

originally published by Dalesman Books in 1981 has since been re-issued by the University.

The framed originals of his work are preserved in an archive at Psalter Lane Learning Centre in Sheffield (tel. 0114 225 2721), but access is now widely available via <<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/yorkshirecrafts/woodwork.html>>

Amongst the woodworking skills are a Dales brewery cooper from Masham, a shepherd's crook maker from Gillamore and the Sissons family of wheelwrights from Beswick, shown with a fine example of an East Yorkshire farm wagon made around 1890.

David Viner

Forthcoming conferences

A 1-day conference will be held on *Mari Lwyd*, Saturday, 4th March, 2006 at the **Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans, Cardiff**.

The Conference explore various aspects of one of the best known of all Welsh folk customs. In the last few years Mari Lwyd had undergone a revival in Wales and this conference will bring together artists, performers & researchers to discuss the performances of Mari Lwyd and the ways it is developing inside and outside Wales.

For further details contact Dr Juliette Wood, School of Welsh, Cardiff University
juliette.wood@btinternet.com

Historic Farm Buildings Group Conference 2006

The annual Historic farm Buildings Group Conference will be held from the 15th -17th September and based at the Holiday Inn on the outskirts of Ipswich. Suffolk is well known for its wealth of timber-framed buildings set in beautiful countryside.

Saturday's outing will include a detailed study of the farms of one village and other sites in the Gipping valley to the north-west of Ipswich and on Sunday we will go to the southeast. We plan to include both typical and estate farms as well as some of the finest manorial sites in the county.

We will be introduced to the region through presentations by local experts and will hear from a local planning officer how he sees the future for these buildings as well as from DEFRA about their policies and the help they can offer. The conference will

therefore be of interest to all those who take pleasure in farm buildings in general and are concerned for their future as well as those with a specific interest in East Anglian buildings.

The cost will be £190 to include accommodation to members and £210 for non-members.

An application form is available on the HFBG website (www.hfbg.org.uk) or from the organiser (scwmartins@hotmail.com).

The Society's website www.folklifestudies.org.uk

is now fully operational, do take a look. 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.goc.uk

Contributions/comments should be forwarded to newsletter editor (e.edwards@nms.ac.uk)

Printed & published by the Society for Folk Life Studies, January 2006. All opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not represent the policies or views of the Society.

folk life NEWSLETTER

Number 21

February 2006



The beautiful Yorkshire Dales

The Annual Conference for 2006:

14th – 17th Sept.

THE YORKSHIRE DALES

The 2006 Society's annual conference is to be held in this most attractive area of the Yorkshire Dales. The main venue which will provide conference facilities and accommodation is The Rendezvous Hotel, Skipton. Located along the side of the Leeds/Liverpool canal the hotel has full disabled facilities and a leisure club with a gym, pool, steam room, sauna and spa – so don't forget your swimming 'cosi'!

The theme will be *Upland Landscapes and Their People*. Life in an upland community can be different. The landscape tends to dominate and to survive mankind has had to work in partnership with nature. There is usually a harsh climate to consider; the reliance on the land to provide food, shelter and often employment; the isolation and the lack of opportunity. This conference aims to explore these issues from a historic perspective.

When considering the history of the Yorkshire Dales there are three central themes to take into account;

farming, industrialisation and leisure. While the landscape continues to respond to natural forces it is the expression of lifestyle which has brought about major changes during recent times. The Yorkshire Dales National Park covers 1773 km² of the central Pennine uplands. It is renowned for its outstanding scenery, diversity of wildlife and habitats, rich cultural heritage and many peaceful areas. It was designated a national park in 1954 in recognition of these important features. Many

visitors (8.3 million visitor days spent in the park in 1994) come to enjoy their leisure time in this environment.

Colin Speakman, of the Yorkshire Dales Society (formerly Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority) will set the scene.

The park lies astride the Pennines in the north of England in the counties of north Yorkshire and Cumbria. There are over 20 main dales, differing much from each other in character and atmosphere. To the south of the area lies a highly populated industrial area while to the north thinly settled uplands stretch to the Tees and beyond. About 19,000 people live in the scattered farms, villages and small market towns of the park. People have settled in the area for over 10,000 years and have left their mark on almost every aspect of the landscape: ancient settlement sites and field systems; disused mineral workings; the patchwork of dry-stone walls and barns which is so distinctive. Early farmers cleared the woodland and developed the fields. Many visitors now come to enjoy a wide variety of leisure pursuits within the environment.

Visits:

Ribblehead via the famous Settle to Carlisle Railway.

We will be guided, en route to Ribbleshead from Skipton by the Friends of the Settle to Carlisle Railway whilst on board the famous scenic railway.

On arrival at Ribbleshead local historian and former Editor of the Dalesman magazine, Bill Mitchell will give us a guided tour which will include the former shanty town built to accommodate the navies who built the railway. Next a minibus trip to Colt Park an ancient woodland site run by English Heritage. There, David Evans will talk about the changing pattern of farming in the Dales.

Lower Winskill Farm, Victoria Cave and the Hoffman Limekiln

Visit the farm of Tom Lord, farmer, historian and local archaeologist. Tom will talk about the archaeology of the limestone caves in the area and put forward theories on whether these limestone shelters were ever subject to human occupation. Walk (approximately two miles) to the site of the most famous site - Victoria Cave. Visit the Hoffman kiln at Langcliffe, an innovative limestone kiln that changed the face of the lime industry in the Dales, for a guided tour by local historian David Johnson, author of *the Limestone Industry of the Yorkshire Dales*.

Evening entertainment

It is hoped we shall be hearing *Settle Voices*, a local community choir that has collected and adapted many traditional songs and poetry relating to the Yorkshire Dales and *Keepers Fold*, a folk duo.

www.settlevoices.co.uk

www.keepersfold.co.uk

The Society aims to keep the cost of the conference to a reasonable amount & for a number of years we have been fortunate in not having to raise the price. However, this year the accommodation being offered is of a higher standard, for example offering leisure facilities & this will inevitably be reflected in the price which will be apx £300 per person in a shared room.

A booking form is enclosed. Please note a **non refundable** £50 deposit must be received by **31st May** in order to secure a place.

If any member is willing to offer either a member's paper or full conference paper or wishes further information please contact Andrew MacKay, Craven Museum, Town Hall, High Street, Skipton BD23 1AH, tel 01756 706407 email museum@cravenc.gov.uk

A free student place at the 2006 conference

The Society is always looking for ways to encourage greater involvement in our activities so this year we are

again offering a free student place to a full time student. Please contact

Dr. Eddie Cass for further details. Email: eddie.cass@btinternet.com

Study Day: Friday 19th May 2006, The Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Cork

The Society's next study day, which will also be open to the members of the Regional Furniture Society, will focus on the forthcoming exhibition 'Whipping the Herring: Survival & Celebration in 19th Century Art'

The theme for the day is the use of **Art as Historical Evidence**. How far can art be relied upon as a source & if so within what parameters & contexts?

The exhibition runs from May 6th to August 26th. The opening coincides with the launch of Claudia Kinmonth's new book 'Irish Rural Interiors in Art' which she has co-written with Tom Dunne & Peter Murray. It also marks the reprinting of her award winning book 'Irish Country Furniture, 1700-1950.'

Those interested should contact Claudia Kinmonth by 10th March 06. ckinmonth@esatclear.ie

The 2007 Conference, 13th-16th September, is to be held in Swansea & will be hosted by Steph Mastoris. Steph was recently appointed to the new National Waterfront Museum as their Head of Museum.

Partly set in the former Maritime & Industrial Museum on the former docks, now a marina, this striking new museum tells the story of Wales' industrial & technological developments but at the heart of this story are the people. Already known for its computer technology a visit to the Waterfront will no doubt prove to be enlightening and engaging.

Possible themes for the conference are (working titles) 'Humanising Industrial History' or 'The Effects of International Trade upon Local Identity'.

