



Traditional Song Forum

Traditional Song Forum Meeting, 20 Nov 2015

Held at Wilberforce House, Hull

The Traditional Song Forum meeting on 21 November 2015 was held at Wilberforce House, Hull, the birthplace of the anti-slavery campaigner, William Wilberforce. We were the guests of the Hull Culture and Leisure organisation who made their excellent facilities available to us for the day. The weekend was organised by Steve Gardham and Paul Davenport who made the weekend an interesting centre to a delightful weekend of songs, singing, and an opportunity to learn more about this often overlooked city.

Welcome

The TSF Secretary, Martin Graebe took the chair temporarily while Steve Gardham disappeared to deal with lunch arrangements. He welcomed the TSF members and guests who came to what was a very well attended meeting, with nearly fifty people in the room for the afternoon session.

TSF business

1 Future meetings

The next meeting of TSF will be the Broadside Day on 20 February 2016, which is organised jointly with EFDSS. These meetings are usually held at Cecil Sharp House but, because the Kennedy Hall is being refurbished it is not available. The meeting will, because of that, be held at Chetham's Library in Manchester. Manchester was an important centre for broadside production and there are a number of important collections in the city. An excellent programme has been arranged with Christopher Marsh as the keynote speaker. His topic will be 'Early Modern Broadside and their Music'. There are a number of other, excellent talks planned for the day and a full programme (as well as other details of the meeting) can be found on the TSF website, <http://www.tradsong.org>. These details will be updated as more information becomes available.

Discussions are continuing about arrangements for other meetings in 2016 (and 2017), and these will be communicated when finalised.

2 Finance

Doc Rowe reported that we currently have £993.02 in the TSF account. Annual subscriptions will be due shortly.

Steve Gardham said that the venue had been made available to us without charge by Hull Culture and Leisure – which was much appreciated.

3 Other matters

The recent death of two members, Fred McCormick and Dave Eckersley was noted with regret.

It is recognised that there has not been an opportunity for an election of officers for some time. When all of them are at a meeting with a reasonable number of members in attendance we will see whether any of them are willing to be re-elected. For the present they will continue with their duties.

Networking Session

Steve Gardham is now working on the third and fourth volumes of songs from Frank Purslow's collection (*The Constant Lovers* and *The Foggy Dew*). The plan is that these should be published as one volume. (Ron Day said more about this later). Steve is checking all the references and notes and observed that Frank Purslow's notes were better in the later volumes. He also observed that Purslow filled a number of gaps in song texts 'silently' from other collections – presumably because some of the verses he used were taken from Sharp or Williams, which were in copyright at the time. Having the Full English available has made it easier to work out what he did. He has also been helping Gwilym Davies with notes for songs for the Gloucestershire song project.

Ruairidh Greig is currently working through some dance tunes as a part of a team working with Chris Partington on C18th music books, transcribing them into ABC notation. These are being put online through the Internet Archive. He is also running the monthly follow up sessions from the Full English day workshop in Lincoln that he was involved in earlier in the year. Continuing with his research on Grainger.

Mike Wild is now living in Worksop. He is currently looking at tunes associated with broadsides – particularly those written by Joseph Mather of Sheffield. He is working towards a play based on Mather. He is also interested in local 'rough music' bands – such as the Shireoaks Toppers Club, who dressed in top hats to go out and play for money during a miners strike in the 1890s. Trying to find out about their repertoire.

Paul Davenport is part of organising committee for the Sheffield Sessions Festival to be held over the Easter weekend – getting people who organise sessions together for the weekend (25 – 27th March 2016). Talked about his recent book, *Under the Rose*, and the fact that Yorkshire is the only place where the different forms of traditional dance come together. He has since obtained a lot of additional material which will make the second edition three times the size. Also working towards a CD to accompany the Davenport's previous book, *Down Yorkshire Lanes*.

Derek Schofield has now produced his final (44th) issue as editor of *English Dance and Song*. The new editor is to be Natalia Cattan Wilson (daughter of Tom Wilson of the Wilson Family). Derek suggested that it would be a good idea to feed her information about what's going on, as she is unlikely to be getting about as much as Derek and his predecessors. The emphasis of the magazine is likely to change under her editorship, reflecting the direction that the EFDSS has been taking in recent years. Derek added that, as part of an obituary for Roy Palmer, he has produced a bibliography, which demonstrates his massive output. He also reported that the VWML has started a series of Library Lectures – details on the EFDSS website. He also said the Malcolm Taylor has been

appointed as General Manager for the Sussex Traditions project, which now has a very strong team leading it. The focus at the moment is fundraising for the project. He also reported that two CDs of Brian Dawson singing have been issued

Vic Gammon's article on the idea of the peasant, co-written with Arthur Knevett, will be coming out shortly in the Folk Music Journal. He has been engaged in two recording projects. One is a set of recordings of 18 Ned Corvan songs with Johnny Handle, which will be used in a theatre production. The other is his 'Early Scottish Ragtime' project (the American tunes which came over before minstrelsy) is partway through – launch expected in the Spring. He also has two writing projects. One is on street ballad singers in the Nineteenth Century for a book being prepared by Steve Roud and David Atkinson. He is also expanding an article that he wrote for ED&S on Ewan MacColl for a CD project being produced by the family. He has decided that he is not now going to rework his thesis for publication and is going to make it available on-line through the Academia website. He has temporarily returned to Newcastle University, teaching a course on the music of the Southern USA. He is also marking Andrew King's PhD on the early phonograph recordings.

