

# Music

Port Isaac is a village of song; long before they were famous, people flocked to the village in the summer to watch the Fisherman's Friends sing on the Platt. Perhaps less well-known were the award-winning Port Isaac Singers who came to fame via Opportunity Knocks in the 1970s. Over the years there have been, and are, other singing groups and choirs that have made their mark. Just a flick through old issues of *Trio* will introduce you to some of them ...

## Music Live Monday Day June 3rd

Be part of the BBC's Musical Beacon  
Join the rest of the country singing

### All You Need is Love

Practice starts at 12.30pm on The Platt

Going live at 1.00pm

followed by LIVE MUSIC ON THE PLATT

STEELBRIDGE (Wadebridge Steel Band)

and PAUL JOHNSON

plus the BBC JUBILEE MUSIC BAND - the SOUTH WEST TUBA QUARTET

June 2006

### The Fisherman's Friends do ... Glastonbury

It was all a bit hard to take in, the sheer scale of the Glastonbury festival is enormous, and as we approached in our private Lear jet (all right, bus!) the site shimmered in the boiling heat of the morning, and hundreds of brightly coloured flags rippled in the breeze. Ahead of us we could see the blue, yellow and red tops of the giant marquees that held the stages. One of these, the acoustic stage, was to be where we would finally make our first ever appearance at the Glastonbury Festival. Port Isaac's proper old buoy band, me and me old muckers, us lot ... we couldn't believe it!

We felt a huge weight on our shoulders. Not only were we representing Port, but our dear county, and as you know we take our role as Cornwall's cultural attaches very seriously. And we had the added responsibility of guarding the village's crown jewels (the evergreen Peter Rowe).

After negotiating a series of security checks that were akin to those on entering North Korea, we were taken to the acoustic stage where we met Geoff (our tour manager), who took us to our tented dressing room (next door to the London Community Gospel Choir), and shown the Green Room, full of comfy sofas and drapes and more importantly several fridges full of cold beers!

Several other acts were on before us, and people were drifting in and out of the huge blue big top, some stopping to listen, others coming in and out of the fierce sun for shade. We waited backstage for one o'clock to come. We had a forty minute set of songs worked out in the bus on the way up, and couldn't wait to get on with it.

What was truly remarkable was that by one o'clock the marquee was rammed full of people who wanted to see and hear us. There must have been away over a thousand, and we walked up the ramp onto stage to a rapturous reception of cheering and clapping and Cornish flag waving. We were all overwhelmed at the sight and sounds, and really very touched and honoured by the whole thing.

Now all we had to do was to sing!

And sing we did. I think we rattled out one of our best ever sets of songs, and we had 'em dancing in the aisles, from the front to the back, and beyond to the outside, and when we finished with Sloop John B and South Australia the sound coming from the huge speakers of the sound system was immense, and seemed to swirl up, up, up, and around the big top.

And it was just our voices!

By the time we left the stage to a huge crescendo of clapping and cheering, we felt to a man absolutely elated and dare I say, a bit emotional (no, I didn't say that, we're men aren't we? We don't do emotion...). So emotional that, can you believe it, we all sneaked off for some well deserved beers to celebrate a most fabulous experience.

So, no one's given up the day jobs, and as I write this little piece behind my shop counter (built for me by Trev, very much the housewife's favourite), and listen to the CD over and over and over again - (sorry Sue, Pauline, Shirf and Annabe!) I think that I speak for all the buoys when I say thank you to the FFWAGS (Fisherman's Friends wives and girlfriends) and our families for their unstinting support and love, and to all you people of Port Isaac and Cornwall for coming out week after week to the Platt to hear us. We couldn't do it without you all.

July 1987

'Heave away, haul away!'

July 2010

### Port Isaac Choral takes first prize at Music Festival



From the shetlets of Eastern Europe to the kibbutzim of Palestine, 'rejoice and be merry in the Lord' is encapsulated in the well known and loved song 'Have Nagels!'. This rallying tune, bridging the cultural divide, travels from the Ukraine through to Israel and has been recorded by the likes of Harry Belafonte, Elvis, The Muppets, Connie Francis and Bob Dylan. This was the song chosen by our Musical Director as one of our entries in the 2015 Wadebridge Music and Speech Festival held at the beginning of March. Sung in the Hebrew language, the choir had, 'secure pronunciations in Have Nagels and 'rhythmic charisma' (We are not quite sure what that is!) However, we transcended our way to the final 'Hey' with gay abandon and great excitement!

By complete contrast, our second piece was the title song from the moving and anonymous love story, 'The Way We Were' which starred Barbra Streisand and Robert Redford in the original film. This lilting and sensitive melody, written by the late Marvin Hamlisch, evokes the pain of lost love and memories of joyful laughter. With, 'sensitive interpretation of the words' and 'beautifully crafted dynamic markings', we finished our set only to scoop the first prize, finally winning that one point that has so eluded us in the past.

