

The RAMBLER

A fanzine written by and for folkmusic fans.
From Mike J. Moorcock. 36, Semley Road, Nor-
bury, London, S.W.16, ENGLAND. This ish Free.

FEBRUARY 1958 No.11

January 1958

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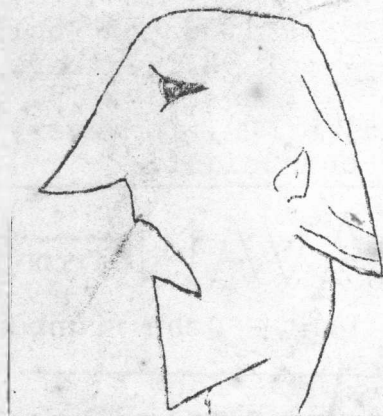
The British Jazz
Scene. Dave Aldridge

Reminiscences of the
Nancy Whiskey Club.
-Sandy Sandfield

SING HAS A PARTY.
MJM.

GETTING THE MESSAGE.
Fred Dallas replies
to the anonymous
letter in our last
issue.

Ray Nelson's regular
column has been held
over until next month



SKIFFLE!?! GOOD LORD,
NO OLD MAN! I'M A FOLK
SINGER!

Dear Readers,

I don't know, as yet, what your re-
action was to the new RAMBLER but I ex-
pect to print your letters in No. 12.

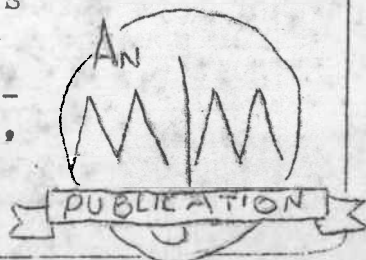
As far as I can see, RAMBLER will be
back to a regular monthly schedule altho'
in slightly smaller doses than originally
planned.

I hope you will forgive any mistakes
or messiness in Nos. 10 and 11 and in any
more similar issues. They are produced
in a great hurry, generally in one even-
ing, and I haven't the time to be as care-
ful as I should like.

Contributors to this issue include:
Dave Aldridge, recently of Chris Barber's
Jazz Band in the capacity of blues singer
and guitarist; Sandy Sandfield, blues
guitarist and quite an authority on the
British jazz and folkmusic scene for some
time. Alistair Graham, member of THE
VAGABONDS folksingers, currently starving
on the continent. Bill Harry, young
Liverpool art student at present studying
how to be a hermit (judging by the space
between letters these days); Ray Nelson,
still, to date, in Paris.

Their articles cover a really wide
field and should please everyone. Also
they should all inspire you to write
some interesting letters of comment.

No. 10 was rolled off and collated
yesterday and many copies
will be distributed at a
party which promises to
be one of the most memor-
able events in folkmusic,
1958.



Forgive me for any mistakes in this issue, I'm sure the temperature in this room is well below zero and I'm hurrying through it just as fast as I can go in order to make a cowardly retreat to a nice warm room downstairs.

Room to plug CARAVAN from Leeh Shaw, Apt. ^{5P}~~4~~, 780, Greenwich St., New York 14 or John Brunner, 144, Fellowes Road, N.W.3 at 10/- or 6d. a copy. Subscriptions of 7/- or a buck are accepted.

SING from Eric Winter of 38, Westbere Road, N.W.2 is a wonderful folkmusic magazine which prints a great many songs of all kinds every issue (I've got a feeling I've said that beofore) and is thoroughly recommended to everyone. Approximately 2/- a copy, may be less, from Eric. Dobells, Colletts and several other retail shops in London and the provinces stock it but it's best to be sure of your copy by writing direct to Eric NOW!

Contributions of all kinds (artwork and articles, letters and reviews - even short fiction pieces about folkmusic) will always be welcome at No. 36. As previously mentioned, we cannot pay for articles in money - only with our love and gratitude.

Most spelling mistakes in this issue are either mine or the typers. Your guess which is which.....

Always pleased to see folksingers, tho' I can't guarantee putting you up as the house ain't mine. However, if you want to risk it and come down for a session - 'phone POLLARDS 8161.

Now for some ads. and announcements.....

