

folk life NEWSLETTER

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The George & Abbotsford Hotel, Melrose

The Annual Conference for 2005: MELROSE, SCOTTISH BORDERS

The 2005 Society's annual conference is to be held in the beautiful borders town of Melrose. The main venue which will provide conference facilities and accommodation is the centrally located, family run George and Abbotsford Hotel.

As out-going president, Gavin Sprott has the privilege of choosing the location of the conference and suggesting the theme. This year's conference then is to be themed around **Frontiers**:

'All of us have the experience of crossing boundaries, from the familiar to the strange. On one level this is a personal and potentially disturbing happening..... on another level it reveals a lot about the fault-lines that both separate and conjoin peoples and social groups'.

'The dual sense of difference and connectedness lies at the heart of ethnological study. It ranges from the material culture of everyday existence to belief and attitude. So it is an appropriate and stimulating theme for the Society to pursue. Frontiers can of course be physical or psychological, they can also be linguistic or ethereal. Indeed this particular theme is in itself almost 'frontierless!'

In addition to a stimulating theme there will of course be a variety of excursions, the home of Walter Scott at Abbotsford and the National Trust for Scotland's Robert Smailes Print Works on are the menu and Melrose Abbey too is a must see. The Scottish Borders is famous for its beautiful scenery and intriguing history.

As usual the Society will aim to keep the cost of the conference to around £250 per person. For further information please contact Dafydd Roberts, National Museums and Galleries of Wales email: Dafydd.Roberts@nmgw.ac.uk

A booking form is enclosed, please note a non refundable £50 deposit must be received by 1st August in order to secure a place.

If any member is willing to offer either a member's paper or full conference paper please contact Elaine Edwards, email: e.edwards@nms.ac.uk

A free student place at the 2005 conference

The Society is always looking for ways to encourage greater involvement in our activities so this year we are offering a free place to a student in full time education. Anyone interested please contact Dr. Eddie Cass email: eddie.cass@btinternet.com

Study Day: Monday May 9th 2005 Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Road, London

The next Society for Folk Life Studies study day will be held in London at Cecil Sharp House, the home of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Malcolm Taylor OBE, the librarian of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library will conduct the day which will include a talk on the history of the Society and of the library. Participants will have an opportunity to see the library, some of the folk materials which are held at Cecil Sharp House as well as having access to the photographic and sound archives.

A visit to the library is of especial interest at the moment as discussions are taking place within EFDSS for the founding of an institute of English traditional arts in conjunction with a university; an institute which would have the power to award degrees. At the core of any such institute will be the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. The day will start with coffee at 11.00 and conclude at approximately 4.00pm. It may be possible to arrange for a sandwich lunch to be served in the café at the house in which case the cost for the day will be around £5. If, however, bookings for the use of other rooms in the building are heavy, it may be preferable to use local facilities for lunch. The decision on which option to choose will be made nearer the occasion. Hence, no booking fee is necessary at present.

Due to constraints of space in the library, numbers for this study day must be restricted to 12. Will anybody wanting to participate please contact Eddie Cass by phone at 0161 881 8640 or by email at eddie.cass@btinternet.com If demand for the day is heavy, it may be possible to arrange a second visit on another occasion.

**The Annual Conference for 2006
is to be held in the ever delightful
Yorkshire Dales**

The theme will be *Upland Landscape*; The focus will be natural and man made prehistoric landscape features; the unique geology of the area e.g. Craven fault; lime extraction – Hoffman kiln; stone extraction – lime and slate quarrying; lead mining; upland farming; limestone pavements; pot holes; dry stone walls.....

Suggested visits include the Dale Countryside Museum, Grassington & Hebdon Moor, Victoria Cave, Gaping Gill/Long Churn, limestone quarry, Ribbleshead viaduct, Tom Lord's farm.

The possibility of using Skipton as the venue and for our accommodation is being evaluated. The all important entertainment is also being looked into and suggestions so far included pot holing, a talk on Yorkshire dialect and a barbecue with the folk club.

So the dates for your diary are 14th Sept to 17th Sept.

**The Annual Conference 2004:
MANOIR DE KERNAULT, BRITTANY**



Delegates at the 2004 Conference

Brian Loughbrough chaired the introductory scene setting session and welcomed members of the Society and our French hosts:

“Bienvenue à notre reunion ici à Mellac. C'est la première fois que notre société se réunit en France. D'autrefois nous avons visité beaucoup de pays et régions près de la côte Atlantique – Irlande, Ecosse, Pays de Galles, Cornouailles et plus récemment, Jersey. Mais aujourd'hui nous sommes très heureux d'être ici en Bretagne”.

Jean-Pierre Gestin, founder of the Ecomusée de Bretagne, spoke of “**The Ecomusée as a mirror of its society: the realities of a museum adventure**” and described the beginnings of the movement in France in 1966 when, stimulated by Georges Henri Rivière, new museums were established in Armorique, Landes, Carmargue and Cévennes. They were not museums in a park (cf St. Fagans or Skansen), but rather buildings in their environment. The first was established in Ushant, where Jean-Pierre came in 1968 with the background of film maker and not as a museum person. The timetable was demanding; a new museum had to be opened in three months. In the early days there was also some urgency to record the songs and traditions remembered by elderly people, “old girl friends” aged 70+, and to collect artefacts and furniture which were often thrown away.

By 1972 a group of people from these museums, often non-specialists, had begun to meet twice a year to discuss and refine their perceptions of the ecomuseum as identified by ICOM and sought to realise a working definition. They settled upon the concept of the museum being in and part of the living environment, including neighbouring people and landscape. The museum was to be a mirror of the local society “in perpetual evolution”, where “life is always unbalanced” and changing. This definition continues to be challenging, especially where the museum occupies a house in a particular location, for in some cases there has been little to record as “interesting neighbourhood events” in the period 1968 – 2004 and limited evolution of local space, landscape, architecture and fields.

Today there is a current audit to find new means of interpretation for these museums, to identify a key to orientate them in Armorica and to insert *energy*, which in turn will determine the impact of the museum. The question is how to understand such matters as cultivation, conservation, food keeping, past and present, within this concept of energy, perhaps so far mis-applied and not well understood. Within the next five years the Conseil General Finistere (the local authority) is to consider how to realise the concept. (Does some of this sound familiar, I wonder?).

