

SWARB'S CORRECTIONS

FAIRPORT BY FAIRPORT BY NIGEL SCHOFIELD

Nigel also wrote the booklets for the *Swarb!* box set of 2003 (the last time I was interviewed by the author) and all Fairport and ex-members' box sets unless otherwise stated.

I have limited all the inaccurate quotes, statements or factual errors noted in these pages to those that relate only to myself.

Page 89

Nigel states Shirley Collins and her album *No Roses* "is one of the few records that pose a serious challenge to *Liege and Lief* for the title of greatest Folk-Rock album of all time".

A strange conclusion. I like Shirley a lot and I like this album a lot and I wouldn't mind if it were the greatest folk rock album of all time. However, *Liege and Lief* was voted best album in a Radio 2 listeners' poll, so *No Roses* could only have been a serious threat if it had been entered for the title in the first place.

Page 93

This is a peculiar one; a quote from me that is not possible: "I had also played on Luke Kelly's version of The Deserter"

Not true. I neither played this song on stage with Luke, or on an album with him. By checking on line you will find the truth, which is that I heard him sing it in ¾ time.

Page 93

"The end of Matty Groves came from Martin".

Not true, it didn't, nor would I have said it did. It came from Hedy West.

Page 94

A fictitious sentence, which I quote in full: "In Birmingham, after they had sat admiringly through the acoustic set, as soon as Dylan came on with an electric guitar, the rest of the Ian Campbell Group had walked out in obvious protest, only Dave Swarbrick remained in his seat."

Not true. In the first place, the Birmingham concert was before Dylan had gone electric. The concert was May 5th 1965. He didn't have an electric backing band until July 1965 and not until 1966 in the UK. Secondly, I wasn't at the concert and it would be years before I saw him on stage. I was at home decorating my flat.

Page 100

"The rear featured a strange and evocative carved head, something Swarb had acquired in Scandinavia."

Not true. I neither acquired it, and it didn't come from Scandinavia. My then wife, Birgitte, did the acquiring, and it came from Pembokeshire in Wales.

Page 102

Swarb "*The Deserter* and *Reynardine* were the two songs I suggested to, and taught the band."

If you turn to page 45 of the *Swarb!* box set booklet, published June 03, you will see that the quote is born from a statement by the author.

"Swarb also contributed the *Deserter* and *Reynardine*". The word *also* has been deleted. By doing so it diminishes my input to the album. For example, I hold the copyright to *Tam Lin*.

At this point I need to say that there are many facts concerning source material and time signatures which have never been aired. I don't intend to give the facts away

here; rather I am keeping them for my book. However, it is perfectly true to say that the reason why *Fairport by Fairport* does not include them is because no one in the current line-up knows them.

Page 103

“Swarb had an original tune which suited it better”

Not true. The melody was bespoke; I wrote the melody to fit Richard’s lyrics. I didn’t carry a handy tune around that magically fitted his lyrics.

Page 105

“In this case he dug back to a favourite set he had played with the Beryl Marriott’s Ceilidh Band. By way of acknowledging its origins, Beryl would be invited on stage at Cropredy to perform.”

Not true. There are four tunes in the make up of this medley: *The Lark in the Morning* (a jig), *Rakish Paddy* (a reel), *The Foxhunters Jig* (in 9/8 time; a slip jig) and *Toss the Feathers* (a reel). I don’t think I played any of these tunes with Beryl, but to be sure I e-mailed Roger Marriott to check that I wasn’t mistaken. He answered that *The Lark in the Morning* was a possibility but not the remaining three. It is simply not true and therefore it follows that asking Beryl on stage to recognize its origins is not true either. In fact I compiled the

medley from a number of collections; O’Neil’s and so on.

I would like to take the time now to explain a little of the workings of PRS: The Performing Rights Society. It defines the arranger of a medley as the person who chooses the various tunes, and puts them in a sequence. I could have claimed Arranger copyright for every single Fairport medley of tunes that is comprised wholly of traditional tunes. I believe that this is unfair. There is more to the arrangement of a set of tunes than finding them and putting them in a sequence: e.g. chords, unison work, DM and so on. I only took arranger rights for *Dirty Linen*. Publication of *Fairport by Fairport* leads me to wonder if I wasn’t over- generous, all things considered.

Page 111

“Yet here he was, clad in a red shirt, revelling in prancing around the stage”

Not true; if only! Most of the time, if not all, I was sitting. I have not stood up sober to play since well before Oct 2004.

Page 119

This left me speechless, and more than a little bewildered, when I originally read it. I have no explanation as to why Peggy should do this.

