friendly' Records website was finished, and connected to the magazine and the MT Records website Home Page. It has been designed for a small screen, and its pages are 'responsive' - meaning they automatically adjust to the size of your screen and whether you're holding it upright or sideways. If you'd like to try it out, don't forget to drag your browser's window narrow to pretend it's a Smartphone.

So this means that when you access the MT Records website (www.mtrecords.co.uk) you will now see three options - the usual one to buy CDs with booklets, the Downloads one to get the whole thing as an HTML file, and a Mobile-Friendly one where you can buy all our normal CDs with booklets, divided into the usual categories, see their tracklists, and access the Samplers page, but with few of the other extras. It looks like this:



Welcome

to the complete physical and virtual catalogues

Important - Purchasers of MT Records' CDs or Downloads gain nothing from secure HTTPS implementation because all the financial transactions are dealt with by PayPal - **which is a secure HTTPS service**. I will not be converting either the Magazine or the Records website to HTTPS because **there is nothing here which is insecure**. You can click the 'Not Secure' button if/when you see one, without any concern.

CDs with booklets We have over 100 unique CDs of traditional songs and music to choose from, mostly from these islands and North America. Most are close to 80 minutes duration and are accompanied by substantial booklets, and come in DVD cases. Many are 2-CD sets, and two are 3-CD sets. They include what is probably the UK's largest collection of English Gypsy and Traveller recordings - 15 full-length CDs.	NEW Mobile-Friendly Try the new slimmed-down 'mobile-friendly' Records website. You can buy all our normal CDs with booklets there, divided into the usual categories, see their tracklists, and access the Samplers page, but with few of the other extras. But, if you're viewing this on a MAC or PC, drag your browser's window narrow to pretend it's a Smartphone.	Downloads All our CDs, except for the most recent releases from last year, are now available as inexpensive downloads, with the songs as clickable links from within the booklet text. These are delivered as ZIP files containing the original (but updated) booklet text as an HTML file, a 'graphics' folder containing all the photos and a 'sound' folder containing all the CD tracks as full-length MP3 files. Each should be unzipped into a single folder on your device, and run from there.
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[Go to the MT Records' Home Page](#) [Go to the MT Records' Mobile-Friendly Page](#) [Go to the MT Records' Downloads Page](#)

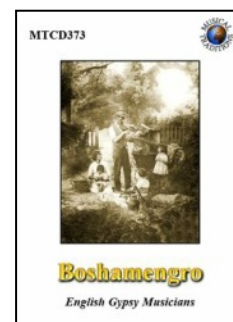
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[Go to the Musical Traditions Magazine Home Page](#)

Back to the CDs again:

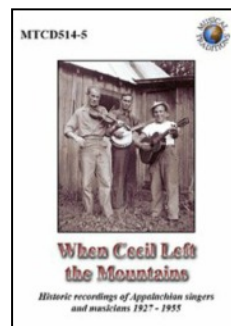
2017 was fairly quiet in comparison to the previous year - one double and two single CDs, and another CD-ROM. First came another collaboration with Phil Heath-Coleman and, indeed, a project of entirely his own suggestion - *Boshamengro: English Gypsy Musicians* (MTCD373). Inevitably, it didn't turn out as simply as might have been thought. Phil's original idea was to present the entire recorded repertoire of Harry Lee - the fiddler who had astonished the world with his contribution to the seminal *Boscastle Breakdown* LP back in 1974. Then he found a wonderful Gwilym Davies video of Vanslow Smith (fiddle and melodeon), and filled up the CD with tracks from several other Gypsy musicians and a couple of gorgios playing Gypsy tunes.

But it was the Harry Lee tracks that proved the big problem. It's a long story, which involves the original tape, recorded in 1962 for Topic by Paul Carter, having gone missing for some 50 years ... and Phil and my 18 month search for it. Eventually we succeeded



in finding at least a copy of it, and were very pleased to be able to present Harry's complete recorded repertoire of 18 tunes, here for the first time.

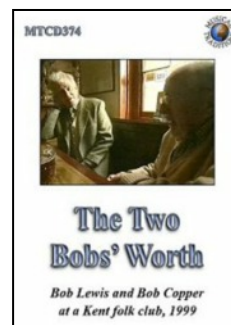
Next came *When Cecil Left the Mountains: Historic recordings of Appalachian singers and musicians 1927 - 1955* (MTCD514-5). This was another Mike Yates contribution, a 2-CD set comprising 83 historic recordings of Appalachian singers and musicians from 1927 - 1955. It runs for 149 mins, and features Horton Barker, Emmett Lundy, Luther Strong, Emma Shelton, Ella Shelton, Bill Stepp, Emory Stoop, Eliza Pace, Dad Blackard's Moonshiners, and 20 others.