Further details will be made available via the website, at the 2006 Conference and in the next Newsletter.

the Brae Face that's in Tattykeel.' Frank's account of the Fire of Stones is as follows,

Then there was a family (this is only, like, hearsay now) ... The Brae and the Glen, I'm told, originally belonged to the McGorlick [phonetic, possibly McGoldrick] family. Then when the plantation came over, it was given to Ogilvie of Scotland. Ogalvie of Scotland being a wealthy man on his own, and having his own estates in Scotland, never came over till Ireland, he was an absentee landlord, And he gave the running of his farm to a man called Buchanan..... Well, the McGorlicks were living in this house, and they were the first ever to get employment by Buchanan. They were always, when the season would start, they were, I think they always had permanent work on it. But they were working on a farm that originally belonged to them, but that's not the story I'm telling. There was a lady was living in a house under the road from where Master Mullan lived, and the McGorlick family must have been expanding, because Buchanan, he wanted the .. house that this family was living in for McGorlick. So he went to the woman, he told her that she would have to get out, but he gave her another house. But he wanted his workmen to be housed on the estate. The woman was very upset about having to go, and as she was leaving she put on an imitation fire of white stone, on the hearth, and she walked backways out of the house, brushing the place, and she cursed the family that came into it. The family that came into it was the McGorlicks, of course, and they never was out of trouble while they were in it. The house kept cracking, and falling down and rebuilt, and working about it, and finally the house did end. Now, they went up above the road, and built a second house, where Master Mullan's bungalow is today....And they used some of the stones to build the gable of the new house. And even when (X) was in it, that gable of the house gave them trouble, because the stones were incorporated in it. And the gable actually fell. True or false? We'll not know, but there's the story as it's told. So how true is these things, you'll never know. (Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Reel Recording 84.147)

Frank's account of this custom is interesting in several ways, not least for the complex of social dynamics that it conveys, which are much more subtle than many references to evictions. Frank's treatment of the eviction of the McGorlicks themselves is also of interest, and the listener (or reader) is left to infer Frank's attitude. The Fire is of white stones, consistent with data from Donegal referred to by Carson Williams (see *Folk Life* 35, p67, also vol 42, p116.) A verbal curse is implied

(see vol 35, p64) and the luck is apparently swept out of the house as the woman walks backwards from it. This may relate to other local customs and belief, for instance 'sweeping the dew' by the butterwitch as a method of stealing milk or the power of the churn on May Eve, or the practice of not sweeping out the house at certain times, New Year's Day for example, for fear of brushing out the luck. Furthermore, stones taken from the building and used in a new one transfer the curse to the new dwelling. Frank's account, drawn from his extremely extensive repertoire of lore and stories, contributes to the growing body of knowledge about this custom so carefully assembled and assessed by Carson Williams.

Linda Ballard

News in brief

The death of Anne Buck, Curator of Costume was met with sadness amongst members. Born in 1910 Anne Buck was well known amongst the Society's members and within the cultural world for her work on costume history. She began her career at Luton Museum in 1939 where she became an expert in the history of lace. In 1947 she was appointed Keeper of the costume collection at Platt Hall, Manchester where she undertook scholarly work which she continued after her retirement in 1972. She was the author of ten books and numerous articles. She died on May 12 2005 aged 94.

2005 Ratcliffe Prize was awarded to Dr Joanna Herbert for *Contested Terrains: Negotiating Ethnic Boundaries in the City of Leicester since 1950*.

Scythes R Us!

The following link is of an organisation that is compiling an international directory of relevant scythe related events and would welcome contributions

<http://www.scytheconnection.com>

Yorkshire crafts on the web

Photographs by a Yorkshire writer and photographer are now available on the Internet as part of a university initiative on the crafts and craftspeople of the county.

Sheffield Hallam University has launched "Yorkshire crafts and craftspeople" with the David Morgan Rees collection, taken during the 1970s by the Ilkley-based specialist in rural subjects, whose work has been promoted on radio and in a number of publications in the north. Morgan Rees' book *Yorkshire craftsmen at work*,

Member's Contributions



Cross-hands at Chipping Campden
Photo. David Viner

Friendly Society banner and historic cross-hands preserved in Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire

The splendid “Go Thou and Do Likewise” banner from the Ebrington Friendly Society was written up, along with the story of its rescue and conservation in *Folk Life* 37 (pp.64-79). The banner is large and guidon-shaped, some fourteen foot long and six foot deep. It seems to date from the Society’s celebrations of its 21st birthday in 1877 when its annual Club Day procession, always on the third Thursday in July, was headed by its “beautiful new flag”. It carries the evidence of the organisation’s foundation date 29th September 1856.

Since the article was published, a new and permanent home has been found for the banner in Chipping Campden, appropriately only a couple of miles away from Ebrington, a small village in the north Cotswolds,

Campden is one of England’s best preserved smaller medieval towns in terms of town plan and property burgh layout, and its High Street is a gem to visit and enjoy. At its centre, the former Police Station and Magistrates Court, typical of its type in Gloucestershire of 1870-1 and listed Grade II, had been largely redundant for some years but has now found a variety of new uses in the hands of a group of trustees delighting in the name of the Peelers Trust.

Tourist office, shops and community facilities of various kinds fill the ground floor rooms and even the former police cells. The town’s Historical & Archaeological

Society has achieved its long-held ambition of a resource centre there. Upstairs the former court room proved a greater challenge, and it has been preserved as an open space, also for community use. Across the end wall, above the in-situ court benches, the Friendly Society banner is displayed, suitably encased for its long-term protection.

Access to the Peeler’s Hall, as the property is now called, is available during normal shop and tourist office hours, with free admission to enjoy the former court room and the display of Campden history and development.

For those with a serendipitous interest in road history, hanging from the ceiling is the ‘original’ cross-hands from the pre-turnpike signpost at the top of Campden Hill, at the junction with the present day A44 (SP 131359). The four arms, each with its classic metal pointing fingers, give directions to the four main county towns of Warwick, Gloster [Gloucester], Oxford and Woster [Worcester].

Their rarity value lies not least in the fact that they are dated to 1669 and were provided by one Nicholas (or maybe it was Nathan) Izod, a local benefactor whose initials NI adorn two of the arms. This set is a rare survivor, even if it has doubtless been repaired over the years.

The cross-hands hanging in Peelers Hall was replaced by the present one some years ago, and had an intermediate life on display in the Woolstaplers Hall Museum in Campden, a privately owned and wonderfully esoteric and eccentric collection which alas, like so many similar private collections, has now been dispersed.

David Viner (dviner@waitrose.com)

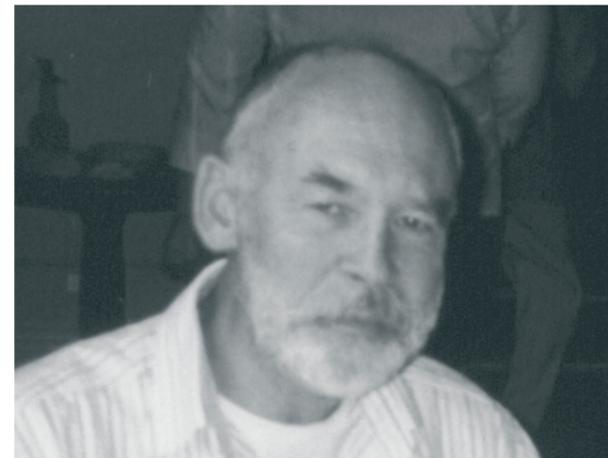
In *Folk Life* 35, Fionnuala Carson Williams published her paper ‘A Fire of Stones Curse’, in which she analyses this phenomenon, drawing attention to the surprisingly ‘low number of references’ to the custom. Carson Williams returns to this subject in ‘A Fire of Stones Curse Rekindled’ *Folk Life* 42, in which she provides additional information about the custom. The following account, recorded from Frank McKenna in September, 1984, may be of some interest. The recording was made in Omagh, at the home of Frank’s brother, and it relates to the region of the Brae Face in west Tyrone. As Frank explains, ‘The Brae Face is one of those places that isn’t a townland. On the Brae Face you have part of Tattykeel and part of Tattysallagh. But most of what I’m talking about is confined to the part of



Delegates at the 2005 Conference

The Annual Conference 2005: MELROSE, SCOTTISH BORDERS

The 2005 Conference was opened with the president’s address entitled ‘*Debatable Lands: a Technicolor exploration*’.



President Gavin Sprott gave an excellent start to the Conference with a presentation which linked an introduction to the Scottish Borders with the Conference theme of Frontiers. It was a masterful performance, illustrating once again the tremendous range and depth of his knowledge. Gavin described the physical frontiers of the area from the Pentland Hills to the River Tweed, and the varied coastline; the border towns and peel towers; the great abbeys and country houses. This you

would expect from any introduction to an area. But Gavin gave us so much more. He talked about the various battles that had affected the area from the Roman period to the Battle of Flodden; about linguistic differences over quite small areas, particularly between the north and south of the River Tweed; the distinctive farming of the region with its Cheviot sheep and black cattle. He finished by linking through to the Enlightenment and Sir Walter Scott, setting the scene extremely well for the rest of the Conference.

There was so much fascinating content in this presentation that it is impossible to do justice to it in a brief summary. I hope Gavin may be persuaded to publish it to give everyone a chance to enjoy it.

