



THE CANAL ARM OF C. 1838 AT THE BLACK COUNTRY LIVING MUSEUM

THE SOCIETY FOR FOLK LIFE STUDIES

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2014

**10-13 September 2015
Black Country Living Museum**

This year's annual conference is hosted by Black Country Living Museum in Dudley. Whilst closely associated with Birmingham, the Black Country has always had its own particular identity based on the mining of coal – particularly the Staffordshire Thick or Ten Yard seam – the richest in Britain and the production and working of iron. Straddling the border between North Worcestershire and South Staffordshire, the region had acquired its name by the 1850s and is generally recognised as the world's

first large-scale industrial landscape. The Black Country was the birthplace of steam power – in 1712 – and had the densest network of canals in Britain.

On its 26 acre open-air museum site, The Black Country Living Museum contains the largest single record of the industrial heritage of the region and its entire collections were given Designated status in 2012 by Arts Council England. Black Country identity and landscape is one conference theme, the others are 'Enjoying the Graft – canals and steam power as leisure and heritage attractions' and 'Authenticity and Utility – the challenges of building conservation on heritage sites'. The Friday afternoon will provide an opportunity to explore the Museum site including taking a narrow boat through the celebrated Dudley Canal Tunnel and Limestone Caverns. On Saturday afternoon the study tour will

head to two towns in the northern half of the Black Country: Walsall and Willenhall. The Walsall Leather Museum is dedicated to the town's traditional leather working trades whilst the Locksmith's House at Willenhall – a branch of the Black Country Living Museum – is a unique survival of a small master locksmith's business, containing the two storey workshops and the Victorian house either side of a paved yard and goods entrance. Both the Friday and Saturday evenings are hosted by the Black Country Living Museum and the conference hotel is the Premier Inn, approximately ten minutes walk away.

A free student place at the 2015 conference

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

annual conference before. A short review of the conference will be required from the successful applicant.

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

2016 CONFERENCE, DUBLIN

Next year's conference will meet in Dublin, and run from the evening of 8 September until lunchtime on 11 September. A range of possibilities for accommodation and activities is under consideration at present, as is the overall cost of attending.

The Easter Rising of 1916 marked a major point in Irish history and in the development of the Irish Republic. In recent years, increasing attention has also been given to the place of the Battle of the Somme, 1916, in Irish history. These events, and the way in which they are recalled and remembered, are



Helen's Tower in co Down, Northern Ireland. The Ulster, or Thiepval, Memorial Tower is an exact replica.



Easter Lily pin, used as a memorial of the Easter Rising and in reference to more recent events.

important both historically and symbolically. To visit Dublin in their centenary year is therefore a very fitting aspect of SFLS activity. While the events of 1916 will be a significant part of our programme, we will also seek to set these in wider historical, social and cultural contexts. We will welcome proposals for conference papers, and our programme of excursions will include places key to an understanding of 1916. The themes of 'memorialisation' and 'identity' will be an important aspect of the meeting, at which Linda-May Ballard will deliver the Presidential Address.

CONFERENCE 2014

The conference was opened by President elect Linda Ballard, she welcomed everyone to the conference in beautiful Killarney.

Conference Papers

Michael Larkin

Half a century of heritage preservation and interpretation at Muckross

In the first lecture of the 2014 conference Michael Larkin, chair of the Trustees of Muckross House and Traditional Farms, welcomed members of the Society to Killarney and gave a short appreciation of the late Paddy MacMonagle, our Vice President for many years as well as the elder statesman of the Muckross Trustees. Michael then eloquently sketched the history of the Muckross estate and gave a fascinating account of the first fifty years' work of the Muckross Trustees, who are celebrating their fiftieth year of work in 2014/15.

Muckross House was built between 1839 and 1843 by the Scottish architect William Burn for Henry Arthur Herbert and his wife, the water-colourist Mary Balfour Herbert. This was actually the fourth house that successive generations of the Herbert family had occupied at Muckross over a period of almost two hundred years. The Herbert family connection with Kerry began in 1656. In that year,

Thomas Herbert of Montgomery in Wales was appointed land agent for his cousin, the third Lord Castleisland. Thomas settled at Kilcow, near Castleisland and his son, Edward, later leased the lands around Muckcross from the native MacCarthy's. Edward's son, also called Edward, may have been the first member of the Herbert family to actually live at Muckcross. Certainly he was living on the Muckross Peninsula in 1735 with his wife Frances, a sister of Lord Kenmare. The Herbert family became very wealthy during the 18th century due to the working of the copper mines on the Muckross Peninsula. However, it was not until 1770 that the family became the actual owners of the lands at Muckross, following the death of a MacCarthy relation. The Herberts' financial situation appears to have become increasingly unstable during the latter part of the 19th century. The visit of Queen Victoria in 1861 may have contributed to this. In 1897 the Herberts were refused any further loans from the Standard Life Assurance Company. A year later, the Estate was forfeited to that Company and the long association of the Herbert family with Muckross was ended.

