The Society for Folk Life Studies

**Annual Conference**

**Newcastle upon Tyne, England:  8th to 11th September 2011**

*\*\*Links:  geographical, economic, social and cultural\*\**

**PROGRAMME**

**THURSDAY, 8th  September**

17.15-17.55  Registration at the library of the **Newcastle Literary & Philosophical Society** (23 Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne,  NE1 1SE, England. Telephone: 0191 232 0192. For directions see: <http://www.litandphil.org.uk/html_pages/LP_visit.html>

The conference hotel is *The Vermont*, Castle Garth, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1RQ. Telephone: 0191 233 1010. For directions see: <http://www.vermont-hotel.com/maps_directions.php>

18.00-18.00  **Christine Stevens** (SFLS President; Newcastle University)  ***Welcome***

18.05-18.50  **Ian Whitehead** (Tyne & Wear Museums)  ***The Tyne river and rowing***

*19.15-21.00  Dinner at Pan Haggerty restaurant,* **21 Queen Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 3UG. Telephone: 0191 221 0904** *(For directions see:* [*http://www.panhaggerty.com/contact-us.aspx*](http://www.panhaggerty.com/contact-us.aspx)*)*

**FRIDAY, 9th  September**

*09.05  Assemble at Newcastle Lit & Phil*

*09.15-09.30***Christine Stevens  *Introductory remarks.***

09.30-10.15  **Dorothy Osler** (Author & textiles consultant)

***Amish quilts and the Welsh connection.***

Amish quilts enjoy critical acclaim and acceptance as unique forms of American art but their strong visual links to nineteenth-century Welsh quilts have provoked questions of cultural cross-over. This presentation will present an argument for Welsh influence in the early development and design style of nineteenth-century Amish quilts as a result of interaction between closely contiguous Amish and Welsh communities in nineteenth-century America.

10.15-11.00  **Louise Tolson** (University of Newcastle) ***The artefact as interviewer: object-centred interviewing as a link between communities***

An archaeological interpretation of a site or artefact offers just one narrative of the many possible, based on our research interests, the questions we ask of the material, and the politics we bring to the past from the present. This has been seen as a weakness by some who prefer the more objective archaeological science with an absence of subjective interpretation. However, as demonstrated here the subjectivity of archaeology can be one of its great strengths.

The ability of physical objects to act as archives of memory is well documented in the field of memory studies. Current research at Newcastle University seeks to explore the ways in which 19th century objects encode, and can be employed to articulate more fully, the practical knowledge traditions shared and passed on by women. Central to this aim is the development of a new methodology for the integration of museum collections, excavated assemblages and ‘object-centred’ interviews with north eastern women.

Key to the success of this approach is a working collaboration between communities. Results from our oral history projects in Northumberland and County Durham have demonstrated the huge potential for community-based collaborations, aiding in our interpretation of the archaeological material. In this paper I will demonstrate how we can forge more meaningful links between the archaeological community and the communities we serve through analysing the links that exist between people and things.

*11.00-11.30  Coffee at Newcastle Lit & Phil.*

11.30-12.15  **Morgana McCabe** (University of Glasgow)  ***Dealing with night terrors: material evidence of the witch in Scotland, c.1560-1730***

The witch-trials, and indeed the Reformation, are typically overlooked by archaeologists as they sit uncomfortably with modern understandings of the world and with notions of what we can and cannot access through the material world. However, understanding the materiality of both official and unofficial religious practices is crucial to engaging with early modern experiences of life. This research investigates how material culture, including landscapes such as holy wells and infant burial grounds, was created and/or differently mobilised to deal with the eschatological challenges presented by both changing official doctrine and the increased presence of witches in society. It asks, for example, how and why specific objects were perceived as magical - either for use by witches or against them. More importantly, it investigates the experience of life in a world where witches were potentially anywhere - or everywhere. How did material culture give substance to an otherwise intangible fear, and perpetuate, manipulate or alleviate that fear?