Catherine Wilson

Reviews of Conference papers

Professor Ian Campbell: *Walter Scott – from an Old World to the Industrial Era*

Sans notes, sans visual aids, sans the ubiquitous PowerPoint artillery, Ian Campbell engaged his audience with intellectual passion and an elfin smile. His aim was to show how Scott not only understood the past and the present that he lived in, but worked – and wrote – to reconcile the two. After outlining Scott’s earlier incarnation as the most successful poet – until his half-compatriot Byron came along – and also his success as a collector of ballads, Ian focussed on two of Scott’s more remarkable novels: *Waverley*, his first, and *Redgauntlet*, in Ian’s opinion, his best. First in *Waverley* he analysed the scene in the King’s Park by Holyrood where the army of Prince Charles Edward is mustered, and about to head out to engage the Hanoverian government army under General Cope at Prestonpans. We and every reader knows what the outcome will be, but the masterly Scott loads the dice of suspense and unbelief by what was a crudely realistic description of the ordinary Highlanders in the Jacobite army, and “the daring attempt of a body not then exceeding four thousand men, and of whom not above half the number at the utmost were armed, to change the fate and alter the dynasty of the British kingdoms”. What Scott spelled out was that despite their extraordinary daring and initial success against all the odds, reality in the form of a well-oiled government machine and the values of the age would and did win. But *Redgauntlet* carried this into a different dimension. *Waverley* is a novel built round historical reality.



Abbotsford, Melrose - Home of Sir Walter Scott

Redgauntlet is a historical fabrication but built round psychological reality. The restless and unreconstructed Jacobite Redgauntlet foments yet another rising, but the black-clad and spectral General Campbell comes among the conspirators – and the wandering Prince – and demolishes their plot and resolve with a kind of iron-fisted magnanimity. As long as they disperse quietly, “this will be remembered against no one”. Then, Gentlemen’ said Redgauntlet, clasping his hands together as the words burst from him, ‘the cause is lost for ever!’” Ian quoted these and other lines to great effect to illustrate the metaphors that Scott used to accept and indeed embrace change. Many other dimensions of Scott were explored: the businessman, the inveterate yet intelligent and principled Tory, the working lawyer and *Shirra* or Sheriff of Selkirk (he was as happy to be recognised as *the Shirra* as the laird of Abbotsford), and the creator of Abbotsford itself with its old towers and modern conveniences, a three dimensional metaphor of an old Scotland transformed into a part of the fledgling industrial Britain of Scott’s day. This was a memorable presentation from a world-class scholar.

Gavin Sprott

Prof Simon Bronner: *Hunting in the Modern World: Interpreting a Contested Tradition.*

Professor Bronner’s thought provoking paper provided a comprehensive analysis of many aspects of the ancient tradition of hunting, probing the reasons why this

tradition has become increasingly contested in recent decades. Establishing the context for his paper, he explored various types of hunt and of animals considered suitable as prey either for food or as pests. He outlined a variety of related activities, including coursing, falconry, trapping and target shooting, together with methods of fishing known by a range of terms including ‘noodling’ and ‘tickling’, and introduced the circumstances that have kept hunting in the news in recent years. He also pointed out that during the Presidential elections in the United States both Bush and Carey made claims to be hunters, and the related contest was over which was the better sportsman. Feminists, by contrast, view hunting as a form of patriarchal violence, while groups concerned with animal rights and animal welfare tend to present themselves as abolitionists.

Summarising the hunting debate in terms of the ‘pros and cons’, Bronner pointed out that those espousing a hunting identity characterise themselves and traditionalists, while an anti hunting identity carries connotations of modernism and of post-modernism. Pressures on the availability of land have also helped to highlight hunting as an issue, characterising the debate as an urban/rural conflict and, as perceived by rural society, demonstrating the political dominance of an urban based system of values. Bronner also addressed the history of scholarly perspectives on the topic, illustrating that ironically (given the emphasis on traditionality) there tends to be a folkloristic bias against

slow clearing up of pine needles from the carpet once the Christmas tree has done its annual turn. There follows school days, a fascinating summary of health and fitness issues, and accounts of home entertainment, sport and leisure. A final chapter analyses Miller’s perceptions of contemporary manners, beliefs and teenage culture, as it applied to him and his circle of friends, with rite-of-passage relationships with the opposite sex inevitably looming large.

Country Boy is largely a descriptive account, with the author not seeking to draw comparisons with village life before or after his time, and in particular with virtually no reference to Rollesby as it is today. Instead it draws deep upon his ‘simple recollections’ of life in a small rural community, which nevertheless are often very detailed and therefore a valuable historical record at a local level of a post-war nation undergoing vast changes. The text is supported by a good range of photographs, drawn from family albums and the files of *The Yarmouth Mercury*. There are some but perhaps not enough reproductions of such contemporary advertising as ‘Mars are Marvellous’ which reeks of the 1950s. Extracts from the village news pages of the local paper also add depth of reference. No bibliography is given or indeed required in a volume of this kind.

Colin Miller has written an enjoyable homage to his youth and his home, which is more than simply an achievement of personal record. He captures not only the detail but also the feel of the 1950s especially, and something of the hopes and aspirations of a new generation growing up in the post-war years, with a relevance far wider than the confines of his native Norfolk.

David Viner

Pamela M. Slocombe, *Mark, a Somerset Moorland Village*, Belcombe Books, Bradford-on Avon, 1999, 480 pp., £10.00, ISBN 0-9537353-0-3.

Every so often you encounter a book that is a tour-de-force of a subject, an exemplar of its type, or just beautifully crafted. This book is all three and more. Mark, the author tells us, is not picturesque but full of interest. She goes on to construct a book that works on many levels by drawing on the memories of her father, who was one of the village bakers, and other local people, together with her own observations and fieldwork. The book provides extensive details of village life, work, education and religion gathered from many sources and the photographs give a personal dimension to the whole. Maps and diagrams are used where appropriate. In an interdisciplinary style the author

informs the reader on such topics as archaeology, the structure of buildings, local dialect and genealogy

It is an incredibly well informed history of the village, from prehistoric times to the twentieth century. The moors in the area have been exploited since the earliest times for wild fowl and fish, and ecclesiastical domination from Saxon to medieval times imposed boundaries and order. The dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century led to more independence and self-reliance, so by the nineteenth century the village supported a very wide range of trades and enterprises. By that period Mark had a foundry and an engineering works that were an enormous influence on the local population and the status of the village. At a time of growth and improvements in agriculture the two firms prospered, benefiting from closeness to the railway at Highbridge. Day’s foundry is known for very fine decorative castings on machinery, railings and gates, and Wensley’s works is remembered for robust agricultural equipment.

This is typical of the structure of the book, which always starts with the broad picture, quickly to focus in on what is special and distinctive. For example the section on aspects of village life, starts with the landscape, goes on to describe transport, then the parish church and non-conformist chapels, schools, farming and food, inns and beer-houses, and many of the trades and occupations that thrived there. Other sections describe in detail the farms and houses of the village, or give family trees of some established families. The poor and the sick are allocated a chapter, starting with reference to seventeenth century Quarter Sessions concerning the support of a single woman with children. The operation of the Poor Laws, charities, Mark Friendly Society, nurses, doctors, and traditional cures are all considered.

The author always places local history in a broader context, making reference to what was happening regionally and nationally. So the section on horse keeping and dealing starts with Queen Edith’s complaint that the keeper of her horses had not paid rent for the Mark area for six years between 1066 and 1075, and ends with the popularity in recent years of the Moot Tour, a sponsored equestrian event round the moor in the Summer. Just when you think most topics are covered you find the chapter on literary associations, or the one on village pastimes, which lists amongst others the favourite children’s pursuit of ditch jumping. The book is a joy to read and to hold for reference.

David Walker

Thornton Edwards, *Cornish, A Dictionary of Phrases, Terms and Epithets Beginning with the word 'Cornish'*. Truran Press, Truro, 2005, 143pp., £7.99 (pbk) ISBN 1 85022 196 0.

Edwards has followed up his recent Mercier publication *Irish* with a new volume on words prefixed 'Cornish', this time for a Truro based press. These provide a very wide variety of entries of differing lengths, the selection criteria for which are set out in the introduction. There are three appendices providing respectively phrases ending with the word 'Cornish', phrases with the word 'Cornishman' and phrases with the word 'West'. The wide ranging nature of the selection is reflected in the bibliography. This, the first published collection of terms including the word 'Cornish' is designed to 'delight everyone who loves Cornwall and Cornish culture.'

Linda Ballard

Anna Rackard and Liam O'Callaghan (Introduction by Angela Bourke), *Fishstonewater, Holy Wells of Ireland*, Atrium Press, Cork, 2001, £25.40, £17.50, ISBN 0953535312.

