The Society for Folk Life Studies

**Annual Conference**

**West Dean, Sussex, England:  16th – 19th September 2010**

*\*\* Interpreting agriculture and rural life \*\**

**PROGRAMME**

**THURSDAY, 16th  September**

16:00 – 18:00  Registration at West Dean – The Edward James Foundation, West Dean, nr Chichester, West Sussex, England PO18 0QZ.  Tel: +44 (0)1243 811301, Email: [enquiries@westdean.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@westdean.org.uk)

18.30-19:45 *Dinner at West Dean*

20.00-21.00  **Matt Pitts**  (High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)  ***An introduction to the High Weald***

**FRIDAY, 17th  September**

*08.00-08.45  Breakfast at the West Dean*

*09.00 –0 9.10***Christine Stevens** (SFLS President)

***Introductory remarks***

*09.10-10.00***Richard Harris** (Weald & Downland Museum)

***The work of the Weald and Downland Museum***

10.00-10.50  **Jonathan Roper** (University of Tartu, Estonia)

***The strange eventful history of Sussex spelling***

As is the case with many other forms of English, dialect enthusiasts in Sussex have attempted to record local words and pronunciations. This is especially the case from the first half of the nineteenth century onwards, since when a variety of dictionaries and articles have been written. Likewise, writers have often also wanted to include some Sussex dialect in novels that they set in the county. But how should these local words and pronunciations be spelt? How compatible is fidelity to the spoken word with readability? In cases where a variety of spellings were used for one and the same word, which spelling succeeded and why? Are deviations from accepted spellings a way of valorising the local or exoticizing it? And finally, what did dialect speakers themselves think of such spellings?

*10.50-11.15 Coffee*

11.15-12.00  **Roy Brigden**(Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading)

***Collecting 20th Century rural culture –a project update*’**

A progress report on a project, now half way through, at the Museum of English Rural Life, funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Collecting Cultures initiative. Its purpose is to purchase additional material for the collections that illustrates the wider role of the countryside in society over the course of the last century.

*12.00-12.45* **David Viner** (Freelance curator)

***Profit or loss? Researching agricultural and rural life collections in the footsteps of Geraint Jenkins***

Two previous papers to conference have outlined the speaker’s research on surviving traditional farm wagons and cart types around the UK, towards the creation of a national database. In this session he continues and broadens this theme, considering the role of private as well as public rural life collections fifty years on from Geraint Jenkins’ own studies.

*13.00-14.00  Lunch at West Dean*

14.15-17.30  **Visit to Weald & Downland Museum**

\*\* As the museum is a short distance from West Dean, we shall use our own transport. If possible, please share cars. \*\*

*18.30-20.00  Dinner at West Dean*

20.00- 21.00  **Hilary McGowan** (Cultural consultant)

***Rural-life museums in the UK -A decade of development?***

It is now ten years since the publication of Rob Shorland-Ball’s report, *Farming, Countryside and Museums*. The Rural Museums Network that arose out of this report has commissioned Hilary to review where rural museums are a decade later.  How have rural museums developed since then? Has the investment by HLF been only a force for good, and how well are they equipped to weather the austere economic times ahead?  What should their relationship be with groups such as SFLS?

This session will take the form of an informal discussion led by Hilary, who will be seeking our wisdom and reflections on this important subject. Hopefully it will also help us put the work of the Society into some context as we look forward to SFLS’s 50th birthday in 2011.

**SATURDAY, 18th September**

*08.00-08.45  Breakfast at West Dean*

09.00-9.50  **Urszula Siekacz (**National Museum of Agriculture and Agriculture Food Industry in Szreniawa, Poland)

***Crops for the State. Agriculture and the countryside in Central European propaganda posters from the 1950s***

In this paper I will describe a project to create an international exhibition of propaganda posters from 1950s, concerning agriculture and rural life. This exhibition was developed with several Central-European museums, mainly museums of agriculture being members of AIMA (Association Internationale des Musées d'Agriculture). The National Museum of Agriculture and Food Industry in Szreniawa near Poznań, is the lead institution for the project.

The exhibition deals with a specific period of history of agriculture and rural life, which was based on socialist political and economic system introduced in Central Europe after WW2. The aim of the exhibition is to show common agricultural policy of communist rule in all countries of the Eastern Bloc: the creation of cooperatives and collective farms, compulsory quota, education and training of rural society, the economic state plans, leadership and competition in performing work, the role of a woman for propaganda, mechanisation of work in agriculture and electrification of the countryside. All that is shown through poster, a specific medium of propaganda. Political circumstances had created an obligatory stream in art  - socrealist art - which shaped also the art of poster. The exhibition tries to come to terms with a specific fragment of heritage and history.

