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Local Music From Out There

DOLLYMOPS

Long Songs Rattletrap Records

It was only last month when I remarked that I didn't know of any collector who'd worked in the Isle of Wight... then this CD arrived!

The "Long" in the title doesn't refer to the time each song takes but to the collector WH Long (1839-96). Without going further into Long's life, which is outlined in the excellent sleeve notes, let it just be said that the songs on this CD are a sample of some 55 songs which he collected from local singers.

The Dollymops, Virgil & Dorana Philpott and Justin Smith have stayed faithful to Long's philosophy of traditional singing and so have produced a CD which is startling in its honesty and consists of live, one-take recordings. It is, let me hasten to add, all the better for that!

Of the 16 tracks (not counting the reprise of track one) all are given notes with Roud numbers. *The Twelve Apostles*, which opens the album and closes it, is a version of the *Dilly Song* and provides a frame for the other 15 tracks of which *Moss The Miller And His Mare*, and *Polly Oliver's Rambles* are enjoyable and rarely-heard contributions. A nice rendition of *The Honest Thresherman* sits alongside that other Victorian wish-fulfillment standard, *The Farmer's Boy*, providing the pivot point in the album.

The singing is strong, honest and compellingly authentic, there are traces of Young Tradition and Watsons in the approach but this is no bad thing given that virtually all traditional songs are transmitted without harmony (with the notable exception of the Copper family). There is a sense that the singers wish the songs to stand for themselves rather than as the vehicle for the singing and this is both right and proper. The voices are neither overtly 'folky' nor classically mannered but are well modulated with good diction which enables the words to be heard clearly. The result is a listenable album with much to recommend both to those who enjoy traditional singing as well as those who seek additions to their own repertoires.

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THE DOLLYMOPPS

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Long Songs

(RATTLETRAP) www.thedollymopps.co.uk



This first release from Isle of Wight trio The Dollymopps features songs taken from the appendix to WH Long's 1886 *Dictionary Of Isle Of*

Wight Dialect. The most comprehensive source for 19th century folksong on the island, it is surprising that Long's collection has not formed the basis of an album before, but this disc was certainly worth waiting for.

Singing largely unaccompanied, Virgil and Dorana Philpott and Justin Smith's voices combine in the robust manner of the Coppers or, perhaps a closer comparison for those with long memories, Staverton Bridge. Though most of the songs are widely known – 'The Rambling Sailor', 'Turpin Hero', and others – it's good to have these regional variations, particularly when performed with such conviction and aplomb.

Following John Kirkpatrick's recent version, it's noteworthy that 'The Farmer's Boy' makes another appearance here – perhaps a sign of the sort of reappraisal 'John Barleycorn' and 'Wild Rover' have undergone in recent years? I, for one, hope so. In any case, this is a fine album by a trio with real vocal presence, which will be warmly welcomed by anyone with a love of English song.

Oz Hardwick

October 2011

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VOLUME 2
ISSUE 29

ISSN 0964-3257



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eds

Long Songs: Traditional Songs from the Isle of Wight collected by W.H. Long The Dollymops

Rattletrap Records, 01

In the last edition of *EDS*, and the reviews in this issue, there is mention of Short Sharp Shanties from Watchet; now we have Long Songs from Wight. From the West of the Isle of Wight, in fact, where one William Henry Long was born on the 6 October 1839 in the village of Calbourne.

The concise notes accompanying the CD tell us of a man who, through perseverance, made his own way in the world as a bookseller. In later life he devoted time to collecting customs, anecdotes, tales and 'native songs' of the Isle of Wight. This work would seem to have been motivated by the coming of the railway and school boards that were rapidly changing the dialect of the island. He collected some 55 songs in all (texts only), 17 of which are featured on this recording. They have been selected because the versions are unique to the island or are songs that are rarely heard. As for the tunes, they have been diligently researched and come from out-of-print collections or traditional singers.

Long Songs is brought to us by a three-part harmony group, The Dollymops, who, not



surprisingly, live on the Isle of Wight. They have been singing and performing together for the past six years and specialise in traditional songs of southern England and more especially from their home island. Interesting arrangements and occasional musical accompaniment keep your attention and there are some songs here that could well find themselves in the repertoire of any number of singers.

Funded by West Wight Landscape Partnership and part of the Local Heroes Project, *Long Songs* will certainly be well received by enthusiasts on the island and around the whole of the Hampshire area. It should appeal to those who are looking for fresh material or variants of known songs. The whole project should be roundly applauded and a big thank you given to The Dollymops and everyone concerned.

Oh, if you are wondering, a dollymop was a flower girl or milliner who indulged in occasional prostitution. We are advised to substitute singing for soliciting!

www.thedollymops.co.uk

John Bentham

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Long Songs The Dollymopps

2011 Studio album

the [bright young folk](#) review

Isle of Wight natives The Dollymopps' debut CD is a set of songs collected by fellow islander WH Long during the nineteenth century.

Published as an appendix to his dialect dictionary of 1886, this selection of the original 55 songs reveals the Isle to be a rich source.

