



# Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

Volume 13, No. 1 2011

## In this Issue

Memories of Erik Ilott, 'The Bristol Shantyman'

Shorty Boulet  
Obituary

K lepperle.de in  
English

JO Templeton,  
Ragtime Bones  
Player

Update on Fran-  
cis Craig

Review of  
*Becky's Bones*  
Book

Bones Fest XV  
Preview and  
Registration  
Form Insert

**Columns:**  
Executive Direc-  
tor

Editorial

Letters to the  
Editor

Website of the  
Quarter

Bones Calendar

**Future Issues:**  
Highlights of  
Bones Fest XV

## Executive Director's Column

So, will you be, *On the Road to Abbeyfeale* as the song says? Amidst the very difficult times in Ireland these days, the *Fleadh By the Feale* will once again host the All-Ireland Bone Playing Championship. It was, I understand, touch and go for the sponsors, but in the end the Fleadh, and the contest will go on.

As bone playing contests go, Abbeyfeale stands alone for many reasons. It features only bone playing, unlike the Bones and Spoons contest at the National Old Time Festival and Contests now in Missouri Valley, Iowa.

The judges have, for the most part, been well known bone players, or at least percussionists, and have included members Mel Mercier and Ronnie McShane, and also Tommy Hayes. This year Junior Davey, 5 time All Ireland Bodhran

Champion, and excellent bone player has agreed to judge the contest.

Bone playing, although a bit of an aberration in most of Ireland, is well known in Abbeyfeale, and the whole town comes out to see the contest.

Yes, the contest in Abbeyfeale is a haven for bone players, but how much longer will we be able to say that? Contestant numbers have steadily decreased over the years. In my first year of competition there were 16 contestants from five different countries, and 6 counties in Ireland, last year only four contestants representing only one country, and two counties of Ireland.

These are hard economic times, and none

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Memories of Erik Ilott, 'The Bristol Shantyman'

A few memories of my late friend and "Bones Mentor" Erik Ilott, the "Bristol Shantyman"

I first met Erik somewhat more than five-and-twenty years ago at a folk-song club in Grimsby, the once-great fishing port on the East Coast of England. It was an occasion that had a significant effect on the turn of my musical life.

Erik had ventured north from his home port of Bristol to entertain us as "The Bristol Shantyman" at our folk-club held at an old Grimsby pub, the "Royal Oak", just a stone's throw from the town's commercial and fish docks.

At that time I was working on the Tugboats of the River Humber, serving the ports of Grimsby, Hull and Immingham, probably the busiest estuary in the UK after the Thames. Luckily the folk-club that evening did not clash with the tides! I was there because of my interest in sea songs and shanties and I had never come across the "Bones"

before.. It was an absolute revelation to see and hear Erik when he "Got into his stride" with his songs, accompanied variously with Concertina, Banjulele and Bones. In the English folk-clubs you get used to the concertina and even the occasional Ukulele or Banjulele but the "Rhythm Bones" were something completely new to most

*(Continued on page 7)*



Erik Ilott from liner notes of *Shipshape and Bristol Fashion' Sea Songs* album.

## Editorial

Long time member, Shorty Boulet, died recently, and Ernie Duffy writes his rhythm bones obituary.

I came across an Erik Ilott's album titled *Shipsape and Bristol Fashion' Sea Songs* several years ago. Can't remember how it happened, but it is an autographed copy. Then sometime later, I received an email from member Pete Hayselden (Shanty Jack) saying he knew Erik and wanted to write an article about him. That article begins on Page 1.

The only similar article was written by Tim Reilly titled *Bones at Sea* in RBP Vol 5, Nos 1 and 2, now online on [rhythmbones.com](http://rhythmbones.com). A big thanks to both Pete and Tim for maritime history about rhythm bones.

Jonathan Danforth in RBP Vol 7, No 2, also online, wrote about the Klepperle, a German word for rhythm bones, and this issue presents the website, [klepperle.de](http://klepperle.de), that has lots of interesting photographs and video.

