

## **Traditional Song Forum meeting, Sheffield, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2008.**

The meeting was attended by 18 TSF members and 4 visitors. It was organised and chaired by Steve Gardham, apologies being received from Steve Roud, Doc Rowe, and a number of other members.

### **Research Reports**

**Johnny Adams.** A public workshop had been held recently to promote the activities of the Village Music Project on the occasion of its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which would be repeated at a number of venues in the next year or so. Currently, a 200-year old book was being conserved at CSH, and funds would be raised and the restored book dedicated to the memory of Barry Callaghan. The Paul Graney project, involving the setting up of an archive of recordings from the Manchester area, was on hold due to lack of time. The Folkopedia project was going slowly, with only two people making contributions, and thought would need to be given to some changes of priority. But the main need was for more people to input material. There were so many projects going on needed “to talk to each other”, including Ian Russell’s idea of a “Virtual Archive”.

**Gwilym Davies.** A CD of the Shropshire singer Ray Driscoll was out, Brockwear, a village near Chepstow, have a carolling tradition, with recordings of the main singer, and it is hoped to revive this for Christmas 2009, and he had done a programme on Radio Gloucester asking for information on travellers, which had given a positive response.

**Chris Coe.** Working with the East Anglian Traditional Music Trust on Vaughan Williams mss and teaching the songs. She is relating this to the Grainger material she worked on in 2000, and how the advent of the phonograph turned the informants into performers. It has particular relevance to the drama groups she works with. She now intends to study the “hctographs” of Vaughan Williams in VWML and compare them with the transcriptions.

**Pete Wood.** His book on the Elliotts of Birtley had just been published, with very good sales and much interest in the North East. He and the Keelers had been involved in a professional play based on the “selkie” legend where they did the musical arrangement and performed the songs. A recent BBC 1 programme had been researching the shanties collected by Carpenter in Sunderland, which had involved the Keelers and descendants of Carpenter’s singers.

**Jane Harland.** Based in Newcastle, she was elearning about children’s games and songs, and teaching them in schools. Grace Kimmins’ 1908 book of children’s songs was mentioned at this stage.

**Poppy Holden.** A postgraduate student at Newcastle University, she is researching the performance of border ballads, having obtained an Arts Council grant to video singers. She is accumulating some excellent material, and is looking for a home for the archive. Her other project is digitising the notes to Ewan MacColl’s “Song Carriers” set of recordings from the 1960s intending to put them on the relevant website.

**Fay Hield.** Hoping to finish her PhD in March, as well as writing a chapter on performance for possible publication. She commented also that after March she would be able to return to performing herself, which she had sorely missed this year!

**Shan Graebe.** Continuing with transcription of the Baring Gould personal copy manuscript, in which everything would be transcribed-notation, notes, comments, texts, the lot. She estimated there was still years of work left.

**Martin Graebe.** In terms of the Baring Gould material, they were now nearing the end of the “collection” phase, and starting the “synthesis” stage, but continuing to find new material. He and Shan had a new CD, a paper on Shan’s work had been given at the Ballad Conference, and an index of the field notes had been made. Martin also mentioned the importance of both the concert parties given by Baring Gould, and his novels. He also mentioned “Herring Fleet”, a novel by Frank Kidson’s niece Ethel Kidson in terms of material on folk songs.

**Dave Eyre.** Dave described how he structured his weekly radio show on Radio Sheffield, and mentioned one or two items he had for sale.

**Ray Padgett.** Ray’s main interest was in assembling material for the Yorkshire Garland project, in particular he was currently working on recordings of Mick Heywood (“Batley Irish”), the Uscar pit disaster, and was now looking at childrens’ songs and mining songs (though there seemed remarkably few of the latter in Yorkshire).

**Harry Langston.** His first meeting, he felt he was a bit of a “heretic” in folk music. He had been putting tunes to Lancashire dialect poems, and been involved in the recent publishing of William Winter’s tune collection. He and Geoff Wolf had received support from Halsway Manor for the project, which encompassed some 400 tunes from late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was also in a group doing stage re-enactments of events using folk music, e.g. singing Sharp’s songs in the place and at the same time 100 year after they had been collected in Somerset. Descendants of Sharp’s singers in attendance, which chimed with other members’ recent experiences such as the Carpenter shanties mentioned by Pete Wood. Steve Gardham, Dave Eyre, and Chris Coe had other examples. Possible project?

**Fred McCormick.** Fred had helped with Peter Cox’s recent book on the Radio Ballads, and was now doing a programme on the subject for Radio Merseyside. He expects his double CD of MacColl and Lloyd singing Child Ballads to come out on Topic in 2009, has now catalogued his record collection (6,500 records and about 75000 songs) and is working on that of the late Keith Summers. Fred’s web-based “Worlds of Trad” radio programme was going through some difficulties, notably with adverts for the CIA, but he was continuing with it.