Jean-Pierre then showed why the island of Ouessant or Ushant, well known for the Creac'h lighthouse, had been such a good first choice. It was isolated with poor communications, wild and had remarkable natural and man-made landscapes. Older agricultural practices were

still followed or remembered. Breast ploughs were to be seen and distinctive methods of stacking and use of straw ropes were recorded. Scarce local raw materials were supplemented by wreck goods from the sea, especially timber and little was wasted. Local two-roomed houses contained a kitchen and a beautiful sanctuary. The Mont d'Arrec, a "local Mt St Michel", overlooks open ground, then an enclosure landscape of dense close fields, rocks, fences and hollow ways (chemins creux), frequently covered in mist. The museum contains property unchanged since 1872; when the last family inhabitants died in 1972 it was found that nothing had been moved and that the listings in the hundred-year old inventory were still correct. The museum set about recording, preparing drawings, photographs, and noting surviving methods and practices. They also gather witness evidence of modern pollution and disasters. The recording has also informed restoration of certain buildings including a bakery with an earth roof and a broom thatched barn. The site has been used as film set and educational programmes provide pupils with experiences of former times, ploughing, using the threshing floor, baking, pottery, slate cutting and a market.

Today the island is much more accessible, in summer at least, and it will be interesting to see how the écomusée responds. This was an excellent introduction to the theme of the conference *Shaping the Future: constructive interpretations of heritage*.

Brian Loughbrough

Carolina Castel-Carpinschi is engaged in a doctoral dissertation on threshing techniques used in France between 1786-1950, at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, Paris. From this experience she tackled the question, can one still investigate traditional agriculture in present-day France?

Most evidently, one can. She has pursued three lines: tools, festival demonstrations, and internet investigation. Starting with the latter, Carolina stressed the importance of making the investigation interesting to correspondents and of relevance to local historians. Those returns that did not turn up original information often led to others that did. The internet enabled her to get in contact with a good range of contacts, up to two to three more each day. Putting living memory on line was a stimulus to more, and a source of interest to friends and families.

Old-time threshing demonstrations were often an aspect of harvest festivals, and there might be between three to ten in any one Département. She showed a video of one example in Brittany. This showed the preparation of the area with clay, the wetting of it followed by a bare-foot dance to compact the clay. To this was added about half

a ton of muck in the form of slurry, which was then left covered for two weeks. Come the day, the sheaves were spread, and beaten with flails turn about. Carolina used this example to point up the differences in neighbouring areas such as Normandy. She also spoke of threshing flax (in Brittany into the first half of the last century) that employed an entirely different range of techniques involving iron combs and bashing sheaves over a slatted bench.

Carolina had also looked at old mail-based surveys from the 1950s. They related just to the tools and techniques. What was evident and of great interest in her talk was the range of contextual information she was recording. To achieve that so far into the age of tractor and combine is some achievement.

Gavin Sprott

Scottish agricultural writers and the creation of their personal identities in the 18th century: Heather Holmes

This paper was a survey, chiefly based on title pages, of the writers behind Scottish agricultural books published from 1697 to 1790, the period marking the transformation from subsistence farming to the basis of modern agriculture. For her corpus Heather Holmes drew on the bibliography 'Early Scottish agricultural writers (1697-1790)' THASS, 5th series XLIII, pp. 79-85, published in 1931 by J. A. S. Watson and G. D. Amery. Seventy-seven books, a few of which were Scottish reprints of English texts have been identified for the period. The 1750s saw an increase in the number of titles, with a further increase in the 1760s. The last decade of the century was an era of expansion, either by revisions to previous works to incorporate the new agricultural developments or by additional volumes to previous works. In addition some titles were also simply reprinted. Their subject matter covers agriculture in a broad sense and extends to bee keeping, fishing and forestry.

While biographical details of some of the writers of these works have been published Holmes' paper was probably the first to analyse their identities. Some of the agricultural books were published anonymously but, these aside, forty-four different writers have been identified. From the title pages Holmes has managed to extract a certain amount of detail about the authors and thus to categorise them into three groups. The writers were all male and the first group represents various occupations such as legal and medical. There were also three clergymen as might be expected as many churches had a glebe. One was a teacher and one a merchant. This group included an economist, James Anderson, who was the most prolific of all the writers. The second of Holmes' groups consists of people who were involved

with the land from landowner to labourer. Seven tenant farmers had put pen to paper and also James Small, plough- and 'cartman' and inventor of the swing plough. The last group comprises agricultural societies, both all-Scotland and regional.

Of the individual writers, some used pseudonyms such as 'Agricola' and in her paper Holmes explained the significance behind these. Most writers produced one book but some two and Holmes cleverly exposed the reasons for subtle alterations in identity from a primary work to a subsequent one.

As well as demonstrating how to maximise on details of writer's identities from title pages, this paper provided a survey of the growth and development of Scottish books on agriculture and prompted me, for one, to check my locality for similar material.

Fionnuala Carson Williams

New Light from Illustrations of Irish Wake Practices



Shane Lehane

As usual, Shane gave an excellently-delivered, informative and thought-provoking paper, his topic on this occasion being Irish wake customs and their depiction in 18th and 19th century prints and paintings. Using the work of five artists (Nathaniel Grogan, J.C. Timbrell, N.A. Woods, Frederick W Burton and anon) Shane skilfully showed how such genre painting depicting the Irish peasantry can be analysed to provide detailed information on both folk customs and their artefacts as well as a more general escatology.

Many commentators on Irish life noted the elaborate nature of wakes following a person's death. These would take place either in the home of the deceased or a nearby barn, well heated by a large fire. The corpse would be laid out, with three or five candles (according to whether it was showed or in its own clothes) within a makeshift "tent" of bed sheets. Keeners would be in attendance and

as family and friends came to pay their last respects they would be plied with alcoholic drink, tobacco and snuff.. These were important gatherings in the community and much socialising, gossip and courtship took place during the wake.

Some time ago Gearoid O Cruaioich identified how the overall tone of the wake was set by the nature of the person's death. A sudden or untimely demise was seen as unnatural and a cause of a sad and restrained wake. Shane provided a pictorial example of this in the poignant painting, *The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child* (1841) by Frederick William Burton. But a death from natural causes after a long life was considered something to be celebrated with jollity. The practical jokes (such as mixing pepper into the tobacco of the wake-pipes) and a wide range of games played by attendees at such wakes were first discussed in detail by Sean O Suillebhan, and shown by Shane to be depicted in amazing detail in Nathaniel Grogan's *The Wake* (1783).

I am really looking forward to reading the full version of this paper in a forthcoming volume of *Folk Life*, not only for the wealth of information on wakes provided by Shane, but also to consider in more detail the way in which the work of genre artists (from minor book illustrations to academic paintings) can provide important evidence of folk customs and their material culture.

Image of drowned girl



Steph Mastoris

Walking tour of the Manoir de Kernault



Many of the Conference activities; the talks, presentations, coffee breaks and lunches, took place at the Manoir de Kernault at Mellac, just a few kilometres from the Hotel Kervidanou where most of the delegates were staying. After the members' papers on the Friday morning, we were given a guided tour of the site by Fañch Postic, who is based at the Manoir in his capacity as Head of the *Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur la Littérature Orale*, and Jean-Françoise Simon, an expert on the traditional architecture of Brittany and who is the Director of the *Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique* at the University of Brest.

