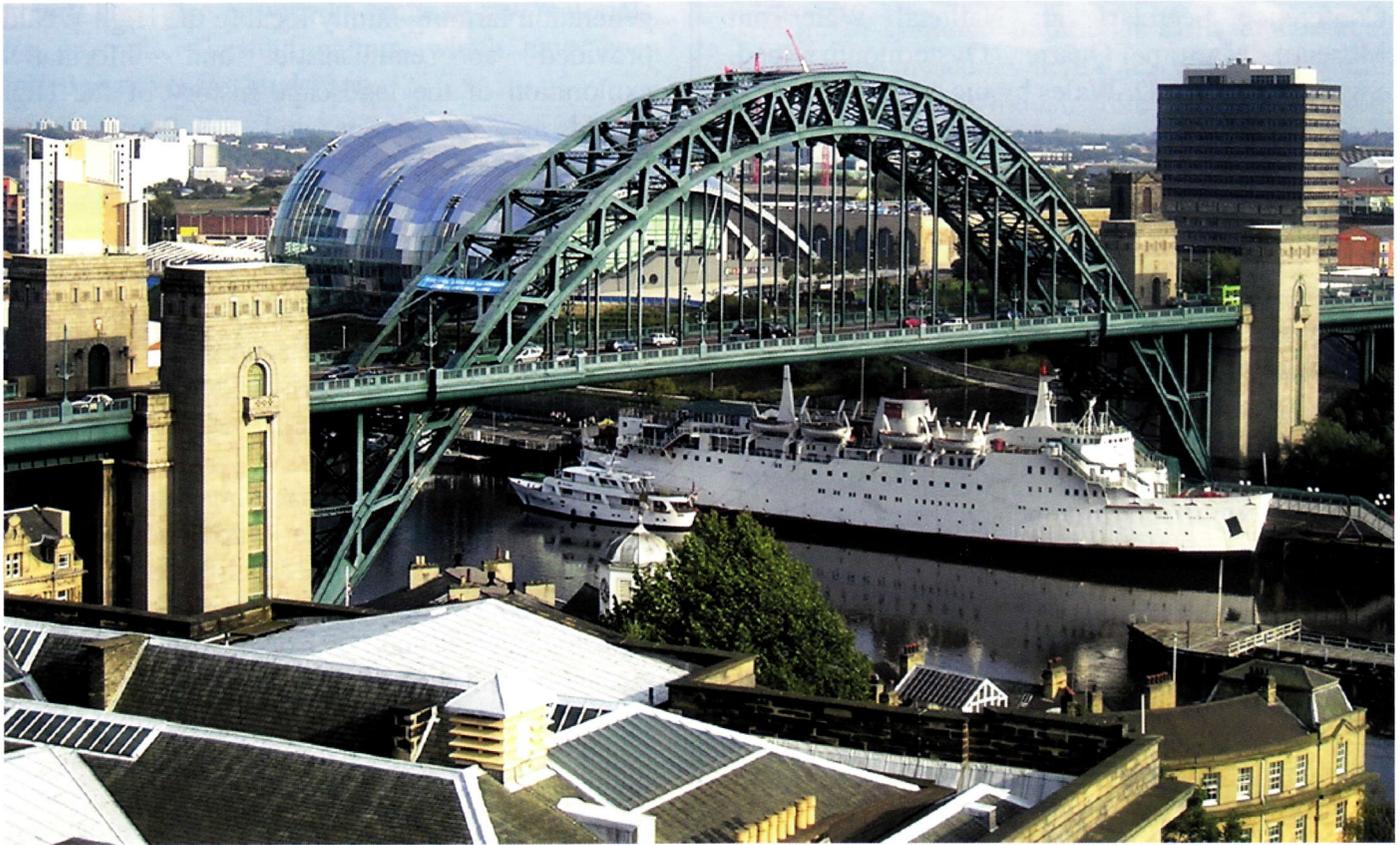


folk life NEWSLETTER

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The Annual Conference for 2011 Newcastle 8th - 11th September

At the end of each President's three-year term of office it is a tradition that the Society holds its conference on his or her home "patch". With this in mind, Christine Stevens has chosen the north-east of England as the location for her last conference as President.

The conference will be based in Newcastle upon Tyne, a dynamic city at the centre of a region that is varied geographically and possessing a distinct cultural identity. This identity has developed from an early fusion of heavy industry and maritime trade with agriculture and reflects the mosaic of peoples who have made the area their home. The key theme of the conference will be the links and interfaces that develop between communities, regions and countries. How do the traces of everyday life in the

past become embedded in the present? What is the role of the institutions that are charged with transmitting this heritage?

As usual, in addition to an opportunity to learn about and experience the distinctive culture of the Newcastle region, we hope also to have contributions on this theme from the rest of the British Isles and beyond. Please contact the conference secretary if you wish to offer a paper. (steph.mastoris@museumwales.ac.uk)

The conference will be held within the home of the Newcastle Literary & Philosophical Society. This was founded in 1793 and its present home (opened in 1825) houses the largest independent library outside London. A tour of the Lit & Phil building has been offered by our hosts.

The cost of attending this year's conference will be in the region of £390 including accommodation and £190 for those wishing to book their own accommodation. There are a range of hotels and

guest houses available within Newcastle. Prompt booking is advised as Newcastle hotels fill up quickly, especially at the weekends!

If you wish to attend this year's conference, please complete the enclosed booking form and send it, with a non-returnable deposit of £75, to the Conference Secretary at: National Waterfront Museum, Maritime Quarter, Oystermouth Road, Swansea, SA1 3RD, Wales by the end of May.

A free student place at the 2011 conference

This year the Society is offering a free place at its annual conference to a student in full-time education. All fees and the cost of bookable meals will be included, but the person attending will have to pay for his or her own travel. To be considered for this opportunity, a person must not have attended the annual conference before. A short review of the conference will be required from the successful applicant.

Applications for this free place should be made to the Conference Secretary, Steph Mastoris (steph.mastoris@museumwales.ac.uk), by the end of April.

2012 Conference

The Society's annual conference in 2012 will be held in Manchester between Thursday 13th and Sunday 16th September. (Please note that at the time of going to press all details are still to be confirmed.)

Further details will be available by mid 2012. Please contact the Conference Secretary, Steph Mastoris (steph.mastoris@museumwales.ac.uk) if you would like to contribute a paper at this conference.

Conference 2010

Matt Pitts

An introduction to the Sussex Weald

Matt Pitts of High Weald Area of Outstanding Beauty (www.highweald.org), and a third generation farming family local to the High Weald, provided an enthusiastic and informative exploration of the landscape history of the High Weald area of Sussex and the South-east of England. This was to provide an excellent context for the conference and its setting at West Dean.

The High Weald is a landscape characterized by high coppiced woodland (with charcoal hearths and man-made ponds) and large scale agricultural lands dominated by arable and pasture, set over a series of ridges that run east to west.

The geology of the area has played an important part in shaping how the landscape has been exploited by man since the Mesolithic period. It is a faulted area with layers of Purbeck limestone, sandstones, clays and rich iron deposits which were pushed up and then gradually eroded at the end of the last Ice Age. This led to the formation of several large ridges running over the land and lots of smaller ridges running across them. This geology has been widely exploited over the centuries. For example, the Romans left a large number of ironwork sites in the gills or deeply incised valley, and also evidence of an iron industry. Charcoal clamps or hearths and ponds in the woodlands also reveal the wide evidence of this activity. More recently, in the last one to two hundred years, extraction at ironwork sites has continued to be undertaken on a significant scale. At one site alone there is evidence that around thirty thousand tons of iron had been removed.

Whilst industry has been an important use of the landscape, so too has settlement and agriculture. The Weald has been an important area for these activities from the Mesolithic period, with significant changes taking place in the Medieval Period. There is widespread evidence of farms and routes into them, including sunken trails on slopes, some of which have survived as bridleways and footpaths. This concentrated activity has led the Weald to have the highest concentration of Medieval farm buildings in Europe, and to a distinct dispersed settlement pattern, with a significant number of villages on ridge tops. Some of the best

preserved grasslands are also to be found in this area.

