

Readers script final 3

Pensford Evergreens : Thursday 23rd July 2026 7.00pm :

Summer Revels - 1850s west country music, words and mischief with
Brigstowe Village Band (Musical Leader: Alison Rowley)

6.45. (when circumstances permit) Briggy + John M as groom circulate the audience

6.55 BVB main band from sides. Colin ,on stage front

7.00 Pensford committee meeting . Pl. wait without speaking

BVB 7.15 start: First half (sub headings for guidance

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Band: Rogues Marchx4 Intro. Perc. 2.53 x???

1. In which we talk of Pensford and Somerset, village bands, village musicians and a hobby horse

Liz: Thank you Pensford Evergreens for welcoming us to your lovely village; described as:
“a great thoroughfare from Wells to Bristol.

‘Pleasantly situated in a fine wooded vale, almost surrounded with small hills and having on their sides several handsome orchards which form a pleasing rural scene from every part of the town.’

Band: Claps and Oooh.

Lyn .*The land use returns for Pensford in 1866, record :wheat, barley, oats, beans, peas, potatoes, turnips and swedes, mangold, carrots, cabbage, kohlrabi, rape, hops, vetches, lucerne, clover etc in rotation. There were also apples and evidence of cider making .. a rich village indeed . And a fine example, for some , of country life*

Singers : Country Life : 3mins

Brigstowe Village Band , on the other hand comes from the city ,and carries the old name of Bristol the town on the bridge.

In the 1850s bands like ours would have played both in church and in the ale house. We are purveyors of music for all festive occasions – **Band: Hurray!**

Band: Butchers of Bristol x 4, Intro: basses, Colin counts

Band: 29th May x 5, Intro: wind (and 2 fiddles), last 4 bars, John L counts.

Colin: Thomas Hardy, West Country poet, writer and fiddle player, wrote with affection about village bands and we like to model ourselves on them – in some respects. We have Thomas Hardy himself here to keep an eye on us. *Points to Thomas*

Band Hurray! (Colin continues)

We will be playing some of the jolly west country dance tunes that Hardy's family and contemporaries wrote down and which he played. Please feel to clap, sway, or even dance to the music!

2. In which Briggy gets a coloured scarf

Liz: In the West Country a village band might have had a hobby horse like the famous ones in Minehead and Padstow.

Come out Briggy!! *Briggy gallops in and round in a circle.* I know they do horse trading at Priddy Horse Fair – have you come for that Briggy?

Briggy whispers to Liz

Liz: Aha. You are here to protect the band and the people of Pensford against fairies in July. But how will you protect the people of Pensford?

Briggy whispers to Liz.

Liz: Briggy says that fairies are dislike coloured clothing . You are beautifully colourful today Briggy – that is sure to scare the fairies.

Briggy whispers to Liz

Liz: You need something colourful from a member of the audience to protect the band as well?

Liz turns to Terry (caretaker) in the audience ... who puts scarf / hat on Briggy

Liz: Are you pleased with that Briggy? *Briggy nods.*

Band Aaah...

Band: Blaydon Races :start without intro . **Tony counts**l. **16 bars only :** *Briggy gallops off during Blaydon races - down the centre aisle*

Link : Colin : Village band musicians, ordinary men of the village – miners, farm labourers, shoemakers, alehouse keepers, and such like - often kept a manuscript book to write down their tunes.

One manuscript book that has survived has the sacred tunes that they played in church in the front, and the secular ale house and dance tunes at the back. - *shows the audience the book*

Lyn :Sometimes these folk tunes were repurposed as hymn tunes – maybe you recognised *All things Bright and beautiful* which we played earlier - it is actually a folk tune called 29th of May.

Colin (in warning tone) As you will hear later this mixing of styles was to prove disastrous for village musicians in church.

Band: mutters disappointment; groan – oh dear ect

Liz : Here's another surprising folk tune from the west country

Band :Portsmouth x 3, Intro: boxes last 4 bars ref. Mike Oldfield

2. Briggy gets a coloured scarf

3. Absent mindedness in a parish choir

Chris Mapp : Thomas Hardy suggests that sometimes members of the his village band were not the best behaved group .

Band : a take care what ypou say ...*ooh*

Musicians generally were a high spirited lot .Unruliness appeared to have occurred even at Pensford Fair , where according to local records there was '*riotous behaviour of certain persons the day after the fair at the George Inn ,and afterwards in the street: the constable and his assistants were much ill treated*'.

The culprits , presumably, were taken to cool off in the lock up in the village

Band : Shame etc:

Roland : Hardy has a lovely story, Absentmindedness in a Parish Choir, which explains how and why the village band musicians were replaced by church organs.

It happened one cold winter Sunday after Christmas. The village band had been bashing out dance tunes at the village pub late into Saturday night, and on Sunday afternoon with darkness falling, they're up in the west end musicians' gallery, of the church , stock still, shivering with cold. It's freezing 'an inch an hour' and there are no heaters! Just a jug of brandy-and-beer to keep them warm. *BVB mimes falling asleep*. And the parson's in the pulpit, droning on and on ... like this ... as they struggle to stay awake.