Peter Wood reported that his book on Napoleon Bonaparte songs is out and selling. He has been looking at Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood the 200th anniversary of whom was celebrated in 2010 and he was recently invited to talk to the Collingwood Society. He is currently looking for a new project.

Chris Jordan is working on a project for Hull College looking at sea shanties. His dissertation is on the influence of English folk music on the development of black music in America, trying to find traces. Mike Wild talked of Morris dancing and mummers plays being taught to slaves in the Bahamas.

Ron Day reported that the *Wanton Seed* is selling well, with most of the first print run now gone. They hope that they will be able to make the promised donations to charity before Christmas. There has been a lot of interest in producing the other two volumes, as reported by Steve Gardham earlier. They will be asking for subscriptions again with the aim of producing the combined volume before Autumn 2016.

Doc Rowe has been out and filming events, including the Ewan MacColl event at the Barbican. He also went to the Sam Larner celebration at Winterton, which, he said, was poorly publicised and organised. Had celebrated 25 years of the Musical Traditions Club, where they showed some footage from the early years. Paul Davenport suggested that TSF should get a Facebook page and he offered to set one up. Doc Rowe said that the Facebook page of the Folklore Society had been a great success.

Martin Graebe reported that his time has been entirely consumed with writing his book on Baring-Gould, which is headed nearing completion.

Shan Graebe has been working with David Jacobs on preparing the transcriptions of the Baring-Gould Personal Copy manuscript for the Full English website. Transcribing from Sibelius to ABC is not a straightforward process and they need a lot of checking and correction.

Nigel Smith is interested in traditional song and came from Lincolnshire. He runs the Fleece Inn at Bretforton which is owned by the National Trust where he puts on a number of traditional events. Has just published a book 'A Working Man's Castle' about the history of the pub.

Jill Pidd reported that she and Doc were touring a show, similar to their earlier 'Midwinter', in various places in 2016.

Other items:

Katy Howson has a new website about the history of dulcimer playing in East Anglia – <http://www.eastangliandulcimers.org.uk>.

Derek Schofield mentioned that EFDSS is organising a conference on Saturday 16th July to mark the anniversary of Cecil Sharp collecting in Appalachia.

The **Gloucestershire Folk** project site is now up, though still work in progress – www.glostrad.cm

Steve Gardham asked for feedback on the discussion session at the EFDSS conference. Vic Gammon reported that he found it interesting – though he was on the panel and spoke a lot, so might have been biased. Derek Schofield was also on the panel and recalled some of the discussion.

Forum Focus Session

The afternoon session was chaired by Paul Davenport and included five presentations linked to the area. The talks were recorded and the recordings have been made available to members (with the permission of the speakers) for a limited period via DropBox. For details on how to access them, contact the [TSF Secretary](#).

Hull Traditional Folk Songs, their origins and evolution, *Steve Gardham*

Steve described the history of four songs with a Hull connection: 'The Merchant's Son and Beggar Wench', 'The Wreck of the Industry', 'The Effects of Love', and 'Hedon Road Gaol'.

"The Elephant on the Wolds" – a look at the musical origins and performance practices of the East Yorkshire 'Ploughlads' dances., *Paul Davenport*

Paul's talk looked at some of the features in the performances of the traditional dances of East Yorkshire which have proved disquieting to some modern sensitivities and ideas of 'political correctness'. The talk posed some challenges to our ideas of what the tradition actually was and the motivation of some of the participants in traditional events.

The life and songs of George Wray, one of Percy Grainger's Lincolnshire singers. *Ruairidh Greig*

Ruairidh talked about the Lincolnshire singer, George Wray, who was one of Grainger's informants, best known for his song 'Lord Melbourne'. He reported that Grainger kept in touch with his performers and their families, even after their deaths and his return to Australia.

'If Mick sings another dead animal song ... I'm going home', *Jill Pidd*

Jill Pidd gave an illustrated talk on her memories of the folk club scene in Hull in the 1960s and early 70s. The talk was illustrated with photographs of memorabilia from the time as well as photographs

of people who were part of the scene. There were also some nice videos of performances from the Hull clubs.

The songs of Billy Harrison, *Jim Eldon*

Jim Eldon gave a very enjoyable and personal account of the time that he spent with the Yorkshire singer, Billy Harrison.

Supporting events

After the meeting several of the audience retired to the Minerva for a very enjoyable session of songs and music. On Sunday Paul davenport led a very interesting walk around the city of Hull, where he was born, showing us the historic sites and making connections with traditional song from the city.

Thanks

We are grateful to Hull Culture and Leisure for making the facilities for the meeting available, to Steve Gardham for organising the meeting and to Liz Davenport for organising the refreshments and for a selection of biscuits and cakes that should have won several prizes.

Martin Graebe

15 December 2015