So, if we had the chance to do it all again, tell me, would we, could we? Of course! Part of our repertoire includes learning two new pieces for the Festival and we will return next year with something special, maybe in Russian??

Many congratulations to our Musical Director, Janet Townsend and for all her hard work over the past few months. She certainly looks delighted as she receives the presentation cup from the adjudicator! Afterwards, to celebrate our multi-cultural efforts, the choir enjoyed a delicious Chinese meal and there was much cheering (but no dancing on the tables).

So, for the immediate future, we look forward to polishing up our existing repertoire for our next concert in May. Further details next month.

Meanwhile if you are interested in joining this friendly group please contact our MD on 01208 880505 or Secretary Pat Pearson on 01208 880969.

April 2015



Nine Fisherman's Friends cross the famous Abbey Road zebra crossing. Meanwhile, Jeremy was the boys' ambassador in Egypt!



About 100,000 festival goers got up in time to see our Fisherman's Friends on the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury - and they weren't disappointed. The best gig ever! was the boys' verdict!

More Fisherman's Friends news next month including details of the amazing Friday night charity collections - and maybe some better Glastonbury pics ...

August 2010



Fisherman's Friends hit the big time

read all about them pages 13, 14 & 15

April 2010

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO SING?

A new mixed choir is to start in Port Isaac in the Autumn. We had a 'try-out' earlier in the year to gauge the interest which proved to be very successful and now plan to begin in earnest in September. We will need singers in all parts - soprano, alto, tenor, bass - and although experienced singers will be necessary, we will particularly welcome youthful people who perhaps haven't sung before in a choir.

The aim is to sing all types of songs from folksongs to popular songs with everything in between. There is a vast repertoire to choose from. If this interests you, come along to the first open rehearsal at the Green Door Club, Port Gwenn, on Tuesday 22nd. September, and give it a try. Who knows - it could be the start of something big!

As well as that, the excellent Port Isaac Singers will resume rehearsals on September 17th, at Port Isaac Primary School. We would like new members particularly sopranos. Come and give it a try. You will be given a warm welcome and may find a whole new way of life.

Janet Townsend.  
August 1992

### Fishermen's Friends on TV

Stars of the Platt and soon to be stars of CD and the Albert hall, Fishermen's Friends are also going to be on our TV screens. Switch on ITV (Carlton) on 11.30pm on Friday October 27<sup>th</sup> and the following Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> to see the singers and Port Isaac in Steve Knightley's (Show of Hands) programme made earlier in the summer - A Musical Journey Around the West Country.

### Race Night

The Albert Hall performance is on Saturday April 7<sup>th</sup> and tickets are on sale now directly from the Albert Hall (over 1000 sold already!). To raise money for the Royal Albert Hall appearance, the Fishermen's Friends will be running a Race Night in the winter for friends and supporters.

September 2000

PORT ISAAC SINGERS Following their success in the South West auditions for the 'Choir of the Year' competition, sponsored by Sainsbury's and to be televised in the autumn, the Singers will travel to Cardiff to compete against 32 U.K. choirs on October 12th. A lot of hard work has gone into this including learning songs in Hebrew and French. Janet Townsend.  
September 1986

### PORT ISAAC SINGERS

There will be a half hour programme about the Singers on Radio Cornwall at 11am. on Sunday 13th. November.

The Recording Fund now stands at £799. October 1983

PORT ISAAC SINGERS The Singers were recently successful in the regional auditions for the Sainsbury's 'Choir of the Year' competition. There were eleven auditions throughout the British Isles involving 270 choirs of all types. Our audition included 22 choirs from as far away as Dorset, and two adult and one youth choir were successful. We now compete in November against the winners from the South, South-East, and the Midlands. The competition is to be televised for regional and national transmission. We would like to express our appreciation for the continued support, encouragement and interest we receive.  
September 1984

### The SAS ... one year on

With the excitement of their first birthday, celebrated at the end of March, now disappearing into the mists of time, the summer term has begun with a swing for the Camelford based start-up orchestra, the SAS. Enthusiastically living up their title, *The Seriously Awful Sinfonia*, the players are launching themselves into new pieces like Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and the spine-tingling excitement of the *1812 Overture*.

### Even the Fisherman's Friends CAN'T CONTROL THE TIDE!

I'm sorry to say that we appear to have been swamped by our own success. With a heavy heart, we had to reluctantly take the decision to cut the number of free gigs we do down on the Platt this year, simply because the lack of beach means there's not enough room when the tides are high to accommodate two or more thousand people!

