WATERSON:CARTHY
HOLY HEATHENS AND THE OLD GREEN MAN

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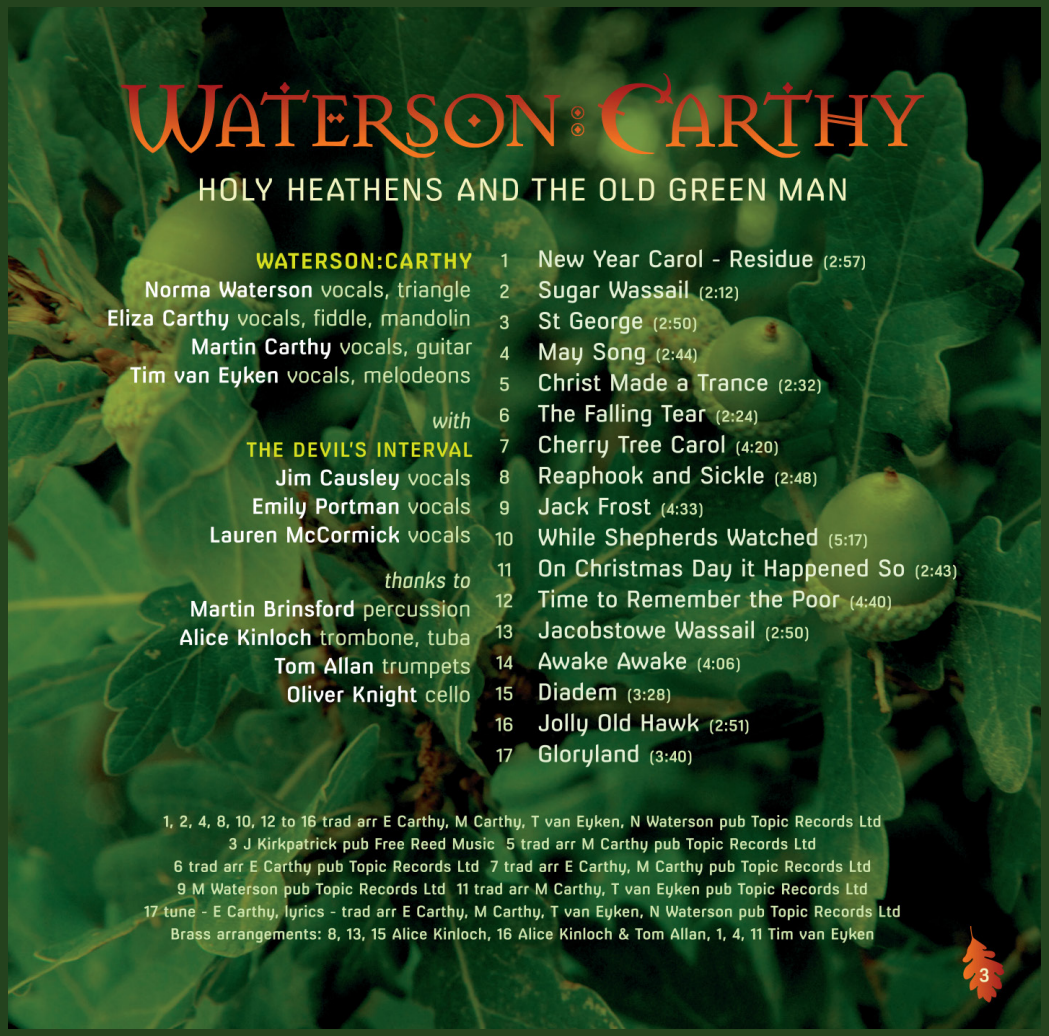

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We all had a hand in the "B" music to the New Year carol *Residue* which opens this album: we also made extra verses for the North and South gates to go with the East and West gates already there and to have more to sing. Norma cannot remember who first handed her the song for the Watersons to sing but, because the letter accompanying the words is signed "from your favourite guitarist", wonders whether it was an old family friend from the East Riding called Bert Hodgson. None of us can figure out the possible significance of the "Residue sing Residue" chorus and neither could Bert - or whoever it was - but that was, he said, what was sung to him. (If it wasn't Bert and the person who did the deed is reading this, then please reveal yourself).