The JO Templeton and Francis Craig stories are interesting in that they took place in the early 1950s when Brother Bones, Freeman Davis (see Vol 4, No 3, now online), and Ted 'Mr Goon-Bones' Goon (see Vol 2, No 2, also online with sample audio recordings) were recording and successful. It would not surprise me to find more recordings from this era from rhythm bones players trying to capitalize on the success of Freeman and Ted.

Our updated website is getting some attention. See the Website Update in this newsletter. Below are a couple of emails from viewers.

## Letters to the Editor

Thank you for having resources online. They are very, very helpful especially the Dr Fred Edmund Bones Unlimited Instructional Course. I'm still learning from it, and watch it almost every day with the help of the book. Ana Mitchell [Ana is a new member.]

I am self taught. When Prairie-land String Band played various venues I would often see bone players. I

began observing their playing and I became interested. I once bought a set of wood bones when we were playing at Silver Dollar City at Branson, Mo. I began trying to play those bones, but had no luck. So next I started making bones from various woods and trying out various shapes, lengths and thicknesses. The set that I like best, I made from walnut. I still play those, but after watching the video at [rhythmbones.com](http://rhythmbones.com), I'm getting the urge to try to make a set from bone. Thanks again. *Gene Henry*

In the 1970 movie *Ned Kelly* starring Mick Jagger, there is a scene where musicians including a one handed bones player are playing. The movie is available at Wal-Mart. *Tim Reilly*

[Adam Klein graciously let us put one of his songs on our website. The photograph he sent to accompany it had the most interesting shaped rhythm bones. Here is his reply to a question about them.]

I've made many experimental shapes in the interest of changing the timbre, generally meaning lowering it and/or giving it a more discernible pitch closer to what claves sound like.

That paired with my sci-fi interests inspired me to shape bones that mimic that famous Klingon weapon, the Batleth. I thought it made a more interesting photo than two conventional pairs.

There are 3 or 4 other shapes that hopefully very soon will be for sale at my website. The Batleths are some of the most playable, I made them from maple and cherry: the ones in the on-line photo are pine. See another photo of them at <http://www.adamcjklein.us/bones.html> *Adam Klein*

*(Continued from page 1)*

feeling it more than Ireland. The future of the Fleadh and the contest rests on continued support from it's sponsor's, and who knows what tomorrow will bring. I think it's important for this contest to continue as it encourages not only the bone playing tradition in Ireland, but gives bone players all over the world a goal to shoot for.

So I say to you in Ireland, Europe as a whole, here in the United States, and any that are able around the world, be off to Abbeyfeale, compete

## *Rhythm Bones Player*

Rhythm Bones Society  
Volume 13, No. 1  
First Quarter 2011  
ISSN: 1545-1380

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The Rhythm Bones Player is published quarterly by the Rhythm Bones Society. Nonmember subscriptions are \$10 for one year; RBS members receive the Player as part of their dues.

The Rhythm Bones Player welcomes letters to the Editor and articles on any aspect of bones playing. All material submitted for consideration is subject to editing and condensation.

Rhythm Bones Central web site: [rhythmbones.com](http://rhythmbones.com)

in the contest, and preserve that great bone playing tradition in Ireland, for as my good friend Paddy Donovan current All Ireland Bone Playing Champion said, "A big thanks to all competitors, for without the competitors there would be no contest" and without this contest bone playing could be an aberration in Abbeyfeale as well.