Woodlands have played a very important part in the history of this landscape. Indeed, the name "Weald" is derived from the German "Val", a wooded landscape. They have been used for a variety of uses. Their use in industry, for ironmaking has been noted. They also provided a range of raw materials, for example, chestnut palings which have been rolled out over the landscape.

Matt summed up his lecture with the words of Graham Fairclough of English Heritage: 'a "good landscape" is an interesting one, in which history remains "legible" so that the marks left by the work and lives of hundreds of generations of our predecessors can still be recognized'. Matt clearly showed that these words could have been written specifically to describe the landscape of the High Weald.

Heather Holmes

On our first morning the Society's President, Christine Stevens opened proceedings by welcoming everyone to the 2010 Conference.

Reviews of the Conference Papers

Richard Harris gave a stimulating and thought-provoking presentation about the origins of the Weald & Downland Museum and the philosophy that has guided it, particularly with regard to the presentation of its reconstructed buildings.

He started with a masterly summary of the history and development of the open air museum concept, tracing origins to the Great Exhibitions of the mid-19th century, via the great Swedish ethnographer, Hazelius, who established Skansen in 1900 with the aim of bringing history to life, to the museums established in the UK in the 20th century. Motives for founding open air museums varied. Some were established purely to record regional buildings from an area; others, such as Colonial Williamsburg, were a political statement. Yet others attempt the complete recreation of a past way of life. The all replica Plymouth Plantation tries to recreate the speech of the time and presents only through the 17th century. In Richard's view this is a 'silly game' and is not a valid method of interpretation.

In England the main thrust for the creation of open air museums came in the 1970s when Ironbridge, Avoncroft and others were founded, including the Weald & Downland. Roy Armstrong, the founder of the museum, realised that timber buildings were being destroyed in large numbers after the war. Edward James of West Dean established a craft college to continue traditional skills and offered land for the museum where it has developed within the landscape, but hidden from West Dean itself. Some of the original parkland trees still exist and the buildings have been carefully sited to enhance, not detract from, that landscape.

Richard's association with the museum started in 1976 and he has been closely associated with all the building reconstructions since then. Winkhurst cottage was the first to be rebuilt. Bayleaf medieval farmhouse was a turning point where systematic dismantling enabled the building to be thoroughly understood.

The Year of Food and Farming in 1989 was the stimulus for a new approach to the interpretation of the Bayleaf farmhouse. It is now furnished with kitchen equipment and wall hangings and is used for demonstrations to recreate, as authentically as possible, life in the farmhouse in the 15th century. Authenticity is vital to everything the museum does. A historic clothing project is underway to make replica clothing for demonstrators to wear. This involves volunteers, who are the key to the success of the whole museum. There is constant activity at the museum which now delivers 3,000 hours of adult learning per year, in addition to 20,000 school visits. All tutors are 'top flight' specialists; the museum is a knowledge-based institution.

The site now has 45 buildings and 10,000 objects, largely stored in the 'gridshell' building. From a deficit on its budget 10 years ago there is now a £1m reserve and major plans for relocating the entrance and car park. As Richard prepares to retire it is clear that he is leaving the museum in good health, and well placed to face the challenges of the future.

Catherine Wilson

Jonathan Roper
The strange eventful history of
Sussex spelling



Jonathan began this fascinating exploration of the representation of the spoken word by the written in the context of Sussex dialect, by pointing out that the two keys to the issue are an awareness of local background and an appreciation of precisely why spelling is an interesting (and potentially controversial) issue. This led first to a discussion on the ways in which spelling and the wider use of language relate to and may reflect identity. Historical and contemporary examples of ways in which terms initially intended as derogatory have been embraced by those so defined, turning insults (including their ‘mis-spellings’) into badges of honour, were given to illustrate this. The relationship between society more generally and spelling was also considered, for example through forms employed early in the nineteenth century by Webster, whose *Dictionary*, Jonathan argued, is effectively a declaration of independent American linguistic identity expressed through distinctive spellings (e.g. ‘color’ instead of ‘colour’, ‘theater’ instead of ‘theatre’ etc.) reflecting the link between language and identity.

Summaries of some linguistic definitions helped to map out the terrain and Jonathan distinguished between standard languages (the spellings of which

are established at an early stage, e.g. Standard French or Standard English), minority languages (in which spelling and other, conventions can relate to the emphasis of difference to heighten linguistic and imply other differences in identity, e.g. Breton or Welsh), ‘strong varieties’ of majority languages (which again can often use distinctive spellings to express dialect, e.g. Scots) and ‘collateral varieties’ (such as Picard French or Sussex English). The very closeness (at a certain distance) of collateral varieties to Standard languages often means that the former come to be dismissed as incorrect versions of the latter. Collateral varieties remain little researched or documented, even though their constituencies may be just as large, or larger, than those of strong varieties, minority languages or even standard languages.

Within this framework, Jonathan turned to the specific question of spelling in Sussex. Handwritten sources include churchwardens’ records and letters to landlords. While now few in number, threatening letters written during the ‘Captain Swing’ campaign of the 1830s provide one fascinating source. At about this time, consciousness of local speech begins to emerge and is specifically referred to as ‘Sussex dialect’ in the novel, *The Parish Clerk*, published in 1841. No doubt this is partly to do with the general recognition of county-based dialects in this period, and here may specifically be an attempt to differentiate Sussex from Kent. A parallel consciousness of distinctive dialect was registered even earlier in Cumberland, in part as a reaction to the emergence of Scots. Several publications providing evidence of Sussex dialect from this period were cited, including Richard Lower’s *Tom Cladpole’s Journey to Lunnon*, first published in 1830, the popularity of which is shown by reprints in London and elsewhere. This is written in comic verse, and includes some mild social criticism. Describing itself as ‘written in PURE SUSSEX DOGGEREL’, it reflects a changing Sussex – a region relatively isolated till lately now being opened up to outsiders with the arrival of the railway and the developing awareness of the attractions of the coast. This (like other similar publications of the time) uses a distinctive form of spelling, but one not difficult to read.

In addition to these popular publications, *The Song of Solomon* was transposed into Sussex dialect by Mark Antony Lower, as part of a philological study initiated by the Anglophile Prince Louis Lucien

Bonaparte to facilitate the study of dialect by comparing variants of the same text. Scholarly activity was also devoted to the emerging issue of regional identity as reflected in the spoken word. There were, however, differences of opinion between writers, some preferring to use standard spellings, as attempts to convey the precise nature of sounds would need use of symbols that made the text too difficult to read. There was also an evident conflict of opinion within the mind of the compiler of the *Dictionary of the Sussex Dialect*: he wavered between thinking of the local dialect as a primarily comic medium and as an ancient repository of Saxon words. Dictionaries of this sort influenced, and to a degree, 'standardised' the spelling of dialect, and some authors from outside regional communities began to use these to add colour to novels. At the same time, Londoners including members of the Bloomsbury Set were discovering Sussex as an attractive place to live, and both insiders and outsiders were using dialect spelling in their writing. Jonathan referred to several of these works, including the best known example, the parody *Cold Comfort Farm* (which he pointed out features a geographically implausible dialectese made of elements from here, there and anywhere).

Many of the difficulties of representing non standard forms of English in the written word relate to the Latin alphabet, which Jonathan pointed out was not intended for the task. He explored a range of solutions employed by writers seeking to provide an accurate expression of sound without obscuring the meaning of their work. These included diacritics and digraphs. Some of these devices were used more consistently than others representing Sussex speech during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He noted that while some sounds effectively become symbolic of a certain form of regional speech, others, equally valid, can be totally overlooked. He addressed the question of who reads dialect writing, reflecting that as the spelling of Standard English is not phonetic, it is very difficult to reflect pronunciation precisely through English spelling conventions. An overuse of additional

symbols meant that, ironically, Standard English was easier for 'locals' to read.

Finally, Jonathan considered the role of the 'king of the dropped consonant' (poet laureate Rudyard Kipling) in representing Sussex spelling. The appeal of Kipling's writing provided the reader with strong motivation for the reader to follow the respelt words. Jonathan concluded by pointing out that the key to Kipling's success with Sussex dialect is an instance of 'less is more'. Kipling used simple, easily recognised forms, and he wrote for an international audience rather than directing himself at locals and insiders. This important episode in the eventful history outlined by Jonathan emphasised the complex relationship between language and identity in both the local and the broadest of spheres.