Not only is *Fishstonewater* a beautiful book, it is a sentinel to our memory, understanding and appreciation of holy wells in Ireland. To leaf through its fantastic photographs and pithy, yet concentrated text is to be immediately transported to the enigmatic and distinct atmosphere that is the holy well. The simple construct of the title *Fishstonewater*, cleverly juxtaposes core mythical and elemental components, epitomising the subliminal evocative formula at play throughout the volume: stone and water are self evident, while fish refers to the popularly held belief that a fish, usually a salmon, eel or trout, sometimes appeared in the well or the well water at particular times.

Fishstonewater is above all a visual exploration of the world of holy wells. Liam O'Callaghan's photographs are of sublime quality and evocation, and seem to have been plucked from an inexhaustible collection. Each photograph details a different perspective on the holy wells, ranging from a full panoramic of a site, to striking studies of pilgrims at prayer, to atmospheric close-ups of the assortment of rags, coins, rosary beads, statues, candles and photographs left behind. The photographic essay works because the disparate, sometimes eclectic images, when taken collectively, result in a very deep sense of the Irish holy well.

The complementary text is direct, clear and concise and communicates some of the main associations and attributes of each holy well. The temptation with such

rich and diverse subject matter is to cram all available space with overwhelming detail and the self-control of the authors in this regard is very impressive. All the core components are clearly expressed and within the seventy or so pages of short text, readers become familiar with the pattern day, associated cures, rag bushes, votive offerings and all the rest. For those who seek further reading on any of the individual wells, a neatly structured bibliography, in addition to an annotated map and glossary are provided.

Angela Bourke's short introduction adds yet more value to this publication. Bourke excels in identifying the detailed patterns in the ordinary and familiar and offering astute and often complex interpretations of inherited traditions that we accept as 'normal'. This gives the reader a remarkably accessible yet deeply insightful analysis of the holy well tradition. *Fishstonewater* is collectively a gem: the economy of carefully written description, stunningly taken and superbly mounted photographs, harmonious book-design. All these elements fuse together to provide a literary and visual touchstone of the holy well tradition in Ireland.

Shane Lehane

Colin Miller, *Country Boy – Growing Up in Norfolk 1940-60*, Sutton Publishing, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2005, vix + 176 pp, 30 b/w illus., £12.99 (pbk), ISBN 0-7509-4247-9.

Colin Miller was born in Rollesby, a village of some five hundred people in the Broadlands of Norfolk, which looked to Great Yarmouth eight miles away as the nearest 'big town;' Anywhere else seemed a good way off and part of another existence. It is salutary to find such a view of the world expressed in a memoir of someone born as recently as 1940 and he approaches his task in predicable sequence. An introductory chapter describes Rollesby as both a place on the map and as a self-contained community. This is followed by descriptions of his extended family (there is a useful family tree) and their various types of employment, then of his home and all the facilities and activities in the village. There is much detail, which meshes together as the volume proceeds and with relatively little repetition. Some is unavoidable, given that a thematic rather than uniformly chronological format has been adopted.

The details of his childhood and adolescence make for an enjoyable and informative read, especially for near contemporaries for whom this reminiscence stimulates the sharp and accurate recall of minutiae from one's own growing up. Here are Spangles, Meccano, early Radio Luxembourg, cow slurry along the road and the

hunters and hunting. Anthropologists tend to place hunting in a text of social hierarchy, identifying hunting and gathering as functions of primitive societal development. The historical emphasis is primarily on the relationship between hunting, chivalry and war. Psychological and philosophical approaches, like the stance taken by feminism, generally view hunting as a metaphor for predatory behaviour.

Bronner pointed out that few museums are devoted to the tradition of hunting, although proposals have been put forward to develop such a museum in the United States. He identified hunting in the USA as a living tradition in which 92% of the participants are male, and described the way in which hunting may function as a rhetoric of communication, the hunters viewing it as a metaphor 'to live by', the protesters seeing their narrative as a social commentary on tradition and modernity. Hunters emphasise rather than counter the argument that hunting is primitive, admire the role of the hunter/provider and extol the egalitarian nature of the 'wilderness experience.' American 'hunt camps' provide opportunities for fathers and sons to bond by participating in a shared and demanding experience in a world in which families are increasingly fragmented. Bronner suggested a symbolic parallel between the initiation ritual of 'blooding' boys (usually aged between twelve and sixteen) and the loss of virginity. He outlined many of the customs of the hunt camp, including the feared but illusory malady of 'buck fever' which may inhibit a hunter and the punishment of shirt tail cutting exacted on an unsuccessful participant. Although there may be an ecological focus on protecting the buck, he is considered a much more appropriate target than the doe, again helping to emphasise the male dominance of the sphere of activity. The 'hunter's dish' comprising the entrails of the first kill also highlights the manliness of the hunter as he eats the heart, liver and possibly the testes of his prey. Storytelling sessions at these camps frequently feature tales of encounters and combats with bucks, and it may be for some participants that the lure of the hunt is quickly overshadowed at camp by the pleasures of storytelling, drinking and card playing. The tradition and the image of the hunter, with the associations of the wilderness and of a frontier heritage, may be more important for some than the reality of the hunt itself.

The meanings of hunting in the modern world are therefore complex and contradictory, and the associated debate is joined by clashing cultural perspectives. For the hunters and their sympathisers, theirs is a family orientated world of traditional values, while hunt protesters envision the hunters' prey as metaphors for

peace, for children and for ethnic minorities. The hunt protestors view hunting as a representation of violence and even of rape. A Biblical dimension may also enter the debate, with arguments centring on the nature of 'dominion' of man over the (rest of the) animal kingdom: the hunters see this as a dominion of benefit, the protestors as a dominion of love. This was a remarkably even handed and fascinating paper, in which the challenge of interpreting hunting as a contemporary activity was thoroughly addressed.

Linda Ballard

Dr. Lizanne Henderson, *Ridiculous Utopias: Mapping the Supernatural in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a surge of elite interest in popular beliefs and various authors endeavoured to establish a scientific basis for the paranormal.

In the late seventeenth century, the Reverend Robert Kirk, an Episcopalian minister, embarked on an inquiry into what he posited were the two sorts of rational inhabitants of the Earth, humans and fairies. Kirk proceeded from a Neo-Platonic notion that the fairies were indeed real, existing in another plane of experience than humans, and that this reality would one day be proven when the boundaries between the natural and the supernatural worlds were overcome. As encouragement for his own investigation, he cited such discoveries as the diving bell that had indeed enabled humans to penetrate into hitherto unknown worlds, or still unexplained phenomena such as yawning or magnetism. He interviewed people who were thought to have seen the fairies, an "abducted" child or convicted witches (both men and women) who confirmed that the abode of the fairies was in or beside hills. Among the popular 'documents' that inspired Kirk, Dr. Henderson cited (and sang to our pleasure) the Scottish Border ballad 'Thomas the Rhymer', in which the protagonist was kidnapped by the Fairy Queen who gave him the second sight.

The phenomenon of second sight also particularly intrigued Martin Martin of Skye, who meticulously recorded all mentions of it that he found during his 1690s voyages in the Western Isles. Martin was especially well equipped to do this, being the first Gaelic speaker to write extensively in English. His work is hardly superstitious in tone and he repeatedly noted the regression of folk beliefs, as he perceived it, finding them just out of his reach, having disappeared so shortly before he was able to grasp them – an attitude of great

interest to anthropology, in any case. The plethora of terms to describe the phenomenon in Gaelic may have been an added stimulus to Martin's curiosity. (The English term of 'second sight' is first attested in 1616.) Martin was most particularly impressed by assurances that persons possessing this gift had foreseen his arrival in their communities, such visits being quite unexpected events at the time. He found everywhere that the gift was becoming less common, although cows and horses were thought in some cases to share it with humans. In contrast to other authors, Martin argued that seers were not abnormal in any respect, not being subject to melancholy and never being drunkards.

Comparing Kirk and Martin is quite fruitful for understanding the spirit of the age and we may note that, though they often agree, they also disagree on some points, Kirk thinking that *only* people with second sight could see fairies and that it was hereditary, while Martin did not espouse this conclusion and held that the talent could be learned by either men or women.

Particularly at stake for Kirk was the notion that fairies *should* exist, as should witches, the devil and – the crux of his argument – that their very existence proved that of God. In this respect, his intent was similar to that of George Sinclair, in his *Invisible World Discovered*, who pursues the same anti-atheistic strategy in his own inquiries, both men being among those in fear of Enlightenment scepticism and working with careful and relatively scientific methodology to counter this tendency. In any case, Kirk, Martin and Sinclair are representative of the methods and debates that animated the Royal Society of Scotland in their times, all three being influenced by Glanville and the collections of Henry Moore. Perhaps we can best understand their endeavours as typical of this period in which authors turned their own voyages of discovery into a search for new frontiers.

