



Traditional Song Forum

Traditional Song Forum Meeting, 21st May 2011

Held at the Surrey History Centre, Woking

The meeting was attended by 22 TSF members and guests, apologies having been received from a further 17 members. The meeting was held in the lecture theatre at the Surrey History Centre where many of the personal papers of Lucy Broadwood, who we hear more about during the meeting, are housed. The SHC mounted an excellent display of photographs and facsimile documents about Lucy Broadwood, her life and her work. The meeting was chaired by Steve Roud.

TSF Business

Members were reminded that subscriptions for 2011 were long overdue and some members present rectified this omission.

The Secretary confirmed that the date for the proposed meeting in Aberdeen, at the invitation of Ian Russell and the Elphinstone Institute, will be November 26th. Planning for this event is now in progress and details will be made available shortly. This is our first meeting in Scotland and it is hoped that it will be possible to put on additional social events during that weekend.

The possibility of another meeting, centred on Wiltshire and the West Country, is also being examined.

Steve Roud confirmed that there will be another Broadside day to be held jointly with EFDSS on 25th February 2012

Networking Session

Steve Roud opened the session by talking about the new project at EFDSS to put the manuscripts of a number of major folk song collectors on-line – the 'Full English' project. As well as digitizing the manuscripts, many of the manuscripts will undergo conservation treatments. This is a major piece of work for which significant funding has been obtained and is likely to take about three years to complete.

Lewis Jones reported the progress that is being made by a team of volunteers with transcribing songs from the 'Take Six' – see http://folkopedia.efdss.org/Take_6_Transcription_Programme. He invited others to take part and to join the transcription team. He also mentioned a piece of free software, EasyABC, which he finds eases the task of transcribing music and presents it in a good quality format. Go to <http://www.nilsliberg.se/ksp/easyabc/>

George Frampton reported that a recording of his former teacher, Mike Sadler, has been released by Forest Tracks in their 'Bespoke Series'. Mike specialised in songs about his native Southampton, including the popular 'Woolston Ferry. Paul Cowdell helped him make contact with a harmonica player, Bill Cragg, from Romney Marsh, who he has recorded. He mentioned a DVD called 'Travellers' Tales' about Surrey Gypsies. The website <http://www.grthm.co.uk/local-story-surrey.php#performer> has an interesting sample of the video featuring gypsy performer Ambrose Cooper and includes a number of nice archive photos. George has also started researching the songs of George Spicer and is keen to hear from anyone who has memories of George or saw him perform.

Martin Graebe reported that the first stage of the transcription of Baring-Gould's 'Personal Copy' manuscript has now been completed (mostly by Shan!) and that the process of checking has the transcriptions has now started. It is planned that the complete collection of transcriptions will be placed on-line somewhere, sometime – details to be worked out. He also reported the discovery of the significance of Francis Nicolle, another radical vicar based in London's East End who was (in his day) Baring-Gould's number one fan. He made a collection of Baring-Gould's books and articles and was the first bibliographer of his work. He helped Baring-Gould's son make a collection of his father's published articles, many of which are in the Devon Record Office. When he died he bequeathed his collection (more than 400 items) to Plymouth Library, where they form the most accessible collection of Baring-Gould's work in the country.

Paul Davenport talked about the work that he and Liz have been doing with the Reginald Gatty manuscripts. They are planning to expand it to include aspects of local history which will increase the viability for publishing the collection. At present words, tunes and notes are all in different notebooks and contains a number of unique songs. Because the area has been collected in several times over the years it could be expected that there would be some duplication with other collections – but in fact this is not the case. He also mentioned that they had arranged for the installation of a plaque for the blind fiddlers of Sheffield – which prompted an interesting digression into the various mechanisms of erecting memorial plaques and the need to ensure that there is a record of the plaque having been erected.

Bob Askew is now focusing on research into George Gardiner's early life and has visited Scotland in search of material. He visited the Edinburgh Academy, where he taught and also the Miotclell Library in Glasgow, where his papers are kept. He showed a list of Gardiner's books which are in the collection, about a quarter of which are on European and British folk song.

Forum Focus - The Surrey Connection

The Surrey History Centre houses the collection of Lucy Broadwood's private papers and is one of the key locations for study of her life and work. We also took the opportunity to hear about two other collectors; Francis Jekyll, who lived at Munsted and Charles Marson, who was born in Woking. Brief descriptions of the talks are given below. A CD-R with audio copies of all three of these talks can be obtained from the [TSF Secretary](#) for £2-50.

Charles Marson's contribution to folk song collecting - David Sutcliffe

David Sutcliffe gave a talk about Charles Marson; describing his life and work with a particular emphasis on his work on folk song and his collaboration with Cecil Sharp in Somerset. The picture that he painted of Marson as an energetic Christian Socialist was compelling and revealing. Marson was familiar with ballads and had given talks about them as early as 1889, soon after he moved to Australia. He was well prepared to work with Sharp in 1903 when they started to collect songs in 1903. His contribution to the collection (which included the introductions to the first three volume of 'Folk Songs from Somerset') is greater than has been generally recognised. The roots of this lie in the unfortunate falling-out with Sharp in 1906, when Marson relinquished all interest and rights in the collection. David's research and the book that he has recently published have made it possible to understand Marson and his work better and to throw some light on this complex and interesting character.

David Sutcliffe's book 'The Keys of Heaven: The life of Revd Charles Marson, Socialist Priest and Folk Song Collector' was been published by Cockasnook Books, Nottingham in 2010 and is available from David through his website www.charlesmarson.co.uk.

Lucy Broadwood: The Lost Lady Found – Irene Shettle

Irene's presentation was given from the point of view of an enthusiast who has been working with the Broadwood papers at the Surrey History Centre and has been performing a show based on her songs. She started, indeed, with a song, 'The Wee Croodlin Doo' This song had special meaning for Lucy Broadwood and she mentioned it several times over the years. Irene then went on to describe Lucy's life and her work on folk song. Lucy Broadwood never had to work, as she had an allowance from the family business and this gave her the leisure to explore many different avenues and to stride the world of classical music as well that of folk song. Her interest had started some time before her collection as she was aware of the book published by her Uncle John and because her father, though he did not collect as such, took an interest in the songs that he heard around him. Men such as Samuel Willett (who sought a shilling for each song he gave her) and the remarkable Henry Burstow were key individuals in her story, as were those acquaintances such as Mrs Carr who introduced her to singers. As well as collecting in the Home Counties, Lucy Broadwood collected in other parts of England and in Scotland.

Francis Jekyll: A Forgotten Folk Hero – Lewis Jones and Primrose Arnander

Francis Jekyll (usually known as 'Timmy') was the nephew of the famous gardener and writer, Gertrude Jekyll. He collected a number of songs, about 30 of which can be found in the Journal of the Folk Song Society and was associated with Ella May Leather as well as his good friend George Butterworth. After Eton and Oxford he worked for a while at the British Library but he seemed to lose his grip on life during the First World War and retired from his job to take on the running of his aunts garden business after her death. Lewis's information about Jekyll's folk song collecting was built on by his great-niece, Primrose Arnander. This included the information that another member

of the family, Walter Jekyll had collected and published songs from Jamaica in his book *Jamaican Song and Story*.

Thanks:

We would like to thank all four speakers for their contributions to the meeting and, particularly Irene Shettle who helped to organise the meeting. We are also very grateful to Julian Pooley and the staff at the Surrey History Centre for making their excellent facilities available to us and for the interesting display material about Lucy Broadwood that they provided.