12.15-12.35  **Laura Clydesdale** (National Museums Northern Ireland) ***Perspectives on statues and other images of the Buddha: A brief exploration’***

This paper has developed from research which I recently carried out on a selection of statues of the Buddha from the collections of National Museums Northern Ireland.  This research assisted me with setting up a display presently on show at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra as part of National Museums’ current ‘Rhythms of the Year’ project.

It was necessary to carry out this research to help to interpret the statues, as the early documentation records for several of the statues within National Museums, frequently describing them simply as “Buddhas” or “Idols”, did not yield much insight into them.  The descriptive vocabulary used in the modern records has not drastically changed over time either.

This led me to reflect upon the *etic* attitudes towards the statues within National Museums today – for example, in relation to the ways in which individuals originally understood, collected, donated them to and displayed them in the organisation in the past, and also the colonial/imperial context of Belfast at the time. In turn, this reflection led me to think about perspectives on the statues within contemporary, western contexts – including advertising and other commercial environments – especially in terms of how such contexts use images of the Buddha, and how researchers may attain contextual perspectives on them. In particular, with a relationship apparent in advertisements between images of Buddha and those of folklore, I argue that theory of the use of folklore motifs in advertising can help to ascertain advertisers’ attitudes towards Buddha images

12.40-13.00  **Sheila Cass** (“Fabricaholic”, practising quilter, and member of the Quilters’ Guild)  ***Two quilts***

The two quilts of the title are linked by purpose, social conscience and a different art form. Details (with illustrations) of the quilts and their makers will be given.

*13.00-13.45  Lunch at Newcastle Lit & Phil.*

13.45-14.15  *Guided tour of the Newcastle Lit & Phil building and its collections*

14.30-16.30  ***Walking tour of Newcastle city centre***Led by **John Grundy**

Strongly influenced by reading Nikolaus Pevsner's *The Buildings of England*, architectural review of the country, John Grundy has taught at north-east schools since 1970. In the late 1980s he worked for the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission before beginning a more widely-recognised career as an architecture writer and television presenter, especially in the north of England. He is a retired lecturer of English Literature at South Tyneside College. He is also chairman of The Friends of Beamish. In the late 1990s Grundy co-wrote/edited the new edition of Nikolaus Pevsner's

*Northumberland*, part of Pevsner's *Buildings of England* series.

*19.00-21.00                        Dinner at the Vermont Hotel*

**SATURDAY, 10th September**

*09.05 Assemble at Newcastle Lit & Phil.*

09.15-09.35  **Linda Ballard** (National Museums Northern Ireland)

***A singular changeling***

In 2007, I recorded a ‘changeling’ narrative from a noted Northern Ireland storyteller. While this clearly sits within the recognised framework of changeling belief, it is very unusual. This paper analyses the narrative with a view to establishing if, in the context of scholarship on changeling legends, it may be considered unique.

9.40-10.00  **Mark Kennedy** (National Museums Northern Ireland)

***There goes the charabanc!***

Many forms of transport are considered romantic or glamorous whilst the poor old bus is never considered in this way. Within the last century, the bus has gone from a seaside novelty to become an essential element of modern life. Buses have also crept into our nation’s culture through sayings and songs. I hope to highlight some geographical, economic, social and cultural links.

10.00-10.45  **Peter Brears** (Freelance food historian)

***Traditional food in the North-East of England***

A rare chance to not only hear about but also sample some of the breads and other foods traditionally cooked for north-eastern calendar customs and rites-of-passage ceremonies.

*10.45-11.15 Coffee at Newcastle Lit & Phil.*

11.15-12.00  **Neil Lanham** ([www.traditionsofsuffolk.com](http://www.traditionsofsuffolk.com/))

1***The oral mindset, language and inherited skill of the natural storyteller***

Stories, in their natural setting, are vitally important to human understanding because they are the tools of wisdom. They are metaphorical because the situation in hand triggers off a story of parallel understanding from the subconscious brain that in its delivered expression passes measurement that puts a judgement from the past on the one in hand. They could be brought out for entertainment but their subconscious purpose of truth through wisdom is still paramount. Stories have been individually collected for many years by orally minded people and stored in the subconscious brain. Being ‘collected’, as far as we are concerned here, however, is not the same at all as the literate meaning where they have been taken from their natural setting in the oral society that produced and nurtured them, and used them for their intended purpose, to be transcribed into ‘visible’ alphabetic code for relaying in written society for another purpose. This paper proposes not to look at visible items – the written stories, but, take a holistic view of the invisibles - the intangible understandings of the people and their society that go to produce the stories, the language and mindset of the teller and inherited technique in delivery. Personal recordings of natural storytellers from East Anglia will be used as typical.

