

## NOTES

### The Holy and The Horrid No.1: The New Road - MBRRCD04

See CD facing page for full list of artists and instrumentation

#### 1. The First of My Lovers 2.36 Carter arr. Ball M. after Price c. Stainer & Bell

Although a deeply committed Christian and a member of The Society of Friends (The 'Quakers'), the late Sydney Carter was acutely aware that there were many who wanted a truly Spiritual dimension in order to feel fully human, yet who were unable to pass the 'barrier' –as they saw it – of orthodox Christian beliefs, propositions, doctrines and dogmas. His song 'Every Star Shall Sing a Carol' exemplifies his ability to speak to and on behalf of Believer and Sceptic alike. This first track more daringly attempts a similarly unorthodox view, and is certainly unacceptable to the point of heresy to many Christians. God, The 'One', the 'Ancient of Days' indicates (if I understand the message correctly) that His would-be worshippers have had to have recourse to Pagan icons, like the sun, in a be-nighted past. They share some things with us, like the use of high places for their temples, our use of steeples reaching for the Heavens. Is this piece Holy-ish or Horrid? My arrangement uses some basic ideas from a recording of some Carter songs I heard on an LP 'Lovely in the Dances', with Maddy Prior and John Kirkpatrick the leading vocalists. Here, **Fiona Johnson** leads the Bull-at-a- Gate Band. See Rex Tucker's Front Cover composition on H&H 2 'Nothing Obvious' for early Glastonbury.

#### 2. Mobile Phone 3.34 Stepto Copyright Control

Paul Stepto has bought one since writing this – a reluctant convert.

#### 3. The New Road 3.44 Beavis Public Domain

**Di and John Cullen** run the Acoustic Music and Folk Club at the Beacon Bar and Restaurant, Rusthall. They learned this piece from Martyn Wyndham Read who heard it on one of his regular tours of Australian Folk Music clubs and Festivals. It was written by Australian John Beavis of Ballarat, Victoria. This narrative provides a refreshing and moving re-statement of major events in Jesus of Nazareth's ministry as told in the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark & Luke.

#### 4. Sausages 3.22 Rule K. Copyright control

**Keith Rule** of the West Kent family folk music group Pig's Ear came up with this shocker. What an imagination: he even manages to get in a road accident and a reference to the Battle of Jericho in this tribute to one of England's delicacies, the 'Banger'. A number on the Horrid side despite the laughs.

#### 5. The Remembrance 2.43 Thackray N.W.R. Music Publishing Co.Ltd

Many of Jake Thackray's songs, of which there are some ninety, keep you guessing up to the last line, including this reflection on the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. **Matt Forbes** of Canterbury is a member of the Jake Thackray Appreciation Society, and as such reproduces properly Jake's characteristic style and original musical arrangements for nylon-stringed guitar.

#### 6. The Sun is Burning in the Sky 2.32 Campbell Trow Essex Music Ltd

Ian Campbell of the eponymous Folk Group wrote this song in the early 1960s, when, even before the 1962 Cuban missile crisis (which very nearly led to a 3<sup>rd</sup> World War), people were extremely nervous about the prospect of a nuclear holocaust. The lovely tune, sung here by **Paulette Sheard**, seems to be in mocking contrast to the brutality of the later verses. Compare 'Crow on the Cradle' on H&H 2.

#### 7. The Dockyard Gate 2.47 Trad. English

Just as 'matelots' would boast of "...a girl in every port..." so Jack's long absences at sea would lead to fickleness amongst wives and girl friends. **Mike Wilkinson**, his wife Carol and myself teamed up to run the Sydney Folksong club many years ago. For this piece I have reverted to the style of concertina accompaniment similar to that employed by Alf Edwards in his work with the Singer and Folklorist A.L.Lloyd in the 1960s.

#### 8. I Sing of a Maiden 1.53 Anon /Hadley c. Ascherberg, Hopwood & Crew Ltd

This anonymous mediaeval lyric is justly famous and has attracted a number of musical settings. This by Patrick Hadley became a favourite of mine when I heard **Fiona and Jennifer Johnson** sing this to their mother **Caroline's** accompaniment at a concert given by The Oriana Singers in Rusthall. Here they repeat that fine ensemble performance.

9. Personal Column 4.06 Thackray c. N.W.R. Music Publishing C. Ltd  
For those who know Jake's songs, they become associated with his nylon-stringed guitar and his own guitar arrangements; but some dozen of them sit well with a certain kind of piano accompaniment. I've tried to transfer his guitar work to my piano arrangement, in part. (I wonder still whether Molly and Sydney ever got together again, and did Sheila ever go home..!)