Speaking of being on the road, I hope each and everyone of you will be on the road to Texas this coming June for Bones Fest XV at the Texas Folklife Festival in San Antonio. I can't tell you how thrilled I am to be going to Texas. We have some outstanding bone players from Texas including the Gillette Brothers, Walt Watkins, and our host Dennis Riedesel himself. They say they do things big in Texas, and I'm sure Bones Fest will be no exception to that. So I hope to see you "Deep in the heart of Texas" when Bones Fest XV rolls around! *Steve Brown*

## Website Update

The biggest addition since the formal announcement in the last issue of the newsletter of our website update is the page that summarizes the audio and video on the website. To see and listen to it, click Resources:Audio&Video:Audio & Video on this Website. Members and others continue to contribute to the website, and it is quite exciting. People also continue to contribute to Mike Paseroti's YouTube Video Summary, and these two web pages provide hours of rhythm bones video content.

## Shorty Boulet Obituary

Elwin "Shorty" Boulet was born on December 27, 1920 and died on February 13, 2011. There is a nice article about Shorty in the online RBP newsletter, Vol 6, No 2, and to find more search all newsletters for 'Shorty.'

He was an avid musician and played with country western bands throughout New Hampshire.

While Shorty could play a number of instruments by ear – guitar, mandolin, banjo, harmonica – his favorite instrument was the rhythm bones. He was given his first set of bones at the age of nine and soon mastered the technique. Though unable to read music, he could play any piece after hearing it once.

The high point of his musical career happened in 1999 when he was invited to play the bones at the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival held in Washington DC. He represented New Hampshire's French heritage music.

In his later years, he sold or gave away bones that he had made himself.

As Shorty played at square dances and other functions in and around his hometown of Whitefield NH, he didn't know that he was "teaching" another up and coming rhythm bones player. I was eagerly watching Shorty play, and was impressed with Shorty's enthusiasm and talent. Later I was amazed to discover that Shorty was self taught and in an era when the bones weren't well known.

(Continued on page 8)

## J. O Templeton, Ragtime Bones Player

Johnny Maddox was a ragtime piano player who was among the first to record with the new Dot Record Company. He made a couple of records with J.O. Templeton playing rhythm bones. The first was Dot 1005, *St. Louis Tickle/Crazy Bone Rag*, recorded May 19, 1950, and the second was Dot 1023, *Memphis Blues/Alabama Jubilee*.

In a letter, here is how Johnny remembers him. "J. O. (Jacques O'Donnell) Templeton was a drummer on my early Dot records. Jerry and I started working together in 1939. I was twelve years old. Temp had played with an earlier orchestra, The Blue Grass Serenaders, 1924—1930. He played ivory bones and also ebony bones. He was so good at doing this. He has been dead so many years ago. Francis Craig, of *Near You* fame, also was a bones player. In fact he wanted to do a record with me. Never came to pass. These are the only two that I can think of at the moment." Yours Truly,  
*John Maddox*

In the 1920s, Templeton toured with a big name band, but did not like the road returning to Gallatin. He formed a band for the WSM radio program, The Blue Grass Serenade, and called the band, The Blue Grass Serenaders, one of the first bands that performed on the WSM station.

His son, Joe, does not know where his father learned to play the bones, but he was interested in rhythm his whole life. In 1946, he organized a minstrel show for the local Lion's Club, and played a rhythm bones number in the show.

## Rhythm Bones Part of Dot Record History

Dot Records was started by Randy Woods in Gallatin, TN in 1950. Randy had an electronic shop in his garage and decided to put in a record rack. It was so successful that he decided to produce records, and among the first to be successful was the Dot 1005 mentioned above with J.O. Templeton on rhythm bones.

## More on Francis Craig

The reference to Francis Craig in the Templeton article got me thinking again about him. Francis Craig was band leader in Nashville, TN and another person who made rhythm bones records. There was a short article on him in RBP Vol 7, No 1 (now online on our website.)

The following was extracted from a recording in the Special Collections Section of Vanderbilt's Heard Library. The interviewer was Jo Sherman of radio station WSM, and the recording date was March 20, 1962.

"Most people look at me as a band leader or orchestra leader, but this time Red Foley asked me to make a record and join in with him playing the bones. I play the bones like in the old minstrel shows.