See you around.

Mike

RAY NELSON of 27, rue de Tournon (DANTON 07-07) will always be pleased to see folksingers travelling through Paris. Maybe a song swapping session and a tour of the folkmusic scene.

SING Edited and Published at 38, Westbere Rd., London, N.W.3. It's really a MUST for every folkmusic enthusiast.

ANYONE thinking of making some money by giving guitar lessons is welcome to advertise in this fanzine. Judging by the noise to be heard in the cofecbars of late - there is a great need for someone to teach people guitar. I can talk.....

CARAVAN from British Agent - John Brunner.

B.L.L.A.D.S, in case you missed the announcement, is held over for some months until funds allow. Thanks to all those who wrote in asking about it.

BROOD No. 2 will be edited by Pete Taylor and Mike Moorcock and will present all kinds of articles and stories. 3d. a copy. Out soon.

A REPORT OF THE PARTY
GIVEN ON 13th JANUARY
BY ERIC WINTER OF SING

- Mike Moorcock.

SING HAS A PARTY

A few were privileged to attend the party given by Eric and Audrey Winter, publishers of SING, the British folkmusic magazine.

I was one of them, and the amount of talent under one roof was hardly believable. There were THE SOUTHERNERS ("One of the finest non-skiffle groups in the country"), Fred and Betty Dallas, Hyam Morris, Sandy and Carolyn Paton, Johnnie Ambrose, John Foreman, Otilie Patterson, Alan Lomax, Guy Carawan - and the one and only - Dominic Behan.

THE SOUTHERNERS started the evening with a rousing spiritual (OH, EVE, WHERE IS ADAM ?) and proceeded to show that they were certainly an out of the ordinary group. Four men and two girls (the men on three guitars and a washboard). They were really worth hearing.

Who wasn't ? Fred and Betty Dallas followed this group with some English folksongs, several accompanied by Fred's banjo and some without any instrumental accompaniment. Fred sang several songs which he had written himself.

Hyam Morris, playing American, English and Hebrew songs as well as parodies (such as his always popular PICCADILLY LINE). Also OH, FOR A CUP OF TEA (a plea for tea - London's coffee bars are taking over our teashops). He kept up, in the time being, a steady exchange of wit with a Scotsman who was proving for once and for all that Scots can't hold their liquor.

And then - Sandy and Carolyn Paton, recently over from the States, singing together to Sandy's guitar accompaniment. To hear Sandy and his wife sing is something which is well worth going out of your way for.

To try and describe Sandy's voice would be to tie myself up into rhetorical knots.

But take my word for it, he's damn' good and if you get the chance of hearing him sing some of those lovely New England songs, take it!

After a bit, John Foreman came up and told a story. John certainly is an animated young man; full of movement. An expressive face, hands - even his body - his whole personality is alive.

Then he sang. He sang a song which 'his hero' Jack Elliott sings. It isn't a song actually but a verse and then a story. It wouldn't be worth telling the stories here - they're the kind which lose their flavour if written down.

After John, Hyam Morris told a story - Hyam call tell a good story, too, and, altho' the joke didn't appeal to me as a good example of the jokes told during the evening, it gave Hyam a chance to display what I'd call histrionic talent if I could find what it meant in the dictionary.

Someone whose name I don't remember told a story which was well told but not up to the Foreman/Morris standard.

Johny Ambrose, "Who's been singing around London for forty years" sang songs in so many languages I lost count - including THE CHIVALROUS MAN-EATING SHARK.

Ottillie Patterson, along with Chris Barber (who didn't sing) turned up and sang some Irish songs. As she said, "I've been singing blues six days a week - I'd like to sing some Irish songs instead." And she sang some very well. She sings blues and plays piano very well, too.

Alan Lomax turned up with Guy Carawan and they sang some American songs including CRIPPLE CREEK (Guy's favourite - you can always count on him to sing that one) several worksongs, THE FRENCHMAN'S BALL and FRANKIE AND ALBERT. These two players are, of course, masters of their instruments (just as all the players present) and they gave us some pretty good entertainment. Alan told a couple of stories about his experiences when hunting for negro songs. How, whenever he used to sing a song somewhere where there were negroes one would come up to him and greet him like a long, lost brother - "You bin down the river, bwah?". The reason being that these songs weren't known outside of the penitentiaries.