BVB totally asleep. As the sermon finally ends, he says 'Let us stand and sing the Evening Hymn. No 69'. He listens. Nobody stirs. Then he shouts: 'Let us stand and sing hymn No 69'. The band wakes up ... the church is dark ... they're not quite certain where they are, there are noises of bleary consternation.

Band reacts

Tony counts in: 'a-one, a-two, a-1234 '.

BVB :no intro ,Devil Among the Tailors x 16 bars with great gusto

Liz : STOP STOP *confused chatter ,then give Roland space to speak*

Roland The tune they played was not the hymn, but one of their dance tunes from the night before – Devil among the Tailors – particularly inappropriate for church. The parson was furious, he dispensed with the men of the village band. He replaced them with an organ for the church services - it plays the same tunes, but it's **much more** biddable so these days the village church has an organ, which is the natural enemy of a band like ours.

Roland (cont) Here, and to end our first half is a **polka** of the sort **never** to be played in church

Great Eastern Polka x 4, Intro: fiddles ast 2 bars of A John L.

FIRST HALF : 32 mins takes us just before IF we start on time : 8.00

Break: 15- mins..... Takes us to approx 8.15 ?

8.15 SECOND Half

Band: Blaydon Races x 5, Intro: fiddles last 4 bars, John Lewis counts

4.Celebrating high summer

Link Liz: The second part of our programme is a celebration of summer time, customs, words and music from the nineteenth century ,when Pensford was still a mining village

Lyn :Bringing a spirit of celebration , Somerset people have marched in parades, given thanks for the harvest, wassailed the apples in the orchard and taken part in revels. They have also expressed great pride in their county , it would be fair to say that celebrating is at the heart of Somerset life.

John M (moves forward)

‘The inhabitants of this county of Somerset ,are plain, honest, but unpolished and reserved in conversation. They entertain a kind of indifference for the rest of the world, probably because of they are so proud of their own portion of it.’

Band: Rising of the Larks x 4, Intro: (Fiddles, last 4 bars,) John L counts

Singers: Farmers Boy

Band: Long Ashton Schottische

5. In which Briggy tries to protect the band from faries

Briggy rushes in and whispers in Liz’s ear

Liz: Briggy tells me that there is a big problem with July – it is a favourite month for fairies, shape shifting magical creatures.

Band : welcoming the magic ...Oooh

Briggy *(again whispers in Liz’s ear)*

Liz: Briggy says there are good fairies and bad fairies. If there are good fairies in your house you might come home and find the washing up done .. but other sorts of fairies might play a prank on you *(Briggy perks up with concern)*.

They might ... curdle the milk **(No!)**

Or make you park on double yellow lines **(Band and audience: No!)** ...or steal your baby and replace it with a fairy baby, a changeling

Band and audience: shocked; No!

Liz: I have heard that there might be fairies around here - in the band - or the audience. Briggy have a look. *(Briggy slowly scans the band and audience for fairies).*

Band : curious OOH

1. Briggy faces brass players , , whilst Pauline **leans out** or steps out and **waves her fairy to make it visible to the audience – keep it up long enough to allow audience to laugh**

Pauline puts down fairy as Briggy turns to face the fiddles and Pauline

2. Angela leans out and **waves her fairy- keep it up long enough to allow audience to laugh**

If Briggy shows the slightest inclination to turn to Angela – fairy moves out of sight

3. Lyn calls ‘Behind you’ from the audience Briggy turns to face her (so has his back to the band . **Angela , Pauline and Pat wave their fairies . Lyn runs down the aisles and disappears**

Briggy reluctantly turns slowly round and runs from one side to the other , **by which time the fairies have disappeared.**

Liz: Stop, Stop - this won't do Briggy. It's difficult to catch these slippery creatures. To ensure full protection, the band needs you to dance a dispersing charm to send them away.

Slight pause (*Briggy can you snuffle round the front row so I can back to my seat*)

Band: Fairy Prince x 4 Intro: Bass - **Colin counts in, Liz get back to seat**

5. Finale : ‘Celebrations’ singing and dancing

Across England in the 1850s dancing was hugely important socially because it was one of the only occasions where men and women could mix relatively freely

We know that Pensford village had several bands over time who rehearsed in the little school room outside the churchyard gates which was known by earlier generations as the ‘band room’

We're now going to play you **3- or less** dances ??? (**number that fits the time**)... the Sussex Cotillion, which was a popular set dance, followed by a local jig, the Radstock Jig is our - tiny a tribute to the miners of the Somerset coal fields that contributed so much to this area and finally a hornpipe because in west the sea is important to us as well

Band: Radstock Jig x 4 No intro . Tony counts 3.20

Band: Sussex Cotillion – Intro: Chords. Tony counts 3.40

Band: Trumpet Hornpipe x 3. Intro: Boxes – last 2 bars of B 3.15

8.45 (latest) Liz: Our final song celebrates being together – again a chance to join in -we have the words to the chorus

Band and singers: Let Union Be: Intro: 4 quiet D chords then singers sing

NB Band needs to be able to see singers

Bow, pause for applause

Encore : Helston Furry dance or whichever ever of the last 3 dances we have missed out

Bow, pause for applause

Thank you from the committee – Final prayer

Stay seated while the audience leaves... there may be the opportunity to play Helston Furry dance or whichever ever of the last 3 dances we have missed out as the audience leaves