Historically, the Manoir was very much a feature of the Brittany landscape in, and there were once literally thousands of such estates ranging in size from a few score hectares to those whose lands numbered several hundred. The Manoir de Kernault was originally established by the de Lescoët family who, through a series of judicious marriages, had become the most powerful landowners in the area.

The manorial buildings have survived in remarkably complete condition. The Manor house is an impressive 3-storeyed building forming one side of an enclosed courtyard. Although construction is believed to have been started around 1450, its present appearance owes much to alterations carried out during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That said, sufficient medieval features have survived, including four massive and imposing chimney stacks, and a carved gable kneeler-stone in the form of a grotesque animal, to indicate its importance and status at that time. Attached to the west end of the main house is further evidence of the site's medieval origins, in the form of a small building containing a chapel on the first floor reached by an external flight of stone steps. Inside, one could not but be amazed at the stained glass and the wonderful timberwork of the roof, the latter all made from chestnut.

Set into the front wall of the house are a number of small round clay pots, with their openings facing outwards. Their function is not known for certain, but it is possible that they were intended to attract small birds to nest, where they could then be trapped (and eaten!) If this is the case, then they are not only unique in Brittany, but are amongst the earliest surviving examples in a building anywhere in Europe. Evidence for some of the major works carried out at the house during the early seventeenth century can be seen in the carved chestnut ceiling beams in the main hall, one of which bears the name of the carpenter and the date 1627. A century later, the then owner, Jacques-René du Vergier commissioned the architect Antoine Forestier to up-date the interior, resulting in the carved wall panelling and ornate fireplace in the hall.

Opposite, and parallel to the house, is a wonderful granary range, raised on 11 timber posts. The ground floor is open on the courtyard side but enclosed at the back. The upper structure is timber-framed, infilled with wattle and daub, whilst the ends of the building are stone-built. Four dormers which were originally located on the south side of this range were, apparently, taken down and incorporated in the main house in 1935.

During the 19th century in particular, the family took a great interest in agriculture, and in improving crops and yields; their tenants being encouraged to follow their example. The Manoir remained in the same family line for more than 500 years when, following the death of the last resident in 1989, it was purchased by the Département of Finistère who decided to restore it. When this work commenced in 1990, the attic revealed a number of surprises, including parts of a 14th century stained glass window and three Flemish tapestries, one dating from the mid-16th century, and the other two from the 17th century.

Whilst some buildings were restored to their original appearance, others were sympathetically adapted for use as offices, a lecture room, shop, and visitor facilities as well as a very good little restaurant, *Le Gôûter Breton*, outside which, on the last day was held the Society's (first ever al fresco?) Annual General Meeting. Surprisingly perhaps, the four dormers were not returned to the granary range during this restoration work but were kept on the main house. The Manoir nowadays serves as a conference and research centre and includes a 30 ha parkland that is open to the general public for most of the year. Whilst we were there, there was an exhibition in the main house focusing on the history of whaling and its role and significance in the Breton economy and culture.

It should be said that the restoration work that has been carried out to the house, chapel and barn is quite

outstanding and has been very sensitively executed, and fully deserves the plaudits that were rained down on it by the Society's members.

Gerallt D. Nash

**'Contemporary folklore with a vengeance': folklore and folklife in Stephen Booth's *Blind to the Bones*.
Linda Ballard**

It is always a pleasure to come across another reader of one's favourites detectives stories – it is an even greater delight to come across that fellow reader delivering a paper which has additional insights to a novel one has already enjoyed. Stephen Booth was born in Burnley, a cotton town in Lancashire, close to the Dark Peak country in which his detectives Ben Cooper and Diane Fry pursue their police work. In this paper Linda Ballard examined the manner in which Booth uses folklore in order to develop his plot.

Booth has an affinity with the Dark Peak in which his novels are set and Ballard illustrated how this affinity affects his descriptions of the valleys and moors, much as Hardy used the landscape of Wessex so effectively. The novelist also has a self-declared interest in local history which manifests itself in the stories of the building of the Woodhead railway tunnels which play their part in the murder mystery as well as providing a legendary core for the activities of the Border Rats, the border morris side which, with its dance and mumming play, has an essential role in the book.

Whilst the paper concentrated on Booth's novel, Ballard also touched on other fictions in order to show how Stephen Booth's use of folklore differed from the use made by some other novelists. Ballard cited *Off With His Head* by Ngaio Marsh and *Snow* by Orhan Pamuk as examples of novels which incorporate folklore and custom as essential plotting devices. As Ballard rightly points out, the use which Booth and Pamuk make of folklore in countries as different as Britain and Turkey differs fundamentally from the use Marsh made in her novel, first published in 1957. For Marsh, the folk customs which are central to her plot are a reflection of a people who felt that they had lost part of a pre-war culture. She was of her time and writing in the context of the post-war folk revival. Booth and Pamuk, however, are writing in a different cultural milieu and both 'present the profound significance of folklore for the present'; each author being deeply aware of contemporary scholarship. Ballard suggests that in this awareness, Booth 'presents a new literary prism for, and reflects a fresh paradigm available to, folklore and folklore scholars'.

This was a very stimulating paper and, I hope, not the last we shall hear of Ballard on the subject.

Eddie Cass

Review of paper by Catherine Wilson on the Distributed National Collection.

Catherine, together with David Viner has been working for some time now on the development of a Distributed National Collection (DNC) of Agricultural objects. This work was supported as part of a Strategic Change Fund grant made to the Museum of English Rural Life, which also resulted in the establishment of the Rural Museums Network.

The work started with a Scoping and Development Study, published in January 2004. This included results of 2 surveys sent to the 33 members of the Rural Museums Network at that time. The first attempted to gain a rough idea of the current composition of museum collections, the second was a survey looking specifically at the tractors held by museums and attempted to rank them by condition and significance. The document proposed moving on from the survey to holding a "Collections Working Group", this was to provide an opportunity to review the survey results and make use not just of museum expertise, but also private enthusiasts and collectors.

The initial meeting of the Rural Museums Network at Reading in March 2004 saw substantial enthusiasm for the development and to allow this to proceed quickly combine harvesters were selected as a distinct category, with low numbers. A further survey was completed and a collections working day held in July at the Museum of Scottish Country Life, Kitching, Kitching. This resulted in a comprehensive review of all of the combines held in museums in the UK, giving an agreed rating based on significance and condition.

This work should be the foundation of a truly significant development of country life collections, permitting collecting policy to be considered within a national context and supporting the appropriateness of items which are of major significance. It is anticipated that further work on this topic will form part of the core activity of the emerging Rural Museums Network.