Then Dominic Behan arrived. Dominic was fresh from a hard MacColl-type rehearsal. Still, Dominic Behan, perhaps our finest Irish folksinger and certainly one of the most likeable, altho' protesting that his voice wasn't up to anything, sang a whole lot of Irish songs, a poem by Burns (which was perfect) and one or two of his own.

Stan Kelly, all the way from Cambridge - but Irish nonetheless, sang very well - Irish songs.

Dominic sang a version of SPANISH LADY which, he told me afterwards, he'd picked up from an Irish labourer recently. It was, he thought, the most authentic version he'd heard. And to me, it sounded the most authentic, too.

When Alan Lomax and Guy Carawan decided to leave, it kind of broke up the party and people started to drift about getting coats, talking to their friends and playing over blues on the piano.

Hyam started, then Ottillie took over.

Then out into the cold, cold morning. Dominic Behan and I were about the only people who lived in South London and so it turned out that we couldn't get a lift.

Eventually, Hyam, who was going nearer Soth than anyone else, offered to take us to Turnpike Lane where we could get an allnight 'bus going somewhere.

Eventually we made it. Changed 'bus for cab, cab for 'bus, then another 'bus, then we parted - me to look for a cab, not find one and board a 'bus going in the general direction of my home. I walked the last three miles home, but it was worth it.

On the way home, we talked about the American influence on present-day British folkmusic. I won't talk about that here, but it reminded me of something that Carolyn Paton had said earlier on in the evening. She said that she expected to come over to England and find English folksongs. Every coffee-bar they go into - what do they hear but MIDNIGHT SPECIAL and blues.

There's room for an entire article on this subject at a later date, so I won't give my ideas here.

Although I've got lots more to say, I don't think I have much more space to say it in without starting another page, so maybe I'll bring it up in another article some other time.

However, I would like to thank Eric and Audrey, plus all the other organisers of the party, for one of the best times I've ever had.

Eric tells me that there's a chance of making it a regular annual thing.

He wants to call it a - SINGENANNY.....

- Mike M. January '58.

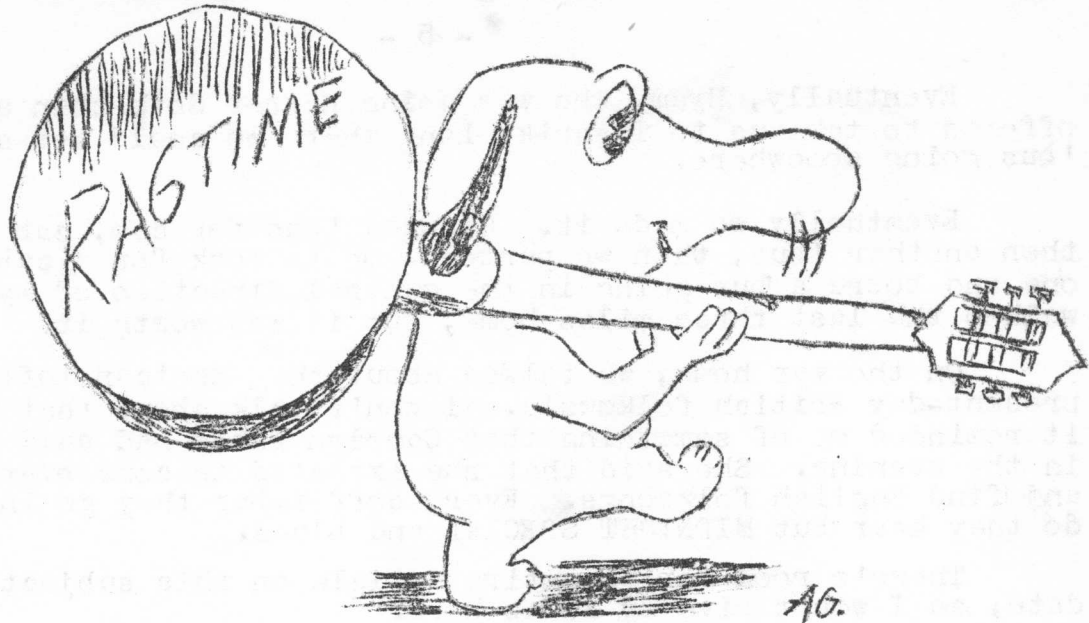
Alan Lomax told me that a PENGUIN pocket book of American folksongs should be out sometime. This will be good news to folkmusic fans with little money.