These things are driven, one way or another, by passion and two of its faces are on show. *Residue* can be seen as representative of one which drives ritual; where people perform old ceremonies simply because it is time to do so. These can be seen to be quite private moments for a community which, although there is a line which the outsider may not cross, the wider world is allowed to view and perhaps to share. The community may struggle to supply a meaning for a particular ceremony or make any sense at all of the the routine of the thing but that does not matter. What matters is the moment: the reason is the moment. In the field of sacred music where indeed it is often at its most intense, nowhere is this passion seen to soar higher, or felt to flow more deeply than in the Baptist hymns of Sankey where Liza found the beautiful *Gloryland* which closes this CD.

Sugar Wassail was handed to us about fifteen years ago by Vic Gammon: it's one of the myriad songs of the sort found in the body of traditional music making and sung between Christmas Eve and Twelfth Night. This particular one is from the small Sussex collection from the 1840s by the pioneer in the field Rev John Broadwood and we took to calling it by this name. *St George* was written by John Kirkpatrick and we added some other verses, but the song remains his work: lock, stock and barrel.

There must be dozens of May Day songs from all over the country and the collector Fred Hamer had his own extensive collection, a selection of which was printed in the EFDSS journal of 1961 along with an article on the subject. He says that a part of the ritual saw Mayers making their feelings known about particular individuals while they were doing their rounds. It was important for people to have the branch of May placed at their doors because a lack of it would certainly be seen as more than just a slight: but indeed it went further. A briar might be left to indicate a liar, and either elder or hemlock and stinging nettles for people of bad moral character: in all probability there were other examples as well. There are songs for night and for day, and what we sing here is a mixture. The tune is from Buckworth in North Hunts and North Bedfordshire and was sung to Fred Hamer by a Mrs Johnstone who lived in Bedford itself.

The Passiontide carol *Christ Made a Trance* is a song which I have known for years. 'Trance' is a piece of old usage of the word, used here to mean a narrow defile between two places - in this case life and death. It's a great example of apparently obsolete bits of language surviving in old

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songs. The words are a mixture of extant versions - all from Gipsy singers - plus oddments from A.L.Lloyd's book 'The Singing Englishman' plus one which I have added myself, and the tune was learned by Cecil Sharp from Mrs Reservoir Butler (nee Holland) who, along with her husband, sang many unique carols and other songs to collectors before WW1.

When Jesus Wept the Falling Tear was sent to the Watersons by A.L.Lloyd in the late 1970s for the 1978 album 'Sound Sound', but for any number of reasons it wasn't included. Written by Mr. W. Billings, about whom we know nothing, it stuck around in the collective memory and it really is a beauty. We would be guessing if we said that it may be part of the Sacred Harp tradition of singing.

The Apocryphal Gospels are full of all sorts of stories about the Christ Child: stories of miracles performed as a child and, in the case of *The Cherry Tree Carol*, pre partum from the womb. The tune comes from the Mr Robert Hughes, who was in Buckingham Workhouse, and the words, for the most part, from a Mr Thomas in Camborne in Cornwall and the two sit next to each other in Maud Karpeles' fine two volume set of selections from Cecil Sharp's manuscripts. *Reaphook and Sickle* was sent - like *When Jesus Wept* - by A.L.Lloyd to the Watersons, this time in the 1960s for possible inclusion on 'Frost and Fire' but, again unsung, it lay in Norma's folder of the not-quite-Forgotten and not-quite-Forsaken which she re-visits once in a while. As do we all.

Mike (Waterson) wrote *Jack Frost* more than 35 years ago and, unusually for him, has not let it disappear into the ether. It's one of the few songs which he has written which we could ask him to sing at any time and which he would remember - guitar part and all - with no difficulty.

He is easily the most underrated songwriter around today (certainly by himself), but he does have his admirers for the unforced ease of his language and for his timing. His (and our) friend Jim Eldon taught us this version of *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks* over the telephone and it's one of the songs from the large collection of East Riding songs which have come his way over the last thirty to forty years.

Songs don't come much darker or more forbidding than *On Christmas Day* which Tim learned from Fred Hamer's book Garners Gay. Fred Hamer recorded it from the Gipsy singer May Bradley whose mother, Esther Smith, had sung for Ella Mary Leather and Vaughan Williams fifty years before and whose version of the song Mrs Bradley had remembered almost exactly. Its steely, utterly opaque and unforgiving vision of Christianity will leave many bewildered but it's one which still obtains in surprising places.

