



Traditional Song Forum

Traditional Song Forum Meeting, 22nd Sept 2012

Held at the University of Sheffield



The meeting was held at the Humanities Research Department of the University of Sheffield, supported by their Arts Enterprise Fund, and was chaired by Steve Gardham. It was attended by more than 40 TSF members and guests during the course of the day.

TSF Business

Steve Gardham welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the plan for the day. He thanked the University of Sheffield (and particularly, Fay Hield) for hosting and organising the meeting.

Annual Meeting (Light version) – Martin Graebe outlined the current position with the Traditional Song Forum and invited comments on the way the forum is working and asked for suggestions on ways in which we can support others in their interests and research.

It was felt that, while we had not achieved all of our original objectives (in publishing, for example), what had been achieved in bringing people together to share their ideas and to offer help to each other had been of very great value to those involved.

Ian Russell emphasised the importance of moving around the country and keeping abreast of what is going on in different regions – as well as meeting new people and recruiting members. There was a discussion about building on the number of regions covered and on visiting parts that have not previously been visited – notably East Anglia and the North-East of England. The primary requirement is that there is someone in the area who is able and willing to take on the local organisation.

The following were suggested and will be followed up:

- It had been suggested that it was time to look again at visiting Wales.

- It was suggested that Brewery Arts in Kendal might be a possible venue for a Northwestern meeting. Sue Allen (though she is not able to organise the meeting) offered to contact them and find out what they would be prepared to offer.
- Paul Wilson reported that the Devonshire Association had recently formed a Music Section (of which he was Chairman) and that they might be able to host a meeting of the Forum.
- It was suggested that a meeting in Derry might be possible and would be of great interest. Names of possible helpers were suggested.

A vote of thanks to the current officers was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously. As a result, Steve Roud will continue as Chair, Doc Rowe as Treasurer and Martin Graebe as Secretary. Julia Bishop raised an issue that has been bothering the officers as well, which is that of succession. It was requested that any of the younger members who felt they might like to become more involved in the running of TSF should put their names forward.

Future meetings – The next meeting of the TSF is to be held in Chippenham on 1 December and will feature Alfred Williams and other topics related to Wiltshire song and that of the surrounding counties. Ideas for meetings in 2013 are now under active consideration and will take account of the suggestions above, as well as places previously suggested, such as Edinburgh.

TSF Finances – In Doc Rowe’s absence, it was not possible to give a detailed account of TSF finances, but it is understood that we remain in a healthy financial position. We have a small, but encouraging, flow of new members into the organisation. The subscription for 2013 will remain unchanged at £8.

Networking Session

Mike Wild is a new member of TSF. Likes putting new tunes to old songs, fascinated by Folk songs.

Jenny and Ron Day have been working on songs related to dance, particularly Rapper, including calling-on songs. Steve Gardham said that the Yorkshire Garland project was reaching the point at which they would like to look at adding calling-on songs to the project website. Ron and Jenny also mentioned that Phil Heaton’s new book (with CD) on Rapper dancing would be available in October – with everything you ever wanted to know about Rapper.

Ruiaridh Greig now lives in Lincolnshire but was based in Sheffield for some time, where he wrote a thesis on ‘Seasonal house visiting in Sheffield’ which is now available on-line (etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/580). A number of recordings that he made in the 1970s have now been digitised and indexed. He is currently transcribing tunes from Lincolnshire tune-books for the Village Music Project. He is also looking at Grainger’s source singers, and has recently made contact with the great-grandson of George Ray, for example. Also working on Lincolnshire broadsides. He would also like to hear about examples of song contests in the tradition.

Dave Eyre talked about his radio show, pointing out that several people present had taken part in the programme over the years. He saddened many present by saying that it was his

intention to get out of the book selling business. As part of this move he is aiming to dispose of a number of his higher priced items over the weekend.

Russ Clare has also joined TSF recently. Though originally from South Yorkshire he now lives near Dunblane. Has been looking at the tune of 'Brigg Fair' and wondering why there is a difference between the tunes recorded for the song. Joseph Taylor sings it differently for different verses – one Dorian, another in a minor key. Paul Wilson said that he had recently been looking at this same question. There was a lively discussion about this.