Cassells will be publishing a new book by him sometime this year, also.

Hyam Morris may help to pay the printing costs for SING - he mentioned that he could sue JIM DALE, British 'pop' singer, for copyright infringement. Dale pinched Hyam's parody PICCADILLY LINE and recorded it, as the song had been published in Eric Winter's SING, it was automatically copyrighted.

The Princess Louise, High Holborn, features a new BALLADS AND BLUES presentation - "PERSONAL CHOICE". On Wednesdays at 8.00 pm. From the 22nd of January. PEGGY SEEGER starts the first one and EWAN MACCOLL, then SEAMUS ENNES follow her on the 29th of JAN and 5th OF FEB respectively.

RAMBLING



WITH BILL HARRY

The coffee bar which I usually frequent is called the Kink-ajoo Club, and for the past month or so I've heard a record which I've liked, but couldn't fathom out the words no matter how much I tried or listened. However, looking through a book about Railroad folklore I found the original version and it's called

TRACK LINING SONG.

Hey boys. I'm gonna tell you something now.
Oh, boys.
Oh, all I want my navy beans,
A big fat woman and a wheeler team.
Hi, hi won't you line 'em ?
Hi, hi won't you line 'em ?
Ho, ho, won't you line 'em ?
See Eloise go linin' tracks.

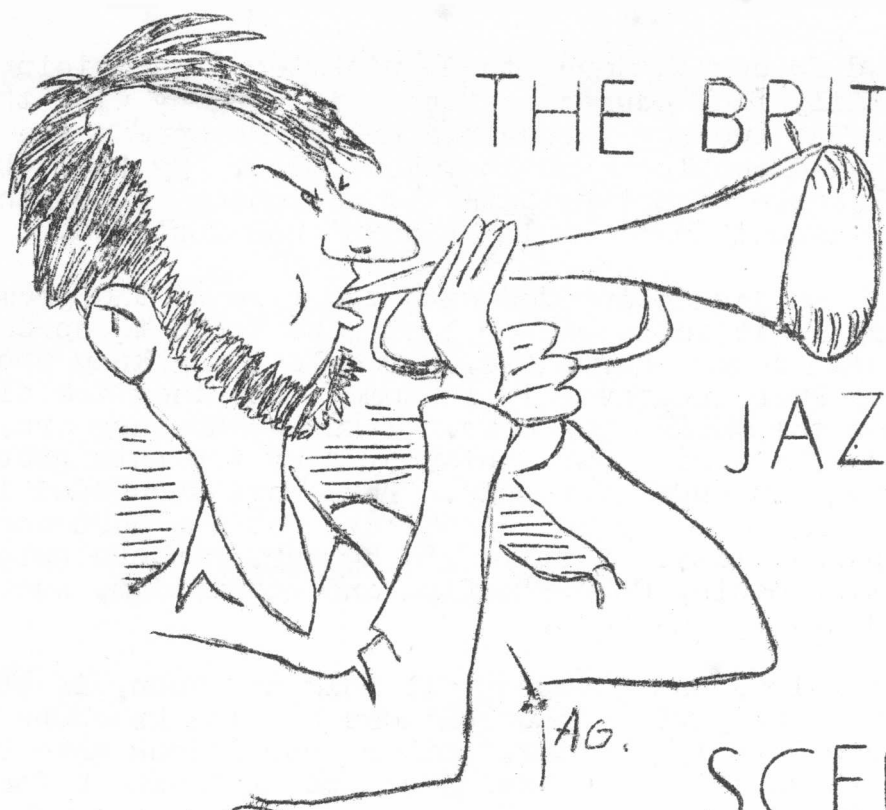
Leader:
Come on now, boys, gather round.
Bow down, put your glad hands on it.
Raise up! Th'ow it away!
That's good iron, I hear it ring.