D M Dornan



Some Instances of the Protection of Buildings (from the outside) in Brittany and Ireland
Fionnuala Carson Williams

In this paper Fionnuala explored the concept of building protection in Ireland and Brittany. Her interest arose when Fionnuala discovered a horseshoe outside her neighbours' house, right in the heart of Belfast city. Such traditions are usually associated with rural life and past generations, but this particular horseshoe not only seemed to be an urban example, but also contemporary. According to her neighbours, the horseshoe was left by the previous owners as a blessing and they didn't want to move it or the luck would run out. Was this a contemporary phenomenon? Fionnuala set about to find more examples. One of her colleagues had only just received three horseshoes from her family farm in Banbridge, Co. Down, and had nailed one of them on the back door of her new house. Another colleague who grew up in west Belfast said that it was common practice to hang horseshoes on the doors of sheds and outhouses in the 1970s.

Other instances of building protection became apparent. Fionnuala was fortunate enough to reacquaint herself with Mary Donohue, a Traveller, who lived in a static caravan on a Travellers site. According to Mary, Travellers would paint horseshoes on to the sides of their caravans. Was this also an example of protection with something made of iron against bad luck or harm?

During an interview conducted by one of Fionnuala's students with Michael Digney, a fisherman from Ardglass, the tradition of buildings having a projecting stone to catch the eye and deflect the evil from the house itself was discussed. Whilst on holiday in Brittany during the summer of 2003, Fionnuala spotted similar examples of building protection. In S. Samson Church in Morbihan, a piece of quartz was built in to the wall in the apse enclosing the altar. A few kilometres down the road

a horseshoe was found attached to the stonework at the back of a holy-well and at the fountain in St Éloi, three horseshoes were attached in a trefoil arrangement. The last discovery was a horseshoe built into the wall of a small church just outside Pontivy, at Sainte Tréphine. The horseshoe was located in exactly the same position in the apse as the quartz noticed in S. Samson.

In Ireland horseshoes were placed on buildings for protection, they were easily accessible and easy to put up. It can only be assumed that the same is true of the instances Fionnuala discovered in Brittany. It is interesting that in Ireland the horseshoes are found on secular buildings whilst in Brittany Fionnuala found them at holy sites which often have other conventional Christian protection in the form of iron crosses. Although Fionnuala emphasised that these findings were incidental to a holiday as opposed to focussed fieldwork, her paper raised many interesting issues and would be a fascinating field of study.

Mared Wyn McAlevey

Guy Jaouen, President of the European Association for Traditional Games and Sports, presented an after-dinner talk on the objectives and perspectives of the Association and its role in promoting activities that encourage people both to continue enjoying traditional pastimes and to affirm their place as actors to be counted within the development of identity, be it individual, local, regional or beyond. He introduced the topic with two videos, the first on a game of (literally) flying skittles in Cantabria, Spain, and a stick game played in the Italian Valle d'Aosta, neatly showing the skills involved both for the players and the makers of the equipment. The Association was born in 2001 as a result of seminars begun in the late 1980s that effectively raised awareness of the lack of records and research on traditional games, as well as the difficulties in defining them, even though they are ubiquitous in popular festivals and other events in the regular calendar of community life. The Association's goals include careful inventorying of games and providing alternatives to the dominant references in sports, thus highlighting the importance of their social context. In Europe, this means bringing together some 600,000 players in a network maintaining fruitful information flow with the EU and UNESCO to increase recognition and pride, but also to encourage people to play other people's games as a means of intercultural communication. The talk stimulated a lively discussion that further emphasized how particularly rich the field of traditional games and sports can be for folk life researchers.

Cozette Griffin Kremer

An attempt to detect and define the variety of 'the past in the future' heritage phenomenon in Slovenia: the role of the S.E.M. in this process. Inja Smerdel (Keeper, Slovene Ethnographic Museum)

What does the Slovene Ethnographic Museum do? Like most other museums, it collects, collates, interprets and presents, and by doing so it becomes, effectively, a "laboratory of the memory". But it is not alone in this respect, given that this type of work is undertaken by other state-funded organisations in Slovenia, as well as by a variety of more locally-funded museums, and even by groups of non professionals. Cultural heritage, it is argued, has become a commodity. At one end of the scale is the museum, caring for its collections. At the other, arguably, is the set-dressing to be seen in pubs, restaurants or shopping centres. Somewhere in between these sits the stereotypical depiction of the supposed characteristics of a particular region or town, such as the allegedly "merry people" of Prlekija.

Much that has always been seen as the monopoly of the museum sector has been taken up by others. Replicas of artefacts are produced for purchase by tourists and visitors, while traditional meals and dishes are rediscovered for a similar market. Architectural or technical heritage is reproduced in model form for collectors. Iconic Slovene structures, such as the iconic hayricks, have been adopted as support structures for advertising hoardings. The lime tree, at one time identifiable as a gathering point within the heart of each village, now has its leaves incorporated into wedding stationery, and has its symbolism coveted by politicians

Is there then anything left for museums to do, at a time when culture has become a happening or an event, when society is becoming a "museum", but when everything is far from its roots? The advantage that museums possess is that they contain original objects, underpinned by a wealth of curatorial information. The Slovene Ethnographic Museum has set out to maximise its particular advantage by developing a series of innovative educational programmes based on its collections, targeting clearly defined visitor sectors. Their new buildings are geared to delivering these programmes, and the live demonstration of traditional skills by knowledgeable, enthusiastic craftsmen lies at the heart of their strategy for the future.

Dafydd Roberts

The Anthropologist AND the Collection or Vs the Collection. Jean-François Charnier

Jean-François Charnier delivered a most thought-provoking analysis of the role of the object/collection within museums and in doing so, questioned the purpose and function of the museum in terms of individual, local, national and/or universal relevancies.

He began by offering a comprehensive survey of the differing approaches to the museum object/collection, noting that there is now a perceived 'tyranny of the object' in a museum context. Conservation, collection and exhibition policy has been shaped very much by the trend to create a 'cultural event' with little regard for the independence of the object. Tongue in cheek, he added that in the French context, such an approach is most usually accompanied by gastronomic interpretation and celebration!

In addition, Jean-François observed that museum collections and their presentation to the public is often now shaped by the ego of the curator and their desire to 'make a name for themselves' within the museum/culture/arts world: the object has become a vehicle for reflecting the charisma and intellect of the curator. In turn, in the manner that 'new archaeology' has suggested that we 'dig in the air' for ideas and perceptions, the 'new museology' does not operate from the point of view of the object, but the object merely features as an element of discussion and debate: the resulting perception(s) is what constitutes the heritage.

According to Jean-François, the discussions pertaining to the development of two new museums in France have prompted a bi-polar approach to interpretation. The first museum, may well have no collection of material culture whatsoever, dealing with non-object specific topics, such as 'Water' or 'Men & Women', while in the case of the second museum, the opposite strategy is envisaged, where there will only be objects, masks, carvings and so on.

Jean-François asserted that the emphasis on such extremes might be considered a testimony to the French sensibility and a more pragmatic approach is required. To this end, he emphasised that it should be remembered that the 'object' is always set within any discussion. In short, in an environmental context, we need to remind ourselves that not only do we shape objects but objects also shape us.