Mr Lolley's is a name which crops up time and again in the correspondence of the Yorkshire collector Frank Kidson as a conduit and it is he who sent him *Time to Remember the Poor*. Clearly it's an Art Song, but it is in no way out of place in his or any collection: what we have is a good piece of songwriting and a well timed piece of comment.

Jim learned *Jacobstowe Wassail* from the collection of the great Victorian collector of songs of Devon and Cornwall the Rev Sabine Baring Gould. Just recently boxes and boxes of his manuscripts have been found and they cast a fascinating light on the music being made and the songs being sung in the South West at the turn of the 19th/20th century and Martin Graebe has devoted enormous amounts of time and energy organising them on to microfiche. Salute him.

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Gipsy singers are the source for very many of the songs whose stories have their origins in the Apocryphal Gospels and likewise for many of the more unusual carols to be found in the body of traditional song. Cecil Sharp heard *Awake Awake* sung by two old gentlemen called Samuel Bradley and Seth Vandrell in Shropshire. At that time he was meeting quite a few Gipsy singers and it would seem that they too were Gipsy people. Such a beautifully fluid melody embracing such stern thoughts about a joyful New Year is often the way with such songs. On the other hand you get the triumphal *Diadem* which Norma and I heard sung by South Yorkshire carollers a few years ago, and they still can be heard these days between Armistice Day and Christmas.

Jolly Old Hawk is an Epiphany or Twelfth Night carol. Cecil Sharp found it with a gentleman called William Chorley in Bridgewater and James Reeves printed it in his ground breaking book Idiom of the People: ground breaking because it was the first publication which devoted itself entirely to the words of songs treating them as seriously as had been the music hitherto. But then Reeves was a poet with a proper understanding of the way language works in a narrative song. In doing so he joined W.H.Auden who for several years had been a voice in the wilderness and who earlier had included several traditional lyrics - unadorned - in anthologies of poetry which he himself had edited. Reeves suggests that "fif and a fairy" is a fieldfare, that "four feeted pig" is a fittering (struggling) pig and that "fistle cock" is a "thristle cock" - a thrush. Thank you.

MARTIN CARTHY
August 2006

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We need to thank
Alice Kinloch and Tim van Eyken for all their hard work on brass arrangements, and to thank especially
Devil's Interval - Emily Portman, Lauren McCormick and Jim Causley - for their energy, their enthusiasm and their sheer hard work on this CD. And yes, their passion. Couldn't have done it without you.

Recorded at Panda Sound, Robin Hood's Bay
and Woodman Studios, Elland by Oliver Knight
Produced by Oliver Knight
Executive producer Tony Engle
Waterson:Carthy photographs by Tom Howard
Oak photographs and design by John Haxby
Photographs of Devil's Interval by David Angel

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1	**New Year Carol - Residue**	2:57
2	**Sugar Wassail**	2:12
3	**St George**	2:50
4	**May Song**	2:44
5	**Christ Made A Trance**	2:32
6	**The Falling Tear**	2:24
7	**Cherry Tree Carol**	4:20
8	**Reaphook And Sickle**	2:48
9	**Jack Frost**	4:33
10	**While Shepherds Watched**	5:17
11	**On Christmas Day It Happened So**	2:43
12	**Time To Remember The Poor**	4:40
13	**Jacobstowe Wassail**	2:50
14	**Awake Awake**	4:06
15	**Diadem**	3:28
16	**Jolly Old Hawk**	2:51
17	**Gloryland**	3:40

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Norma Waterson : vocals, triangle
Eliza Carthy : vocals, fiddle, mandolin
Martin Carthy : vocals, guitar
Tim Van Eyken : vocals, melodeons

with The Devil's Interval
Jim Causley vocals
Emily Portman vocals
Lauren McCormick vocals

thanks to **Martin Brinsford** percussion
Alice Kinloch trombone, tuba
Tom Allan trumpets
Oliver Knight cello

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Produced by **Oliver Knight.**
Executive producer **Tony Engle.**
Waterson:Carthy photography by **Tom Howard.**
Oak photographs and design **John Haxby.**

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