

Traditional Song Forum Meeting, 17th March 2007 held at Amery Hill School, Alton

Meeting Report

Chair: Steve Roud

Eighteen members joined us at Alton for a special meeting, celebrating the life and work of George Gardiner and, particularly, the collection that he made of Hampshire songs. The numbers were swelled considerably in the afternoon when we were joined by a large number of visitors and singers who enjoyed and took part in the afternoon presentations.

Member's Activities

The meeting opened with our customary review of recent activity by those present

Doc Rowe reported that a lot of his time since the last meeting had been devoted to supporting the Waterson-Carthy 'Frost and Fire' tour, working on costumes and scripts for a mummers play. He was now gearing up for the round of Spring customs.

Paul Marsh is assisting with the production of a new double CD based on Keith Summers' collected material for Musical Traditions. It is planned that this will be available in May. This will be a companion to the Veteran CD already available. He asked that anyone who could help with additional information on the performers should get in contact. He also reported that the double CD 'Folk Songs from Hampshire and Dorset' based on the Gardiner and Hammond collections is now available again (details on www.forest-tracks.co.uk)

Derek Schofield is preparing the next issue of 'English Dance and Song' which will be about Dorset and is timed to coincide with the re-issue of 'Marrow Bones' by EFDSS and with the award of a Gold Badge to Frank Purslow and the Yetties. ED&S now has its own 'MySpace' page - www.myspace.co/edsmagazine where you can find links to all sorts of folk people and events.

David Atkinson has been working with a team of people on a new book about folk song for Backbeat Books (working title - 'Folk Song Source Book') which. It is planned, will have an associated CD. The project is still taking shape at the moment. He is also working on the next issue of Folk Music Journal which, it is planned, will contain articles on Lucy Broadwood and Sabine Baring-Gould. He is also continuing with the work on the Carpenter Project.

Talking of which, Elaine Bradtke is also a member of the Carpenter project team. They are planning to focus, for the present, on getting the mummers plays in the collection published (as printed material). News from the Library is that the 'Century of Song' CD is now sold out after having been listed by 'The Guardian' as one of the top 40 must-have CDs.

Irene Shettle continues to focus on the work of Lucy Broadwood and has been cooperating with David Gregory on a paper that he will be presenting in the autumn and on his article for the Journal. Her work has focused, in particular, on the letters in the Surrey History Centre. She has also given a number of talks about Lucy Broadwood to various groups in Surrey. It was suggested, in discussion, that a meeting centred on Lucy Broadwood and her work, held in the Surrey History centre, might be a possibility for 2008.

Bob Askew is still working on George Gardiner with the Gardiner Appreciation Group. He is particularly interested in encouraging younger singers. He will be talking more about Gardiner in the afternoon.

George Frampton has continued to co-operate with Paul Cowdell who will shortly be going to Washington to make a presentation about the Millen at the Folklife Festival. George is putting together the programme of talks for the Sidmouth Folk Week and organizing the traditional singing sessions at the Volunteer. George's book 'Discordant Comicals: The Christmas Hoodeners of East Kent - Tradition and Revival' has now been published as a monograph by Faversham Papers. He is continuing his work on the Webb family band who performed together at the end of the 19th century.

Lewis Jones regrets that he has still not retired (though the prospect lies before him). He is grateful, though, for access, though his work, to commercial text resources. He has continued to work on the transcription and digitization of Isaac Watts publications - greek letters, long 's's' and all. Only a very small number of his books of Lucy Broadwood's songs remain. He is contributing to Folkopedia and is planning to do more work on Lucy Broadwood as time permits.

Tim Radford, now based in the USA, is continuing his research on song from the New Forest and particularly Albert Doe and the Blake Family.

Peter Robson has had a few problems that have interfered with his research work for a while. He is still working on Thomas Hardy's manuscripts - currently he is engaged with studying a version of Cupid's Garden which appears both as a transcript and in a notebook. He is giving a talk to the Hardy Conference on West Gallery Musicians in Dorset. When time allows he will get back to looking at the songs that Hardy used in his books.

Carolyn Robson said that she was tickled pink to be hosting the meeting in Alton. She told us something of her work with local community choirs and the way in which they have got people interested in the work of George Gardiner. She also works with schools, an important part of which has been the Brunel Project in association with Folk South-West. She has also continued performing with Craig; Morgan; Robson. They visited the USA last year and were delighted to have the opportunity to meet some of the descendants of Sharp's singers there. She also spoke about the 'Take Six' project which they are working on with EFDSS and other community arts groups to link schools to the songs collected in their locality (six localities - hence the title) and it is hoped that three Andover Schools will take part. She is also working with the Voice Foundation - teaching teachers to sing from the oral tradition.

Dave Eyre also spent some time in the USA at the end of last year as a guest of the Glenrock Carolers. They went to a concert in the church where Dave talked to them about the S Yorkshire carol tradition. He has also enjoyed visiting the Correfoc (fire run) at Manresa in Spain - an amazing display of fire and fireworks (see videos on 'youtube.com' - search for Correfoc Manresa). The Sheffield Giants have been invited to a Rhubarb Festival in France later this year and also, in 2008, to Quebec for the 400th anniversary of the city's foundation.