Come on now, boys, come on back now, boys.
Get another one.
Etc.

If I could, I surely would
Stand on the rock where Moses stood.

TURN 2 PAGES

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THE BRITISH

JAZZ

AG.
SCENE

dave doesn't look like this.....

It has been said in the past that the faults of British jazz are (1) There are no outstanding personalities (11) That jazz in this country does not get into the home. These are the indictments and I shall now endeavour to answer them in an analytical way. To do this completely would take too long for this article and would be a full time job, but it is hoped that this scratching on the surface will start you thinking and you can form your own opinions. So let's confine our activities to the style called Traditional.

Looking at the two indictments it will be seen that they rather go together. Therefore they will have to be answered together.

About ten years ago, the young people of this country were looking for a style of music that they could call their own, a music that would give them kicks and excitement for which they craved. Just as their parents had reached after the 1914-18 war. In those days they settled for a particular style within the trad group and the young generation went mad on Dixieland which then led to swing.

This formula repeated itself after the last World War, but settling on the whole 'Trad' group not just one section and so the modern conception of British Jazz was born. Besides the usual crop of copyists, men with ideas came to the fore, Colyer, Lyttleton, Turner, Barber and a host of others, but jazz was still outside the door - tho' the door this time was unlocked.

The Armed forces had much to do with the popularising of 'Trad', especially the occupation forces in Germany with their own station, BFH. The two way favourites programme spread the news of British groups and people began to take notice. By 1947 there was a hard, if small, core of enthusiasts and societies wherethis 'new' style with the accent on 'made in Britain' was fostered.

This rise in jazz coincided with the rise of the gramophone and record industry so it is no wonder that jazz began to spread and names in the jazz world became household. People today know who Colyer, Lyttleton and Barber are, even if in some cases they are dismissed with those immortal words "Yus mate. I knows who they are, it's them Jazz Players." The merits and faults of many top rate groups are discussed daily by thousands of people. They have succeeded in getting jazz into the home and they could not have got the hard core to start with without personality. Lyttleton's humour, Barbers quiet almost dry smile and announcements, Colyer's fire and enthusiasm, such men are equal to the jazz man anywhere.

My own opinion, as of course all this has been, is that the Jazz world like any other part of showbusiness has its knockers and the sooner they drop dead the better. Other accusations have been levelled of course and these I hope to have a chance of laying before you at a future date.

- Dave Aldridge. November 1957.

RAMBLING with Bill Harry. Continued.

Oh, boys in the morning,
Hi, hi, afternoon.
Hi, boys, in the evening
I'll be standing there all the time.

And it goes on for a few more verses which Mike will let you have if you want them. Anyway, it just shows you how a song can change. The record is nothing like this. Perhaps you've heard it - Chris Barber Skiffle Group (Johny Duncan and Dick Bishop).

There's a lot of other stuff in that book, mostly the well-known and famous stuff, which you've probably heard anyway - BEEN ON THE CHOOPLY SO LONG, CANNONBALL BLUES, etc.

There's even a section on how to fake railroad sound with instruments the most effective instrument being the harmonica. And a song called 'Lonesome Whistles' sound very similar to the "K.C." song ----

Lord, I hate to heard that Lonesome whistle blow,
Lord, I hate to heard that Lonesome whistle blow,
It blows so lonesome and it blows so low,
It blows like it never blowed before.

Just thought you'd liked to know.

- Bill Harry. 12/8/57.



A letter was received today which I thought was worth featuring in this issue. FRED DALLAS of Surrey, England, writes:

"Your anonymous anti-folk contributor (back page) deserves a reply, which is the main import of this letter.

"There are certain basically false assumptions behind your correspondent's tirade against people who like (and perform) folk music. For a start, the traditional musician is not the naive, unsophisticated illiterate (musically, and otherwise) that he presumes. The belief that he is, lies behind much of the ill-informed abuse aimed at those of us who are wrapped up in the English-speaking folk music revival at the moment.