The paper was very well received and Jean-François certainly gave the many curators of material culture a lot to think about and discuss for the remainder of the conference.

Shane Lehane

Some remarks on the uses and limits of oral history: the case of ploughing practices

François Sigaut, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris

François Sigaut used the example of ploughing practices and their associated ploughs to demonstrate the advantages of oral history in revealing evidence on an aspect of material culture which had been a fashionable area of scholarship in the 1950s, but were now neglected. His paper asked the question 'what did people do with their ploughs?' He suggested that the answer to this question was not straightforward as a range of ploughs were used: the cultivation of cereals required six or seven different kinds of ploughs and each of these had their own specific activities associated with them. For example, during the cultivation of spring oats, the soil was ploughed in late winter or early spring and the oats sown and the soil harrowed thereafter. For barley, the soil underwent two or three ploughings. Winter grain which was sown in October or November, had three different ploughings, the first of which was undertaken in May, and each was undertaken by a different plough: the first ploughing was conducted with a flat plough or ard, the second was a short mouldboard one and the third one an ard with a very long mould board. Each plough and its ploughing practices had a special name, and specific linguistic patterns being noted throughout western Europe.

Sigaut noted the difficulties in gathering evidence on these ploughs and their techniques. He suggested that illustrations could assist in understanding them, though these were not always available. Some published accounts also existed, and a number of good ones were available in nineteenth century published literature; none were to be had before this date. However, the absence of such sources of evidence made it difficult to understand the use of ploughs and ploughing practices. As the subject was a complex one with much detail, the collection of oral accounts could be problematic: (1) the oral historian had to be precise and specific in asking questions; (2) not all oral historians asked questions which were sufficiently detailed to develop and provide a complete account of ploughs and their ploughing techniques; (3) suitable informants had to be identified and located and with the passage of time and the development of new ploughing practices, informants had become less numerous and more difficult to locate.

Sigaut went on to describe a range of practices that were used to cover grain seeds when they were sown. He noted that this could be undertaken by ploughing the seed under or by harrowing. These practices had a distinct geographical distribution throughout Europe. In the Mediterranean area (and also western France along the Atlantic Coast, up to and including Brittany), the seeds were always ploughed under; the harrow was very rare and was also unknown before the 19th century. In a

few areas of North Europe, the seeds were always harrowed; ploughing them under was unknown. In between these two areas, both techniques were used. Sigaut provided an interesting, well illustrated and very clear account of a complex subject and approaches in the study of it.

Heather Holmes

St. Teilo – the Welsh-Breton connection

Gerallt Nash

Gerallt, as Curator of Buildings at the Museum of Welsh Life, is currently working on the re-erection of a medieval church dedicated to St Teilo, which originally stood in the village of Llandeilo, near Pontardulais. The church dates from the 12th century and reached its final form in the 15th. It was altered internally during the 18th & 19th centuries and was in a derelict condition when offered to the Museum. During its recording before removal, traces of rare medieval wall paintings were found. The decision was taken to rebuild the church to its 15th century form. This has led to considerable research into the wall paintings and other internal details to ensure that the reproduction is as accurate as possible. In particular, research into the life of St Teilo has been undertaken. He was born about 500AD, a contemporary of St David, and set up a religious community at Llandeilo. He later travelled to Brittany, to escape an outbreak of the plague, and founded another religious community there. Here the landowner offered him as much land as he could walk round in a day. As he set off on this journey a stag appeared, he mounted the stag which carried him around a large area which was then given to the community. Depictions of him in Brittany show him mounted on a stag. Despite there being a considerable number of churches dedicated to St Teilo in Wales, there are no medieval depictions of him. There are however a number in Brittany, both carvings and stained glass windows which will help with the reconstruction. Gerallt has been helped in his researches by a colleague in Brittany who is also researching Saint Teilo, and events associated with him.

Also in Brittany, St Teilo's day is recognised and celebrated. The recent work has raised interest in the Saint in Wales, and his 'day' is now being celebrated there as well.

Catherine Wilson

Museums and National Identities

Gavin Sprott

As ever, Gavin gave a most entertaining and stimulating presentation on the provocative topic of National Identity. As Gavin observed there are many books printed on the subject and numerous opinions but very

little in the way of hard facts. Indeed, he opined and no doubt many would agree, that National identity is a state of mind.

Gavin went on to say that one's identity comes not only from a Nation but is also derived from religious adherence, kinship and indeed citizenship of a multi-ethnic 'empire', all of which are very important. He pointed out that one of the saddest states is when a Nation becomes fragmented.

Museums and especially Folk Museums have a curious place in this picture. Referring to them as 'Zoos of relocated buildings' Gavin stated they record regional and local character which should not be undervalued. Just as architecture is a hugely valuable source of information so too is folk costume. Not only is dress very personal it can also, of course, be a statement of National Identity. Often used as an expression of independence National costume is frequently found in smaller Nations or districts who may be feeling subsumed by their larger neighbours and so wish to accentuate the differences, areas such as Quimper, Scotland and Wales. Of course costumes are a wonderful interpretation tool for museums as they are portable and can be relatively easily recreated.

One of the most identifiable National costumes is of course the Kilt, the wearing of which has increased in recent years. Once again the kilt has become part of the younger man's wardrobe. The young of course have adapted it to suit their needs and desired statements. Now the wearing of the kilt is no longer constrained by the former strict rules of dress but is often much more informal, being worn along with rugby shirts or perhaps being made of leather. The breaking of such rules is a sign of renewed life. As if to emphasise this the kilt is now seen as a sign of virility. Curiously there is no real female equivalent with the possible exception of formal occasions however this is currently not really deemed to be fashionable.

With his usual colourful description Gavin drew a metaphorical picture for his audience in which he gave an example of National costume reflecting modernity in a multi-cultural Britain. He described an attractive, young woman he had seen recently walking down an Edinburgh street. Wearing Islamic dress he gave a wonderful description of her graceful stature draped in tradition costume yet which adaptations being employed for modern use. As Gavin phrased it the outfit 'ticked all the boxes' yet had elements of modernity and individuality. For individuals and more especially the young it about knowing the rules and when to break them!

Elaine M Edwards

'The Breton regional magazine *ArMen* at the heart of heritage interpretation.'

Yann Rivallain

Yann Rivallain's sparkling presentation outlined the history of the magazine *ArMen* ('Stone'), of which he is Editor in Chief, and suggested the future directions the publication is likely to take. Dedicated to Breton culture, *ArMen* first appeared 18 years ago, and quickly gained a very healthy circulation which it has maintained ever since. The publication receives no public funding and carries little advertising, depending almost entirely on income derived from sales and subscriptions. From the outset it has had a clear and adventurous editorial policy, which is implemented by a small though very energetic editorial team. The magazine is beautifully illustrated, and one important aspect of the publication is the associated growing photographic archive, which will provide a wonderful research resource for scholars in the future. The vision of the publication's founders is well maintained by the current editorial team, and Yann mentioned that Fañch Postic, our host at the Manoir de Kernault, was one of the first journalists to be involved in the publication.

