



Traditional Song Forum

Traditional Song Forum Meeting, 19 Nov 2016

Held at Liverpool Central Library

Our first visit to North West England could not have been better organised and the venue, the Liverpool Central Library, was terrific. The only problem we had was fitting all the people who came into the room – thank you for coming. And an even bigger thank you to the team who organised the meeting for their excellent work.

Welcome

Mathew Edwards and Derek Schofield welcomed the TFS members and guests to the morning session, which opened with a short business meeting.

TFS business

1 Future meetings

The 2017 Broadside Day will be held in Oxford on 25 February and this will be followed by a meeting in Sussex on 25 March. Plans are being laid for a meeting in Sheffield on 16 September, which will be the occasion for the second Roy Palmer Lecture. Plans for 2018 are being considered and any thoughts on locations and any offers to host a meeting would be very welcome.

2 Membership Secretary

Martin Graebe reported that, at the Stroud meeting, the suggestion had been made that we should appoint a membership secretary to take on aspects of the role that is currently shared between himself and the Treasurer, Doc Rowe. After the meeting, Shan Graebe bravely volunteered to take on this job. Those present were asked to approve her appointment and this was agreed. Details of how this will work will be discussed and presented at the March meeting in Sussex.

3 Publication

Progress with the republication of the final two volumes of Frank Purslow's collection is going well. Ron Day reported that the funding is in place and that a promotional tour is being planned, involving Bryony Griffiths and friends. The provisional title is *A Southern Harvest*. It is intended that the book will be dedicated to Frank Purslow.

Before the networking session we heard a presentation by Mike Brocken, the Senior Lecturer in Music at Liverpool Hope University.

Mike Brocken

Mike started by talking about the loss, over the last year of two local friends, Fred McCormick and Stan Ambrose. Fred had a large collection of material covering his wide musical interests including jazz and blues as well as folk music. This collection was initially bequeathed to Liverpool University but they turned it down and, after some material had been given away or sold by Fred's family, Mike arranged for the residue to be housed at Liverpool Hope University where a popular music resources centre had recently been created. Fred's material is being added to that resource and will be used as a basis for future studies. The material is being catalogued, starting with the vinyl. There are a few small reels of field recordings, which will be digitised when their condition has been assessed. They have created a display based on the collection and the first project inspired by Fred's material is in progress, which is to research and re-introduce the Cheshire soul-plays.

The way that Fred's collection had not gone, as planned, to Liverpool University was discussed at some length and many among the aging population within the room expressed their concern for the implications for their own collections and those of others in the same situation. Vic Gammon said the universities have a more commercial approach than in the past and are less likely to accept collections of this kind and were less able to guarantee their future safe-keeping. Mike Brocken said that, for this reason, Fred's collection had been treated as a bequest to him personally, rather than to the university.

Steve Roud said that the best plan was to make sure that collections are left to someone (preferably younger) who can ensure that it is dealt with effectively and, if possible, as you would have wished. After a number of members shared their experiences Martin Graebe suggested that TSF should find a way to help with this, perhaps by forming a small group to produce some simple guidelines. Steve was asked if he could get some people (and there were some volunteers) to come up with some thoughts for the next meeting.

Networking Session

Gavin Davenport has recently relocated to Liverpool where he sings and plays a bit, as well as working at the Bluecoats centre for Contemporary Arts. He is working on a new recording.

Paul Davenport described the work of Hallamshire Traditions. He also talked about the TSF Facebook page for which he is the main administrator. He asked if anyone else would like to be an administrator – let Paul know. He also encouraged people to 'like' the page.

Doc Rowe talked about sorting his archive out. Having spent most of October digitising and eliminating he realises that he will not be able to fit dying into his diary for some years yet.

Dave and Maggie Hunt talked about their work as Sunshine Arts, introducing traditional music and lore into schools. Maggie is working with mummers plays, with a multigenerational approach.

Barbara Snape, supported by her husband **Peter**, has been researching Lancashire songs and ballads and they are performing several songs that they have found in various collections.

Hilary Friend has lived and worked for many years in Manchester and Yorkshire, and has worked on a project dealing with songs of the women's movement from the 70s onward, which is now archived at Goldsmith's College, alongside other collections related to women's art library, as well as the Bert

Lloyd collection and the library of the Seegers. She now has an honorary appointment to work with the archive.