Virgil Philpott, Dorana Philpott and Justin Smith sing characterful three-part harmonies with vigorous heart and an obvious rapport. There are hints of Coope, Boyes and Simpson and Blue Murder in the group's easy warmth.

Collected on the Isle of Wight they may be, but there are plenty of familiar songs, such as Turpin Hero, mixed in with the south coast rarities.

Highlights include a well-paced Rambling Sailor, Doranna's lively solo spot I'm in Haste and the tragic ship-sinking tale of The Loss of the Ramillies, which is driven along with sprightly guitar and percussion. Virgil's instrumental version of I'm in Haste showcases his considerable guitar skills further still, brief though it is.

Though at 17 tracks it's quite a marathon listen, **Long Songs** does a great job in lifting the music from the dusty pages of the dictionary. An enjoyable document of Long's labours, and an apt celebration of the Isle.

Mark Dishman

Released on Rattletrap Records in 2011.



Reviews

The Dollymopps

Album: Long Songs

Label: Rattletrap

Tracks: 17

Website: <http://www.thedollymopps.co.uk>

The Dollymopps (Virgil and Dorana Philpott and Justin Smith) are a vocal trio hailing from the Isle Of Wight, who specialise in the songs of that region, and the aim of this CD (part of the Local Heroes Project and funded by the West Wight Landscape Partnership) was to resurrect songs from the Appendix to William Henry Long's 1886 Dictionary Of Isle Of Wight Dialect. Hence the CD's title (and no, it doesn't betoken a succession of lengthy ballads).

Long was a late-19th-century collector - there's a useful biography in the disc's liner notes - who sourced 55 songs from local singers; 15 of these songs are presented here (the two extra tracks comprise a brief "reprise" that, rather curiously, is three times as long as the original appearance of that song and an even briefer instrumental variant of another). There's been some minor tweaking of words here and there to make them more sing-able, but this doesn't seem to compromise the original texts. Long did not actually record any tunes for the songs, and so the origins of the various tunes used by the Dollymopps to bring these songs alive for us on this recording ("gathered from dusty recordings of source singers and out-of-print song collections", they openly admit!) are candidly expounded in the excellent, succinct booklet notes.

Several of the songs are familiar items within the folk repertoire, at least in versions collected elsewhere, but those we encounter here are every bit as interesting, and sometimes even to be preferred. I particularly liked the Dollymopps' renditions of the Long-collected variants of The Rambling Sailor, Turpin Hero and The Honest Thresherman. Another highpoint of the disc is The Sailor's Return, which makes especially good use of the dynamic contrast between the three individual singers and also features an almost sotto-voce drumbeat obbligato. Of the less often-heard selections, the most appealing discovery for me was the "last orders" rolling-home song Jolly Sixpence. As far as actual performance goes, the Dollymopps possess an individual blend of voices and an honest, solid, natural and unpretentious (yet still authoritative) singing style that at times reminds me variously of Paul & Liz Davenport or The Young Tradition, with occasional shades of classic Watsons and even the Coppers along the way; their diction is clear too, with a keen feel for communicating their chosen repertoire. Generally speaking, Dorrie takes the principal harmony line within the texture, but she also turns in a fine solo performance of I'm In Haste. There are occasional unobtrusive embellishments to the melody lines, while one or two theatrical gestures employed for comic effect on Moss The Miller And His Mare become slightly irritating on repetition, but for the most part the Dollymopps' readings are full of conviction yet welcomingly accessible, and stand up very well indeed to repeated listening.

The disc doesn't present an unremitting acappella onslaught, though, for no less than four of the songs are accompanied on guitar (by Virgil): Spotted Cow betrays a distinct Carthy influence and a morris-like spring in the step; Polly Oliver's Rambles is given a Nic Jones-like treatment; while on Paul Jones The Pirate, Dorrie's robust vocal attack sounds uncannily like Emily Weygang; Virgil's fine solo account of The Loss Of The Ramillies is also underpinned by a brushed snare courtesy of the disc's recording engineer Rupert Brown). The recording is suitably immediate, and full of as-live presence (it turns out to've been done in one take). This disc is well worth tracking down, and I do hope the Dollymopps feel sufficiently motivated by its success to record a further selection of "Long Songs" in due course (dare I say before too Long?).

David Kidman





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Long Songs

Rattletrap Records 01

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Lady Diamond

Selwyn Music SYNMCDCD 0007

Long Songs: *The Twelve Apostles; The Little Carpenter; Moss the Miller and his Mare; Roger and Dolly; The Spotted Cow; The Rambling Sailor; I'm in Haste; The Sailor's Return; Polly Oliver's Rambles; The Honest Thresherman; I'm in Haste* (instrumental); *The Farmer's Boy; Paul Jones the Pirate; Turpin Hero; The Loss of the Ramillies; Jolly Sixpence; The Twelve Apostles* (reprise).