10. C'est Chic 4.26 Stepto Copyright Control  
Super-models around the north-east part of Mayfair. The Tonbridge poet and song-writer **Paul Stepto** has a portfolio of songs which illuminate a range of moods and topics\*, yet he has a particular gift for topical and satirical treatments, sometimes invasively surgical, sometimes hilarious. This has a bit of both. (“..looks that chill..”: Yes, why the frowning, in their photographs?). \* Paul's songs feature also on CDs ‘..Threshold’ & ‘Magic Bedroom’.

11. Sweet Emaline 1.56 Layton/Creamer/Tatum/Ball T. c. Francis Day Hunter/Redwood Music  
**An interlude.** The great American jazz pianist Art Tatum took this quite ordinary early-20<sup>th</sup> century ‘Pop’ number and applied his formidable technique to it. Recently **Tom Ball** spent many an hour listening to and transcribing this entertaining piano solo for the Wedding breakfast of his electric bass player of 12 years, Chris Anderson. (See MBRRC02 ‘Just on the Threshold’ Track 19, ‘Chicken’).

12. Country Girl 3.32 Thackray c. N.W.R. Music Publishing Co.Ltd  
I suppose that, because of one line, this is a touch too racy for a prude like me. Nevertheless this number charms: pictures for the mind, striking lines :”.. on her bicycle, sailing along singing hymns to the hedgerows”, “ lying under the plum trees, her toes in the crocuses..”. **Matt Forbes** interprets.

13. Carol of the Creatures 3.30 Carter arr.Ball M after Price c. Stainer and Bell  
The ‘creatures’ are those elements of Creation (sun, moon, stars, fire etc) which are expected to praise their Creator. These lyrics of Sydney Carter's have a background in the Apocrapha and the Book of Daniel, but more obviously in St. Francis of Assisi's prayer ‘Canticle of the Sun’ extant in mainstream English-speaking Hymnody e.g. ‘All Creatures of our God and King’ (“ O come thou.. rushing wind/mother earth/ kind & gentle Death/flowing water.. & Praise the Lord” and in The Benedicite, a 2<sup>nd</sup> century canticle still chanted today from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. The **Johnson Family** and **Ginette di Palma** give this number some ‘welly’ to create an exuberant performance in praise of God.

14. Salvation Army Girl 2.40 Thackray c.N.W.R. Music Publishing Co.Ltd  
My Salvation Army friend, the fund-raiser extra-ordinaire Pat Simmonds of Tunbridge Wells, has enough of a sense of humour and humility to allow me to mention her in connection with this song. Yes, a touch Holy, a touch earthy, a surprise. **Matt Forbes** provides me with some quality, Jake-like guitar work.

15. Beggar Wench 2.40 Trad. Scottish  
**Carol Wilkinson** performs this piece of Scottish ribaldry with appropriate rhythmic swagger, given this swinging Ionian air and the pro-female lyric. The merchant, out of his depth in this low-life scenario, was almost asking for his come-uppance. (See note for Track 7) *Produced from and old tape recording.*

16. Down Below 2.27 Carter c. Stainer and Bell  
Sydney Carter's journalistic work took him into some strange places, including the Central London sewers. I like the element of nostalgia in the last verse. In Stainer and Bell's Carter publications, under the general title ‘Present Tense’, more verses are provided. The tune is an old one.

17. Joseph 2.47 Thackray c. N.W.R. Music Publications Co.Ltd.  
“..Nobody sings me any songs “ goes the lyric, and how true since I have never in a life-time of church-going ever heard a hymn do anything but mention him in passing. Jake was commissioned to write this when teaching at the Intake School, Leeds. **Matt Forbes** obliges.

18. The Weaver's Dance 3.23 Rule S. Copyright Control  
An interlude. **Sue Rule's** joyous song celebrates the occasion when one of her daughters was part of a group of children dancing around the Maypole. It contains some useful reminders of what it takes to sing and dance effectively, and is performed by the family group **Pig's Ear**, all six of them on this occasion.

19. Sue... 4.45 Stepto Copyright Control

**Paul Stepto** identifies many a modern craze as being grist to his satirical mill, some of them more chronically lasting than others. Here he settles on one of the more socially debilitating modern orthodoxies. It is sobering to hear that he is able to point to so many examples of the sue/blame cast of mind and its related non-senses of taking easy offence e.g. at having your leg 'pulled', at a piece of constructive personal criticism.