Linda-May Ballard

Roy Brigden
Collecting 20th Century Rural Culture
– a project update

This project, running at the Museum of English Rural Life, as Roy explained, is now about half way through. Funded via the Heritage Lottery Fund's *Collecting Cultures* initiative, its purpose is to purchase additional material for collections that illustrate the wider role of the countryside in society over the course of the last century. Of the £95k contributed by HLF, roughly half has been spent by the Museum of English Rural Life on purchases, the balance being used to fund exhibitions, events and publications.

The collecting criteria adopted ensures that material collected will appeal to urban and rural audiences alike, with around £5k allocated to each decade. It was noted that the project had an experimental nature, enabling those involved to research the market, while ensuring that acquisitions sat comfortably alongside existing collections. The outcomes were fascinating. Posters – for example,

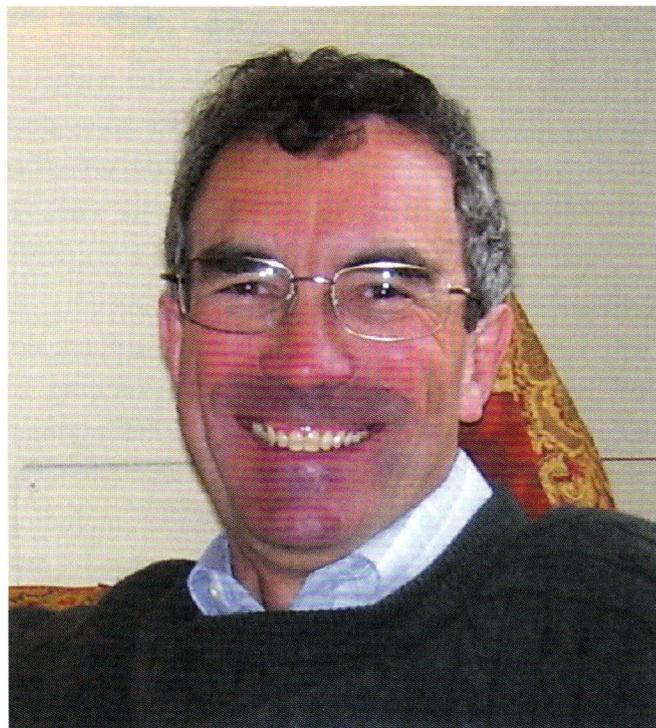
those produced by the Southern Railway to promote organised summer rambles – marketed the countryside as a place of recreation and leisure. Music and its impact on the countryside, could be considered as part of the promotion of the renowned Isle of Wight pop festivals of the late 1960's, whilst protest was represented by posters promoting the first anniversary of the Womens' Peace Camp at Greenham Common in 1982.

Suburbia, that “grey area” between town and countryside, was represented by the gabled primness of a Triang doll's house from the 1930s. A decade later the Land Rover had appeared, initially no more than a farmer's utilitarian workhorse. Twenty years or so down the line, the Corgi Pony Club model of a long-wheelbase Land Rover and horsebox encapsulated the transition from workhorse to fashionable middle class lifestyle. A Barbour Border jacket from the 1980s similarly denoted a crossover from what had been, originally, workwear supplied to fishermen in north-east England, to what is still considered by some to be the height of urban chic.

On the other hand, a “Farmer Palmer” cartoon from the Viz magazine indicated the crude and somewhat negative stereotypes associated with the countryside, contrasting vividly with Pop and Ma Larkin costumes from “The Darling Buds of May” and their nostalgic portrayal of the countryside. But relationships with the land can also be stark and sour, testified by the battered clothing worn by Jim Hindle, one of the treetop protesters opposing the construction of the Newbury by-pass

Dafydd Roberts

David Viner Profit or Loss?: Researching agricultural and rural life collections in the footsteps of J. Geraint Jenkins



David Viner's talk combined a detailed and comprehensive description of his research work on carts and wagons in the UK with discussion of the external influences and motivations involved and the envisaged outcomes. It was an update on the work done so far towards a national register of vehicles, which in turn should lead to the development of a distributed national collection. However, this outcome has rarely been the sole reason for surveys and studies to be initiated, and David described the influences and pressures which have often been involved, such as reviewing storage. In the difficult economic circumstances such external issues may well become more prominent. But it was emphasised that it would be wrong to give the impression that motivations other than pure research are not somehow to be welcomed.

Geraint Jenkins's first national survey, over fifty years ago, was acknowledged and praised as the foundation of the register. Although necessary to review the present state of the 127 vehicles identified by Jenkins as the core, the new surveys add substantially to the number of vehicles and the corpus of knowledge.

Significant surveys have included the Devon vehicles collection in *Tiverton*; the Gloucestershire and south midlands collection at *Northleach*; and the *Weald & Downland* collection, of which a core collection of 25 was identified, allowing for rationalisation and disposals. As an adviser to the National Trust, a detailed survey has been completed at Llanerchaeron in Ceredigion, part of continuing attempts to make relevant and accessible the large Geler Jones Collection. Entries for the register are now over twice the original Jenkins core figure, and it is estimated that they could exceed at least 300 wagons and perhaps the same number of carts.

Only one commissioned project, at MEAL (Museum of East Anglian Life) at Stowmarket, could be described as solely aimed at improving collection knowledge. Other motivations and influences are often the impetus, such as pressure to reduce storage capacity as part of an overall upgrading of reserve collections at Somerset; wholesale relocation of stores; and even closure, as at Manor Farm Museum, Cogges. Whatever the motivations, survey work should always seek to enhance the overall knowledge of objects in collections.

A much-needed UK wide national register will be welcomed by the many curators, like myself who have inherited large agricultural vehicles, providing a contemporary and substantially enhanced source of information, to aid assessment of significance and planning for the future.

Gareth Beech.

Hilary McGowan **Rural-life museums in the UK – a decade of development?**

This presentation was intended to create a convivial atmosphere for a wide-ranging discussion and it certainly succeeded. Ten years after Rob Shorland-Ball's *Farming, Countryside and Museums* report that helped give rise to the Rural Museums Network (RMN), Hilary has been commissioned to make a critical review of progress. This task includes investigating what the real impact of the Heritage Lottery Fund has been and what organizations such as 'Folk Life' have to gain from such relationships.

The green movement and the portrayal of food in museum contexts brought up many questions: Can they help drive museum projects? Are programmes such as the Education Project 2000 or the RMN "Turning Green" project 2007 becoming models? Do all such sources provide quality working materials? There was enthusiastic agreement over the potential of presenting food in historical buildings, as in the Weald & Downland, and utilizing food history to address present-day issues such as processing – not always that well handled by museums. Museums are ideally placed to serve as a bridge between agriculture and industrial cultures, too often perceived wrongly as totally separated. This fits well into the wider issue of how to present the basic interpretation of landscape and engage with the public more generally.

It is vital to aim at a clear definition of a museum's remit and open up to more collaborative partnership projects. Particular financing or administration problems are regularly brought up – for example, Cogges Farm (see 2010 Newsletter) or the Church Farm Museum. How can museums pursue their educational objectives and still compete effectively among the many entertainment offerings, in the knowledge that some of the public clearly seek to avoid a "bazaar" atmosphere and are genuinely interested in the collections?

There was deep concern that curatorial skills will not be sufficiently protected and transmitted, although access to the Distributed National Collection and the efficiency of networking may help fill some of these needs. Members stressed the ongoing duty of museums to archive and publish, linking this to outreach efforts that mobilize the community and its histories, which must be the driving force behind a museums' sense of place. This could include more collaboration between educational institutions and museums and encourage a more pro-active approach on the part of visitors. Physical deterioration of collections and buildings is equally worrisome, and multimedia equipment is a prime example. At Saint Fagan's, visitors are now using their cell phones to read barcodes on buildings to download information, a dynamic interaction that also saves the museum from investing in fleeting equipment.

Hilary will include this vibrant discussion in her forthcoming work and called upon all present to continue contributing.