Martin Graebe has now joined the ranks of the retired and has substituted a small desk in the spare bedroom for a comfortable air-conditioned office. He has been working on an article for the Folk Music Journal, looking at the working relationship between Sabine Baring-Gould and Cecil Sharp. He has also been looking at the next steps towards the indexing of the Baring-Gould collection and its eventual digitization, a project that is now being constructed in association with Wren. Another venture has been the reprinting of Baring-Gould's 1863 book 'Iceland - its Scenes and Sagas, for which he has written an introduction using the letters Baring-Gould wrote to his mother before and during the journey as well as a parallel account from an American who travelled on the same vessel as Baring-Gould - available from Signal Books. He has also volunteered to look after Baring-Gould on Folkopedia. As well as a few other things.

Sam Lee is enjoying exploring the traditional repertoire and appreciating the work of collectors old and new. He is currently working with Folk South-West.

Steve Roud has finished another book* and is recovering from an arm injury which has slowed him down a bit.

* *The English Year, Penguin Books*

Forum Business

1 Financial situation

Doc Rowe reported that we are maintaining a reasonable balance (£272), since we have been fortunate in having secured a number of venues at low or zero cost. A number of people have not yet paid their subscriptions.

2 Next Meetings

We now have a number of offers (some more tentative than others) for meetings over the next two years, though dates need to be firmed up. It was decided that the next meeting would be held at Cecil Sharp House in September when we will focus on the discussion about future activity by TSF. This is very appropriate since it was ten years ago, in September 1997, that the meeting that led to the formation of TSF was called. Details to be confirmed.

The winter meeting will, it is hoped, take up the offer by Vic Gammon to host another meeting at the Sage in Gateshead. In the Spring we will hope to organise the meeting focused on Lucy Broadwood in Surrey and there is a possibility of a meeting in the South-West in the late summer of 2008.

Forum Focus - 'Hampshire Voices - Traditional Songs collected in Hampshire 1905 - 08 by George Gardiner'

Carolyn Robson led the afternoon session, introducing the topic and the speakers (and singers) for the afternoon. The hall was, by now, a lot fuller since the Alton Community Choir and their families as well as a number of members of the public and local enthusiasts had swelled the numbers to give us the largest audience yet for a TSF event.



Bob Askew - 'George Gardiner and the folk songs of Hampshire'

Bob opened by describing the way in which it had been possible to reconstruct the pattern of Gardiner's collecting from the notebooks which, though undated, give a probable order of collection. There are also some dates in the notes of the musician's Gardiner used to take down the tunes for him. He believes that Gardiner's is the most representative collection of English songs. Gardiner had studied classics and taught in Edinburgh until 1896 when he retired and focused on music. He had a very wide range of musical interests. He became interested in folk song through classical music and the use by foreign composers of folk tunes. He then set out to discover British song and bought the published collections and joined the Folk Song Society before starting to collect himself in 1904.



Gardiner used the railways to move around and he found the workhouses valuable places in which to find the old people who knew songs, though there were a number of places where he found no singers at all. Though he was skilled musician, he did not trust himself to note the tunes correctly and so employed musicians to assist him when he collected. For example in the northern part of Hampshire he worked with H Balfour Gardiner (no relation) who was introduced to him by Lucy Broadwood - the other was

John Guyer. It was also Broadwood who suggested Hampshire as a good place to explore. Gardiner collected more than 1400 songs, 1200 of them in Hampshire. A number of songs that Gardiner collected were misattributed to Vaughan Williams since he arranged them for publication.

Bob's talk was punctuated by performances of some of the songs performed by his daughters, Emily and Hazel.

Steve Jordan - 'No Ordinary Working Man'

Steve told us the story of his quest for Richard Hall, one of Gardiner's singers - an extraordinary example of dedicated research and, essentially, detective work. Starting with the telephone directory Steve tracked down successively closer relatives until he positively identified his man as living and working on the estate at Avington Park. He then went on to fill out the picture of Dick Hall's life, illustrating his progress with photographs and with some songs that Hall sang. Fascinatingly, he also established that Hall was invited by Gardiner to meet Baring-Gould who gave



him a copy of 'Songs of the West' from which he learned some new songs with the help of Chloe Osmond, the Rector's daughter.

The Songs of Hampshire - a series of performances



Tim Radford told us a little about George Blake and Albert Doe and sang a couple of songs from them

Sarah Morgan sang us some songs from the collection and was then joined by another third of the singing team, Carolyn, for a bit of harmony.

We then had the enormous pleasure of the Alton Community Choir filling the hall with the wonderful sound of full-on George Gardiner.



And in Conclusion

We ended the day in the pub with a few songs. It was, perhaps a smaller gathering than usual due to the need by many to get home or get food and the singing was rather limited by the rugby on telly in the adjoining bar - but it was still a nice experience and did a little bit to keep live song alive.

Thanks

Thank you to Carolyn Robson, assisted by Bob Askew, among others, for organising this very enjoyable and successful event. Thank you also to all the singers of the Alton Community Choir who gave up a Saturday afternoon to sing for us. To the other singers: Emily and Hazel Askew for supporting their dad, Sarah Morgan and Tim Radford) and, of course, to the speakers; Carolyn Robson, Bob Askew and Steve Jordan. Finally, our grateful thanks to Amery Hill School for allowing us to use their premises.

Martin Graebe

13th April 2007