Short of auditioning King Canute for the group, to hold back the Atlantic white we sing, we're a bit between a rock and a hard place... It manifests itself in two ways -

When the tide is right up at around six, we can't set ourselves up because so many people are already on the Platt and it's impossible to position our equipment. We can't set up any earlier because we're all working in our 'proper' jobs! By the time we're due to start singing at eight bells, we can hardly get through the crowds to our 'stage', and the crush is ridiculous.

When the tide is still coming in and reaches its highest point during a performance, say at eight thirty or nine o'clock, the audience who have been watching from the beach behind us have to squeeze sardine like up onto the Platt and slipway. It's become quite impossible, and save a generous benefactor building us a coliseum with similar harbour views and amenities, we have had to become the world's first tidal buoy band!

I can't remember the last summer when we didn't spend each and every Friday evening in Port Isaac, singing down by the harbour. It must be fifteen or more years, and has become part of the Fisherman's Friends DNA. We know that it's an important part of many visitors' holidays, and a weekly social for lots of locals. In many ways the music has become almost incidental to the gathering as a whole.

Those of you who have been to one of our open air gigs will be familiar with our stamina and I know you'll be pleased to hear that we've been taken with great reluctance and address. By announcing the dates of this year's free Platt gigs as early as this, we hope to minimise any inconvenience to you all and hopefully save you any wasted journeys!

So here are the dates when, weather permitting, we'll be up to giving you all a good, hard shantying!

June 1st, 15th & 20th  
July 13th & 27th  
August 10th, 17th, 24th & 31st

Hope to see you all there!  
Jon Cleave

March 2012

Gulls flew to Slovenia  
Gulls were invited by the Slovenian based 'Knock of the People' choir to sing with them on their autumn trip to Slovenia. We didn't know much about the country but decided to go - and how glad we were that we did. We had such a brilliant time that could have only been better if our 'baby' Gull had been with us. We flew to Venice and then travelled by coach along the coast to Portoroz and then to Lake Bled so got to see quite a bit of the country along the way - and we were amazed by how clean everything was and that there were no roadworks! And we were also amazed and overjoyed by the cake ... cake (and cherry pie) to die for, really huge slices that nearly, but not quite, beat us!

In Bled we met up with Slovenian choir Musica Viva Kranj. Our first meeting with them was in a bar where they sang to us, we sang to them and we all sang together. It didn't really matter that most of them did not speak English and none of us spoke Slovenian (I say none of us - one of us learned the word for 'thankyou'). And Gulls knocked them (and the Somerset chorus) down with our rendition of the Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy - although we will probably be remembered most for our shower cap game! Unlike us, viva Kranj have been going for 70 years and one of the singers we met was an original member. Singers have to pass an audition to join and they sounded amazing - the men's voices made us go weak at the knees and the ladies sang like angels. We did notice that the sopranos were a lot taller than us and thought that might be why they could hit such high notes!

And as for us, we sang at the airport, we sang on the bus, on a train, in the hotel, round the lake. In the bar, we even serenaded the oarsman (and a young couple who had probably boarded the boat for a romantic interlude on the lake) who took us over to Bled Island. You can imagine the look of dread on the said young couple's faces when they saw us in the hotel! I don't know what we did to them.

And we laughed... a bit. There had been times over the last few months when we were learning the repertoire for the tour that we wondered why we were doing it! Now we are home, we realise all the hard work was worth it. And now we realise we can actually fly, well, where shall we go next ...

November 2015

### 'Suck 'em and Sea'

This has been a great year for us and an extra exciting month just gone. Many of you have been asking when we were going to produce an album of our songs and back in the summer we recorded our first CD, 'Suck 'em and Sea'.

We were fortunate enough to have Gerard O'Farrell, who is the manager of the folk duo Show of Hands, to do the recording and the end result was released early in November. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who have bought 'Suck 'em and Sea' and hope you enjoy the contents.

Late in August we appeared at the Cornwall Folk Festival in Wadebridge where we share a concert with The Johnson Girls, an American girl shanty group. They remarked on howiring it was to record an album and said that it had taken them around two years. 'Oh yes,' says Lettbridge, 'it is tiring. It took we all bloody afternoon!'

Anyway, our astonishing leap to global fame took another turn on November 4<sup>th</sup> when we appeared live on Gloria Hunniford's Open House on Channel 5 alongside Rick Stein and Sir Ranulph Fiennes who was late having apparently got lost between the underground and the studios!). Overall it was a great day and thanks to Bradbury for cranking up the applause in the studio audience. Apart from Bill upsetting an entire tray of coffee and sandwiches, getting jammed in the automatic doors and getting lost beneath the stairs, we must have made a reasonable impression as she has invited us back again, maybe around the time of our Albert Hall gig (as we say in showbiz!). Since that we have been featured on Radio Leeds and Radio Cornwall who both gave us good plugs.

