



News archive for 2003

A new Vaughan Williams publication

The East Anglian Music Trust have published an excellent little collection of fourteen songs entitled 'Blyth Voices'. These songs were collected by Vaughan Williams in Southwold in 1910, most of them from William, Robert and Benjamin Hurr. The book is well produced with a number of excellent monochrome photographs and extensive notes on the singers as well as background information on Vaughan Williams visit. A number of the songs have not been published previously and Katie Howson, supported by Chris Coe, has matched words to the tunes from other sources where possible - a not unfamiliar necessity!

The book can be purchased for £6 (inclusive of UK post and packaging) from East Anglian Traditional Music Trust, 44, Old Street, Haughley, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 3NX (phone 01449 771090)

Cecil Sharp projects continue

The latest I have heard of is a three part documentary about Sharp's collecting in Somerset, being made by Harlech and featuring the music composed for 'Fanfare for the South West. It also features re-enactments of key events. I have heard an amusing tale of Barry Lister as John Short rowing through Watchet Harbour while Tim Laycock wobbled dangerously along the key on a bicycle - watch out for the series of three programmes to be broadcast later this year.



'Fanfare for the South West' being performed at Sidmouth (at least two TSF members can be seen in the photo)

Child On-line

I hope that you will be as delighted as I am to find that the 1860 edition of Child's 'English and Scottish Ballads' can now be found online as part of the 'Making of America' project. The slightly less good news is that this is a very clunky site - each page (including blank pages, which is very off-putting!) is scanned as an image. There is, though, a downloadable text version as a single big file for each volume. Unfortunately there is not, it appears, a single link that will take you to all eight volumes - so here they are separately

[Volume 1](#), [Volume 2](#), [Volume 3](#), [Volume 4](#), [Volume 5](#), [Volume 6](#), [Volume 7](#), [Volume 8](#)

Cecil Sharp Mania Still Growing

As I write this Cecil Sharp mania is sweeping the country. Preparations for the Conference and the Festival in Hambridge are now well in hand. Eddie has relaxed a few degrees now that his major event at Sidmouth 'Celebrating the South-West' has been performed to his relief and to the obvious enjoyment of the participants and audience. The performance included, as well as choral pieces and music from Cecil Sharp, a 30 minute performance, 'Fanfare for the South West' written by Gina Le Faux based on six Cecil Sharp songs. If you missed the show in Sidmouth then you can see 'Fanfare' again in Hambridge on Aug 24th

Then there is the book 'Still Growing', which has now been published by EFDSS. It contains 50 songs compiled and edited by Steve Roud, Effie Upton and Malcolm Taylor. Shirley Collins has contributed a Preface, and David Atkinson a bibliography. Additional research has been done by Bob and Jacqueline Patten and other TSF members. Vic Gammon has contributed a concise, but comprehensive analysis of Sharp's life and work and there is a note on Charles Marson by David Sutcliffe. The presentation of the songs is linked to biographical details of the singers themselves and includes a wonderful selection of photographs. There are not enough good books of songs around - this production sets a new standard for others to follow.

As if this were not enough, you can hear Malcolm Taylor exploring the significance of Sharp's 'Hambridge moment' in a radio 4 programme called 'The Seeds of Love' at 13:30 on Tuesday 26th August.

Phil Tanner CD

Veteran have just released the long-awaited CD of Phil Tanner - 'The Gower Nightingale'. A 'Voice of the People' style case allows room for a massive booklet of notes and the song texts as well as the little round piece of plastic that holds 16 songs as well as the wonderful radio programme about Tanner by Wynford Vaughan Thomas. These recordings were made in 1936 and in 1949 and demonstrate fully the talent of one of the greatest of traditional singers. Order from Veteran www.veteran.co.uk

Help requested

Georgina Boyes has written with a query:

Does anyone from the TSF have any information on the source of this verse A.L. Lloyd quotes in 'The Singing Englishman'?

THE MECHANICS'S APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC

*Mechanics now are at a stand,
And trade in all quarters is bad.
They're complaining all over the land
And their children are hungry and sad.
Travel Britain wherever you will,
You may behold everything dead,
The tradesmen are all standing still
And their children are crying for bread.
Then, good people attend to my rhymes,
And pity a mechanic reduced;
For appealing to you in these times,
I submissively hope you'll excuse.*

It is not from the broadside of the same name in John Ashton's 'Modern Street Ballads' or (probably?) the one in Baring-Gould collection. It looks as though the text SBG had is the same - or very similar - to Ashton's. Certainly, neither have much in common with Lloyd's version. It would be useful to know where Lloyd got it from, but he's so bad at even hinting what the source of songs might be, a query on TSF is likely to be the only chance to find out.