When Cecil Sharp left the mountains for the last time, he complained about '... the sound of Victrolas and the strumming of rag-time and the singing of sentimental songs - all of which we have suffered from incessantly during the last 12 weeks. I am sorry to have said goodbye to the mountain people but I suspect that I might have seen the last of them.' What he didn't realise was that within just a few years, American record companies would be sending scouts into the Appalachian Mountains looking for singers and musicians who could be recorded commercially.

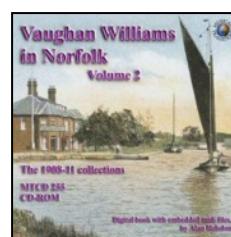
This is a double CD set of performers having some sort of familial or geographical connection with the people Sharp collected in the nineteen-tens - as, indeed, was the *Far in the Mountains* 5-CD set. The important difference is that those recordings were from Mike Yates' 1979-83 trips ... these are from the late-nineteen-twenties to the mid-nineteen-fifties, and are of people who were alive when Sharp visited the mountains - and a few who actually performed for him a decade or two earlier! Lots of very interesting stuff from both commercial and private recordings. As with *Far in the Mountains*, this was compiled, and the booklet written, by Mike Yates.

Then came another of those completely unexpected publications, *The Two Bobs' Worth: Bob Lewis and Bob Copper* (MTCD374). The two Bobs were recorded at Nellie's folk club in Tonbridge, back in 1999, where they were performing together as 'The Two Bobs' Worth' - an almost unique event. They were recorded by Andrew King, who'd said "If you think the recordings are of good enough quality I would be delighted and honoured if you wanted to issue them." Well, given that they were recorded on a mini-disc machine, the recordings are excellent, and the singing is just glorious!



The 20 songs were sung by Bob Lewis first, alternating with Bob Copper, and are presented in the order they occurred in performance, with no songs missed out. I edited the inter-song comments so that we end up with a duration of 79 minutes and 46 seconds - only 14 seconds short of a completely full CD! This is an absolutely splendid record; Bob Copper accompanies himself on concertina for most of his songs, and I have never heard Bob Lewis in better voice.

Finally in 2017 came one I'd been expecting for some time, *Vaughan Williams in Norfolk Volume 2* CD-ROM (MTCD255). It covers the three Norfolk collecting trips Ralph Vaughan Williams made in April 1908, October 1910 and December 1911. He met some 22 singers and collected 93 songs from them. As with Volume 1, they are presented in staff notation, with full texts, and with link to MIDI sound files of the tunes, and there's a very substantial page of information on the singers.



2018 started off, in March, with another 2-CD Set 'complete recorded repertoire', in this case of an Oxfordshire singer. Freda Palmer: *Leaffield Lass* (MTCD375-6) contained 56 tracks, duration 132 minutes, and had a 48-page booklet. Recordings from Alison McMorland, Mike Yates, Steve Roud and Gwilym Davies. I had begun the project based on Mike Yates' recordings, but then discovered, quite by chance, that Alison McMorland, had also made rather a lot as well. Alison had the advantage of recording Freda at least three years ahead of Steve Roud and Gwilym Davies - and she was in much better voice at that time. Alison also had a nice Uher stereo tape recorder, so her recordings are of good quality. This has meant that what I thought would be primarily a Mike Yates project has turned out to be primarily an Alison McMorland project.

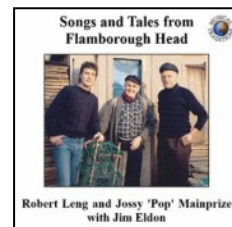


Freda Palmer was born in, and lived most of her younger life in the village of Leaffield, Oxfordshire. Later, she moved to the nearby town of Witney, where these recordings were made. From the age of eleven, she was employed as a glover - making gloves, together with her mother at times, but mostly with her aunt Annie,

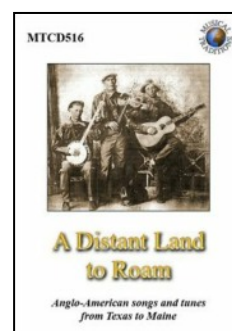
and it was from her that she learnt many of her songs, as they sat across the table together, sewing their gloves.

She had a phenomenal memory ... while raising six children she probably didn't have too much spare time for singing, and it was only in her later years that she was encouraged to visit folk clubs and festivals as a performer. But to have a repertoire of sixty or so songs, and to sing 35 of them off the cuff in one day when Alison McMorland visited her was quite an achievement - not to mention reciting the 19 eight-line verses of *Murphy's Little Girl* without a stumble.

Then, in October, we published *Songs and Tales from Flamborough Head* (MTCD203). In 1988, Jim Eldon was gathering material for a cassette album of East Yorkshire fireside tales, and a friend took him to Flamborough and introduced him to Robert Leng and Jossy 'Pop' Mainprize. The few snippets of ditties that had been dotted among the stream of tales grew into a whole repertoire of songs as more were remembered. Eventually a cassette of songs and one of tales were issued on Jim's Stick Records label. The fishermen's tales and poaching yarns speak for themselves. There was very little editing in the stories section of this collection - one yarn would spark another and the titles and track separations are just there to help you navigate through them if you want to revisit a particular favourite. This is real traditional singing and storytelling. A delight!