[There will be a workshop on modes &c at Dungworth on 15 – 17 March 2013, led by Julia Bishop]

Julia Bishop talked about the ongoing work on the Carpenter collection, aimed at producing a print edition. They are looking at the possibility of producing an introductory volume with the idea of raising the awareness of the project – important, since they have lost a large chunk of funding. The Library of Congress has now digitised the whole collection and catalogued – but getting it online is still some distance in the future. It is, though, possible to get stuff on request through the LoC – who will probably then ask Julia to provide copies from her own resources.

Cath Banister is a student in sociology at Sheffield University looking at culture of organisations such as Scouts and Guides - where campfire singing is an important feature. She gave a presentation in the afternoon.

Gordon Hoyland is a local singer in the carol tradition

Tracy Boyle lives in Edinburgh where she sings a bit. She is also in the second year of a part-time Masters in folklore and ethnology and was thinking about doing her dissertation on song contests.

Alan Roseveare is a novice but his level of interest has been driven up as a result of his having been elected Secretary of the Devonshire Association's new Music Section. He is looking at the broad picture of Devonshire song.

Sue Allan is struggling on with her PhD thesis on Cumbrian folk music and regional identity. Most of her research is now done. She has established the importance of print traditions. Dialect poems start to come in during the early part of the C19th. 30% of the local repertoire is hunting songs.

Martin Graebe has been engaged with further work on Baring-Gould's broadsides. He is also researching and preparing an article on the first woman who collected and published folk songs, Marianne Mason. He is also looking at the songs used by Vaughan Williams for his 'English Folk Song Suite' which was written for wind band.

Peter Wood made the point that PhD theses are increasingly being put on-line on sites such as Whiterose, which is a joint venture between several Yorkshire Universities. Peter also volunteered to look at the possibility of listing current folk song research. He is continuing his work on Tyneside songs. He has also been looking at a big collection of chapbooks (Robert White collection – about 600 items) and believes that more were produced in Newcastle than in London and other cities further south. He described the collection, which he has looked through. He has also published an article on Tyneside songs on Mustrad, highlighting differences from the rest of the country.

Ray Padgett is still heavily involved with the Yorkshire Garland project. They are getting a number of requests from commercial organisations, seeking songs for broadcast and other uses as well as enquiries about songs for theatrical events. There are now 120 songs on the site with more to be added. Ray is also looking at the songs of Tom Daniels and reviewing the work of Tony Green.

Tegwyn Roberts is based in Sheffield and works for the East Peak Innovation Partnership where she is involved in a number of rural projects, including some that involve traditional song.

Lewis Jones has recently re-published his books of selections from the Broadwood collection as e-texts, and they are now available on the International Music Score Library website. His main work has been transcribing the tunes from the Butterworth collection. In October he will be giving a talk at Torquay Museum on the modes of tunes in the Butterworth collection. He brought a Yorkshire version of 'Cupid the Ploughboy' as a gift to those present.

Ian Russell is preparing for the Festival of Village Carols on 1 December, for which the main guests will be the Glenrock Carollers from the USA. The Hathersage Carollers will also be in attendance. He has recently published a new edition of the 'Sheffield Book of Village Carols'. Apart from this he has been consolidating his research on Derbyshire carols and this is nearing completion. He is also working on a book about participation in folk music. There will be a conference in 2014 prompted by the anniversary of Gavin Greig's death – though the programme will go beyond Greig and Duncan's work to include other collectors working at the time.

Fred McCormick has completed the database of his record collection as well that of Keith Summers, as well as folk song this includes a mass of blues and jazz. He hopes to get this on the internet.

Paul Wilson has been working, with Bob and Jacqueline Patten, on Exmoor carols and have got a collection of 150, which they are now taking out to the public. He has also, as mentioned above, been involved in the formation of the Music Section of the Devonshire Association.