Cozette Griffin-Kremer

Dr Jacqueline Simpson: *Boundaries for ghosts - A Technique in Folk Exorcism*

Death, said Hamlet, is 'that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns'. With this intriguing introduction, Dr Simpson started her paper which was a fascinating exploration of folklore beliefs on ghosts and how they are treated when they invade the spaces usually reserved for the living. An essential part of her discussion was the difference between Catholic and Protestant theologies and where souls went after death thus allowing for their reappearance as ghosts in the after

life. What was equally intriguing was to discover that there was a class distinction in ghosts and that the worst after death offenders were tyrannical landlords who often re-appeared to terrorise the neighbourhood they had ruled over in life.

Dr Simpson drew her examples from revenant tales collected from both England and Europe but, perhaps her finest story came from Denmark where troublesome ghosts were staked to ensure that they didn't cause too much of a problem to the living, unless that is, they were released by some interfering individual. I quote from the paper: 'A Danish tale, found in many places, tells of a man who notices an old post sticking in the ground in some lonely spot, and idly decides to pull it up. As he tugs at it, a voice underground mutters hoarsely: 'Yes, pull, pull. You pull, and I'll push.'" This is a story which will resonate with all lovers of the ghost stories of M.R. James. This paper was a really enlightening, and entertaining, exploration of the borders between the living and the dead.

Eddie Cass

Dr. Joan Beal, Director: *The Shared Heritage of Northumbrian and Lowland Scots Dialects*

Dr. Beal gave an absolutely fascinating paper examining the differences and similarities between dialects in the Borders region between 800 and 2005, a vast subject which she presented in a lively and thought provoking way.

She examined the relationship of 'Scots' and 'English' to other Germanic languages, and questioned 'What was Northumbrian?' In the days when the Kingdom of Northumbria stretched from the Humber to the Forth, the same dialect was spoken throughout, both Scots and Northern dialects having descended from the Anglian (Old English). She examined why the two languages have diverged and what they had in common. Scots had become an official language by the 15th century, the main difference between the languages being political rather than linguistic.

Anglicisation began in the late 16th century and the Union of the Crowns meant that the language of James VI became more anglicised once he became James I of England. The Romantic revival kept literary Scots alive and Devolution in the late 20th century has led to new interest in Scots as a national language. Scots is now

Alain Belmont. La Pierre à pain. Les carriers de meules de moulins en France, du Moyen Age à la révolution industrielle. This is a new publication on millstones and covers the history of extraction, regional variations etc. For further information pls contact Alain Belmont

Maitre de conférences en Histoire Moderne
Université Grenoble II

Cozette Griffin-Kremer

Please note that three very fine volumes have been re-edited, one (Traditional Crafts of Ireland) in an expanded form:

David Shaw-Smith. Traditional Crafts of Ireland. Thames & Hudson, London, 2003. ISBN 0-500-51142-X.

F.H.A. Aalen, Keven Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds.). Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape. Cork University Press, 2003. ISBN 1 85918 095 7.

Estyn Evans. *Mourne Country.* Dundalgan Press, Dundalk, Co Louth, 2005.

Christine Stevens

Cunning Folk: An Introductory bibliography by Owen Davies & Lisa Tallis

Published by the Folk Lore Society in 2005 this 28 page booklet contains valuable information such as primary & secondary sources from medieval times to 1950. A handy aid for those undertaking research as well as those with an interest in folk lore.

Available from The Folklore Society, The Warburg Institute, Woburn Square, London, WC1H 0AB

Elaine M Edwards

Maureen Donegan, Fables and Legends of Ireland, Mercier Press, Cork, 1976, reprint 2004, 127 pp., £9.95 (pbk), ISBN 1-85635-441-5.

It is a great pleasure to see Maureen Donegan's delightful collection has at last been reprinted. In her preface, the author modestly admits this 'is not a scholarly book', but her ability to tell a well-known story in a fresh and exciting way will appeal to all readers, from older children to scholars alike. Following the great *seanchaithe* tradition, Maureen Donegan certainly has *bua na scéalaíochta* (a gift of story-telling). Without adulterating or altering the myths, she retells them in her own way. Each section of the book constitutes a link, as the stories are interrelated in a sequence, like chapters.

Several examples of the specifically Irish genre termed *táin* or cattle raid are given pride of place, along with discussion of *dinnseanchas* (placename lore), shapeshifting and the historically verified ancient Irish

and Celtic custom of decapitating an enemy found in various tales, which may reflect a belief that a head contained power and therefore could be used as a form of talisman. The author draws parallels between the *immrama* (voyage tales) or motifs such as the ravishing of the kingship and themes in classical Greek myth or legend. Donegan makes no claim to providing a comprehensive collection of all Irish myths, but her careful selection and inimitable style provide a real taste of Irish culture and whet our appetites for a closer look.

Thornton Edwards

Fighting the waves: the Story of CuChulain

Xanthe Gresham and Sherry Robinson. £10. Available from celloabellow@yahoo.com

Story teller Xanthe Gresham and musician Sherry Robinson (together known as Word of Mouth Storytelling) have recently produced this excellent CD of their own retelling of the mythology associated with Cu Chulainn, Hound of Ulster. This is presented in a series of seventeen episodes that provide background to the famous Tain Bo Cuailgne and explain how Cu Chulain finds himself fighting alone for Ulster against the warriors allied on the side of Queen Maeve of Connaught. The storytellers have obviously read very widely to inform their version of the tales, which echoes a range of influences, but this retelling has a strong spark of originality. Even the legend of the rediscovery of the Tain is drawn on, with Xanthe instead of the bard Seanchan encountering Fergus Mac Roigh at his tomb.

In live performances of the tales, Xanthe reflects briefly and wittily on the undoubted difficulties of drawing together the stories of the Ulster Cycle, which seem to overlap and overlay each other, into a cogent whole, but here is no question that Fighting the Waves does this successfully. In doing so, the storytellers have found it necessary to omit several of the tales, and their selection has been judicious. This retelling is bound to bring these ancient stories to new audiences, and those who wish to will be able to follow up their interest through the many published sources. The tales are presented in a vibrant, lively way that is subtly and perfectly complemented by Sherry's musical accompaniment, provided on an impressive range of instruments. The entire performance is a magical adaptation of ancient mythology for the twenty first century.

Linda Ballard

There was some discussion about the study days which had been part of our programme in recent years. Whilst initially, these had been successful, the last two had been less so. The event in Edinburgh in 2004 had been disappointing and the planned study day at the Vaughan Williams Library in London had been cancelled because of lack of demand. It was agreed, however, that the Secretary should discuss with Claudia Kinmonth, the possibility of a day at Cork in spring 2006, details of this possible day would be published in the Newsletter.

Membership Secretary's Report

In the absence of Mared, the Membership Secretary's report was presented by Elaine Edwards. Total membership now stands at 400, of which 203 are individual members and 197 are institutional members. It was hoped that the new membership cards and the website would help our recruitment.

Conference Secretary's Report

In the absence of Dafydd Roberts, the Secretary presented the conference secretary's report. He expressed an especial thanks to Elaine Edwards who had born a particular burden this year as Dafydd had not been able to help as in normal years. Andrew Mackay had provided information on the conference for 2006 which is to be held in Skipton. The conference for 2007 will be in Swansea; that for 2008 will be at the discretion of our next President and the 2009 conference will be hosted by the Isle of Man museums.

Constitution

On behalf of the Council of the Society, the Secretary proposed two amendments to the Constitution. The first was to add to the list of officers, the Membership Secretary, the editor of Folk Life, the editor of Newsletter and the Website Officer. The second amendment was to delete the phrase in clause 6 which stated that 'Past Presidents shall be ex officio members of the Council' and to add that there should be an addition to the list of officers of the Immediate Past President who should serve for a term of three years. These amendments were agreed *nem con*.

Election of Officers and Council

Gavin Spratt proposed Roy Brigden as the next President of the Society and this was agreed by all present. Roy thanked Gavin for the work he had put into his presidency and felt that he was taking over a society which had been in good hands.

The Secretary reported that, all officers were willing to stand again. We had received nominations for four members of Council, Sarah Blowen, Cozette Griffin-

Kremer, Andrew Mackay, and Catherine Wilson. These nominations were agreed by the meeting.

Any Other Business

The Secretary reported that he had no notice of any other business appropriate to an Annual General Meeting and the President declared the meeting closed.

Book Reviews/Recent Publications

Our People Our Times; A History of Northern Ireland's Cultural Diversity is a 28 page, illustrated exhibition catalogue from the Northern Ireland Museums Council. Included is a migration timeline, which traces contemporary migration back to the first human movement from Africa into Europe.