"In Britain, where our traditions are moribund, but not dead, it is true that many of our traditional singers are like that, though I know some traditional singers, young 'uns too, who can read and write and all that. In other countries, particularly Eastern Europe, the traditional performer is often a highly sophisticated musician. The conventions are different, that's all.

"The belief that folk music is simple, earthy business has led 'jazz' musicians like Brubeck and Mulligan into vapid meanderings which are merely pale imitations of harmonic and rhythmic ideas developed much more creatively by composers of art music.

"Unfortunately, some of today's folk music addicts suffer under the same delusion, like your correspondent, that folk music is something rather quaint, that goes with beat-up jeans, broken down instruments, bad tuning and the rest. Or, if they belong to

the Richard Dyer Bennett 'minstrel' school, going with lute-like guitar accompaniments and high tenor voices.

"Folk music is neither of these, it can be tough, it can be sweet. Melodically, rhythmically, harmonically, it is almost the most complex music I know. Else how to explain the way that the study of Hungarian and Bulgarian folk music led to the complex creations of Bela Bartok? (Let no one say that Eastern European folk music is nothing to do with it, by the way. I've got recordings - but that's another story).

"A guitar doesn't have to be scratched and twangy. It helps, though, if it's a round-hole instrument with metal tailpiece (not cello-backed with f-holes) called by the specialists "the American accompanying guitar". A banjo doesn't have to come from Kentucky, but it helps, again, if it is the five-string long-neck variety that they play there.

"Folk songs about sputniks? Why not? They've always been about the latest events, as well as those eternal themes of love, birth and death. It was a desire, as a poet, to contribute my experience to a wider gathering than my immediate circle that first aroused my interest in folk music. Writing songs in the traditional form about the sort of events which have always been the subject of folk songs has filled that need for me. But that, once again, is another story."

Fred Dallas, January 1958.

P.S. "I suspect the piece on your back page was written, tongue in cheek, to arouse irate replies from people like me. Right?"

(No, not this time, Fred - the subject of folk music came up in the course of a conversation at a pub recently. A friend of mine gave his opinions of folk-music - I asked him to write them down as I thought that they would make a contraversial talking point.)

ANY OTHER LETTERS RECEIVED ON THIS SUBJECT WILL BE PUBLISHED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE.

ANYONE INTERESTED IN JOINING A GROUP SINGING ENGLISH FOLK SONGS (CONCENTRATING ON TOPICAL SONGS RATHER THAN TRADITIONAL SONGS) AND AMERICAN FOLKSONGS (TOPICAL ONLY) SHOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH MIKE MOORCOCK. GROUP ALREADY HALF-FORMED. TENTATIVE NAME FOR GROUP - "CONTEMPORARY SINGERS". ANY INSTRUMENTS WELCOME.

THE GROUP IS JUST BEGINNING TO FORM SO GET IN TOUCH IMMEDIATELY IF YOU WANT TO JOIN IT. NATURALLY WE MUST KEEP TO A CERTAIN NUMBER OF PLAYERS BUT THE MAXIMUM HAS NOT YET BEEN REACHED.

