

Dennis Rookard and Ron Cowell on Essex folk clubs

Dennis Rookard: The next time you're in the Essex area, why not take a drive out into the country, perhaps ending up at a country pub like this. Well, if you do, park up the car and make your way towards that welcoming bar. Because there's a fair chance you'll be walking in on one of the pub sessions that can be found all over this historic county. If you're in north Essex, for example, around Colchester, then you might just drop in on this group just having fun away there in a corner. They're Bo-Diddley Diddley, and just one of the many folk bands based in and around Essex.

There's an awful lot of folk music around in Essex right now, ranging from more than twenty folk clubs, eighteen Morris dance teams, countless numbers of barn dances being held throughout the year, and in many Essex country pubs, folk musicians like these, just getting it together, for sessions of their kind of music.

[Bo-Diddley Diddley playing]

Dennis Rookard: That's a point of view that Ron Cowell, editor of the magazine Essex Folk News, would agree with.

Ron Cowell: Things seem to be thriving at the moment, the magazine has a club guide that lists about eighty clubs in the county now. All kinds, song clubs, dance clubs, Morris... Song clubs vary from those that book big names to singaround clubs where anyone can get up and do their thing. Dance clubs vary from the ceilidh club where it's a sort of knees-up evening, to the Playford club, where the dances are based on books published by Playford in the seventeenth century, so they tend to be a bit more sedate – but not always, I think they knew how to enjoy themselves in those days.

Dennis Rookard: And here in Essex, of course, they still do. For, come the summer months, for more than eighteen Morris and club dance teams, it's on with the bells and out with the bright hankies and best foot forward.

Recorded by Dennis Rookard for a radio programme on Essex folk music, around 1990.
Read more about the recording on Essex Archives Online: [SA 19/1/70/1](#)