**Bob Askew.** His main interest was in Hampshire songs-he mentioned a map with the location of Hampshire singers, a CD of George Blake’s songs, and talks he had been giving on George Gardiner, where he was particularly interested in the role played by Vaughan Williams with regard to songs from that county. He mentioned Grace Kimmins again, giving us some details of her life collecting childrens’ games and songs and teaching students, before Pearson and Sharp.

**Brian Peters.** His first TSF meeting. He had recently recorded a CD of Child ballads, which has led to a live show where he explains the background to the collection. He was also writing a piece on Child ballads for EDS, including Bert Lloyd's contribution to these.

**Dave Eckersley.** Mentioned the Elliotts' book again, in particular the importance of the kids songs in their repertoire, as well as their strong political involvement, noting that next year will be the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the miners' strike. As Herron Publishing, his next project was a Roy Palmer book on industrial song.

**Malcolm Douglas.** The revision of *The Wanton Seed* should be out next year, including material on the original singers. There was extensive discussion of the problems of getting some of the material on these. *Classic English Folk Songs* was sold out, but a new print was due.

Two research students from the Music Department at Sheffield University, Zhao Yue, writing on pop music, and Wu Xiaorui, studying the English folk revival, were in attendance, as was our host Jonathan Stock, and Frazer Jarvis, a Mathematics lecturer at Sheffield.

### **Ongoing TSF Projects. (Report from the Chair)**

1. 18<sup>th</sup> century street literature. There was a need to persuade various archives to give this more attention, as 18<sup>th</sup> century broadsides and chapbooks were under-represented compared with the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Chapbooks were particularly difficult to scan, but it was pointed out that a technical advance now allowed scanning without complete opening of a booklet. Steve Gardham was to visit the British Library shortly to assess the state of their collection, and a number of websites now had at least lists of titles and garlands.
2. A Child Ballad research centre had been considered a bit problematic at a previous TSF meeting, but the Chair thought it would be worth pursuing it through a website which would have a page for each ballad. The site would be interactive, allowing many people to contribute, and hopefully lead to an on line research forum. Interested members were encouraged to contact him outside the meeting.
3. The "Voices from the Attic" project had been discussed at a previous meeting, where it was suggested that TSF ought to be looking for suitable material and setting up an archive. Johnny Adams said that a lot of items had been digitised, but there was a lot more awaiting the process. Dissemination via the web should be straightforward, but the cataloguing and indexing was the biggest barrier. When done, the material could be somehow allied with Folkopedia or something similar. Indeed there were many separate archives, both embryonic and established (notably Doc Rowe's) which needed to "network". Such things as club recordings and individual fieldwork could be included, making for a prodigious amount of work. Even U-tube had a contribution to make. Structuring and managing all this would be difficult.

(Memorable quote from Johnny: "I'm looking forward to retirement, .....because there's work to be done")

3. Martin Graebe had held two research workshops so far, but had only received moderate interest from elsewhere.
4. A related issue was access to JStor for non-University researchers. We should perhaps approach the EFDSS with a view to addressing this. The Chair said that a more general proposal related to website access would be put on the Tradsong site for members to consider.

### **Business Matters**

1. Subs were due in January (£8 as this year).
2. A request was made that future meetings in Sheffield should be timed for when the carols were running, rather than the week before they started. General agreement.
3. The next meeting of the Forum is 21<sup>st</sup> February in Exeter, organised by the Wren Trust, and the programme was outlined by the Secretary.

### **Afternoon Talks and Performance.**

The afternoon session consisted of two talks and a presentation.

#### **Simon McKerrell. The aesthetic sense of the rural landscape in the songs of Archie Fisher.**

Simon concentrated on two of Archie's own songs, contrasting "The Fairfield Crane" about the Govan shipyards with two songs firmly extolling the rural idyll and eschewing the "busyness" of the city streets. One was set in the borders where he lives, and the other in Ontario where he had spent some time. A thought-provoking analysis.

#### **Julia Bishop. The tunes of the Carpenter Collection.**

Julia played examples of recordings made by James Carpenter and asked us to look at copies of different ways the tune notations could be presented. The reason being to suggest the best way to interpret the recordings taking into account the different needs of researchers and performers who will be using the finished scores. Anyone with an interest in this aspect should contact Julia ASAP to offer help, preferably those members with music notation experience.

#### **Three Yorkshire Farmers.**

A highly enjoyable presentation where Will Noble (Holme Valley), Roger Hinchliffe (West Sheffield) and John Greaves (Littlebeck, Whitby) sang songs and chatted about their own involvement in singing, as well as where their songs came from and why they sang them. The three were skilfully directed by Steve Gardham (East Riding).

The singaround was late starting, and smaller than usual, but those who stayed had an enjoyable and varied session.