Laura Smyth mentioned some events including the EFDSS Morris Dancing Conference which is on 25-26 March (clashing with our Lewes meeting). There is also a new series of Library Lectures, the first of which is being given by Ian Russell. VWML is working on a number of projects, one of which is the James Madison Carpenter collection. Julia Bishop is working with the library on a proposal to put the Carpenter collection (both manuscripts and sounds) onto the VWML Digital Archive (the name 'The Full English' is being phased out). It is hoped that this will start in April and the material should be online a few months after, since much of the work has already been done. Steve Roud interjected to say that the Ken Stubbs collection of recordings would be added to the VWML Digital Archive in the near future. His Sussex material will be on the Sussex Traditions website. There will be an EFDSS Folk Tune Conference, 6 – 7 October. Finally, Laura reported that work was in progress on a song subject index. They will be creating a thesaurus of key words as a step towards an index. They will be looking for volunteers when the project kicks off later in 2017. Steve Roud said that he saw this as a big step forward in indexing song.

Derek Schofield mentioned that the Editorial Board of the EFS Journal frequently commented that a song was of 'Irish origin', 'Scottish origin', 'Negro tune etc.' – do we understand what they were hearing that enabled them to say things like this. Paul Davenport suggested that most of these people were musical experts who could make these distinctions based on rhythm and tonality. There was some discussion on this before Derek suggested that it would be great if someone talked about this at the tune conference.

Steve Roud reported that he is now adding images to the Roud Index.

Steve Gardham asked if anyone understood why Frank Purslow added verses to the songs he published without acknowledging his sources. Sometimes he says that he took the verses from a broadside when they were actually from Sharp, Gardiner or another collector. No one knew the answer, but it might just be for simplicity rather than for copyright issues.

Vic Gammon mentioned the articles written by Frank Kidson, published in *The Choir*, *The Musical Times*, and the *Leeds Mercury*. They are still of value and Vic thinks it might be worth publishing them. Paul Davenport reminded (or informed) the meeting that the *Leeds Mercury* articles were all on the Hallamtrads website - <http://www.hallamtrads.co.uk/downloads.html>.

Martin Graebe explained that the Tradsong website is difficult to maintain because the program used by the supplier is no longer fully supported by them. The site will be transferred to a new provider, and this process has started and will be completed when time allows. It was suggested that help could be bought in – the possibility will be looked at. Martin said that it was some while since he had been sent any new material and that not all of the appropriate news is reaching him in a timely manner. The recent adoption of Mailchimp for managing regular e-mail communications to members seems to be working well.

There was some discussion about publishing hard copy material.

The broadside collection at the Liverpool Central Library

Arrangements were made for TSF members to examine the Street literature collection at the library. Many are well known (several Liverpool Printers, Harkness broadsides, etc.) but one or two items are unique, such as a variant of the McCaffery story in a booklet, which tells the story from the victims' perspective. Another item is a C18th Century songster with lots of 'Nymphs and Shepherds' type material.

Forum Focus Session

The 'Forum Focus' session included five presentations on topics related to Liverpool and the Merseyside.

The presentations were:

Gerry Smith – Stan Hugill and the Liverpool Tradition

Derek Schofield and Clive Pownceby - Southport - from Anne Gilchrist and Sea Songs to the Bothy Folk Club and Cork Jackets

Matthew Edwards - The Miraculous Arm: William Armstrong and the Ballad Trade in Liverpool in the early 19th century.

Alice Jones – Frank Kidson in Liverpool

Mick Groves and Hughie Jones - The Early Years of the Folk Song Revival on Merseyside

I will be editing the recordings of these talks and will make them available in the usual way via my DropBox. If anyone wishes to listen to them, please let me know and I will send them the link.

Thanks

Thanks to Derek Schofield and Matthew Edwards for organising the meeting and for organising the singing sessions and the walk that added to the success of the weekend. Thanks also to the staff at the Liverpool Central Library for all their help during the day. It is a great library and is even, as we discovered, open on a Sunday.

Martin Graebe

21 Feb 2017