"It turned out terrifically I must say, and I can brag on playing the bones anyway. It was Red Foley's second biggest record."

In response to a question from the interviewer, "I don't know how many it sold, but he conceded that it was the second biggest hit he ever made in the recording business."

The interviewer ask if he made any more bones records. "Yes, we did make a few more, but that was the biggest hit."

The record he was talking about was *Alabama Jubilee*. The only other rhythm bones record found was titled *Play Them Bones*. You can hear both of these records on our website.

As a child, Craig taught himself to play the bones using the remains of a beef roast.

## Ida Mae Schmich Died

Scott Miller informed us that member Ida Mae Schmich died on March 16 of old age. There was a nice article on her in the last issue, Vol 12, No 4. She attended Bones Fests in Chattanooga and St. Louis and impressed everyone with her energy. She played bones and banjo right up to the end.

# Review of Becky's Bones Book

Do you want to learn how to play rhythm bones and are looking for something you can hold in your hand. Member Becky Cleland has written a small instructional booklet titled *Becky's Bones Book: Learning to Play the Bones* that might be for you.

With words and photographs, she briefly presents the history of rhythm bones and then takes you through the wrist movement, holding the bones, putting it together to get the tap, the triplet, and then adds a unique section on troubleshooting if things are not working.

She closes with a bit about Bones Etiquette and refers people to our website.

Another nice thing about the book: it will be around when some of the more transient media are long gone.

For more information, contact. rcleland47@gmail.com. Steve Wixson

## Website of the Quarter Klepperle.de

Jonathan Danforth wrote a quite nice article on the Klepperle (German) and Chlefeldi (Swiss) in the Vol 7, No 2 issue of this newsletter (now online on our website.) Since klepperle.de can be roughly translated as *rhythmbones.com*, I wanted to know more about this website—but I don't know German.

With the help of an internet translator and a friend who lived in Germany and knows the area that is home to this website, this article will guide you through their website. Note that this is sort of an overview translation as there was not space to translate the entire website. Translated text is shown in this type font.

**Overview.** For the Klepperle or rhythm bones player, the highlight is the Preiskleppern, a contest held as part of Carnival—a Mardi Gras like event. It is immediately preceded by a parade, Hemdglonkerzug, and these events are part of the chamfering night custom where the 'spirits of winter'

are driven out by noise makers including the Klepperle.

Each year in preparation for the Preiskleppern, a Klepperle training course is held for youth and adults. It is said it takes two to three years of training to be ready for the contest. You will see in photographs and video that hundreds of people are involved.

**Home Page.** The main title is Bones Playing and Eve of Fasting in the city of Radolfzell, a charming city on Lake Constance bordering three countries, Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

The art of playing bones is a question of prestige for the inhabitants of Radolfzell. People who participate in the parade and Carnival activities are called 'fools' or 'jesters.' It belongs to the custom of the times.

Below the photograph of a pair of Klepperle is the title New Highnesses followed by; On March 2, after the parade with people wearing white night gowns and playing instruments that make noise, the exciting, prize winning bones playing contest took place with 15 kids (10 boys and 5 girls.) This is followed by the names of the new Queen, King, Princess and Prince, a list of their Guard, and a photograph from the 2011 event. At the bottom is a list of organizers starting with Master of Ceremonies.

The links on the right side of the page from the top are; E-mail, Contact, Contents, Search (full text), Home Page, Making a Klepperle, the Contest, Winners, Photo Gallery, Kings & Princes, History, Training Course, Verses and Legal Information.

Contents Page or Site map.

The four panels are in the shape of the Klepperle. On the left is about the same as the Home Page with the addition of Assistance/FAQ and at the bottom, Where to Buy Klepperle.

The second panel is History with a list of links; Roots, Places, In Ra-

dolfzell, Parades, Competition, and Winners.

The third is more on the Competition; Registration, Parade, Resignation of Last Year's Winners, Jury, Contest, Crowning, Winner's Certificate Awarding and Performance.