None of us have given up the day jobs yet though and we hope to see you all as normal through the season on our regular Friday night slot on the Platt (subject to the kind permission of my nautical equivalent, the Harbourmaster General). We hope next year that if the weather is ever bad (!) we might be able to perform under cover in the Lifeboat House.

Should any of you want to buy a copy of the CD, it is for sale in most of the village shops - and being played in most of the village shops, over and over and over again. If you'd like one sent in the post, please send a cheque for £11 made out to 'The Fisherman's Friends' to The Post Office, Port Isaac, PL29 3RA. (E! We still want to know - As with all boy bands who's going to leave to have a solo career first - suggest)

December 2000

### MUSICAL WEEKEND

Port Isaac was filled with music last weekend - on Saturday there was the concert in the pottery with shanty singers and other groups for which the tickets were all sold before the day! Then Sunday lunchtime we were regaled at every hostelry with singers, guitarists, banjo players, squeeze-boxes, and fiddles. It was better than Christmas and you wish that it could always be like that. This has been written as a 'Stop Press' - we hope to be able to give details next month!

October 1997



December 2008

### FISHERMEN'S FRIENDS TO FUND SKATEBOARD TRACK

An unprecedented round of applause greeted the news that the Fishermen's Friends are to fund a Skateboard area at the Playing Field for local children. The announcement was made at the September Parish Council meeting with the proviso from the PC that 'we have the assurance from the children that, if provided it would be used, thus eliminating the practice of skateboarding in the streets'.

There is apparently a superb track at Helston and Parish Council Chairman Bryan Richards is to visit it to see the layout and also see what advice Helston Parish Council can pass on. Watch this space!



October 2001

PORT ISAAC SINGERS Formed in 1970 with just twelve singers, the choir, under its founder conductor Janet Townsend, has grown steadily in size and reputation. They have achieved outstanding competition successes both in Cornwall and further afield: Bath, Cardiff, Blackpool, and Cheltenham, where they twice won the Champion Trophy for Ladies' Choirs at the Music Festival.

The Singers were chosen to represent Cornwall in the Interceltic Festival in Brittany in 1985 and have made several appearances on national television from 'Opportunity Knocks' to 'Songs of Praise'. They are also regularly heard on local radio having made their own tape, and last Christmas contributed to a tape of West Country Carols. If any potential young singer (particularly soprano) is interested in joining, please contact Janet Townsend or any other choir member.  
May 1990

### Port Isaac Choral

The Choral was in disarray when Janet Townsend broke her ankle last December. So much had been planned for the festive season - was it all to be abandoned? No, the member of the Choral are made of sterner stuff and the carol singing at the pottery went ahead, albeit with a novice organist! Carols were sung at St Kew on the coldest night in December, followed by our annual Xmas meal. Then, with the help of a wheelchair, a zimmer frame and several strong men, Janet joined us for our annual Carols at Port Gwenn.  
May 2008



### Love Came Down at Christmas

This piece of music was given to me by the late Mrs Bertha Blake. It was composed by Mrs Christine Hoskin who used to live at the Old Vicarage (out under Castle Rock). We, Joan Murray, Velma Knight, Shirley Gladwin and Barbara Richards, used to sing it at Christmas Concerts and were always very pleased and proud to perform it, the music being part of Port Isaac's history. It will not be heard in any other part of the country, it's a proper Port Isaac tune.  
Joan Murray & Barbara Richards

Christina Rossetti's words were set to this Port Isaac tune called Tregarthen:

Love came down at Christmas  
Love all lovely, love divine  
Love was born at Christmas  
Star and angels gave the sign  
Worship we the Godhead,  
Love Incarnate, Love Divine,  
Worship we our Jesus,  
But wherewith for sacred sign?  
Love shall be our token,  
Love shall be yours and love be mine,  
Love to God and all men,  
Love for plea and gift and sign.

December 2014

### Christmas Carols by candlelight

It has long concerned me that so many traditional songs are no longer known. In the early part of the last century there were a number of musicians who went round the country writing down the traditional songs, which included carols, before the people who had always sung them died off.

I, like many others, grew up singing songs from the New National Song Book - traditional songs that are rarely sung now. Without this songbook, these songs - part of our heritage - would have been lost.

My current concern is traditional carols. Many children, and adults know the Christmas songs like 'Little Donkey' or 'Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer' but have never sung 'Good King Wenceslas' or 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'.

In Port Isaac, as in every town and village in Cornwall, traditional carols were sung every year. There were several that were special to Port Isaac. A candlelight carol service was held in the Roscarrock Methodist Chapel (now the Pottery).

The people who know these traditional carols are now getting on and the old carols will be totally forgotten before long. So, through the Port Isaac Historical Society, the Port Isaac Choral and because of the kindness of Billy and Barbara

If you enjoy having a good sing, help to resurrect an old tradition in our village.  
Come along and learn to sing these old carols before they die out completely.  
Janet Townsend

December 2002