Cozette Griffin Kremer

Urszula Siekacz
**Review of 'Agriculture and the
Countryside in the 1950s Propaganda
Poster of Central and Eastern Europe'**



The talk given by Urszula Siekacz looked at a temporary exhibition "*Crops for the State!*" which was exhibited in 2006 at the National Museum of Agriculture and Food Industry in Szreniawa, Poland. The research for this exhibition was carried out by Urszula and her colleague Hanna Ignatowicz. Initially the brief was to look at Polish propaganda posters from the 1950s. This was later broadened to include posters from many other European countries. This style of propaganda poster is generally known as Socialist Realism, though it is a highly stylised and idealised version of reality.

In general posters seek to portray a simple positive message for promotional purposes. The socialist state utilised this straightforward device to encourage people to buy into a common ideology. Posters provided a cheap way to reach a wide audience with a visual message that could be easily understood, even by illiterate citizens.

An impressive list of museums contributed to this exhibition which brought together collections from Prague, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine and Slovenia. The exhibition of posters was set up in a restored agricultural building which now serves as a gallery of the National Museum of Agriculture and Food Industry in Szreniawa. The centrepiece of the display was a large 1950s Ursus tractor -

representations of this make of tractor appeared in a number of the posters.

The themes included; Collective farms and an alliance of workers and peasants. The Estonian poster '*Collective farming is a powerful basis for socialist agriculture*' shows men and women working together bringing in the harvest for the collective good, using labour-saving machinery such as lorries and tractors to help ease their burden.

A poster from Poland- '*An alliance of workers and peasants- the source of power of People's Poland...*' contrasts agricultural male workers in flat caps and shirt sleeves with industrial workers in blue boiler suits and carrying hammers. Many posters encourage working together between agriculture and industry.

'*We build a happy and cultural life*' poster from the Ukraine shows a well-groomed man beside his homely wife with plaited hair and their healthy son viewing an illustration of a utopian village. Common imagery includes: Men rolling up their sleeves and getting on with the work whilst women in traditional peasant costume help with the work carrying sheaves of corn to represent a good harvest and perhaps fertility?

One poster celebrates a tractor driver – '*The working class of the Prague Province*' – *follow the example of comrade Vaclav Krbec, a tractor operator from Lochovice, and the best worker of his trade in the country.* There was the promise of honour and fame for the best workers of agriculture. Later posters encouraged girls to learn to drive tractors. A poster from Warsaw '*We will quickly supply grain to the State*' depicts happy farm workers delivering their produce in a trailer hauled by an Ursus tractor. The trailer is decorated with flowers as if it is Harvest Thanksgiving. An almost identical poster from Prague was also shown.

Another poster by the celebrated Hungarian artist György Pál shows a happy family pointing to some productivity statistics whilst proudly displaying a bicycle, a new pair of black leather boots and a bakelite wireless, with a woman herding cows in the background (there is always work to be done). The

range of consumer goods offered in a poster for the co-operative store included gramophones, irons and thermos flasks. Another poster shows a man and his wife bringing home a vacuum cleaner from a co-operative fair.

There were posters encouraging people to read more books and to educate themselves through their local library. Posters also warned people not to trust the rich. In the Ukraine and the Czech Republic posters were even used to encourage people to vote at election time.

Urszula recounted some of the comments of visitors to the exhibition. She said the posters were enjoyed by all who saw them. Younger people were interested to learn about the world of their parents and grandparents whilst older people enjoyed seeing the images again. Most older people also expressed the opinion that they would not wish to go back to those times.

The exhibition brings together a wide variety of representational artwork from many countries and is a must-see for anyone with an interest in art and design, as well as being an interesting introduction to the politics and social history of an era.

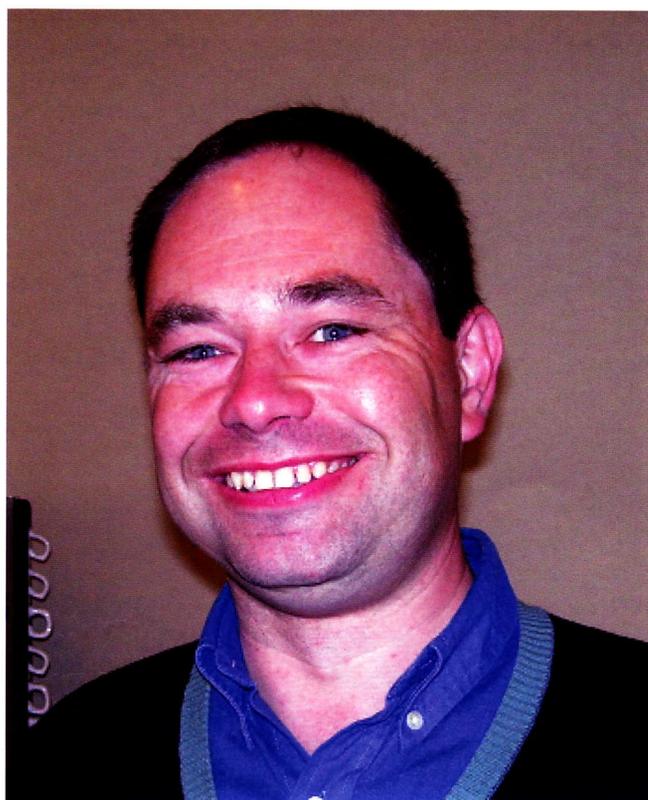
'A rich harvest to People's Poland' shows two rosy-cheeked girls carrying in a bountiful harvest which perhaps sums up the work of Urszula Siekacz & Hanna Ignatowicz of the National Museum of Agriculture and Food Industry in Szreniawa. With this exhibition, book and talk, they have produced a very rich harvest for us all to enjoy.

"Crops for the State!" will be available as a travelling exhibition of reprints from 2011.

We have no hesitation in recommending it to any museum. A substantial book compliments the exhibition and it was particularly pleasing to hear that the museum funded the book and was selling it to the public at slightly below the cost of printing to ensure that the research work was accessible to the widest possibly audience.

Debra Wenlock and Mark Kennedy.

Gareth Beech **To the present and further** **into the past**



Gareth Beech's presentation was subtitled a 'new interpretation of agriculture and rural life at St Fagans: National History Museum' where he is Curator of Rural Life in the Social and Cultural History Department, with responsibility for agricultural history, rural crafts and rural transport.

Gareth is also Honorary Secretary of the Rural Museums Network, an indication of his outreach in that field. He acknowledged the key role which the Society has long played in promoting rural life themes in museums, not least through definitive papers published in *Folk Life* and in the conference theme of interpreting agriculture and rural life.

The history and significance of St Fagans is well understood and it remains a much-loved visitor attraction offering a 'sense of place' to many in and beyond Wales. The museum has evolved substantially since its opening in 1948, but Gareth was able to show clearly how limitations and constraints (all of them very familiar to his audience) have created real pressure on keeping the museum's work relevant to today's audiences (another equally familiar point).

The issue of relevance has been well aired (indeed it is of necessity ever-present within RMN), and was

best tackled, conveniently from a Welsh perspective, by John Williams Davis in 'Museums and Agriculture: The Challenge of Relevance' a conference paper given to the Association of European Open Air Museums (see www.ceom.org) in 2002. Not, alas, I think more widely published anywhere?

It is the same JWD who as Director of Collections & Research for National Museum Wales (NMW) now leads the St Fagans re-development project. Amongst its other values and vision this will 'reinforce St. Fagans' position as the home of Welsh history', achieved not least by integrating the national collections of archaeology and history.

Challenging, certainly and the core of Gareth's presentation, in which he showed the careful and precise approach required to lay the groundwork. A Collections Care and Access Project across NMW and worth £4.3 million of Welsh Assembly funding has allowed key (and long-awaited) storage improvements together with some 'pragmatic and informed' rationalisation.

Like others elsewhere, Gareth and colleagues struggle with turning Distributed National Collection potential, of which St Fagans by definition has plenty, into a workable reality, whilst also addressing the well-known challenge of collecting, or at least recording, more modern farming methods since those represented by the bulk of objects in the collections.

Examples included animal health items from the 1970s and 80s, representing the huge shift towards treatment by farmers rather than the veterinary profession. A current project is the addition of an associated barn from Kennixton on the Gower, where the main farmhouse, dating from 1610, was re-erected at St Fagans as long ago as 1955. Re-uniting the farmstead provides an opportunity for a more coherent interpretation.