This is followed by Courses; Annual Training Course, On-line Crash Course and Film (video.)

The last panel on the right has legal information that will not be addressed in this article. At the bottom are links to the Photo Gallery and to Video of the 2010 event.

Klepperle Page

Description. The rhythm music instrument or clacking apparatus is officially called 'Klepperlehölzer,' that is clapping woods or concussion idiophones. They are made of wood with a notch to fit securely between your fingers.

Material. Hardwood is used predominantly. Acacia is considered as one of the best woods, however, is very rare. Beech, Cherry and Ash are used and also walnut and elm. Rarely used are Oak and calf rib bone.

Only well dried and long stored woods (best several years old) without tears or branch holes can be used. Ideally the grain of the wood runs at right angle to the later flapping direction of the Klepperle.

In former times the lower striking end was partly treated: hammering nails with round heads into the wood, scorching, weakening, weighting with lead balls, and drilling holes.

Size. The pieces of wood are approx. 11 - 15 cm long, 4 - 5 cm wide and 10 - 12 mm thick. The Klepperle has different sizes in

other places. Those in Radolfzell are the largest and people from **other places call them 'Clubs.'**

Work procedures. To make a simple Klepperle takes about 45 minutes for a pair. 1. First bore the notch hole for the finger. 2. Then saw two blanks out together. 3. Afterwards they are sanded into the final form. 4. Finally they are shaped with a wood rasp. 5. To finish, the Klepperle are manually sanded with fine sandpaper. The Klepperle production depends on the detail. One should not sand too much, otherwise the Klepperle will have a high pitch sound.

August Dieterle has manufactured Klepperle since 1966, and sells them only for the Training Courses at his cost. If you want **to buy Klepperle, see 'Where to Buy Klepperle' on the next page.**

Webmaster. The webmaster welcomes any further details and requests people communicate either by his Contact Page or E-mail. **Most pages end with this request.**

History of Klepperns Page

The origins are not completely known, and not even the spelling is clear. Many claim it comes from rattling and write it "Kläpperle. Others claim that the Kleppern could have something to do with the instruments used for noise making in order to scare birds from the vines in the vineyard. More probable however is the connection with the chamfering time and the medieval use.

Detail (**links to other pages**)

Medieval roots

Places where played

History in Radolfzell

Hemdglonkerumzug Parade

History of the Preiskleppern

List of the former winners

Medieval Roots Page

First Sources -The origin of the Klepperns is not fully understood. Medieval roots of the chamfering night custom can scientific be proven to some extent. In 15th and 16th Century, some sources say rattles were used by lepers, and lepers had to warn the healthy population with clapping. [some not translated.]

Swiss Evidence - In the choir stalls in the cathedral of Bern is **a figure titled 'Fool and Klapper'** and dated 1523. In Switzerland, the church order of Schwyz from the year 1588 testifies that boys on Easter Saturday ran around the village rattling. In the Schwyz, the Chlefeldn is played in the 40 days from Ash Wednesday to the Easter Saturday. The Chlefeldi is used there as chamfering instrument as a replacement for the church-bells which are silent.

19th Century - They were represented for many years until the custom slowly declined in the post-war period .

Designation - The names used are very similar. Germany - Klepperle, Kläpperle and Klepperli. Switzerland - Chlefeldi, Chlätterli and claque.

History in Radolfzell

Intermediate wartime - The traditional Kleppern on chamfering night, with two Holzbretchen, had been hardly maintained after the 1st world war (1914-18). Beginning in the 1920 years, it was again introduced. [some not translated.]

Post-war period During World War II (1939-45), the lowest point had come for Mardi Gras. In 1950, the chamfering night

tradition was again taken up, and the Hemdglonkerzug with King Kleppern was held. It had to begin anew since young people could not play the klepperle.

Klepperart In Radolfzell Rhythmic compositions from text, melody and Klepperle sounds are implemented together.