20. Present Tense 0.48 Carter c. Stainer and Bell

Written from the point of view of an Agnostic, this little squib reminds the regular Church-goer, the 'Faithful', the genuinely Pious of the need to be seen to reflect one's encounters with the Lord in one's daily life. As Jesus said in one of his many difficult sayings : "...many are called, but few are chosen". Mind you, I wonder if Sydney might have wished to re-phrase his '..so shut the Bible up..' in the light of today's pathetic total ignorance of 'The Good Book' which has sustained the western world for two millennia in an understanding of what it is to be fully human; so there ! (I hope nobody is going to sue me). **Jane Goldsworthy** sings Alto in the St.Paul's, Rusthall Parish Church choir, plays the two flute parts on Track 1 and provides a chorus part in Pie Jesu on H&H 2, 'Nothing Obvious'.

21. They Bowl As Well 3.17 Ball M/Thackray C.C., & Plantagenet Music

I have used Jake's tune from his famous song 'On Again On' (with its arresting opening phrase: "I like a good bum on a woman, it makes my day..") for my own agenda, changing his topic (the length of a woman's tongue –principally that of his good wife) to a cricketing theme. One season when my club was playing against weak teams, the opening 4 or 5 batsmen had ridiculously high batting averages by the 10<sup>th</sup> mis-match with averages of between 60 and 180 runs. Batting anywhere from no.6 to 11 you had no chance of a 'knock'. Hartfield C.C. play at 'the Croft'. A ton is 100 runs. Wilfred Rhodes opened his career playing for England as an outstanding slow spin bowler and a No.11 batsman but developed into a No.1, an elevation unique in the annals of English Test cricket. Several of the jokes are taken almost straight from Jake's original lyric. "...coffin, book and bell.." = kit bag, score-book & tea-bell, plus pun.

22. Le Cygne Noir 2.44 Thackray/Bergman c. N.W.R.Music Publishing Co. Ltd

Jake used to translate French songs into English, principally those of George Brassens. Jake's song 'The Black Swan' has been translated into French, and according to **Matt Forbes** is now a darker reflection of the process of drowning one's sorrows when in the sudden throes of lost love. Without a translation one can still enjoy this Track on the basis of the beautiful sound which is the French language. In any case this a reminder that although Jake is very much his own man he has borrowed from the French 'Chansonnier' tradition in some of his songs, and in any case has managed in his tunes, his use of linguistic and musical metre, his guitar style and in his bloody-minded Englishness to avoid being drenched by the all-pervading 20<sup>th</sup> century Afro-Americanisation of English language popular song style (about which Jake was apoplectic). Original English:

[www.JakeThackray/Lyrics](http://www.JakeThackray/Lyrics)

23. Damien the Wonder Kid 3.35 Stepto Copyright Control

Perhaps you have heard of Damien Hirst, an English artist of sorts. The refrain has a reference to 'Champion the Wonder horse' of American films, long ago.

24. Dabbling in the Dew 1.50 English Traditional

This pastoral tale has different tune and cast of words from the version on H&H 2. This ingratiating, nosy cad appears to have been rendered speechless at the milkmaid's delightful snub in the last verse. This version was collected by H.& R. Hammond in Dorset in 1906. My mother became a milkmaid at 13, Dairymaid at 16 (making cheese, butter and clotted cream now) and at 18 appointed Dairymaid & Housekeeper on the small Mixed farm near Landrake, Cornwall bought for her brother Harry by my Grandfather Thomas Jane.

25. The Poor Sod 1.53 Thackray Plantagenet Music Co.Ltd

One of Jake's Pastorals set as usual in rural Yorkshire. They include the comical, the scandalous, the charming, the descriptive. This one is darker.

**M.R.Ball**

**Rusthall, Kent, 14-11-07**

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*This CD is dedicated to the memory of my sister Elaine and my mother Ella*

**Sponsored by John and Di Cullen proprietors of The Beacon Bar and Restaurant, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells.** Thanks are due to **Gray Cooper**, sound engineer and co-producer, for his meticulous attention to detail and musical creativity, and to **Helen Cooper** for her patience and for her photo-artist ingenuity. I acknowledge the work my webmaster **Matthew Howell** has done to make me computer literate. Amateur artist **Rex Tucker** & I struck up a friendship in Bath 6 decades ago. Presently he lives in Petersfield, Hants. *Jake's output is available on 'Jake in a Box', a set of 4 CDs by EMI Ltd.*

*The Holy & The Horrid* is the description that Jake Thackray sometimes used to describe his output of songs.

*M. R. Ball*  
14<sup>th</sup> November 2007