In his overarching review, Gareth provided numerous other project examples, all working towards the bigger goal, which served to show how St Fagans in particular and NMW as a whole, is facing up to its future. A £20m funding call may be asking a lot under present circumstances, but the vision is in place and the canvas remains a huge one.

David Viner



Patricia O'Hare and Toddy Doyle Muckross Traditional Farms 'Vision, Reality and Future Development'

Patricia (researcher & education officer) introduced us to this beautiful Victorian house and estate with a potted history.

The estate on the shores of Muckross Lake, Killarney was built for Henry Herbert and his wife, the watercolourist, Mary in 1843. In 1933 it became Ireland's first national park and thirty one years later it opened as a folk museum. Soon a larger project was envisioned - an open air museum. Its aim was to create a 'time capsule', to capture rural life before electrification and mechanism in Ireland.

The vision: phase one would consist of a large farm, visitors centre and playground. Phase two was dependant on the financial success of phase one! The reality: building work started in 1991 and the development was completed in one phase not two.

The farm is a working farm so it *really* does follow the yearly calendar, responding to the needs of the season and the weather.

The buildings represent various areas around Ireland and include a traditional three-roomed

thatched cottage, a farmer's two-roomed dwelling, typical of the east part of Ireland, (consequently it has no thatch) and a labourer's cottage. The houses were placed in appropriate surroundings, all of which had to be created. To represent these houses as authentically as possible research was undertaken with families who had dwelt in similar properties.

The houses are decorated with artefacts donated to Muckross house which have been in storage for many years. A huge amount of work is done behind the scenes to create the illusion that folk are stepping back into the 1930s, but it is the front-of-house staff that make the illusion possible.

The events programme is a key part of the Muckross farm experience. Each May a five day event is held for primary school children known as the Féile. They enjoy a range of activities such as carpentry, bread-making, rope-making etc.

In the mid 1980s it was felt the museum needed to raise its profile, so Toddy was brought in from a commercial farming background. At the time there was no public profile, no transport available, no shop. As the site has developed so too have the staff, nearly 80% of whom have been with Muckross since the 1980s. This, of course, is now a challenge as the average age is 57. Most of the staff are from a rural background & their interaction is vital for success.

Target audiences have changed over the years. Initially coach travellers were the desired audience. Later attention was on the family market during the season and retired folk off-season. This proved very successful.

Managing visitor expectations can be challenging because, as people have moved further away from working with the natural cycles of the season, visitors expect all activities to be occurring every day of the year and not least, milking to be on-going!

As with many museums set in a particular period future developments have to acknowledge that there are no more people with first hand memories of traditional farms. To ensure Muckross' longevity there is a need to invest in staff and the collections, in training and enhance the visitor attraction by adding more interactives.

It is now the premier visitor attraction in Ireland.

Elaine M Edwards

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



The period between 1850 and 1914 saw considerable rural and agricultural change in Scotland. Ancient and primitive looking implements and machines used by Scottish farmers were totally modernised. The making of these products were undertaken by a wide variety of businesses ranging from heavy engineering firms to the local blacksmith. By using data compiled in her research Heather was able to demonstrate how these implement makers had grown from 44 in 1870 to 110 in 1913. Most of these manufacturers, as in England, were located in the country where demand for the product was at its highest.

By searching through various business records, directories, catalogues of national, regional and local shows, using show reports and agricultural newspapers Heather succeeded in analysing their work and the trades they undertook and was able to piece together the activities of the various manufactures. Interestingly, it was found that the Royal Highland Show had the largest display of implements and machines in Scotland. The technological advances in the production of the implements and machines meant that production became more complex leading to more opportunities at home and abroad.

She was able to trace the participation of family members in the establishments, development and subsequent expansion of their businesses. With the growth in the industry, individual businesses were able to sustain higher levels of family employment as seen from the 1840s onwards. As the industry expanded she was able to explore further changes in the geographical areas where the agricultural implement makers were located. By continuously improving their products they were able to be at the forefront of technology change. Their reputation for quality and innovation of their implements and machines stood them in good stead not only locally and nationally but also internationally as previously mentioned.

Up until now there have been few studies on the Scottish agricultural implement makers and these have tended to focus on specific businesses. However, Heather's meticulous research work will not only be referred to by agricultural workers but by researchers alike.

Dylan Jones

**Cozette Griffen Kremer
Working with oxen in France and
beyond: Museums as crossroads**



Cozette always brings her own form of lateral thinking to bear on matters of her interest, in this case the role of museums in preserving traditional breeds of cattle and the associated crafts and skills.

The presentation began with an overview of the breeds of French cattle and the research that has been done into their history. A survey was made in 2009 by Laurent Avon of animals at work in France, region by region. Compared with a similar survey done in 1929, it is obvious that the use of working animals has disappeared completely from some regions, along with the know-how and equipment related to it. On the other hand, some traditional regional breeds of cattle, such as Aubrac and Salers, have actually become more widespread due to more sophisticated consumer demands. The Nantaise breed has been saved due to a resistance to productivisation and an act of local identity - there is even a Nantaise cow festival every two years.

In recent years, a group of people from different backgrounds in France had become interested in animal traction, bringing together information from historical sources and museum artefacts as well as hands-on experience in animal handling. There was an increased interest in oxdriving songs and driving routes. Following the TAWS (World Association for Transport Animals Welfare and Studies) meeting in the UK in 2004, there had been a meeting in Alsace in 2006 of interested parties. The greatest challenge is sustaining and preserving the skills of elderly experts and encouraging them to pass on their skills and knowledge to others.

Nowadays activities which used to be considered work have become sporting activities. Cattle fairs have now been reinvented as tourist attractions. But how do we preserve the know-how and local knowledge of making head yokes, for example? How do we transmit the understanding that rural variation is as much related to function and knowledge of the characteristics of breed as it is to decorative purposes?

At present, the network of people engaged with this issue is informal, mobile and user-guided, without central oversight. Cozette queried what the role of museums should be, citing Rhineland Open Air Museum and Ecomusee d'Alsace as positive examples. She felt that Museums could be a node, a catalyst, but that the outlook was bleak.

Beth Thomas

Members' Papers

Anne Dyer

Change in the 20th century: Westhope, Shropshire

Anne's fascinating and informative talk painted a vivid picture of this valley 3 ½ miles from Craven Arms which has been her home and livelihood for many years.

Anne detailed for us seemingly immense changes with the matter-of-fact dry humour of someone who takes it all in her stride: the arrival of electricity, mains water and "new ideas". It was these "new ideas" that nearly did for farming in the valley with one tenant farmer's son putting his agricultural college learning into practice and leeching the fertility from his fields as a consequence. It was calculated that his subsequent efforts to "go organic" would take 30 years to come to fruition. A neighbour who had not abandoned the traditional methods took only three.

Anne's talk was a salutary reminder that listening to the land and its lore remains key to sustaining agriculture and local life. Electricity pylons erected on Thunder hill will inevitably be struck by lightning; land deemed unproductive is, in fact, very productive for wildlife as a SSSI.

The diversification of the working of the valley is a real lesson that small changes can produce big outcomes. From moving into egg production in the 1970s to green burial plots today, interventions that do not radically alter the landscape have the most effect.

Anne reminded us that change is not linear and predicted an increasing return to old sustainable methods. Her woodland now provides one man with his living and the valley's timbers now form part of the Globe Theatre in London.

"Happiness is an L-shaped valley" concluded Anne – but careful stewardship and common sense seem to play an important part too.

Sarah Blowen

Mark Kennedy

May the Road Rise up to Meet You: research into Irish Coachbuilders

In the 19th century, Dublin built elegant coaches for the well-to-do. Queen Victoria had a second-hand one. Who knew? Marks' beautifully-illustrated talk was full of such wonderful facts, bringing the story of coach building in Ireland vividly to life.

Underused and unloved, the coaches in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum collection needed to be brought to a new audience. Marks' research to implement this has built up a comprehensive picture of coach builders and their concerns, as well as the social history surrounding them.

The coach makers of Dublin's St Stephen's Green produced coaches for the aristocracy and emerging wealthy classes, but Belfast makers also prospered. All displayed a wonderful level of pragmatism alongside their craft, responding not only to demand but also to technological change. When railways took all the longer-haul travel, builders modified their coaches to become serviceable railway carriages. This inventiveness lasted well into the Twentieth century, when coach makers turned their hand to making chassis for automobiles.