Places Page

Almost all places where people play the Klepperle are along the Rhine Valley. [**Only a small part of this section is translated.**]

Far Places—Mainz - Klepperle guard of 1856, World-wide - rhythmbones.com, Film, which shows a Klepperer in England.

Gengenbach - In Gengenbach there is a adult Preiskleppern.

Waldkirch - Here the beginning pupil competes for the title "Prinz" and "Prinzessin." The older pupils can be "Könige" and "Königinnen."

Konstanz - Klepperle consists of a wood piece with a steel sheet attached to both sides. Further information can be found on [www.narrengesellschaft-niederburg.de](http://www.narrengesellschaft-niederburg.de).

Switzerland - Here are scores for Chlefeldi, spoon, broom, harmonica, and muzzle drums.

History of Hemdglonk Page

**The Hemdglonk is the large character carried high at the front of the parade. They call it 'the great man' or goliath. It is shown in the photograph. [rest not translated.]**

Hemdglonkerumzug - **This is a very old tradition in German Carnival, and very poor people could take part since they only need to wear their white night clothes.** The Hemdglonkerzug Parade is divided into groups: Band, large Hem-

*(Continued on page 6)*

(Continued from page 5)

dglonker, Klepperle chorus, lantern carrier, torch/flare carrier, and noise instruments. [rest not translated.].

Klepperle Training Course Page.

**To navigate to this page, click Kurse from the Contents (Inhalt) Page.**

Lessons for the young and young at heart. The Kleppern looks beautiful and sounds fascinating. **There is some introductory comments followed by a link to the Annual Training Course for children and adults (with 2 interesting photos.)**

**On-line Crash Course** - This is offered to people who can't wait for the annual course. There are two links, one to word and picture lessons and the other to video examples.

**Where to Buy Klepperle** - Gustel Dieterle sells Klepperle to people taking the annual training course. If others want to buy them, email uhl@spiel-freizeit-swars.de. The cost is 9.90 Euros for 1 pair, 19.80 Euros for two plus 4.50 Euros shipping.

Training Films Page.

**Navigate to this page by clicking Filme from the Training Page above or from the Contents (Inhalt) Page.**

Learn by watching. For those who cannot take our courses in January, and all, who want to view in video, we present videos of the basics movements of the Kleppern. See the On-Line Crash Course Page for written and photo explanations.

Since the AVI films are in AVI format and are large (7 to 15 megabytes), they are suitable only for users with DSL or broadband connection.

PreisKleppern Page

To become Klepperle King and Queen is the desire of many children. It requires much pa-

tience, practice and also talent.

Procedure. The Preiskleppern in Radolfzell is held annually at the start of Carnival, Wednesday evening before Fat Thursday, and directly after the Hemdglonkerumzug parade. The solemn ceremony takes about one hour.

Detail (**links to other Pages**)

Register for Competition  
Hemdglonkerumzug Parade  
Old King and Guard recognized  
Installation of the Jury  
Contest

Coronation of new winners  
Certificate presentation  
Appearance of the winners

**Most of the preceding Pages are not translated. There are lots of photographs and a list of previous judges.**

Contest Page

**Below the photograph.** Contestants are evaluated by the judges:

The impact must be clean.

The rhythm is to be continuous and not too fast.

The sound of the Kleppern must be euphonious and loud.

The body attitude should be loosely upright in order to be unconstrained so the Klepperle are played freely.

The melody. Here it depends on the composition, the invention wealth, the variation and the elegance.

**The contest is like a ice-skating contest with a required short program and a freestyle program.**

Required Program: Two-handed Kleppern to a verse (see Verses below.) Due to the different speech and rhythms of the fool verses, inevitably different degrees of difficulty of rhythmic content result.

Freestyle Program: After the required verse, each applicant

must present a free style self-composition. Here the judging particularly depends on the creative variations of the rhythms.