REMINISCENCES OF THE NANCY WHISKY CLUB

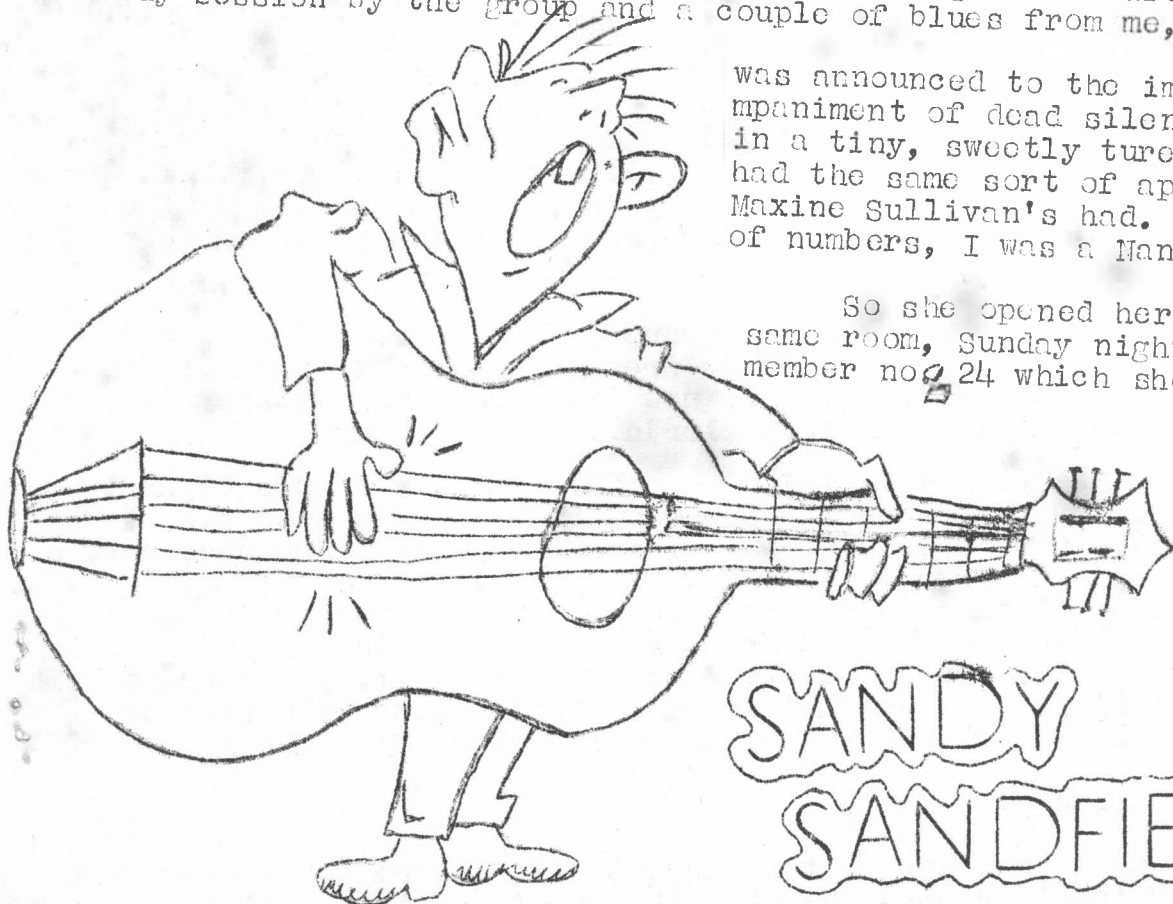
My first memory of Nancy strictly speaking doesn't belong to her club at all, but to the City Ramblers Club on the same premises. Skiffle at that time was but a word to me, as I had been gafia from stf and jazz fandom for about 8 years. However, John Brunner promised me some good folk music if I went along with him, and he did not fail to carry out his promise.

The City Ramblers group were a spasm band in fact, playing on very cheap and nasty guitars, kazoos, washboards and tub bass. The music had a very jazzy quality, "I wish I could shimmy like my Sister Kate" being of the first numbers I heard there. Careless Love was going when we walked in, and that was a good enough start for the evening. Curiously enough, SISTER KATE was followed by Villikins and his Dinah.

After a goodly selection of music and an interval with a goodly selection of beer, things started up again and after a rowdy session by the group and a couple of blues from me, Nancy

was announced to the immediate accompaniment of dead silence. She sang in a tiny, sweetly ture voice which had the same sort of appeal which Maxine Sullivan's had. After a couple of numbers, I was a Nancy Whiskey fan.

So she opened her own club, same room, Sunday nights, and I was member no. 24 which shows how quick



SANDY
SANDFIELD

John and I got there on opening night. The group was, I believe, called the SATYRS and consisted of three guitars, vocalists, bass and washboard. The mainstay of the group was Hyam Morris, guitar, mandolin, fiddle, oh gosh everything. Shall always remember him with his finger style box, standing there singing a thing called Rikity, tikiti, tin about a girl who systematically murdered her family in sundry ways until the police came and asked her about it. She had to tell the truth because to say no would have been a lie, and lying she knew was a sin. ((Tom Lehrer wrote it, Sandy)).