Each issue of *ArMen* features a selection of articles, together with reviews of books and music relevant to Breton culture. The emphasis is on ethnology, history and oral tradition and the magazine clearly illustrates that the proud Breton heritage is as relevant today as it was in the past. While the magazine draws on regional history, it interprets this in a way designed to engage directly with a modern readership. It is well positioned to foster a sense of confidence in Breton culture for people living in the predominantly rural area, and for natives of Brittany now living in Paris, in other French cities or further afield. While the focus is on Brittany in no sense is *ArMen* introspective and it frequently carries articles on other Celtic regions: for example, one issue was devoted to St Fagan's. The increasing tendency of French people to travel abroad, together with the emergence of a new generation known to be curious about the world, has encouraged the editorial team increasingly to develop this aspect of the publication and to look increasingly to other areas of Europe which is seen as a way of maintaining its relevance and appeal to its readership.

It is no surprise that a magazine with an established history and such an ambitious editorial policy has encountered occasional challenges, and Yann described these in an open and positive way, concentrating on the creative solutions that have ensured the publication has continued to flourish. So far, 142 issues have gone into print. It was a delight to hear about this excellent publication, and no doubt all members of SFLS will wish Yann, his team and *ArMen* every success for the future,

ensuring that the magazine retains its place 'at the heart of heritage interpretation'.

Linda Ballard

'Rethinking heritage management in Brittany and Wales'

Sarah Blowen, Senior Lecturer, University of West England, Bristol

Sarah gave her lecture with the disadvantage of non-working technology and a back up set of overheads having been lost to some organic chickens, but nevertheless was able to achieve most of her objectives, although the need to explain and describe did prevent her from expanding on the concept of the ecomusée and the possible potentials of the system.

She concentrated on the contrast in the history and development of the Museum of Welsh Life in Wales and the Musée de Bretagne in Rennes, commenting that both museums had their origins in city centre museums with neo-classical architecture, regarded as 'temples of knowledge' in the Victorian sense of museums. Both also had a post-war re-shaping. In Wales the move was to a separate rural site, influenced strongly by the then curator, Iorwerth C. Peate, whereas in Rennes the re-thinking was within the museum itself. G.H.Rivière of the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires in Paris came out to Brittany to redisplay the Breton collections in Rennes.

Both museums have national or regional collections, not purely local and therefore both have the problem of creating context.

During the 1970s a new curator, Jean-Yves Veillard a Breton activist, attempted to contextualise by creating an audiovisual display of contemporary Brittany, projecting contemporary events from the region, showing landscape, folk dress used in dance and also highly political events such as the protests against the nuclear installation in Finistère.

From the nature of the collections there has been an essential focus on a rural past; at Rennes the rural past was reinforced by the creation of a satellite ecomusée near the expressway. This looked at rural history, traditions and also the rural present and future. It includes static displays, temporary exhibition space and is extremely popular with the urban population through the festivals it promotes, but is also involved with local farmers; for example rare breed societies have their headquarters there. The surrounding population is housed in high rise inner city estates, with their attendant problems, though St Fagans, despite its apparent rural siting, is hemmed between large former council estates and continued urban sprawl.

Both museums have a network function, MWL as part of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales, and the Musée de Bretagne has utilised networks across the region, since it is not the natural head of an existing network; its funding is from Rennes city and is not regional. When Rennes became the new regional centre of Brittany in the 1980s the museum became very symbolic, positioned as it is in the eastern, non Breton speaking area. A network, known as *Buhez* (Life), of like minded curators has been set up throughout the region who collaborate on exhibitions; these are thematic exhibitions which circulate regional museums to which each museum contributes its own 'add-on' to represent the local area. Themes have included Food – traditional food and food culture, imports, drink etc.

In Wales there have been policy changes; the upper management regularly changing and reorganising plus devolution bringing new political influence. In the Musée de Bretagne there has been no change since the 1970s; the same socialist mayor has been MP since 1977. The same people, Veillard and his deputy running the museum. Renovation has been in project form for 20 years; the museum has been closed for 6 years. There is political will for the new museum development; but here is also a strong political will for every cultural institution to be in the city centre. Various sites have been found and abandoned, but now the new museum is due at the end of 2005; the building incorporates a science and technology centre plus the main city library and a museum. The large lavish part will be the library, with museum getting the left over parts. However, the curators are being very positive about the project. This new landmark 'designer' building is the post modern equivalent of the classical columns and flights of steps of the older museums.

The museum displays will consist of showing Breton identity as an invented concept, a mixture of myth and reality, with a link to the French idea of universality rather than parochialism – *Bretagne est univers*. They are including 1001 images of objects from the collection in a video presentation to convey this theme. The history of Rennes has had to be cut down due to lack of space and will consist mainly in highlighting the second trial of Dreyfus, which took place in Rennes, in order to demonstrate that restoring 'the rights of man' was Rennes' contribution to the world.

Unfortunately Sarah ran out of time at this point without being able to present the results of a survey she had conducted with visiting French museum and heritage professionals following a visit to St Fagans; it is to be hoped that her full lecture will find a publisher.

Christine Stevens

Members' papers:

***Ireland's Whiskey in Song and Story* Patrick MacMonagle**

Or Paddy's "Unfinished Symphony"

Mr MacMonagle's highly entertaining presentation took up one of the main strands of the 2004 conference namely how people express their cultural identities.

People have often expressed important aspects of their day to day life through song and story telling and this paper explored a particular aspect of that genre, the imbibing of Irish whiskey. As Mr MacMonagle noted "there are few things better in company than an Irish gentleman and a bottle of old whiskey". As an Irish gentleman himself he is, of course, in a position to know.

Due to time constraints we were unable to fully enjoy the fruits of Mr MacMonagle's research. This included an overview of the work done by T. Crafton Croker (1798-1854) in recording the stories and songs of Ireland. His publications included *Legends of Killarney* (1824-25) and *Popular Songs of Ireland* (1839). From Mr Croker's work it became obvious that drinking whiskey was a significant feature of Irish life and culture.

The Irish preoccupation with the pleasures of whiskey drinking was emphasised in such articles as one on the difficulties of standardising whiskey glasses in the *Sentimental and Masonic Periodical*, 1793 and on songs and stories which bring the subject right up to present date.

These songs included praise for potteen (and digs against the excise men and whiskey tax), songs like 'I'll never get drunk anymore' written for the Temperance Society and the modern 'Moonshine' song.

This regrettably brief look at the important links between identity, song and story finished with a taste of the 'good stuff' itself, after which we were all in the mood for singing!