Verses Page

The Kleppern needs a short **'Eve of Fasting' verse to compete. It is assumed that this is for the required paragraph above.** Note: Strike once or twice to each syllable. **This is followed by a long list of verses.**

History of the Preisklepperns in Radolfzell Page

**This is a table listing years and accomplishments.**

List of Winners Page.

**A list of winners by year.**

Photo Gallery Page.

Photographs of the Preiskleppern and the sovereignties. This photo gallery is being constantly expanded for you. Please note that the photos are relatively large and thus need thus a certain load time. Nevertheless, we think that high quality photos are worth the wait. The gallery is programmed in such a way that the following picture is loading while you look at the first. This reduces the waiting time somewhat. **While the text is not translated, it is easy to navigate the photo gallery.**

Film Gallery Page

**Navigate here from the Contents (Inhalt) Page.**

Here you will find videos of the Preisklepperns and the sovereignties from February 18, 2009. We developed this gallery which is constantly updated for you. Please note that the videos are very large (1 to 20 megabytes) and thus need a long load time. They require a DSL or broadband connection. **This is followed by a list of 59 captivating videos. The language is German, but the sound of the Klepperle is universal.**

You will want to attend this event after viewing the videos.

This is a large website, and there are many pages that are not translated. If you would like to translate additional pages, try using <http://dict.leo.org/ende?lang=en&lp=ende> for individual words and <http://translate.google.com> for paragraphs.

The creator and webmaster of [klepperle.de](http://klepperle.de) is Dr. Joachim Schuhmacher, and he assisted both Jonathan and me with our writings. You can send him an email at [kontakt@klepperle.de](mailto:kontakt@klepperle.de). We look forward to a long relationship with him and the Klepperle players.  
*Steve Wixson*

**Bones Fest**  
**XV**  
San Antonio, Texas  
June 10-12, 2011



Host  
**Dennis Riedesel**  
[riedeselD@uhv.edu](mailto:riedeselD@uhv.edu)

Full Program and  
Registration  
materials in this  
newsletter

*(Erik Ilott—Continued from page 1)*  
of us.

Erik had the audience in the palm of his hand with his songs of the sea and the stories of some of his experiences in His Majesty's Navy during the second World War. It was a night to remember. He paid several visits to the "Royal Oak" Club and also Visited our local Yacht Club where he again captivated the audience.

He would play at various times with 3 bones in one hand and 4 in the other. He used cow bones mostly. His hands were quite large and this was to my advantage because he gave me a set of his old bones which were literally too small for him to play! I treasure them to this day.

Eric subsequently visited at our home on the Cleethorpes (Lincolnshire) seafront (overlooking the wide river Humber estuary) where he spent some time introducing me to the basics of Bones-playing. My progress was slow and after Erik left I practiced the moves assiduously, much to the annoyance of my wife who subsequently christened the bones "Erik's Curse"! We also visited with him at his hillside home in Bristol. It was a nice old place with one room full of books as I remember. The bathroom had an old-fashioned "Skippers" bath, the sort where you sit up on a ledge at one end with your feet in a kind of well where the taps (faucets) are. I would imagine it came out of a ship. They were built like that to save water. You could see over quite a lot of the City from his back garden. I believe that he had also lived at the Bristol "Sailors' Home" at one time.

He was fairly proficient on his Wheatstone Anglo Concertina and was involved for some years with a group of concertina players in Bristol. The name of the group escapes me for the moment!

He was also an honorary member of two Morris Dancing sides, the local "Bristol Morris Men" and the "Earlson Morris" of Coventry in the Midlands. Since Erik died these Morris sides celebrate his life with an "Erik" day from time to time. This involves playing and dancing at a large number of Pubs!

Erik was a really fit guy for his age. I remember seeing him dance a quite energetic Hornpipe on the quayside at the "Albert Dock", Liverpool at one of the Shanty Festivals. He was at one time a champion racing cyclist. That was quite a few years before I knew him but he still rode a bicycle as a means of everyday transport. That in itself was no mean achievement in a hilly City like Bristol!