The sheer variety of vehicles demonstrated the ubiquity of horse-drawn transport for people and goods – we were even introduced to a hatchback hearse! Mark showed us images of two- and four-wheeled vehicles, smaller than their English counterparts but all fit for purpose and many being used right up into the 1950s and 1960s.

It was encouraging to hear that several of the Transport Museum's vehicles have been put back into horse-drawn service, attracting a potential new generation of enthusiasts. Mark made the point that there are many private collectors of the more showy gentry carriages and "gypsy" caravans also survive in significant numbers, due to their romantic connotations. It is the more mundane trade vehicles, such as the baker's cart, which are rarer today and there is a clear role for museums to play in their preservation. Does anyone have a spare horse-drawn bathing machine Mark can have, by the way?!

Sarah Blowen

Linda Ballard
The Rhythms of the Year Project

Linda outlined a work-in-progress that involves highly engaged museum outreach to local minority communities through their young people - the *Rhythms of the Year Project* has recruited a Youth Panel to create exhibits celebrating the seasons of life. The first challenge was to find motivated young people 16 to 25 years of age, gradually train them how to (literally) handle objects from the collections and let them reinvent themselves as “neo-curators”! This led to some serendipitous discoveries and to new leads in research on the museum’s collections. The special emphasis is on raising sensitivity to celebration of seasonal events, an objective particularly pertinent to a collection rich in harvest knots, mummers’ masks and straw costume, all of which are new and, in some ways “foreign” to these young people, who are used to juggling more than one identity.

As an example found in many urban contexts, the dragon dance has been born again in the Chinese communities’ new homes and attracts enthusiastic participants of every origin. The “near but other” has not been neglected in this mix of communities, with Scottish Highland as well as Indian dancing among the activities explored with public demonstration being an important part of the program. These young people tackle collections in the framework of post-colonialism, while striking a balance between different generations’ traditions in their own lives. The endeavour has heightened their awareness of their parents’ cultures as well as valorized the traditional seasonal celebrations of Northern Ireland and reinforced a sense of place – an important undertaking in a town where the Peace Line still divides neighbourhoods.

Rites of passage mean something new when the young people can connect them with museum objects they now expertly handle and the project has encouraged more active participation, with the public now contributing their own photographs to the museum of festive activities. For the *Rhythms* exhibit, when material needed was lacking in the collection, the approach has been decidedly proactive: the young people and their families are lending objects, carefully documented and protected, to the museum. They hope to show identities and traditions in transition and in transmission, with all the changes that are entailed and the commitment to community, in its many

senses, which such bold hands-on work encourages. As Linda said, “we don’t know exactly where we’re going, but it’s a sure thing we’re going somewhere”, and the *Rhythms of the Year Project* is making research on collections meaningful for another generation.

Cozette Griffin-Kremer

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

In this thought-provoking member’s paper Dafydd Roberts discussed the way in which some industrial workers in Wales during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had strong, active connections with local agriculture. He cited a number of examples where workers in the north Wales slate industry were also agricultural smallholders. At the most modest level of activity, slate-workers with no land of their own in which to grow kitchen vegetables would assist local farmers with harvesting and shearing in return for small allotments. Some of the slate workers in the Llanberis area were in fact weekly commuters from their homes on south-west Anglesey, where they lived on agricultural smallholdings. By the 1870s houses for quarrymen around Penrhyn were being built with small strips of land at their rear (‘lleiniau’) that were used as smallholdings. Amongst the coal miners of south-west Wales a similar situation pertained. In the Ammanford area many colliers not only possessed small-holdings but also exhibited similar folk beliefs (such as sin-eating) as their agricultural neighbours. Smallholding by these industrial workers resulted also in a greater independence and economic stability that in turn led to greater trade union loyalty and militancy during industrial disputes.

In many respects Dafydd’s stimulating paper looked forward to the theme of the Society’s conference for 2011 in Newcastle upon Tyne, by stressing that duality of economic activity was historically more of the norm in many industrial areas of the British Isles than has hitherto been acknowledged and that the impact of this on the cultural and political behaviour of industrial workers was significant.

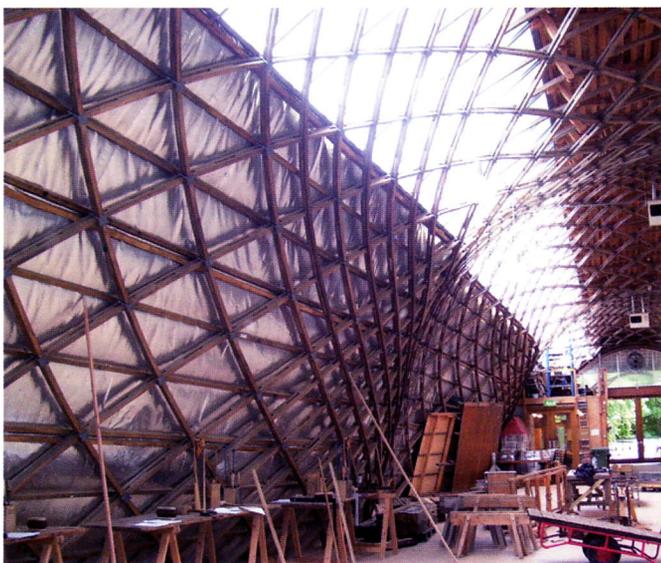
Steph Mastoris

Excursions

Two afternoon visits were made by the group to the **Weald & Downland Open Air Museum** which was a short distance from our base at West Dean College. On the first visit the group took a tour around the site lead by Richard Harris. We were blessed with sunshine which aided our enjoyment of the buildings and the wonderful demonstration of oxen harrowing with tree branches.



The group then had the opportunity to take a tour of the gridshell museum storage area. Whilst some visited the gridshell others enjoyed the livestock, walks, duck pond and refreshments.



Our second visit was facilitated by Roy Vickery. It was a sheer joy to be guided around the wooded areas of Weald and Downland by such an enthusiastic and knowledgeable person. Roy gives a flavour of the tour in the following report.



Uses and Folklore of Sussex Trees a – garden tour at Weald & Downland.

Although the programme listed this session as a walk, we covered only a short stretch of hedge at the Weald and Downland Museum. Roy reached up and showed us elder, described by two 1940s herbalists as ‘being useful in every part’ and ‘the healingest tree that on earth do grow’. He explained how elder was thought to be associated both with witchcraft and evil, and with protective spirits which lived in its branches. If you destroyed an elder you might upset the local witch, or cause the good spirits to desert you; damaging elder was a bad thing. Roy suggested that both beliefs prevented a valuable resource being from being harmed. It is claimed that elder could be used to cure all ailments apart from constipation.

Moving on to ash, Roy showed an even ash leaf - one which lacked a terminal leaflet, and therefore had an even number of leaflets. These were used to foretell who you would marry. You would recite a rhyme counting off a leaflet as each word was said. When the rhyme was completed you would recite the alphabet and the letter given to the bottom right-hand leaflet would indicate the initial of your future husband. As ash leaves usually have 9-13 leaflets, it was unfortunate if you hoped to have a William or a Wilfred as a husband. However, this problem could be overcome by using two or three leaves to get a greater range of letters. Roy also explained how a child with a hernia could be cured by passing him through the split trunk of an ash sapling, which was then tightly bound up. As the

split trunk grew together the hernia would heal. In Charlotte Latham's 1868 collection of West Sussex folklore it is stressed that such saplings must never be cut down or destroyed. If this happened the child's hernia would return. However, there are samples of split ashes in the Somerset Rural Life Museum in Glastonbury.

Other trees examined included spindle, the fruits of which were used as an insecticide, and hawthorn, the young leaves of which, known as bread-and-cheese, were eaten, and the flowers of which were considered to produce misfortune if brought indoors. Roy suggested that this is because the flowers of one species of hawthorn smell of decaying flesh. And so on.

For further information on Roy's work see <http://www.plant-lore.com>.

Roy Vickery

Minutes of the Society's Annual General Meeting

Held at 9.15am on Sunday 19 September 2010 at West Dean College, nr, Chichester Sussex.