Interestingly the catalogue can be read backwards as usefully as forwards: as indeed can the history of human migrations. Overall the message is one of intellectual development seen as a product of diverse migration over millennia. A museum would therefore seem the natural setting to carry this message forward in an enlightening and positive way, as it has in this exhibition. The catalogue has a balance of illustration & text. Each page shows people, places and artefacts telling the migration story supported by easily read detailed text. For me migration is perhaps best understood in the series of personal accounts.

Important benefits to society of inward migration are touched on in areas, including shipbuilding, tobacco and linen manufacturing. Emigration particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries to the Americas is included. The reasons it seems for migration remain much the same. The aim of this exhibition is strongly endorsed by many organisations in Northern Ireland. A list of over 30 relevant web sites provides an encouragement to further study.

P.W. Edwards

Anna J. Papamichael-Koutroubas, Politismology First Dimension: Museology, Athens, 2004, 271p ISBN 960-91773-1-X

A contribution to the study and research of museology, published in both Greek and English text. Discussion of the science of museology rooted mainly in a Greek ethnographical material culture context. Fully illustrated in colour with artefacts, museum displays and buildings. With bibliography and index.

Christine Stevens

regaining the stature that it had before James came down to England.

Dr. Beal considers the history of Northern English, from the time when Northumbrian dialect had equal status with other dialects of Old English, through the Norman Conquest which led to the demotion of all dialects in English in favour of French and Latin, the languages of prestige, to the time when Northern English dialects are regarded as outlandish. The further from London, the more outlandish your dialect. By the 16th century, Scots was recognised as the separate national language of a sovereign nation.

In the 16th century, a Londoner would not distinguish between Scots and Northumbrian, however by the late 20th century, the national border is marked by a sharp linguistic divide. The difference is attributed to the different status of Scots (which has national status) and Northumbrian (which is viewed as a dialect).

Dr. Beal goes on to examine vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, where many features are still shared. To this day, a number of dialect words are held in common. Some words have a Scandinavian origin and are recognised both sides of the border, others have a French origin and are in general usage. There are also shared features of grammar. There are shared features of pronunciation, however this most clearly distinguishes Northumbrian from Scots.

A shared heritage still exists, though Northumbrian features are receding northwards and there is a greater differentiation between North and South. Dr. Beal highlighted the study by Pichler and Watt of 2004, 2005, of Berwick upon Tweed, where younger people in particular identify themselves as neither Scottish or 'Geordie' but just 'Berwickers'. Post devolution is making its mark on dialect and identity.

The paper given was an absolutely fascinating study which really absorbed the delegates and reflected the present status and movement of language, dialect and identity in our present political society.

Rosemary E. Allan

John Gall: The differences and shared experiences on both sides of the Scottish-English Border

John provided a lavishly illustrated investigation into aspects of material culture on the Scottish-English Border to demonstrate the nature of boundaries and

borders. He noted that while some aspects were noted on both sides of the border, others which were specifically Scottish or English crossed the Border, while others did not cross it. He noted that sometimes it is not known where the border is. At other times, this situation was very different, and a lot of work was required to be undertaken to find out where it was. These boundaries and borders helped to understand a particular culture and what was special about it.

He provided a number of examples to illustrate the nature of boundaries and borders. These included folk-brasses, mainly from north-east England which spread into Scotland and also more recently in Ireland; the decorative quilt tradition in Durham and Northumberland; work banners from coal mining areas; Sutherland and Newcastle pottery, shipped across the Baltic in coal boats; love token patterns in the Valleys; costume; the similarity and differences between stockmen on English and Scottish farms; evidence for the horseman's word in north-east Scotland and in Scots workers south of the border; horse and livestock traditions on farms; the use of Shetland ponies in north-east collieries.

Heather Holmes

Dafydd Roberts: The Quarrymen of Gwynedd and the 'Sowth' 1900 – 1930

I have to confess that I know very little about Welsh history. I am English born and Scots by descent and as far as I'm aware I have no Welsh blood in me. Reviewing Dafydd Roberts' paper was therefore going to be either very daunting, or a real opportunity for a fresh pair of eyes to take a critical look at an important aspect of early 20th century migration.

First the geography. Gwynedd is a stone quarrying district in North Wales and Glamorgan is a coal mining district in South Wales. Caernarfon in Gwynedd was at the heart of the stone quarrying industry, whilst coal mining flourished throughout South Wales. Being 150 miles apart each area has a different culture and a unique dialect. During the first three decades of the twentieth century quarrymen from the north migrated to the south and a minority returned.

In North Wales the slate industry developed in earnest in the nineteenth century, following the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent boom in housing. Gwynedd, consequently became the centre of the roofing industry and the population of the area multiplied

dramatically, in some cases census returns show an increase that more than doubled within ten years.

These communities, heavily reliant on slate, were exclusively Welsh populated and Welsh speaking. This intensified the effect of the near collapse of the slate mining industry in the 1880s, following a down turn in the British building industry. It was during this period that the first migration south is believed to have occurred. However this was only a minor migration compared to the hundreds who travelled south in the years leading up to 1914. The great strike of the Penrhyn Quarry between 1900 and 1903, coupled with a further collapse of the building trade and competition from foreign slate exports created low wages and high unemployment in the north. The migration was intensified by the onset of the First World War and the generous offer by the Quarrymen's Union to transfer membership to the South Wales Miners' Federation. With the quarrymen from the north having extensive experience of working the rock it was not hard for them to use these transferable skills in mining (and in some cases in the tin industry of Llanelli). Work was easily found.

Dafydd Roberts has gathered much of his evidence from contemporary newspapers and literature, oral testimony and a collection of quarrymen's correspondence. Used together, Dr Roberts has used this evidence to portray both working and living conditions experienced by those who migrated. One report hits at the cosmopolitan draw of South Wales:

“The only unsatisfactory thing here, going by our short experience of the place, is that we have to acknowledge, and mix, to a degree, with all kinds of men, particularly unprincipled Irishmen, who are disorderly and uncouth, and like common navvies like to drink beer...”

(*Y Rhedegydd*, 1915)

The quarrymen did just move south to find work, many travelled to the Liverpool docks and some followed the advice of the Quarrymen's Union and travelled to quarrying districts of North America, particularly Canada.

After the First World War the slate industry enjoyed another revival (due to the increased demand for housing) and several quarries reopened. This together with high wages negotiated by the Union resulted in reverse migration to the north for several hundred converted miners. In the words of the old quarry man from Corris: “After all, this is where our roots were.”

Andrew MacKay



Traditional Irish Dance Dress - Image Courtesy of National Museums & Galleries of Northern Ireland.

Linda May Ballard:

Fake tans, curls 'n' rhinestones: an ethnological perspective on Irish Dance Dress

The title of Linda Ballard's paper promised much of interest and potential entertainment and did not disappoint. What it also promised to those of us who are accustomed to Linda's academic excellence, was a thoroughly researched and balanced account, and again, this was delivered.

As indicated in the title, this paper contained so much more than merely Irish Dance dress (familiar to many only via the later Riverdance version). A chronological division was useful to those of us not familiar with the history of Irish traditional dance. The chronology/typology was divided between the 1890s and the present:

1890s- 1930 early phase

1903s -1960s de Valera era

1960s – 1990s period of globalisation

1990s- present *Riverdance* era

There followed a thorough review of the varying styles and types, and influences, of dance dress, with emphasis on the early 20th century, noting particularly the use of

Traveller culture and identity and the art of making them is still occasionally demonstrated by Traveller groups.

Roy Brigden

Minutes of the Society's Annual General Meeting,

**held at 10.00am on Sunday, 18th September 2005
at the George & Abbotsford Hotel, Melrose.**

Present

The President, Gavin Sprott, and 21 members.

Apologies were received from Sarah Blowen, Rob Shorland-Ball, John Burnett, Paul Coughlan, John Williams Davies, Sandy Fenton, Shane Lehane, Mared McAleavey, Paddy MacMonagle, Ross Noble, John Smith, David Viner.

Minutes of the last AGM

These had been printed in the *Newsletter* and further copies were tabled. They were approved as a correct record following a proposal from Christine Stevens, seconded by Fionualla Carson Williams.

President's Report

Gavin Sprott once again welcomed members to Melrose and said that he felt it had been a successful conference. He reported on another satisfactory year for the Society and thanked the officers for their support.

Treasurer's Report

The treasurer presented the accounts for the year. These seemed to indicate a surplus but Duncan pointed out that this was due in part to delayed payments for the journal. Due to a number of cancellations, this year's conference would not balance out and would not cover its costs. The meeting confirmed that whereas the society would hope that each conference would cover its costs, we should look at a cycle of years to see a balance. The Treasurer proposed that we increased the subscriptions by £1. After some debate it was agreed that we should raise the subscription to £20: given this increase, the Treasurer's report was moved by Christine Stevens and seconded by Brian Loughborough.