At times Erik was something of an irascible character, especially when driving his car. One could have been forgiven for thinking he might have had a drop of French blood in his veins, given the way he would rail and gesticulate at other drivers who may have balked him! Yes, it could also be a terrifying experience being in a car with him!

There are lots more memories which are worthy of recording. Probably enough for another epistle at a later date. *Pete Hayselden* (Shanty Jack)

[The photograph on Page 1 is from a 24 page set of liner notes that accompanies Erik Ilott's LP album titled "Shipshape and Bristol Fashion" Sea Songs. This is a magnificent document with all sorts of detail about sailing and ships including photographs and drawings.

There is a short write-up on him in the Obituary section of the [rhythmbones.com](http://rhythmbones.com) website. From there you can click on a link that will take you a recording of one of the songs from the above mentioned album.

The liner notes and the album itself are copyright by Erik Ilott and Folk'sle Records. We were not able to find Folk'sle Records, and present this as a tribute to the late Erik Ilott.]

## Bones Calendar

**All-Ireland Bones Competition.**  
May 2, 2011. Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick, Ireland.

**Bones Fest XV.** June 10-12, 2011, San Antonio, TX. Program and registration form in this newsletter.

**NTCMA and Bones Contest.** August 29-September 4, 2011. Bones contest on Saturday or Sunday.



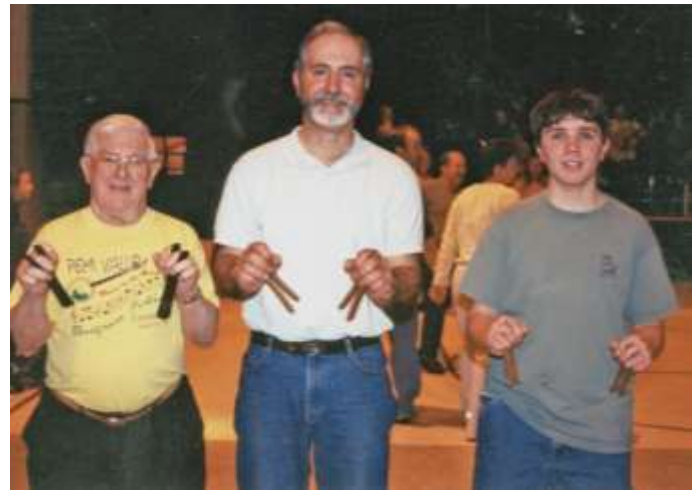
Shorty Boulet performing at the 1999 Smithsonian Folklife Festival

*(Continued from page 3)*

Soon Shorty and I became friends and Shorty taught me how to play the rhythm bones.

Shorty was very well known throughout the area and was extremely popular with the local bands. He was often invited to play many times with different musical groups in a variety of functions. Shorty graciously asked me to join him and we played together side-by-side. It wasn't long before the two of us often spent time together.

It was not long after that I taught a young 13-year old Sky Bartlett how to play the rhythm bones, and it wasn't long before the three generations were playing together publicly.



The late Shorty Boulet and his legacies; Ernie Duffy and Sky Bartlett

Ernie, Sky, Shorty and his wife, Shirley, attended Bones Fest V in Philipston, MA. They were hooked and attended two other Bones Fests. The crowds at each of these Fests wholeheartedly enjoyed watching them play.

Shorty wasn't a tall man, but he was big in many ways. He had a smile that lit up a room. His bones playing caused people to stop and watch; especially when he played off his knees, elbows and forehead! He was known by many and each of us will miss him more than he'll know.

Thanks, Shorty, for entertaining us for all these years. We hope we can honor your memory by passing on the things you taught us. *Ernie Duffy* [A tribute video will be on our website.]

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## *Rhythm Bones Society*

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*Address Correction Requested*