Present: The President (Christine Stevens) and 20 members

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Matthew Richardson, Eddie Cass, John Williams-Davies, Fionnuala Carson-Williams, Alan Gailey, Paul Coghlan, Michael Larkin, Bob Powell, Pat Dawson, Diana Zeuner, Gillian Bulmer, Cynthia Boyd, Paddy MacMonagle, Seb Littlewood & Peter Brears.

Minutes of the last AGM

These had been printed in the Newsletter. It was proposed by Linda Ballard they be adopted by the meeting as a correct record. Seconded by David Viner. The minutes were duly adopted.

Presidents Report

The President began her address by welcoming new members of Council, Dylan Jones, John Williams-Davies, Cozette Griffin Kremer and Liam Campbell. She went on to say that an officers' meeting was held in January at the newly revamped

People's History Museum and the officers were fortunate to have a sneak preview. The discussions were varied, the main focus being Maney's moving to two journals per year and the marketing of the Society. Christine thanked the officers for attending the meeting in Manchester. Christine wished Eddie Cass well and we all hope he will be well enough to host the 2011 officers' meeting.

Cozette had sent Christine an agricultural newsletter from Paris, a very interesting publication which had a particularly nice article on carts.

Christine closed by thanking the officers and council for their work this year and thanked Steph again for his work in arranging this conference in West Dean.

Treasurer's Report:

The annual financial report was provided by the Treasurer, Duncan Dornan, who reported that the position is fine. The move to the journal being published by Maney's has reduced costs.

The conference in 2009 cost in the region of £6,800. Balance as at 31st July £14,041.62.

Duncan reported there was a problem with a batch of subscription cheques that went missing in the post, amounting to £396. Duncan will contact all the individuals involved. There are only two branches of HSBC in Scotland, in Edinburgh and Glasgow, so not easy for him to do banking. He wants to encourage as many members as possible to pay by direct debit.

Acceptance of the accounts, as submitted by Duncan, was proposed by Brian Loughbrough and seconded by Dafydd Roberts.

Editors' Reports

Linda Ballard, editor of *Folk Life*, reported that the major change in publication of *Folk Life* this year is the introduction of a two part volume. Part 1 of Vol.48 was published in May and publication of part 2 is expected in November. As a result we can now publish more pages (up to 192) per year and the main impact on the schedule of editorial work has related to the circulation of proofs during the summer.

One of the challenges faced by the editor is trying to get proofs back from university employed

contributors as they are away from June. This is proving tricky but is something the editor will address. 700 words per page are now being printed rather than 500 so 2 or 3 more articles can be printed in each volume. Volume 49 is full and of course there will be more material from the 2010 conference.

Maneys are also promoting us so *Folk Life* leaflets are being distributed at various conferences as well as being with other journals. In addition they are promoting on-line access. We do have control over the content of this.

The editor has information showing how many people visit the Maneys website and how much downloading of articles is being done:- 3,800 browsings and 145 full downloads. We only have 1 journal on-line at the moment so this is very good. Maneys provided the top 10 (by country) downloads of *Folk Life*. They are U.K., U.S.A., Canada, several European countries and Australia. In addition North & South Korea both have downloaded one article each! The top downloading organisations are 1) University of Warwick, 2) University of Belfast.

Elaine Edwards, editor of the newsletter, reported that it was the now usual 20 pages long and how pleased she was to be able to include the announcement of the birth of twins to one of our members and former membership secretary, Mared McAleavey. The early spring dispatch date depends entirely on early submission of articles, particularly reviews of conference papers, which is why the 15 November deadline for submission is so critical. The cost of both printing and postage was down slightly on the previous year. As always, Elaine was open to any suggestions or new ideas for the Newsletter, including any ads for conferences etc. that members would like to see included.

Elaine pointed out that any change of addresses for members should be sent to the membership secretary, Seb Littlewood at Beamish, as, although she despatches the Newsletters, she doesn't have access to the database.

A suggestion was forthcoming from the floor at this point: Cozette suggested a copy of the latest Newsletter be sent to all the societies that advertise in our Newsletter.

Elaine said she would look at the cost of printing and postage if the Newsletter was produced in A5 size, to see if any further savings can be made.

Website Officer's Report

Heather Holmes reported that Christopher Craig, a freelance computer programmer, has undertaken some of the technical work to change the platform for the website and that Lumison is no longer our web host. We are now hosted by 'One.com' which is cheaper. Chris's input means it is now much easier to upload information. There is now a link for institutional subs. Heather also reported the generic email address is well used and that there are usually a number of requests for back issues of Journals coming through regularly. The main domain name has moved to One.com, but the other is still with Lumison and may need to be moved over.

Christine Stevens requested that photos. be put on the website should anyone have any please, this can be done via Flickr; we also have Twitter access. There was also a suggestion that links from Maneys be available and vice-versa. Maney's is looking at digitizing back issues of journals.

Heather is still monitoring/controlling the website, though a number of people can now update it. This takes the pressure off just one person needing to do all the updates.

There was a suggestion from the floor that we might have a blog/Twitter from the next conference.

Secretary's Report

Matthew Richardson was unable to attend this year's conference due to work and personal commitments. There was no official report but the President recorded her thanks on behalf of herself and the council for all his hard work and for providing the minutes from last year's conference, the AGM papers and nomination papers.

Membership Secretary's Report

Seb Littlewood sent his apologies, the President read out his report. There are 182 individual members 'amazingly consistent'. These include 4 new members from a half price offer that Maney's ran at the Folklore conference. Seb wasn't aware of any new members coming via the website but this may have been due to it being out-of-date until about 4 weeks ago. There is now a downloadable joining form on our website, though nothing has yet been put in place re. Paypal.

Conference Secretary's report

Steph Mastoris hoped everyone was enjoying the conference so far & he felt it had gone well, with the quality of papers being extremely good. He hoped

that the 'breathing spaces' scheduled into the programme had also been appreciated. These had been requested on feedback forms from previous conferences. Steph thanked Duncan for keeping the money under control and for being a stalwart. The venues for the next 4 years were sketched out:

In 2011 the Society will be visiting Newcastle, tentative theme 'Links & inter-relationships – temporal, geographical, cultural e.g. interface between rural & urban, rural and maritime etc. Steph will put out a call for papers.

2012 will be Manchester

2013 is to be Scotland, possibly Dumfries and Galloway.

2014 Eire possibly Cork.

Steph said he was conscious of costs so we may base ourselves in a place and suggest a variety of accommodation so people can budget. Steph concluded by thanking all the speakers and all those who attended.

Christine thanked Steph for all his hard work.

Election of Officers

Report from Matthew stated up to 4 places on council were available. From the nomination requests sent out Matthew had received two names: Sally Ackroyd and Sarah Blowen. Council nominated were Catherine Wilson and Mark Kennedy. All of the above were approved.

All of the Officers were happy to continue to serve and were endorsed by the meeting en bloc.

Any Other Business

Cozette reported there are now a couple of young, post-doc. people doing reviews for the journal.

Beth said that by being on Flickr and Twitter we will now be reaching a different audience, so increasing our presence outside our own sphere. Also if SLFS members 'follow' others they may well look at us.

Cozette suggested 'Linked In', a business / professional networking site. Christine & Heather will look at this via Chris Craig.

Beth suggested having a guest speaker from the U.S.A. or Canada via a 'video conferencing' type medium.

Elaine suggested that the conference should be promoted locally and Christine said she has lots of ideas already for Newcastle.

The meeting concluded at 10.20 hrs.

End Notes

Book Reviews/Recent Publications

Opening the box – a modest look at publishing legacy

Snow and ice-bound for rather too much of the long Christmas & New Year break, the avoidance of sloth in the Viner household took the form of 'having a clear-out', targeted specifically at various 'reserve collections' (a favourite museum curator's term) of paperwork and publications so easily accumulated over the years.

One such was a box of publishers' catalogues, now long out of *date*, but nevertheless a reminder that such things perhaps never quite fall out of *use*. They provided renewed pleasure, admittedly of the memory lane type, plus a reminder of the contributions made by specific publishing houses in social history specifically and local and regional history generally.