Rural Life Museums Action Group (RulMAG)

Consideration was given to the future of RulMAG, which had been set up under the auspices of the Society following publication of the former Museums & Galleries Commission report *Farming, Countryside and Museums*. Now that the Rural Museums Network had

been established successfully and recognised recently as a charity and, also, enjoyed the support of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, it was agreed that RulMAG had achieved its objectives and that it would be appropriate to wind up its affairs. It was resolved to transfer the remaining assets of RulMAG, reported by the Treasurer, Brian Loughbrough, to be £981.87 at 25th August, 2005, to the Rural Museums Network and authorised him and the other signatories, Catherine Wilson and Rob Shorland-Ball, to close the account held with the HSBC Bank and make the appropriate arrangements to transfer the balance.

Editor's Reports

a) *Folk Life* Editor

The editor reported on the next issue of *Folk Life* and said that it was well in hand with a combination of submitted articles and papers arising from society conferences. Linda Ballard expressed her thanks to Cozette Griffin-Kremer who had so successfully taken over the role of reviews editor.

b) *Newsletter* Editor

Elaine said that she hoped that the next issue of the *Newsletter* would be out on time to bring us up to date. A significant part of this issue would be the reports on the conference and she was grateful for the contributions which members had offered to make by way of reports on the papers presented.

c) *Website* Editor

Heather reported that the website had now been transferred from the National Museum of Wales website and was now being run by Lumison. Plans were now well in hand to expand the contents of the site to enhance its value to the society. Some discussion took place on the value of the website for membership recruitment.

Secretary's Report

The Secretary reported that he had written to Anne Buck's family to express the Society's sorrow at the news of her death.

He also reported on the meeting we had had with our printers, Maney's, who had expressed a wish to take a more active role in the management of *Folk Life*. Whilst the Secretary had a positive view of this project from his experience at the Folklore Society, it had been agreed that the proposed subscription increases which Maney's were planning would be unacceptable to most of the smaller museums who made up our membership. For this reason, we had declined Maney's approach for the time being.

Cozette asked for suggestions and help from interested parties. Further information can be received from Cozette at griffin.kremer@wanadoo.fr.

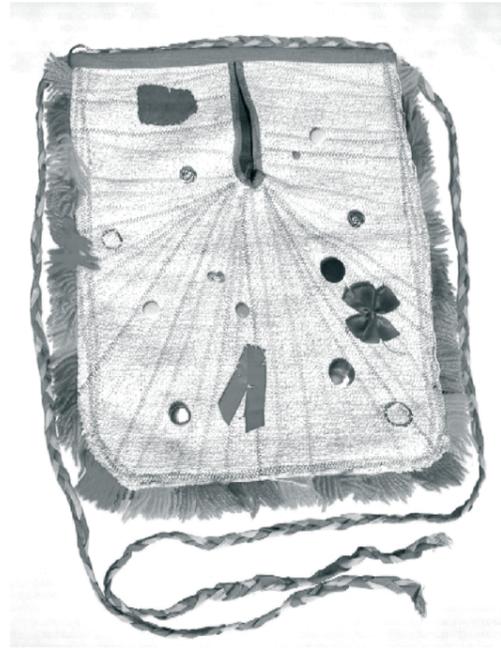
Heather Holmes

Eddie Cass: *Walter Scott, Sword Dancing & the Cruise to Nova Zembla*

What is sword dancing? The Scottish-style dance dodging back and fore and round over two crossed swords bears little relation to a more general pattern, where several dancers hold their swords and connect with their neighbours to form a complex knot. This occurs in several districts across Europe, and the sword dance in Papa Stour, one of the small Shetland islands, was of this latter kind. Scott heard of it during his visit to Shetland aboard *Pharos* during the cruise of the Commissioners for the Northern Lights (or Scottish and Manx lighthouses). The dance then figured in *The Pirate*, 1821. But Scott never actually saw the dance, underlined by the fact that what he described was impossible! His source information comes in Caddell's *Collected Works*, and obscured and second-hand through his son-in-law John Gibson Lockhart. Descriptions of both the words and actions of the dancers came from two other sources during the 19th century, and there is a photograph of 1926 (with swords made from barrel girds). But all this information merely compounds a mystery, because the leader of the dance is a St George, and the nearest text is in a mid-19th century academic English. How did this dance appear so remote from its cognate forms in for instance England and the Low Countries, and the spoken content out of kilter with the setting? A lively discussion followed this presentation, but shed no further light on the conundrum!

Gavin Spratt

Fionualla Carson Williams: *Beady pockets worn by traveller women*



Beady Pocket from the Aileen L'Amie Traveller Collection. The Linen Hall Library, Belfast. Photo courtesy of the Linen Hall Library.

This investigation of pockets worn by traveller women was sparked off by the Northern Ireland Museum Council's touring exhibition 'Our People Our Times' (2005-7) in which a replica example is included in the section on Travellers. In its original sense of a bag, pockets were commonly worn beneath a skirt by women in the eighteenth century. The practice began to die out from 1840 as built-in pockets in skirts became more usual. It remained for much longer, however, as a feature of the costume of the traveller community. Further information on the Irish context was gathered through a questionnaire survey of the Cork Women's Travellers' Group. This showed that the practice of wearing a pocket had been widespread until about twenty years previously. They were in the form of a flat bag or pouch, often made from black satin that was tied around the waist and normally worn on top of the skirt or apron. Inside, in addition to everyday things, might be kept family items such as children's' birth certificates and other important personal effects. Many women decorated the front of their pockets with buttons, brooches, beads and other keepsakes, hence the term *beady pockets* to describe them. As a result, the pockets themselves were highly individual and prized possessions that were often buried along with their owners. Beady pockets have since become a symbol of

Irish fabrics and Irish embroiderers. Linda notes that the styles have remained fluid during this early period, but that the characteristics of the form of costume that was to become iconic were already identifiable in the 1890s.

By the time of the establishment of the Irish Dance Commission, as might be expected, styles were becoming quite strictly fixed, indeed, regulated. The de Valera era is noted as being one of contradiction, with the real traditions of rural Ireland somewhat in conflict with the rather austere image projected by de Valera himself. One interesting fact seems to be that, following partition, Irish dancing developed on both sides of the religious and political divide, whereas other cultural aspects, such as that of language, story and song, were deemed to be solely the realm of the nationalist.

The existence of the Irish dance schools, along with the Dance Commission, seem to have contributed substantially to the standardisation, but it is interesting that Linda identifies the Irish diaspora, particularly in the USA and Canada, and the ever increasing number of dance competitions held there, as a strong influence towards standardisation. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the globalisation of the regulated competitions had extended into the southern hemisphere. An unlooked for result of this globalisation was the commercialism which attended it, and also the individual competitors, who began to spend large sums on ever more elaborately embroidered garments, even including the rhinestones of the title. The dance had become so regulated that performers sought to stand out in the decoration on their dress. As Linda comments, this tendency 'came dangerously close to toppling the idealised image of the iconic Irish dancer over the boundary of absurdity'.

The stunning, and to some, shocking, arrival of *Riverdance* on the international scene in 1994, with its high energy dance and simplified costumes, presented by dancers from an Irish American background, changed everything. In the words of the pro Vice Chancellor of the National University of Ireland, Irish dance had become, at a stroke:

'... a hybrid, drawing inspiration from international dance movements and cultivating a deliberate global appeal. Gone were the rigid dresses decorated with Celtic motifs; gone was the directory of approved steps. In place there was a visual spectacle embracing speed, sound, ... tap dancing, Flamenco and modern ballet'.

Linda follows this with an analysis of the effects of *Riverdance* upon the iconic form of both the dance and

the costumes. There is no shortage still of offers on websites to provide elaborately embroidered dance dresses. In fact, one additional aspect of dress seems to have developed in that girls must have curly hair, and fake curls are now included on websites offering complete dance outfits. The origins of this, and another item, that of the fake tan, are more difficult to fathom, but seem to owe their development more to that of the American beauty pageant rather than the dance competition. The female dancer is therefore becoming not only a cultural icon, but also a feminine icon, likened by Linda to 'a ritualised expression of the female that owes much to contemporary conspicuous consumption'.

This paper included vast mounts of information, much food for thought, and also promises further work in a growing and ever changing area of study. It was also, as usual, highly entertaining!