Steve Gardham reported that the revised edition of Frank Purslow's book *The Wanton Seed* is now at the printers. He is now starting on the next in the series, *The Constant Lovers*. His collection of copies of all the 'oldest versions' of songs that he mentioned in his talk at Whitby is now complete and available (as hard copy) in a folder.

Forum Focus Session

A Sailor Went to Pick Pick Pick: Multimodal Perspectives on Children's Musical Play – Julia Bishop

Julia described a project she had undertaken at a local school to look at children's play, prompted, in part, by the idea of seeing how things have changed since the time of the Opies. She looked in particular at clapping games. The study used multimodal analysis – look at broad picture of how people use different modes of communication like speech, writing, images, gestures and sound to represent or make meanings. She showed some

videos that demonstrated how children behave during play and recorded some of the things that they said about their play.

A Pathway in Song: Fieldwork Reflections – Ian Russell

Ian Russell talked of his early experience of fieldwork in the Sheffield area between 1969 and 1982 and his personal encounters with traditional song. He first recorded carols in the 1969 at the Three Merry Lads. It was people that he met along the way that guided his experience. He met a number of singers such as Frank Hinchcliffe – a man who sang mainly for himself, in the tractor for example – and even sang in his sleep! When he first met Ian he said that he could sing him old songs for a week. Frank introduced him to other singers. He gave us a number of anecdotes from his journey. He told us, for example, that Arthur Howard saw folk clubs as a predator.

Burning Issues: Taming Tensions and Creating Communities at the Scout and Guide Campfire – Cath Bannister

Cath has been studying how groups develop identities and she has taken a particular interest in how campfires and their symbolism have played a part in the culture of groups such as scouts and guides. The leaders at campfires are important to the success of the event. They are often strong personalities who dress in distinctive costume. They often have a large repertoire of songs suitable for the campfire – 250 is a typical number. Songs such as ‘Boom Chicka Boom’ introduce stereotypes which can be challenged for the sake of group unity. In discussion Ian Russell mentioned the importance of campfires to travellers and quoted the example of the Pinewoods camp in the USA.

Folklore and National Identity: Historical Reflections – Timothy Baycroft

Timothy is the Senior Lecturer in French History at the University of Sheffield and his most recent book is *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe During the Long Nineteenth Century* (Biggleswade: Brill, 2012). He talked about the idea of the nation as a myth – not in the sense of false, but that their meaning is symbolic. In the early Nineteenth Century nationalism was set up in opposition to absolutism – bringing people together to support their interests. Later in the century the focus of nationalism switched to a concern about what differentiated countries or regions. In that cause an additional meaning is ascribed to actions, events, songs, stories, and so on. He also talked about authenticity. Nationalists will look for the most authentic version of a song – which for them may mean something that identifies it with their own region.

Panel Discussion – Making use of folk song collections in performance and education

A panel was assembled which included Steve Gardham, Fay Hield, Paul Wilson, Paul and Liz Davenport and was chaired by Simon Keegan-Phipps, a lecturer in ethnomusicology at the University of Sheffield. The aim was to discuss very broadly how to make use of traditional song in education. The discussion looked at a number of issues, such as the information

about the song that needs to be communicated – the record of a song’s history. Ian Russell pointed out the importance of the record of a songs present use as well.

[A recording of the afternoon’s talks can be purchased by registered TSF members from the TSF Secretary]

Supporting Programme

On the Friday before the meeting an exhibition of broadsides from the University’s archive collection were available for inspection in the Special Collections department. A number of members took advantage of the opportunity to view this material.

Ian Russell organised an informative concert of hunting songs by Yorkshire singers, which was greatly enjoyed by those who attended. There were also two excellent singing events organised by Sheffield members.

Thanks:

We would like to thank all the speakers and singers for their contributions to the meeting. Particular thanks are due to Fay Hield, Julia Bishop and Ian Russell for organising the meeting and to the other local members who helped organise sing-arounds. We would also like to express our gratitude to the University of Sheffield for allowing their facilities to be used for the meeting and to the University’s Arts Enterprise Fund for meeting some of the costs. Thank you all!

Martin Graebe

31 October 2012