Fiona Ure

***A note on some folk dancing in Baltic ports* Alan Pearsall**

In what Alan Pearsall chose to call a brief note rather than a member's paper he told us of some folk dancing he had come across on a recent cruise in the Baltic. It seems that much folk dancing can be seen at the various stopping off ports for the cruise ships. Whilst some of this may be affected by the appearance of the tourists, Pearsall pointed out that the tradition owed much to the

need to keep alive a local cultural identity in the face of a strong Russian presence.

Pearsall gave us an evocative description of one group he watched which danced continuously for more than 45 minutes in Tallinn. The group consisted of women of varying ages including two girls of about ten. A crying baby was picked up by one of the dancers without an interruption to the dance which carried on in a flowing circular flourish. The apparent unself-conscious inclusiveness of such a gesture I would have loved to have seen.

Eddie Cass



Members at the AGM

Minutes of the Society's Annual General Meeting held at 11 am on Sun 19th Sept 2004

Present

The President, Gavin Sprott, and 24 members.

Apologies were received from Peter Brears, John Burnett, Yvonne Cresswell, John Williams Davies, Pat Dawson, Geraint Jenkins, Ross Noble, Bob Powell.

Minutes of the last AGM

These had been printed in *Newsletter* 19. They were approved as a correct record following a proposal from Christine Stevens, seconded by Michael Larkin.

President's Report

Gavin Sprott reported on another satisfactory year for the Society and thanked the officers for their support. The study day at the School of Scottish Studies had provided a marvellous opportunity to explore the photographic archive in the centre. He commented that perhaps the long journey to Edinburgh had deterred some English

members from attending and that maybe consideration should be given to a more southerly location for the next study day. Some possible locations for 2005 were proposed including Kew Gardens, London Docklands, the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House and Bristol. The Secretary agreed to pursue these options.

The President complimented Catherine Wilson on the work she had put into the Rural Museums Network into which the Rural Life Museums Action Group had been subsumed. However, he pointed out that it remained necessary to be aware of the problems of some of these museums highlighting the situation at the Cotswold Rural Life Museum. Brian Loughbrough reminded the meeting that he had written to the responsible council over a year ago but had received no reply. It was agreed that a further letter should be written.

Treasurer's Report

Christine Stevens presented a statement of income and expenditure for the year ended 31 July 2004. The year's figures showed a satisfactory surplus. She highlighted the fact that subscription income remained in excess of the costs of the journal but that the *Newsletter* costs were subsidised by conference surpluses. However, she was happy with this situation in view of the fact that a major function of the *Newsletter* was to report widely on the conference for the benefit of the membership in general. Christine Stevens pointed out that this was her last AGM as Treasurer and she was to be replaced by Duncan Dornan which would entail a change in signatures. Adoption of the accounts was agreed having been moved by Alan Pearsall and seconded by Catherine Wilson. On a motion from Bill Linnard, the meeting thanked Christine for her work as treasurer over many years.

Editor's Report

Linda Ballard informed the meeting that preparations for *Folk Life* vol 43 were well underway. Some six papers have been edited and finalised and the volume will contain a strong selection of book reviews. Three papers have already been accepted for the next volume and several papers are under review. The editor also raised the possibility of an 'occasional publication', perhaps web based, designed to stimulate discussion and debate, reviewing aspects of the study of Folk Life from the perspective of the Society and as reflected in current conferences, and exploring potential future directions. This issue was debated at length and it was agreed that further consideration of the question should be given by Linda Ballard who would bring a proposal to the next AGM.

Secretary's Report

The Secretary reported that he had been involved with two matters which he wished to bring to the attention of the meeting. The first was that our printers, Maney's, had

written to express a wish to take a more active role in the management of *Folk Life*. The involvement would mean that they would take over the publishing of the journal and its marketing instead of being merely its printers. Before any decision was made on this suggestion it was proposed that a small group of officers Linda Ballard, Eddie Cass, Duncan Dornan and Christine Stevens would meet a representative from Maney's to discuss the potential benefits to the society and any perceived risks in which the society might become involved.

The second matter arose from an approach which Peter Kennedy had made to Steph Mastoris to see if the society would wish to be part of a proposal to establish a folk studies centre which might be a potential depository for his archive. This had grown into a much larger project which involved the English Folk Dance and Song Society and the future of its library. A working party had been established to consider this project and, the Secretary reported, he had been asked to join the working party to represent the society. The group had not yet met but the Secretary said that he would keep members informed of any progress.

Newsletter Editor's Report

Elaine Edwards reported that the next *Newsletter* would contain the Minutes of the AGM along with a full report of the conference. It was the intention that the *Newsletter* should be brought out in January or February in order to give more notice of the study day. It was agreed that we would again offer a student place for the next conference and that the availability of this place should be advised to universities offering folklore courses.

Website Officer's Report

Heather Holmes reported that we now had a web technician who was in the process of transferring the website from the National Museums and Galleries of Wales site for transfer to the new server, Lumison. Heather was exploring ways of widening access to the site as it was difficult to find at the moment without knowing the address.

Membership Secretary's Report

Mared McAleavey reported that total membership currently stood at 402, a slight decrease on last year and expressed her concern that there had been steady decline in membership since 1998 with the exception of 2000 which had shown an increase. It was hoped that the website would help in recruiting new members and the new membership recruiting leaflet which is being prepared will also help.

Conference Secretary's Report

Dafydd Roberts thanked Cozette Griffin-Kremer on the success of our first real venture out of the United Kingdom. The conference had been meticulously planned from the outset by Cozette and the team at the Manoir and had proved to be a very enjoyable

experience. Planning for the 2006 conference to be organised by Andrew Mackay and held in the Yorkshire Dales was well in hand. Future conference proposals included the Isle of Man, Swansea and Inish Meáin, one of the Aran Islands off Co Galway. The President informed the meeting that accommodation had been booked in Melrose for the 2005 conference which was to be held on 15th – 18th September. The theme of the conference was to be ‘frontiers’ both in the geographical and physical sense but could also include the idea of ‘frontiers’ as borders between the material and non-material worlds of fairy and other such spiritual manifestations.

Election of Officers and Council

The Secretary reported that with the exception of the Treasurer, all officers were willing to stand again and that Duncan Dornan had been Council’s nominee for the position of treasurer. Three members of the Council were due to retire this year, Yvonne Creswell, Cozette Griffin-Kremer and Susan Sladen. We had received nominations for three replacements, Claudia Kinmonth, Andrew Mackay and Christine Stevens. In confirmation of the outgoing Treasurer’s earlier remark, the Secretary reiterated the need for a new bank mandate on the election of the new Officers and Council, he proposed the election of the Council *en bloc*. This was seconded by Catherine Wilson and agreed *nem con*.



Outgoing treasurer, Christine Stevens looking thrilled to greet the in-coming treasurer Duncan Dornan

Study visit to the Scottish Life Archive, National Museums of Scotland and the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh.