Christine Stevens

Members' Papers

John Baldwin: *Seabird Fowling Traditions from the Irish Sea Islands*

This started with a splendid map to establish a proper frame of orientation, that is the British Isles and beyond as seen facing south from the Butt of Lewis! The next map in a more conventional orientation showed how all the major fowling areas are open to the westerly blast of the Atlantic Ocean, the only exception being Man. The birds caught ranged from gannets, puffins, guillemots and razorbills to the Manx shearwater. How do we know about seabird fowling? Surprisingly, outside Scotland (where John has left a substantial record in the *Scottish Life Archive* of NMS) the museum archives are not particularly prolific. Much of the information comes from ornithological sources. Obviously, the character of fowling changed with the advance of industrialisation, in effect diminishing as isolated coastal and island communities did not have to be so self-sufficient. There were also curious asides, for instance how during the 19th century shipwrecks in several spots disgorged rats that effectively decimated the seabird populations by raiding their nests and burrows. But beyond the traditions of catching the birds lies another world of belief and perception. Niall's Saga contains interesting hints of pre-Christian superstitions. And the hairy experience of a young rabbit catcher who found himself storm-bound on the island of Skokkholm in the 1920s when he was mobbed by shearwaters provided a graphic account as to how people can come to believe a place is haunted. In all, this was a fascinating glimpse into an all but vanished world. But not vanished altogether! As John mentioned

after, the men of Ness in Lewis still bring home the *guga* from Sula Sgeir once a year, and if you are lucky you can get a sample for the freezer: a fine rounded taste of chicken and fish!

Gavin Sprott

Alan Pearsall: *The Waverley Line*

In the bar of the *George and Abbotsford* conference hotel there is a splendid post WWII photograph of the Thames-Forth express making its way through Melrose on the famous Waverley route. At Melrose, a substantial part of the station buildings still stand a monument to the pre-Beeching era. Alan Pearsall explained the growth of this North British Railway line, which from 1876 provided an alternative route to the east and west coast lines to and from Edinburgh. Smart Midland Railway coaches were a feature of the service, which passed through fine scenery, both on the Settle and Carlisle sections and through the Borders, by Newcastleton, Hawick, St Boswells, Melrose and Gala, where it tackled some of the most difficult gradients and sharp curves on British main lines. The Borders connection was celebrated in the naming of locomotives after Scott characters, such as *The Pirate* and *Wandering Willy*. More dignified, perhaps, was the name *Abbotsford* (Scott's country house visited by conference delegates) given to a large 'Atlantic' type loco introduced c.1900. Alan's postscript was that the last LNER Clyde steamer still running is the *Waverley*.

Brian Loughbrough

Peter Brears: *Elizabeth Cleland and the Paxton House Kitchen*

Paxton House lies in the Scottish Borders and, while part of this early Georgian mansion has been open to the public for some time, restoration work on the kitchen was only begun more recently. Peter Brears was involved with this and in his fascinating member's paper he expertly guided us through, not only the structure and materials used in the kitchen, but gave us an insight into the cooking associated with it in its earliest period. John Adams' surviving original plan depicts the kitchen in the basement below the reception rooms; however, it was actually built as a separate wing, connected to the rest of the house by a curving passage. Architecturally, Peter's paper concentrated on the main room of the kitchen wing, in particular, the main fireplace wall there.

The kitchen had what appeared to be ashlar stone walls, however, as restoration work proceeded, most of these proved to be mock and were, in fact, plaster painted to

resemble stonework. Before this project, people thought that, if walls were painted, the colour blue would be used in an effort to repel insects. During the work it was discovered that the corner built in domed oven had been modified before 1800. This was restored to how it had looked originally and Peter's illustrations showed it and the twigs used to try heating it up to the appropriate temperature for baking, as it would have been in the past. As well as restoring the oven, another major part of the work was to install a new stone floor.

The restoration was greatly assisted by an early extant inventory belonging to the house and also by a fascinating cookery book, not only contemporary with the building of the house but, as Peter unfolded the story, probably actually used by a lady of the house. Published in Edinburgh in 1755 and called *A new and easy method of cookery* the book contained about seven hundred recipes which, it claimed, were neither noble nor peasant. The book was written by the lady in the title of the paper—Elizabeth Cleland. Although city of Edinburgh records for her are elusive, her book states that it was written for young ladies who attended the school in her house in the Luckenbooths near St. Giles' cathedral. Surviving copies of the book are extremely rare but one of those extant is in the archive of the Home family of Paxton House. About the time of the book's publication Christine Home was the young woman who had the heavy responsibility of running an extensive household which included three uncles and it is likely that Cleland's book was a mainstay to her.

It was the second cookery book to be published in Scotland but was much lengthier than the first and therefore gives a more extensive picture into Scottish cookery than the earlier one. In his paper Peter Brears, as well as describing Georgian kitchen architecture, gave members a real insight into the dishes that were prepared in it, based on the Cleland book. Contrary to expectations, for example, there were no recipes for haggis or petticoat tails (shortbread).

Peter neatly brought together his research and the conference location not just in the Borders but in Melrose itself: a second of the very few extant copies of this book is in the Abbotsford library.

The paper was packed with detail in each of its aspects—architecture, people, cookery, location—and linked together satisfactorily like pieces of an old wooden jigsaw. Paxton House culinary life was most satisfactorily rekindled by the expertise with which Peter made the connections, his enthusiastic style and by the

few choice illustrations. Members will be pleased to know that a facsimile edition of the book comprehensively introduced by Peter has become available since the conference: *Mrs. Cleland's Scottish Cookery, A New and Easy Method of Cookery by Elizabeth Cleland (1755) with an introduction by Peter Brears*, The Paxton Trust, Berwick Upon Tweed, and Prospect Books, Totnes, Devon, 2005, ISBN 1-903018-39-0.

Fionualla Carson Williams

Roy Brigden: *The Rural Museums Network*

This Society has, from the outset, maintained a very active interest in rural museums, and has effectively provided a meeting point and forum for those working in or involved with rural museums. Some years ago, the formation of a Rural Museums Action Group was facilitated via the Society, with Catherine Wilson and Gavin Sprott successively leading the Group. In his Member's Paper, Roy Brigden – who is now the Chairman of what has become the Rural Museums Network, with a membership of some fifty – summarised progress to date and indicated targets set.

The Rural Museums Network has adopted a constitution, has achieved charitable status and has established a website as well as a discussion group. It was pointed out that individuals with an interest in its subject matter can become associate members. Some funding has also been obtained: via a bid to the MLA, £36k is now available to fund the development of a long term plan called the Building Relevance Programme. This is in fact crucial to the survival of most rural museums, which tend to have been established some time ago and which, accordingly, have collections that are relevant to their period of gestation. As Roy noted, today's generation of rural history curators might not always appreciate the relevance of some of these collections. At the same time, rural museums need to evolve in order to remain relevant to current and future expectations.

There are two main strands to the Building Relevance Programme. Firstly, there is the need to analyse audience expectation, in the sense of discovering why people do or don't visit rural museums. Is this perhaps because of inappropriate presentation of the subject matter? On the other hand, we know via our television screens that general interest in food and famine has never been higher.

The second strand deals with an analysis of collections. What do these rural museums collections amount to? – do they have the status of a national collection, dispersed

around a series of sites? If that is the case, then strengths, weaknesses and gaps need to be identified. With Catherine Wilson's help, a methodology has been developed for gathering collection information, object categories and subject areas have been identified, and a collections working group has started to assimilate this information. Having built up a composite picture, advice on further development can be provided.

In conclusion, Roy pointed out that useful information in respect of both strands is already being gathered. Dairying has been selected as the first of the key themes that will draw information together, and it's expected that the results of this process will become available in 2006.

Dafydd Roberts

Cozette Griffin Kremer: *The Animal Draft Network*

Cozette provided an informative overview of the development of the Draft Animal Network. She noted that since the early 1970s when the French Ministry of Agriculture stopped taking the census of oxen and working horses in the early 1970s, there had been a number of changes in the use of these livestock, and in man's relationship with them. For example, technological change has appeared, even in the old societies. She asked whether people can influence the course of development in sustainable agriculture and energy use?

The International Meeting on Animals at Work in Alzen, held at the Alzen Open Air Museum, south-west France, in October 2004 brought together specialists in working with a wide range of aspects of draft animals from Belgium, England, France, Germany, Portugal and the USA. The proceedings, which included lectures, exhibitions and demonstrations, were recorded in a DVD on the future of animals at work.

She noted that the LIARA Newsletter (Lettre d'Information/Amis de la Rencontre d'Alzen) announced upcoming events which involved animals at work, reports on recent events, details new publications and documents, information on open air museums and other places that regularly have demonstrations with working animals, censuses and bibliography.

In addition to this newsletter, which provides a "meeting ground" for the Network, it has a website, holds a meeting every two years as well as proceedings. It will hold an international colloquium on oxen at work.