Paul Wilson

Paul Wilson, co-founder of Devonshire based community arts organization Wren, was awarded an honorary MA by Plymouth University in July, for his work as a writer and educator in the South West using traditional music as a basis for his work.

Formby

Stretching the definition of folk music once again I am conscious of the contribution George Formby made to the repertoire of singers in the 20th Century. Visit www.georgeformby.co.uk and find a lot of Formby stuff, including the lyrics to 170 songs.

Memorial to Frank Kidson

Following the erection and unveiling in Leeds of the memorial plaque to commemorate Frank Kidson Vic Gammon has sent the following picture and message.

Dear Martin,

Attached is a photo of the unveiling of the Kidson plaque.

After the unveiling and addresses by myself and John Francmanis outside Kidson's house the party retired to a local community centre where there were refreshments, a discussion of Kidson's life and work together with performances of songs and tunes from his collection. Present were a number of members of Leeds Civic Trust, Steve Gardham, Sue Burgess, Johnny Adams, Annie Dearman, Steve Harrison and a number of other notables. I think all those present found it a unique, interesting and enjoyable experience.



Once again many thanks to the Traditional Song Forum for the generous support given to complete this project. Some of Kidson's articles from The Choir will be put on the Leeds University, School of Music website in the near future and I will try to send you information on these.

Best wishes,

Vic

The James Madison Carpenter Collection

One of the three excellent presentations at the Sheffield meeting was that by Julia Bishop and David Atkinson on the work that has gone into the production of the online catalogue of the James Madison Carpenter collection. This excellent piece of work is now available for all to see and I heartily commend it to you. Go to www.hrionline.ac.uk/carpenter

British Library Sound Archive

Another matter reported at the Sheffield meeting was the progress made on the Traditional Music in England Project being undertaken at the British Library Sound Archive. This is a project in which the Forum has taken a great deal of interest and has looked forward to the reports on progress by Janet Topp Fargion of the BLSA and by Andrew King, who is working on the project. One of the actions agreed at the last meeting was that the Secretary should write to the BLSA commending them on the project and offering their continued support for future work.

Since the meeting I have been directed to the excellent web page which describes the project and which gives an outline index of the collections completed so far. This is, in itself, a useful little reference. Go [here](#) to see the site.

A Place called England

Radio 3 have an evening of Traditional English music on March 19th from 19:30 to 00:05. The programme will combine an examination of the current state of English folk music with live performances by a number of Revival artists. The programme has a discussion board about the state of English folk music which would probably welcome some informed comment by luminaries such as those that visit these pages.

It's great that there is some recognition by the BBC that there is a need to look more specifically at English tradition - let's hope that enough people think that what they find is interesting enough that they look for more of it.

A new project

Chris Coe has written to tell me more about her latest project based on traditional song, mentioned at the November meeting

"I've been given a Research and Development grant by Yorkshire Arts to develop "The Wife of Usher's Well" into a visual piece of multi-media performance. I've already done most of the ballad research re different versions and their story lines, decoding the symbolism etc and it really is a wonderful, rich story. I'm in the process now of "sketch-book" work.....pulling together the images in my head into a way of combining video, soundscape (melodic and abstract), sung text extended by written text, and sculptural pieces/costume etc. to fit and film in landscape. In other words, it's a project that could well utilise all my skills and trainings and more! The funding is from "Combined Arts", as the final performance could be a live presentation.

I'm working with Debbie Middleton, a writer and performer, John Adams (of course!) as sound specialist, Lucy Adams as dance/movement to camera consultant,(as it's her degree specialism), and Barry Callaghan as film-making specialist. I'm really excited at having the chance to combine ideas with such a skilled team. This section of the work maps out the ideas for interpretation of the ballad, and the next bid for funding will be to actually make the piece.

I've been singing it since Ray Fisher gave me the words in the late 60s, and it was the first ballad that I ever recorded. (On "Open the Door and Let Us In " for Bill Leader in 1971.) I didn't understand it until Lucy left home 3 years ago. It's quite clearly a warning to parents not to use (misuse) parental power in order to keep children tied to them and the Home. They're on elastic! If you try to bind them to you, you lose them altogether.

So many of these ballads are full of "timeless wisdom", and it's interesting to analyse them and pick out the bits that still address human problems, and those that have become anachronistic. A huge body of work."