The Society’s 4th annual study day ‘Old Photographs as Evidence’ was held 11th May 2004. A ‘select’ group

attended the study day which was looking at how and why certain photographs survive, what do they represent and how can they be interpreted?’ Both institutions hold wonderful collections of photographs and the study day provided a marvellous opportunity. However the president felt the location ie central Edinburgh, had perhaps deterred more members from attending. We hope this issue can be redressed by the London venue!

Recent Publications

One of the speakers at the 2004 SFLS conference, Guy Jaouen who spoke on the subject of ‘Traditional Games in Europe’ is happy to provide a list of recent publications on the subject. If you are interested please email him at falsab.jaouen@wanadoo.fr

‘ALL CHANGE’ The social impact of the railways. Principal author, Mark Kennedy, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. ISBN 0 9511562 3 3

Published in 2004 to support a touring exhibition from the Northern Ireland Regional Curators Group in collaboration with the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. The exhibition is touring until Easter 2006. Details of venues are given in the booklet.

This 21 page booklet with beautiful black and white and colour illustrations was published to ‘support’ the historical exhibition. The introduction includes a brief overview of the developments of the railways. The booklet goes on to tell of the first trains to grace Ireland’s railways during the 2nd quarter of the 19th century. *The morning of December 17th 1834 saw the first train leave Row Station, Dublin, filled with fashionable and no doubt excited passengers.* By 1900 practically everyone in Ireland lived within five miles of a railway station!

The authors explain the social and economic impact the railways had on Ireland and her people in a succinct and easily digestible way. Scattered throughout are colourful advertisements of the day appealing to our sense of nostalgia. In addition, every alternate page carries a little ‘Did you know?’ insert, highlighting snippets of interesting information.

All in all a delightfully illustrated and informative read.

E.M. Edwards

News in brief



Playing 'Wallops', Castle Bolton, North Yorkshire 1954 Werner Kissling

In March 2005 the University of Leeds will host a one-day conference entitled 'Dialect and Folk Life Studies in Britain: The Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture in its Context'. This event is taking place as part of the build up to the launch in June 2005 of the archive's online catalogue, work on which started in June 2002 thanks to the award of an Arts and Humanities Research Board 'Resource Enhancement' grant. The catalogue will represent a comprehensive finding aid to the multiple media archives of the Survey of English Dialects and the University's Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies (1964-1983), collectively renamed for this project.

Speakers on the day will include representatives from the Archives of the School of Scottish Studies, the Elphinstone Institute, the Museum of Welsh Life, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, the British Library, the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition and the University of Leeds. Papers will consider the collection, preservation, interpretation and dissemination of dialect and folk life resources in Britain, and include individual case studies introducing approaches to the arrangement and (electronic) description of multiple media dialect and folk life archives.

The conference will be held in the Edward Boyle Library, University of Leeds, on Saturday March 19th 2005. For further details, please contact Dr. Clive Upton, School of English, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT (email: c.s.upton@leeds.ac.uk).

A website providing information on the conference programme including booking details, the archive and the project is available at <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/english/activities/lavc/index.htm> Further information on

the conference, including a timetable and booking details, will be posted on this site in the near future.

Come to Herefordshire for the 2005 Conference of the Historic Farm Buildings Group!

The Historic Farm Buildings Group Annual Conference will be held in Herefordshire on the weekend of 16th to 18th September 2005. The theme will be the development and change of farmsteads over time. Despite the quickening pace of change, Herefordshire retains large numbers of traditional farmstead layouts - some holdings inherit collections of buildings spanning three centuries; others retain little which pre-dates 1950.

The programme will combine lectures and visits. The first tour will pass hopyards and cider orchards and, subject to the timing of hop-picking, may visit a farm where hop drying is in progress; the second, towards the Welsh border, will explore a mixed farming region of spectacular scenery. The importance of livestock, particularly the breeding of pedigree Hereford cattle, will be evident on both tours.

Lecture topics will include Herefordshire farming in the 17th and the 19th centuries; an introduction to the county's farm buildings; and an overview of those on the National Trust's Brockhampton Estate.

Hotel accommodation, well equipped for conferences and with ample parking, has been reserved on the outskirts of Hereford.

FOR BOOKING DETAILS contact: Joan Grundy, Old School House, Ullingswick, Hereford, HR1 3JQ. e-mail enquiries: Jgrundy2005@aol.com

James Madison Carpenter Collection

In Traditional Drama Forum 10, we were able to announce the award from the British Academy to enable work on transcribing the re-mastered Carpenters cylinders to proceed. June brought even better news for the continuing work on this Collection. The American institution, the National Endowment for the Humanities, has awarded the American Folklore Society a grant of \$150, 000 to facilitate the first phase in the creation of the critical edition of the James Madison Carpenter Collection which was always the ultimate objective of the team of English and American scholars, David Atkinson, Elaine Bradkte, Eddie Cass, Tom McKean and Bob Walser led by Julia Bishop. In the June edition of *American Folklore Society News* which carried the announcement of the award the Carpenter Collection is described as 'one of the most significant collection in the

American Folklife Center's Archive of Folk Culture...For Britain, the Collection is one of the most extensive and diverse ethnographic gatherings ever made, the first to use sound recording consistently, and the first by an academically trained collector. It bridges the gap between the turn-of -the-century and mid-century folksong revivals, and has singers in common with these earlier and later collections. It contains some rare and unique items of balladry, important variants of better known ballads, multiple rather than conflated versions of shanties, recording made of well-known fiddle players while in their prime, and is the first folk play evidence based on performers' rather than upper-class observers' testimony.'

Work on this new phase will start in the autumn and, is planned to last eighteen months. It is hoped that the final phase, during which the essential scholarly apparatus of the critical edition will be completed, will follow on immediately if the necessary funding is obtained. Whilst the first phase of the team's work is being undertaken, it is hoped that efforts to contact descendants of Carpenter's informants can be made prior to the publishing of his material. Once this work has been carried out, it will be possible to access the digitized images on the Library of Congress website from the on-line catalogue of the collection at <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/carpenter/> . This will make the Carpenter Collection fully accessible to scholars for the first time and will supplement the critical edition which, it is hoped and again depending on the necessary funding, will be the eventual outcome of the work due to start in the autumn.

The 2004 Ratcliffe prize was awarded jointly to Prof. Mairead Nic Craith for her work 'Plural Identities Singular Narratives: The case of Northern Ireland' and to Dr Jane George for her work 'Women and Golf in Scotland'. Prof. Nic Craith is an anthropologist at the Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages at the University of Ulster and Dr George is a tutor in Social History Life Long Learning Dept at the University of Edinburgh. In addition Fionnuala Carson Williams, who lectures in Folklore at the Institute of Irish Studies, Queens University, Belfast, was awarded a 'highly commended' scroll for her work on 'Wellerisms in Ireland'.

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)

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