Lady Diamond: *Martinmas Time; Arise Arise / The Rowling Hornpipe; Lady Diamond / Iron Legs; Laudnam Bunches / The Miller of Mansfield; The Lady of York; The Murdered Servant Man; The Heysham Peace-Egging Song; William Gower / The Tankard of Ale; The Constant Lovers; Come Up The Stairs With Me / Miss Lambert's Delight / Untitled; The Ringers of Eglshayle / The Rose Hill; Faithful Johnny.*

Two CDs by English groups (well, a trio and a duo) arrived shortly after each other. Both perform traditional material - mostly English - in a nominally traditional style. Neither quite succeeds.

The Dollymopps are Virgil and Dorana Philpott and Justin Smith - Male lead, female harmony, and male bass. Older readers may recall The Young Tradition, who had a similar lineup, and made a rather similar sound - here's [The Little Carpenter](#). Personally, while I enjoyed Peter Bellamy's vocal inventiveness, I found it often got in the way of their more serious 'story' songs. Virgil Philpott doesn't trouble me in that way. But a criticism I would level at both groups is that 'story' songs (like ballads) work far better when sung solo, and a group treatment may well make a good noise, but often distracts from telling the story effectively. Similarly, I would suggest that, just because a song has a good chorus, it doesn't need to be sung between every verse, if doing so disrupts the narrative flow.

Because, let's face it, the prime purpose of singing is *communication*, either of the story being told, or of the emotions it evokes in the singer. Without that essential communication, it becomes simply background music! As I said earlier, sometimes the group approach distracts from telling the story effectively. The Dollymopps are also guilty of the same mistake many revivalist singers make - of taking the tunes (and rhythm) more seriously than the words. As a consequence, there are moments when words or phrases are mangled to comply with melodic or rhythmic requirements - when a simple modification of the tune would easily solve the problem ... resulting in an interesting or memorable moment in a song. On the soon-to-be-released MT 3-CD set of Sarah Makem there's a sublime moment when a poorly scanning phrase in *The Banks of the Callan* is resolved through an utterly wonderful melodic manipulation, making the entire song doubly memorable.

The title, *Long Songs*, has little to do with the length of the songs presented here, but reflects the project of which this CD is an outcome ... the resurrection of a number of songs from the Isle of Wight which appeared in the appendix of the 1886 *Dictionary of Isle of Wight Dialect*, by one William Henry Long. Both Long and the Dollymopps hail from that Hampshire island. As was usual in the 19th century, the 55 songs Long published appeared without their tunes, so the group has fitted them up with tunes from mainland versions of the songs, generally staying away from the most well-known versions. On the evidence of the 15 presented here, they've done a good job, as on [The Sailor's Return](#).

The fairly slim booklet makes a good job of telling us about W H Long and his life, and just about enough about the songs themselves. Sadly, the actual singers' lives, occupations - names even - remain a mystery, since Long did not publish them.



Dollymopps bring Island folk songs back to life

Husband and wife team Virgil and Dorana Philpott and their friend Justin Smith are putting Island folk music firmly back on the map, appearing nationwide as The Dollymopps.

The trio formed some seven years ago, and has since unearthed a selection of Island-based folk songs that might have been lost forever, but for their endeavours.

Their first CD 'Long Songs' was released in May 2011, and features traditional English folk songs from the collection of 19th Century Islander, W. H. Long who was a writer and antiquarian living in Calbourne.

Virgil explained how The Dollymopps formed almost by accident back in 2005. When he and Dorana had their son Jabel christened, they didn't want traditional hymns, so a group of friends got together to form an impromptu choir. That 20-strong group gradually whittled down to just three- and so The Dollymopps came into being.

"When we first started it seemed no traditional songs associated with the Island existed," said Virgil. "Then we chanced upon the Dictionary of Dialect, a book that W.H. Long put out in 1886. We found 53 songs, text only – some of which are common to the rest of the country, but others that are unique to the Island.

"Our project was to see if we could learn and revive them; try to find the original tunes, or make tunes that would fit the text. Subsequently we found loads of other leads on the Island alongside those of Long, so we soon found out that the theory of the Island being devoid of original folk songs certainly wasn't the case. As a



'When we first started it seemed no traditional songs associated with the Island existed'

result we have managed to build this picture of what was going on here in the 19th century."

The Dollymopps regularly appear at folk festivals on the mainland, and have created quite a stir, turning up with songs from the Island that no one has heard before. Virgil added: "The intention was to put the Island firmly on the map as far as folk music is concerned, and it certainly seems to be working."

The Dollymopps will be releasing a second CD in the spring of next year, and have a deal with Wild Goose records, which prides itself on being one of the leading folk music labels in the country. Virtually all the songs planned for the CD will have an Island connection.

They have accumulated a working



repertoire of between 30 and 35 Island-based songs and are adding to it all the time. They have not ended their search for material, and would be pleased to hear from anyone who thinks they may have unearthed an Island folk song, or even fragments of it. Only recently there was a discovery of songs that used to be sung in a pub in Ryde, named The Swan, way back in 1836.

Their collection includes sea shanties, ribald sailors' songs and other folk songs. Some have tunes that would have kept the sailors in time with rowing and hoisting rigging, and others were purely for fun.

Further details can be found on website: <http://www.thedollymopps.co.uk/the-dollymopps>