Peggy

“It would be wrong to say I was bored with Folk, but I was excited about playing something rockier again with Fairport. I told Swarb how pleased I’d been to have a bass guitar and not the huge, cumbersome, upright, double bass to lug around. **Swarb suggested I smash up the double bass at the end of the gig as a kind of ceremonial farewell.**”

Author

“Swarb has what some describe as an impish sense of humour. More than one member of Fairport has said that sometimes he doesn’t know when to draw the line. Old Years Night in 1969 was one of them”.

Peggy

“We came offstage and headed for the bar. Swarb collared me and said, “Well, are you going to do it then?”

“What?”

“Execute your double bass”

I was fairly refreshed by this point in the evening, and it seemed like a good idea at the time. So I went on stage and jumped down on it. As it lay in bits beneath my feet, I noticed the shocked expressions on the faces of the rest of the group. Then Swarb calmly reminded me that, “it’s only the interval...He has continued to exert a positive and supportive influence on my life ever since.”

In 2003 Dave Pegg told the same story to the same author for my box set booklet (page 64). This time he was much closer to the truth.

Peggy

“One of the best memories I have is after I had joined Fairport and Swarb and I went down to the Ian Campbell Folk Group’s Folk club at the Jug o’ Punch in Birmingham. I had taken my double bass to play with them and Swarb had brought his fiddle. We got very relaxed drinking whisky. I think it may have been a Burns Night or even a Hogmanay. I was standing in front of the little stage playing my double bass, hanging on to it more than playing it to try and keep myself upright. Swarb was leaning over me, and I was saying **“I hate the double bass! At the end of the gig I’m going to jump through it”**. He said, “Go on then” and kept encouraging me. During the last song I took the double bass, got onto the stage (which was about three feet above the floor) where the rest of the band were, and at the end of the number, I triumphantly put the double bass on the floor and jumped through it. This, I thought, was a fantastic move for double bass playing! However, judging by the look on my wife’s face at the time, as she was heading towards the stage with a tray of drinks, I knew I had put my foot in it, if you’ll pardon the expression.

This was made even more obvious to me when **Ian Campbell said, “Why did you do that?”**. I replied, “It was the last number and a great end to the evening”. **Ian said, “Peggy, it was only the end of the first half”**.

So, I neither instigated the incident and nor did I make the fateful comment about it not being the end of the show. Neither did I “egg him on”, my input to the incident being “when are you going to do it?”

The fact is I don’t go in for elaborate practical jokes as I can’t keep a straight face. Any jokes I make are usually of the retort variety.

If jumping in a pool fully clothed hurts other than me, then I am sorry. I can be caustic or funny with one liners, but then with Fairport I am one among many when it comes to caustic one liners, and by no means the best either. I tell a mean story and I like to think of myself as having a sharp wit, but I would never have instigated such a destructive and unpleasant practical joke.

Page 145

I am quoted as saying “I suppose I have Paul Simon to thank for it. I had been booked to play a session with him. It never came off, but I still got paid”.

Not true. Once again, you have to turn to the *Swarb!* box set booklet of ‘03 (page 49) for the truth.

“His life was saved by the fact that he had invested a recent royalty cheque in an antique bed which was...” etc. etc.

Actually, it was an advance on Royalties from Island Records after I pointed out to them that Dave Pegg, DM, and myself, being new members, were not signed to them, They then drew up a contract for a further period and we all signed. The cheque was an advance on royalties for £15,000 and my share was the most money I had ever seen. Paul Simon didn’t pay Alistair Anderson, who I was booked with, or myself for the cancellation of the session.

Page147

“It was only natural that their enforced move should seek a similar environment. They decamped to the Cotswolds.”

Not true. The author's quote refers to the occasion in February 1971 when a lorry crashed through The Angel landing up in my bedroom. In fact, we didn't leave The Angel. I moved to a small cottage that the landlord had next door and I believe the rest shuffled about somehow. It was about the time that Richard left the band. He may well have moved out, or perhaps been in the process of doing so. At any rate he wasn't home when the lorry hit the house. *Babbacombe Lee*, with the exception of one song, was composed while still living at The Angel.

For the record, none of us lived in the Cotswolds after we moved from the Angel. Simon moved to Islip, DM to Haywards Heath, Peggy to Birmingham and I moved to a flat in Streetly, a suburb of Birmingham. Later I was the first person to move to Cropredy, followed some time later by Dave Pegg. Cropredy, I should point out, is not in the Cotswolds. Later Simon moved to Chipping Norton; the first person in the band to actually move to the Cotswolds.

Page 152

"Sailors Alphabet had come to Fairport via Bert Lloyd".

Not true. It came to the group via me. I had played on an L.P. Called *A Sailors Garland*. It was one of the first records I ever made. You can check it on line. The singer of the song was Ewan MacColl.