**The web page for the exhibition is:** [**http://muzeum-szreniawa.pl**](http://muzeum-szreniawa.pl) (English version available)

9.50-10.40  **Gareth Beech**(Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales)

***To the present and further into the past: new interpretation of agriculture and rural life at St Fagans: National History Museum***

This presentation describes the developments in the interpretation of agriculture and rural life at St Fagans during the last decade, projects currently in progress, and the plans being formulated for the most significant development of the Museum in decades. The interpretation of rural history will extend to, and include the present, but also go back much further, to the earliest times.

*10.40-11.00  Coffee*

11.00-11.50  **Patricia O’Hare & Toddy Doyle** (Muckross House, Killarney, Ireland)

***Muckross Traditional Farms: Vision, Reality and Future Development***

The Trustees of Muckross House had a vision of the type of museum they intended to create on Muckross Traditional Farms. This presentation will discuss how this vision was developed, some of the problems that have been encountered along the way and our current vision for the future.

11.50-12.40  **Heather Holmes** (Private researcher)

***Agricultural implement makers in Scotland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries***

This paper examines the agricultural implement and machine makers in Scotland between 1850 and 1914, a period of significant rural and agricultural change. It analyses the character of their work and the trades they undertook, the geographical location of their businesses, and the role of family members within their businesses. It then assesses how the implement makers and their work changed during this period, through for example the capacity of the industry to support an increased number of family members within the businesses, geographical changes to the location of the businesses, the development of national businesses that had a customer base throughout Scotland, and changes to their activities in the manufacture and sale of their implements. It briefly looks at some of the types of implements and machines that characterised the activities of the Scottish agricultural implement makers. The paper draws on evidence from a number of sources such as business directories, reports of agricultural shows, including the Royal Highland Show which had the largest display of implements and machines in Scotland, and agricultural newspapers.

*12.50-13:45  Lunch at West Dean*

*14.00  Walk or drive to the Weald & Downland Museum*

\*\* As the museum is a short distance from West Dean, we shall use our own transport. If possible, please share cars. \*\*

14.15-16.30  **Roy Vickery**  (South London Botanical Institute)

***Folklore and the uses of Sussex trees***

A guided walk around the Weald & Downland Museum’s grounds, discussing uses and folklore of native trees and shrubs.

*18.30-20.00  Dinner at West Dean*

20.00-21.15  Members’ papers I:

**Anne Dyer** (Westhope College, Shropshire)

***Change in 20th century Westhope, Shropshire***

Westhope is a 1,000-acre valley on the Welsh border. It is very rural, with five or six farms, a huddle of cottages, a church, and for a short time, a school. This paper looks at the changes that have taken place within the living memories of the older inhabitants.

**Mark Kennedy**(National Museums Northern Ireland)

***May the road rise up to meet you***

A quick look at the state of research into Irish coachbuilders

**Sunday, 19th September**

*Information regarding church services will be available for those wishing to attend*

*08.00-08:45  Breakfast at West Dean*

09.15-10.15.  The **Annual General Meeting** of the Society for Folk Life Studies

*10.15-10.45 Coffee*

10.45-11.30  **Cozette Griffin-Kremer** (Centre de recherche celtique et bretonne, Brest/Centre d’histoire des techniques et de l’environnement, Paris)  ***Working with oxen in France and beyond: Museums as crossroads***

France still has working oxen (if perhaps not the fabled number sometimes cited!), but what are they doing, where are they, and who is tagging along after them? This presentation will attempt to cover the major actors (cattle and people), the past and present geography of working animals, the research being done, the sorts of real work animals play a part in, the matrix of skills and equipment this involves, then the questions of transmission, mediation and networking required and the special place of museums in this context, with a final section on perspectives for the future.

11.30-12.30  Members’ papers II:

**Linda Ballard** (National Museums Northern Ireland)

***The Rhythms of the Year project***

This paper will look at development of *Rhythms of the Year* project (which reflects seasonal celebration), including establishment of Youth Panel, working with minority communities in Northern Ireland and charting future plans

**Dafydd Roberts** (Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales)

***Thoughts on the interface between agriculture and industry in parts of Wales***

This brief paper will consider some aspects of the relationship between industry and agriculture in parts of Wales. In some – but not by any means all - of the slate quarrying communities, quarrymen and their families derived a second income from a smallholding. Did this influence their relationship with others in the labour force ? And are there other similar examples, from across other communities in Wales ? – and beyond, for that matter.

12.30-12.45  **Brian Loughbrough** (Past President, SFLS)

*Concluding remarks13.00  Lunch at West Dean*

*End of conference*