Indeed, there is an interesting study to be had into the accumulated achievements forming the inheritance from various publishers, many long gone, especially perhaps those which concentrated upon their home area or primary themes. They come and they go but plenty remain, albeit some surprisingly well hidden from view.

Amongst those with firm local roots, Moorland Publishing based at Ashbourne in Derbyshire is archetypal. Formed in the early 1970s, it quickly set up such defined series as the Roads and Trackways titles (starting at home in the Peak District, but also Wales and the Lake District).

A difficult time in the mid 1990s brought Moorland down but it soon re-appeared as *Landmark Publishing*, with a new larger format and a strong interest in a Collector's Library approach, in industrial history and in well-reproduced 'Spirit of ...' photographic albums from towns and communities. The volumes on places such as Leek and Ashbourne stand out.

These are all common themes in local publishing, but – especially perhaps the photographic albums – not always as well reproduced.

Other midlands specialists have included Breedon Books, founded in 1982 but a victim of the economy towards the end of 2009, becoming part of Derby Books Publishing, now *DB Publishing*, marketed as 'Britain's best Sport and History Publisher'.

Similarly named but not to be confused is *Brewin Books*, based at Studley in Warwickshire since 1976 and ‘publishers of Midland regional history interest’. There is much here of contemporary record, including a string of Brummie titles from Carl Chinn, professor in community history at the University of Birmingham and well-known city raconteur.

By contrast, rural history has its devotees amongst publishers too, although perhaps harder to find. *Crowood Press*, ‘independent publishers since 1982’ and based at Ramsbury in Wiltshire, is one such. Animal husbandry, country crafts and – inevitably – regional country cookery traditions feature large.

In all that, there is a mirror image to D&C, the *David & Charles Group*, which celebrated 60 years in 2010. Don’t go looking for it under that branding any more – it has re-emerged as *F+W Media International*, where ‘our key focus is the art and craft market’.

A trailblazer in its day for its interests in railways and canals, David & Charles (by name a railway and a canal historian respectively) was without doubt one of the greatest publishing influences on the development of industrial archaeology as a discipline in those formative years of the 60s and 70s. Its legacy remains significant today.

Around the UK are many other local publishers. Scotland, Wales and Ireland have always had their specialists (a topic for another time, perhaps), but a few more English regional examples must suffice. In the west country, *Halsgrove Publishing* now based in Wellington, Somerset, publishes nationwide with a particular relevance here for its well-extended Community History albums in an A4 format.

Wiltshire has the *Hobnob Press* at East Knoyle, run by a respected local historian and author, and similarly across into Dorset the leading player is *Dovecote Press* based near Wimborne, creators of some of the best-produced books to be found anywhere in this field. A recent title is *Dorset Barns* by Jo Draper with photographs by David Bailey, a study of the 1000-plus historic barns still extant in the county.

Back home in Gloucestershire there is ample choice, one outcome of the long and competitive saga which is the story of Alan Sutton Publishing – Sutton Publishing – Tempus Publishing – NPI – Nonsuch and now both *The History Press* and *Amberley Publishing*, a sequence of twists and turns spread over more than thirty years.

That saga, as they say, is quite another story (and I have the back catalogues to prove it!), but it does mean that two companies with like interests and in strong rivalry are located little more than a mile or two apart in the Stroud Valleys! Incidentally, each produces an attractive product in on-line ‘opening page’ website catalogues.

Finally, two companies with perhaps unassailable pedigrees in terms of quantity-with-quality output over a good many years. *Phillimore* as a company dates all the way back to 1897 in local and family history publishing and still produces books of excellent quality from its Sussex base.

Shire Publications, founded in 1962 by John Rotheroe, is now part of Osprey Publishing based in Oxford. Its catalogue holds a mass of options for social and local historians, and under Osprey it has been rejuvenated in recent years in its range and quality of output.

Among recent titles are Jonathan Brown’s *The Edwardian Farm* and Mary Greensted’s *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Britain* (both 2010). The website lists hundreds of titles in print, validation still of the claim from the 1980s that ‘Shire’s impressive list had become a real British institution’. It was and thankfully so it remains.

Websites

www.landmarkpublishing.co.uk

www.DBPublishing.co.uk

www.brewinbooks.com

www.crowood.com

www.davidandcharles.co.uk

www.halsgrove.com

www.hobnobpress.co.uk

www.dovecotepress.com

www.thehistorypress.co.uk

www.amberley-books.com

www.phillimore.co.uk

www.shirebooks.co.uk

David Viner

Another recent publication which may interest some of you is the captivatingly titled *The case for working with your hands: Or why office work is bad for us and fixing things feels good* by Matthew B. Crawford (Paperback Dec. 2010).

The Robert Burns Birthplace Museum opens

The new building of the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum (RBBM) at Alloway, south of Ayr, opened informally in December 2010 and formally on 21st January 2011, four days before the poet's 252nd birthday. Nearby are the cottage in which he was born, the kirkyard in which his parents are buried, the Burns Monument (1823), and the Brig o' Doon over which Tam o' Shanter escaped. The National Trust for Scotland, who have built the Museum, are to be congratulated on their initiative and commitment to developing an important tourist destination. The Museum is also of great interest to ethnologists.

Burns was a great poet of the people, who in works such as 'The Twa Dugs' gave a vivid feeling for the ways in which poor tenant farmers viewed their rack-renting landlords. A selection of objects (at Alloway and elsewhere) were preserved because they were owned or used by Burns, his family, or by people who knew him. Looked at from the point of view of folk culture in general, these are important survivals because they are provided with a provenance and a date. For example, Burns's cottage is a rare survival of an eighteenth-century clay house in south-west Scotland, built by his father around 1757, and a pair of shoes owned by East Ayrshire Museums owe their significance to having been made by John Davidson – 'Soutar Johnnie' in 'Tam o' Shanter'.

About nine years ago the Distributed National Burns Collection was set up to co-ordinate the work of the many museums, galleries archives and libraries which hold Burns material. Among its output have been a database of these holdings and in 2009 a touring exhibition. At present funding is being sought to expand and improve the database, and a small group is working to frame ideas for research into this remarkably important group of objects. And on 13th March 2011 everyone is invited to bring to Alloway objects which commemorate the bard – Burnsianarama!

John Burnett

Forthcoming conferences/Meetings

New Light on Vernacular Architecture: Studies in Britain, Ireland and the Isle of Man

International conference, Douglas, Isle of Man
22 – 25 June 2011

Any enquiries to Dr. Catriona Mackie at c.mackie@liverpool.ac.uk or 01624 695 777

Association of European Open Air Museums 25th Conference will be held in Bardejov. Slovak Republic 20 – 25 August 2011

Any enquires to Dr. Mária Halmová, Director Slovak National Museum at halmova@snm.sk

Call for Papers for the Oral History and Life Stories Network.

9th European Social Science History Conference **11 – 14 April 2012**, Glasgow. Ambivalent Pasts: Nostalgia and Life Stories Research.

Please send proposals to **both** Bea Lewkowicz at BeaLewkowicz@gmail.com and Albert Lichtblau at Albert.Lichtblau@sbg.ac.at **Upon submission you must also pre-register on the conference website <http://www.iisg.nl/esshc> where more general information is available.**

Deadline for sending abstract is 1 May 2011

Happy Retirement

As many members will know Roy Brigden retired from the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) in autumn last year.

Roy has been a prominent and active member of the society, serving for many years as journal editor and then for a period as president. He was equally active in the rural museums sector being instrumental in the foundation of the Rural Museums Network and its founding chairman. He also led MERL through the move from the incredibly long-term temporary accommodation it occupied to an impressive new home on Redlands Road.

Thanks to Roy's ever youthful appearance this does of course look like a premature retirement, though you will see from the brief highlights above it is a well deserved rest. We wish Roy all the very best in retirement and hope that he will continue to be seen at the annual conference.

Duncan M Dornan
Treasurer

Take a look at your Society's website www.folklifestudies.org.uk

The contents of all issues of *Folk Life* are listed as well as core information about the Society, including a membership form along with notices of Society meetings and conferences and the text of the *Newsletter*. The site is also available for members to post relevant information. Please send text as e-mail attachments to the website officer

Heather.Holmes@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Contributions/comments should be forwarded to the newsletter editor Elaine Edwards at e.edwards@nms.ac.uk

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