Page 156

Peggy

"Somehow Swarb managed to sell the idea of a TV special to Melvin Bragg"

What? You mean I phoned him? "Hi Melv, how you doing? Listen mate, I got a great idea"

Not True. The producer contacted the band's management.

Page 158

Swarb "The police decided to check our instrument cases. A lump of a certain substance had found its way into the middle of my violin case. It was nearly arrest and prosecution, but we managed to convince them it was rosin rather than resin"

Not true. Dave Pegg in my box set booklet (page 65) tells the true story under the heading of Peggys Police Story.

"We were playing at the club... the full show with tape inserts and everything, the whole of *Babbacombe Lee*. We were just about to begin; the place was full; and the police decided to raid the place, the Drugs Squad. Everyone had to stand where they were, hands raised, while the police went round and checked everything. We were up there on stage, exchanging glances, and feeling rather stupid. A couple of the audience were bundled off... and it looked like we could carry on-when someone (accidentally or deliberately) pressed the button on the tape machine and across the hushed room we heard the voice of Phillip Sterling Wall which opens the album. "John Lee the jury has found you guilty of wilful murder and the sentence of this court upon you is that you be taken from this court and etc. etc."

That was it, the gig was cancelled. They plainly did not find it amusing, and so we started shifting our gear. Then one of the coppers, I think it was a Sergeant, said "Just a minute lads. What have we got here then" and he proceeded to check the instrument cases. It was annoying and a bit embarrassing with everyone peering, but not a problem. Then he came to Swarb's case, which someone (who shall remain nameless) had decided would be a good spot to get rid of a lump of dope.

The result: A very annoyed Swarb who, as a result, ended up making several very unwelcome trips back there to plead his case."

I was arrested, and I was sent for a Jury trial to Plymouth, My Barrister was Mr. Lawson Scott, and I was acquitted. There is much to tell, but I am keeping it for my book.

Page 166

"Swarb frequently dipped back to the tunes that the band knew from from Ian

Campbell's group. *Tail Toddle, Haste to the Wedding, Hens March.*"

I gave the tunes to the Ian Campbell Group. *Haste to the Wedding* was not one of them. Ian never sang *Haste to the Wedding* and I never played it with him. As a matter of interest, *Haste to the Wedding* would not appear in Fairport's repertoire until long after Simon re-joined when he found Victorian words to it and we sang it as an introduction to an instrumental called *Royal Seleccion No. 13*.

Page 172

"*Matthew, Mark, Luke and John* is credited to all five members of the *Full House* line up"

It is a Swarbrick /Pegg composition, wrongly assigned. Lots of speculation follows in the book as to who wrote it. I do have a phone!

Page 183

"The flat was suburban and relatively small, its space was further reduced by Sandy's Steinway"

Not true. This is a reference to Sandy and Trevor's flat in London, The flat had a tiny rehearsal room, really a conversion of the smallest bedroom, with sacking on the wall to enhance the sound, and two enormous speakers on the wall, a bedroom and a living room but no Steinway. Sandy got the Steinway when she lived in Byfield.

Page 186

Author

"Swarb had put the show at risk when, on 7th September, he had climbed on to a chair to see over the heads of the standing audience as the Stones played the Empire Pool, Wembley."

Swarb

"I had wanted to see them playing *You Can't Always Get What You Want*, lost my balance, knackered my knee, and ended up in hospital with the whole of my left leg in plaster."

Not true. I was showing off in Epping Forest to a delightful lady from Jamaica. I had put myself into a half lotus position and got stuck in it and remained in that position for the whole of that night's concert. I was later operated on and, what is more, later married the delightful lady.

Page 189

"Swarb was uncertain about it, fearing it would erode his position"

This relates to Sandy re-joining the band. Why me? Everyone was uncertain, including Sandy. I wasn't concerned about her taking over on the fiddle! Nor was I anything but pleased to be able to work with her again. She improved the group ten fold. Despite all that has been said about Sandy and me and our relationship, I was, with the exception of Trevor, the closest to her. She was a regular visitor, living just a mile or two away; we thought alike and shared the occasional cuddle.

Page 191

"Trevor Lucas was heard on the soundtrack, and briefly seen on screen".

Not true.

Page 209

"And yet another song about the band from Dave Swarbrick."

Not true. *Our Band* has references to Joe, but it stops there. *Rosie* is a plea to listen to the band, that's all, any band! That makes two; hardly grounds for "yet another".

Page 265

"Where Swarb moved after a freight truck took his Angel away". (Meaning Cropredy.)

Not true. As previously stated, I lived in Streetly, Birmingham, then Princesdale Road in London and Upper Addison Gardens in London before I moved to Cropredy.