One Thursday night, the privilege of appearing with Nan at the Breadbasket, an espresso near Goodge Street, alternating blues with her Scottish folk songs....back at the club on Sunday to hear the City Williams group drive it on down with the loudest guitars this side of the Thames....then the unforgettable Jack Elliot, playing and singing Woody Guthrie numbers and yarning. He told a joke about a guy called Archibald Arsoldo, perhaps you know it. He also read out a story from an American music zine by Eddie Condon, written after Condon was here...."Into the bar came a very thin man, dragged along by a large bearskin coat....I hope Jack earns good money here, that coat needs several pounds of meat a day."

And so it went on, Peggy Seeger, Alex Korner, A.L.Lloyd, Alan Lomax... Peggy did the Arkansas Traveller and Alabama Bound. This was the first time I heard that lovely "...if you wanna see my fricassee..." in public. She did that one about the man who asked his wife to push him in the river then stepped aside, the louse...

Back to Nan's tiny, lovely voice again...then New Year's Eve and some of the Chas McDevitt group absent, drunk according to Chas... Nancy grabbing someone else's guitar and insisting that I sit in with the group to make the number up...quite a privilege, that. Those boys knew, brother. It was the old group, the one that made the lovely Freight Train. The present group, consisting of professional musicians, hasn't got the touch.

Then there was Nan and the group on the boards at the Metro Music Hall, Edgeware Road, and her dressing room afterwards... and things ain't what they used to be now that the Nancy Whiskey Club has ceased to be. Sic transit very gloria...shame, though.

At the Hammersmith PALAIS DE DANSE, one of London's biggest dance halls, caught Nan and Chas when I hadn't known they were to be there at all. They have a really professional stage presence now, a confidence arising from telly and film appearances and plenty of work. My personal acquaintance with Nan gives me great interest in her future as a solo artiste and an even greater interest in the future of folk in the music hall. In the early days of music hall, the current folk was sung alongside the current pops, Sam Hall vying with Lily of Laguna. Will THE LURE OF THE MINE compete with MY PRAYER ?

We shall see.

((Nancy is now appearing in the current SIX FIVE roadshow along with Zem and r&r 'pop' groups. Had to cut Sandy's article a little to fit it in. Sorry Sandy. Only one para, though...))

Well, gather round everybody, I want you to know.
'Bout a little party we had a while ago.
People came from the South and they came from the North.
From San Francisco to the Firth of Forth.
They were....folksingers....the people who....teach
folksongs..... to the folk....

Eric Winter's the man, friend of yours and mine,
Whose magazine is worth the buying.
It's name is SING - and it's going strong.
Writing all about traditional songs.
And new songs too, if they're good enough....

There was - Alan Lomax - Hyam Morris, too.
Beating their guitars and singing the Blues.
Otilie Paterson with - Christopher Barber.
No blues from Miss Paterson who said she'd rather -
Sing Irish songs. And she did.

We heard Sandy Paton and Carolyn,
Singing songs which were more than fine.
They've got real talent and are really swell.
Then we heard John Foreman raising hell!
With a blues all about San-fran-cisco.....
In a cockney accent.....

I heard the SOUTHERNERS - a folksinging group.
Who sang a spiritual 'bout Adam getting in the soup.
And Guy Carawan turned on the heat.
With a great little song - 'bout CRIPPLE CREEK.
That boy was born with that song.... I guess he's
going to die with it.

Two Irishmen - good I. R. A. men.
Proved that as singers - they weren't laymen!
THE SPANISH LADY and THE BOLD THADY QUILL.
Where both of 'em sang with a real Irish lilt.
By Dominic Behan and Mr. Stanley Kelly.
A Liverpool born Irishman from Cambridge.

But eventually, the party stopped.
It was nearly 3 a.m. when we looked at the clock.
So we got lifts home as best we could.
(There were 45 Scotsman under one hood....)
Those cars were just a-bulging with humanity -
One car went for two miles before they realised that
they'd left the driver behind.

So just to prove that you really enjoyed it.
Send a sub to SING - best not avoid it.
'Cause I think Eric Winter deserves our praise.
Proving that folkusic ain't just a phase.
So dip into their pockets, boys, and help to
keep something worthwhile going.