And finally, in December, we published *A Distant Land to Roam: Anglo-American songs and tunes from Texas to Maine* (MTCD516), yet another contribution from Mike Yates. Among these 25 songs and tunes that have gone across the seas, a distant land to roam, you will find some very recognisable versions. Bradley Kincaid sings *The Two Sisters* and *Fair Ellender* and *Lord Thomas*, Bob Cranford sings *Babes in the Wood*, Bascom Lamar Lunsford sings *The Derby Ram*, and Emry Arthur sings *Jack Hall*.

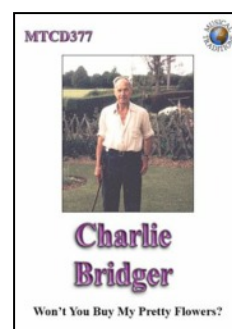


Perhaps less easily recognisable are: The Stanley Brothers - *Poison in a Glass of Wine*; Frank Jenkins' Pilot Mountaineers - *Go and Leave Me if You Wish It*, Gid Tanner & His Skillet-Lickers - *Soldier, Soldier, Will You Marry Me?*; Louisiana Lou - *The Oxford Girl*; Hattie and Ernest Stoneman - *When Shall We get Married, John?* And downright extraordinarily, you'll hear The Southern Melody Boys with their *Little Ball of Yarn* and Blind Boy Fuller with *Our Goodman* or *Seven Nights Drunk*.

Coming more or less up to date, I should perhaps mention that on the 1st of January 2019 I had to go into hospital for a pretty serious abdominal aneurysm operation, and had no idea if I would be able to carry on any of the MT work afterwards - or even if I would survive it. This was the reason I did all the website up-grades mentioned in the previous section of this piece all in one go, rather than in the more leisurely fashion you have become used to. But I did survive, and don't seem to be too much changed. I certainly still make all the same mistakes and forget the same things.

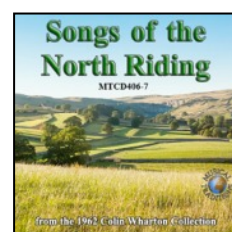
2019 brought us Charlie Bridger: *Won't you Buy my Pretty Flowers?* (MTCD377). This came as a result of one of my frequent Editorial requests for more information about recordings suitable to be published as MT CDs. George Frampton wrote giving details of three such sources - one of which was Andy Turner. As I knew Andy personally, I approached him first.

Charlie Bridger, of Stone-in-Oxney, Kent, was recorded by Andy Turner on 15th April 1983. Charlie sang him the 28 songs found on this CD, plus two more that there wasn't room for here. He's a lovely singer, with some terrific tunes to his songs.



The Future:

We will soon have *Songs of the North Riding* (MTCD406-7). In 1962 Colin S Wharton published his Leeds University degree thesis 'Folk Songs from the North Riding'. This thesis was the culmination of his collecting in the North Riding of Yorkshire. The finished work was 149 pages long and divided into five sections, according to subject matter: Songs of Love and Courtship, Songs from the Farm, Hunting Songs, Occasional Songs, and Songs of Sorrow. The 2-CD Set has 67 songs from 22 singers, including the now relatively well-known Arthur Wood and Billy Pennock.



Another contribution from Mike Yates will be of American musicians playing tunes derived from Britain and Europe. And I have hopes for one or more CDs of Simon Evans' recordings of Gypsies and Travellers from Kent.

All told, MT Records has published a catalogue of around 108 CDs and 17 CD-Roms to date and, as you can see, there are still one or two others lined up for the future. The purchase of a professional tower CD duplicator has speeded up the production process no end, and should result in more durable CD-Rs than was the case in our earlier years.

But I must again express my sincere thanks to the numerous contributors of recordings, photos and text (most particularly Mike Yates, Peggy Seeger and Phil Heath-Coleman) without whose enthusiastic collaboration, few if any of our CDs would exist.

That's about it - so far. I shall, as we used to say, Keep on Truckin' into the unknowable future.

Rod Stradling - Musical Traditions Records - Autumn 2019.

Labour of Love Database

I wrote that the *Labour of Love Database* (detailing the complete CD output of MT Records - 2602 songs/tunes) might well be got together over a rather shorter time-scale than 100 years. Well, a bit of spare time last week and the discovery of a far quicker method of entering the data, has resulted in the Labour of Love Database, sorted by song/tune name, now being available in the MT Magazine. It's the first/top item on Articles. Users can, of course, sort it in other ways as required.

If you don't have any spreadsheet software installed, I can strongly recommend the free WPS Spreadsheet and Writer software - available from: <https://www.wps.com/office-free>

Rod Stradling - 20.9.2019