Page 329

“Bridge over the River Ash is unlike Fairport’s other instrumentals in that its roots are not in folk tunes but in chamber music.”

Not true. The medley comprises two tunes, both most definitely folk tunes; they come from a collection of tunes assembled in the 17th century by John Playford. The full details, including their names, will be available in my book.

Page 385

“The Banks of The Sweet Primroses - This lost traditional song from the Richard Thompson era is found in the EFDSS collection of his (Phil Tanner) recordings and Swarb certainly owned a copy of the LP”

Not true. I don’t have a copy. The song is on page 17 of *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*.

Page 387

“*Ye Mariners All*, also known as *A Jug of This*, was a folk club staple and would certainly have been known to both Peggy and Swarb from their days with Ian Campbell”.

Not true. It never was a club staple. It’s in 5/4 time and none but a few sung it. Ian neither sang it nor recorded it. It did come from the singing of Bert Lloyd, but I was re-introduced to it by the singing of Martin Carthy and the variant Fairport used is from *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, page 103.

Page 362

“Neil Cutts, who ran the bar at Cropredy, owned the brewery at Masham. He died in 2006.”

Neil didn’t own the brewery; Theakstons did and does.

GLADYS’S LEAP

Author

“What’s surprising is that Fairport would not use Cropredy ‘85 to promote *Gladys’s Leap*.”

Simon

“This was down to Dave Swarbrick. He had, by this point moved up to Scotland and while he was prepared to join Fairport for one day a year, he had no interest in reviving the band on a more permanent basis. When we played him the album as a work in progress, he had been very disparaging of what he had heard and had no interest in contributing to it.”

Hmmm...

By this point I had moved down to England! *Gladys’s Leap* was released in 1985 and Whippersnapper’s first album was also released in 1985. I moved from Scotland to Preston Capes, a small hamlet in Northamptonshire in 1982, Whippersnapper was formed while living in Preston Capes in 1983.

Fairport didn’t let me know they were working on an album. The first I knew of it was when I turned up at the studio. If I had complied with the request to overdub, it would have been the first Fairport album since *Unhalfbricking* that I would have played on as a virtual session musician. I lived nearby; in fact I had a home visit from Peggy and Simon. Why didn’t they pop round with a cassette or post it? I was given no choice of keys to play in, no choice of material, or songs to sing. I thought then, “They clearly don’t want or need me”. I had issues too with the new system of recording that Peggy had brought to the studio from his recording work with Jethro Tull; no playing together at one time, all dubbing separately, layering, sometimes even beginning with the drums. And I also wanted out. The last few gigs, mainly

festivals abroad, had made me determined to distance myself from the mounting, and what was becoming routine, temper issues.

Why then would I later go to all the trouble of learning someone else's part to promote someone else's album? I made the conscious decision to move on.

Discography

Omits *4play*, a double cd package of the Pegg, Nicol, Rowland, Swarbrick line-up and includes some of the Australian live material, which the author previously states is not available.

Other Stuff

"*Fairport by Fairport* was produced by subscription, a number of people pre-paid to finance the project. In return their names appear in the book in the roll of honour"

None of the ex-members were notified of the book's publication or even existence.

"All quotes from ex-members have been previously used, the vast majority appear in ex-members box sets or Fairport box sets."

Unlike current members, ex-members were denied the right to correct proofs.

The book is advertised as Official. In literary terms this is taken to mean authorised.

Since ex- members were denied proofs it can't be Official!

I maintain that this is a highly unfriendly act that blows the belief that Fairport Convention is one big happy family out of the water. Nigel Schofield never got to see the final proofs. In the indecent haste to start selling and make a profit he was sidelined and didn't see the finished book until publication. Neither did he see the illustrations. So upset was he that when I began this project of correction, he stated, in a letter to me, that he could not bring himself to read it. The book was proof-read at every stage by Dave Pegg, and Simon Nicol.

Nigel was not even allowed to write the book as he wished. It might appear to some that the book was written to the needs of the band. For instance: a quote pertaining to me was deleted "With Swarb's decision not to rejoin the band, the last in the impressive line of Fairport's true innovative geniuses was gone". I reprint that quote purely as an illustration.

It could have been a wonderful book. It could have involved all of us and it could have positively overflowed with rich detail and untold nuggets. Since traditional music has become a University Course study and folk-rock a sub genre, it could have influenced students positively in their studies. Some information within it could have made it all the way to peer review! The profit for the current band would have been depleted, but is that more important than a definitive biography that reaps the benefit of the combined knowledge of us all? What we have now is a mish-mash, part biography and part novel that not one member, past or present, can be everlastingly proud of.

I understand that I stand alone amongst ex-members in my condemnation; I believe the book is a smack in the face to us all, and an abuse of Fairport Convention's undoubted power.