12.00-12.45  **Group discussion: *Folk Life at fifty: reviewing the first half century of the Society for Folk Life Studies***

The years 2011 and 2013 mark the fiftieth anniversaries of the founding of the Society and the first publication of our journal, Folk Life. This discussion aims to provide us with an opportunity to reflect on the impact of the Society over the last half century and assess its future role.

12.45-13.30  *Lunch at the Newcastle Lit & Phil.*

14.00-17.30  **Coach excursion to the University of Newcastle’s experimental farm at Cockle Park** *[Grid Ref: NZ 201912] (Welcomed by David Watson, Farm Manager)*

Cockle Park farm is a 262ha mixed farm situated about 18 miles north of Newcastle and is owned by the University. The farm is let to the School of Agriculture, Food & Rural Development as a tenant farming unit. The farm has been part of the facilities of the university since 1896 and was one of the first experimental farms to be established in the country. It is home to the world's oldest continuous grazing and hay cutting experiment on the Palace Leas Meadow. The original farm buildings include [Cockle Park Tower](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/afrd/business/cockle/cockle.htm) which is a scheduled ancient monument.

\*\* Waterproof clothing and footwear advisable \*\*

*19.30-21.00***“At home” with the President**

*Our President, Christine Stevens and her partner Gareth Jenkins invite you to their home for an evening of food and socialising.*

\*\* Directions and arrangements for transport will be distributed during the conference\*\*

**Sunday, 11th September**

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

*09.20 Assemble at Newcastle Lit & Phil*

9.30-10.15  **Christine Stevens***Presidential Address*

***Personal links between landlord and tenant on a Welsh estate: an absentee landlord's influence on the social life of an estate village in the 19th century***

10.15-11.15  **Annual General Meeting** **of the Society for Folk Life Studies.**

*11.15-11.45  Coffee*

11.45-12.30  **Richard Bebb** (Honorary Research Fellow, Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales)

***The interaction of rural joinery and urban cabinet-making in 18th and 19th century Wales.***

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Wales moved from being primarily an agricultural society to being primarily an industrial society, with a majority of the population living in industrial towns and villages. In time, even those areas which remained rural replaced their locally-produced goods with those manufactured at a distance. But it was not a simple progression, with newer and more fashionable ideas ousting traditional and outmoded articles, indeed ousting a traditional and outmoded way of life. It was a complex cultural process, which I want to look at through the way the principal domestic spaces were furnished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

12.30-13.00  **Steph Mastoris** (Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales)

***Mapping contrasting landscapes in 17th century England: William Senior’s estate surveys for the first Duke of Newcastle.***

Between 1629 and 1640 William Cavendish, first Duke of Newcastle, commissioned detailed written and mapped surveys of his extensive estates located in Northumberland and five other counties. The results of this work survive today as the privately-owned Welbeck Atlas, which contains over 80 detailed maps. These illustrate well the great variety of landscapes in north-eastern and midland England just before the Civil War.

13.00-13.15  **Brian Loughbrough** (Former president, SFLS)

***Concluding remarks.***

*13.15  Lunch at Newcastle Lit & Phil.*

*End of conference*

14.30  **Optional, post-conference excursion** to Beamish, The Living Museum of the North, *(Welcomed by Seb Littlewood\*\**

*Delegates to arrange their own transport (please consider car sharing) \**(Beamish, The Living Museum of the North, Stanley, County Durham DH9 0RG, Tel: 0191 370 4000). For directions see: [http://www.beamish.org.uk](http://www.beamish.org.uk/)