

PRESS RELEASE 28th October 2008

‘Vaughan Williams in the East’

Walberswick, Suffolk
Sunday 8th February 2009

A day of illustrated talks and an afternoon concert telling the story of composer Ralph Vaughan Williams’ trips to the eastern counties a hundred years ago to collect folk songs from fishermen and farmworkers.

‘A folk song is like a tree, whose stem dates back from immemorial times, but which continually puts out new shoots.’ (Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1912)

In the early years of the twentieth century, Vaughan Williams collected nearly a thousand folk songs, including a good number in the eastern counties. Some of these songs have been published, but many more have been carefully archived in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library belonging to the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

This event, celebrating East Anglian folksong, is to be held in Walberswick Village Hall, in an area Vaughan Williams visited in 1910 for the purposes of finding people of the older generation who remembered old ballads and country songs – what we came to call ‘folk songs’.

The event was inspired by attending an event at Cecil Sharp House in London in 2008 held to mark the 50th anniversary of the composer’s death. The East Anglian Traditional Music Trust was asked to give a presentation on the research and performance projects they have organised focusing on the folk songs collected by Vaughan Williams in Norfolk and Suffolk. This involved a talk given by EATMT director Katie Howson and songs from project leader Chris Coe.

The Cecil Sharp House event also featured a talk and performance from Cambridgeshire-based singers Mary Humphreys and Anahata, and it became clear that we had all the ingredients for a really interesting event here in the eastern counties, and so we decided to bring the performers from that day together with Sue Cubbin from the Essex Sound Archive and singers Adrian May and Elaine Barker, who worked on an event in Peldon (Essex) earlier this year.

Talks will be given by Sue Cubbin (‘Vaughan Williams & Essex Folksong’), Mary Humphreys (‘Vaughan Williams in Cambs: Deciphering the Manuscripts’) and Katie Howson (‘Vaughan Williams - Then and Now: Collecting and Communities in Norfolk and Suffolk’). The talks, illustrated with various images and excerpts from some of the songs, will be followed by a concert featuring a selection of the folk songs collected by Vaughan Williams in the eastern counties, brought back to life by singers Chris Coe, Mary Humphreys and Anahata, Adrian May, Sue Cubbin and Elaine Barker.

There will also be a unique chance to see several exhibitions linked to the talks, which give a wider picture of the history of folksong in the east and of Vaughan Williams’ invaluable contributions to folksong.

Doors open to view the exhibitions at 10.30 am
Talks start at 11am and run till 3.30 pm with a break for lunch.
The concert runs from 4pm to 5.15.

Tickets are available in advance, and can be bought for the whole day, or for the concert alone. Demand is expected to be high, and advance booking is recommended.

Further event details from East Anglian Traditional Music Trust:
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