The Standard Life Assurance Company sold the house and estate to Lord Ardilaun, a member of the Guinness family and a prominent Irish Unionist. The Ardilauns spent very little time at Muckross and it was let out on an annual basis as a shooting and fishing lodge. In 1910 Muckross was let to a wealthy American, Mr William Bowers Bourn. He was owner of the Empire Gold Mine and Spring Valley Water Company of northern California. A short time after, Mr Bowers Bourn's only child, Maud, married Mr Arthur Rose Vincent of Summerhill, Cloonlara, Co. Clare. Her father purchased the Muckross property as a wedding present for them. During the years of Bourn and Vincent ownership, between 1911 and Maud's death in 1929, over £110,000 was lavished on improvements to the Estate. In 1932 Maud's parents and widower presented Muckross House and its 11,000 acre estate to the Irish nation. Being called the "Bourn-Vincent Memorial Park", it thus became the first National Park in the Republic of Ireland and formed the basis of present day Killarney National Park. In later years the park was substantially expanded by the acquisition of land from the former Earl of Kenmare's estate.

The Irish government was somewhat at a loss as to the use Muckcross House could be put and much of its furnishings were eventually used in various embassies in the 1950s, while plans were being drawn up to create a Civil Service college here. However, the people of Killarney opposed this in favour of a public facility. A public meeting was held in Killarney in December 1963 to debate the issue. There Dr Frank M. Hilliard put forward the suggestion that the House should be opened to the public as a folk museum. This idea was enthusiastically received. As a result, a sub-committee of the Killarney Tourist Industry Coordinating Committee was established to explore the feasibility of the matter. Following discussions with the Minister for Finance, the committee was granted Muckcross House for an initial trial period of five months.

The House first opened to the public on the 14 June 1964. In that first short season, 19,500 visitors passed through its doors. Having thus demonstrated that they could successfully manage the House, the committee was granted a further ten-year lease. One of the conditions attached to the lease was that the committee should become a limited company, In May 1965, the Trustees of Muckcross House (Killarney) Ltd., was incorporated and the existing committee members became the first directors. Its members and directors include people from all walks of life. They share a common interest in the preservation of the Heritage of Muckcross House in particular, as well as the History and Folklife of Kerry.

Over the next fifty years the land surrounding Muckcross House has steadily been turned into an extremely popular heritage and educational attraction, with a working farm and reconstructions of a range of traditional North Kerry vernacular buildings set in the 1940s and showing the range of social status within the rural community at the time. Staff at Muckcross have also undertaken significant folklife research and built up an important library and sound archive, as well as developing highly-regarded educational programmes. In recent years a number of new visitor facilities have been improved and in 2013 a schoolhouse was erected to provide facilities not only for educational groups, but also a wide range of community groups.

Michael Larkin's account of all this exciting work at Muckcross is a salutary case study of how high quality folklife collections, research and interpretation can be integrated with imaginative heritage tourism to create a vibrant and sustainable heritage visitor attraction of great economic benefit to the community. The next half century of work for the Muckcross Trustees is likely to be equally exciting and productive. Long may their excellent work continue.

Steph Mastoris

Pat Dawson

The Impact of people on the landscape of Killarney national Park and its environs.

This was a lucid and fast-moving account of the natural and human histories of what is now the largest natural woodland in Ireland, though the forest is smaller than it was when 'a squirrel could go from Limerick to Cork [from the Shannon to the South Coast] without touching the ground', as Pat put it.

Geological background: in a phase of mountain-building, superheated water trapped in the limestone rocks dissolved and concentrated copper, zinc and lead. Human background: people arrived here in the Neolithic Era, and mining copper began at Killarney at the very beginning of the Bronze Age, around 4400 BP. The ore was worked by setting a fire against the rock face, and then chipping with stone axes. A little later, tin was brought from Cornwall and alloyed with the copper to make bronze.

Millennia later, the minerals drew Rudolph Raspe, scientist, curator (and apparently inventor of the glass display case), thief, translator and propagator (we cannot say inventor, because the man was real) of Baron Munchausen. Raspe came from the Harz, where the mineral-making mountain building took place at the same time as that in Kerry, and he remains connected with the county because he is buried there, having died of scarlet fever in 1794.

In the early nineteenth centuries the east side of Lough Leane was an industrial area. The copper mines were reopened, drained by a steam engine. Iron was smelted, and leather tanned using oak bark. But the future lay with tourism, and the landlords worked to develop it. The railway reached Killarney in 1853, Julius Benedict provided publicity with his folk opera, *The Lilly of Killarney* (1862). The numbers grew of Jarveys, coach drivers, guides, and sellers of liquid pleasures such as goats' milk and poteen.

John Burnett

Patricia O'Hare

Aspects of Some Kerry Calendar Customs



Patricia O'Hare, Research and Education Officer at Muckross House, gave a wonderful illustrated talk about Kerry customs for the Feasts of St Stephen (26 December) and St Brigid (1 February).

Traditionally, of course, the latter marked the first day of Spring and therefore, it was an important date in the agricultural calendar. Patricia's sources included nineteenth-century publications and newspapers, material from the National Folklore Collection including collectors' manuscripts and the 1930s' 'Schools' Collection' of folklore, as well as more recent oral testimonies and photographs. Drawing from this diverse material, Patricia's talk showed how the 'Wren Boys' of St Stephen's Day and the 'Biddies' of St Brigid's Day combine a consistent core of activities and motifs with considerable variation of details and change over time.

Both the Wren Boys and Biddy customs involve masked or disguised participants, music, collections of money, and the processional display of the custom's focal figure—a dead or model wren in a cage, or bush, on a decorated mount on 26 December; an effigy of St Brigid made of a churn-dash dressed as an old woman with a turnip head, or a home-made rag doll, for 1 February.

In the past, the Wren Boys were almost always exclusively male. On the other hand, the Biddies often included females. Indeed, the biddies of the Dingle Peninsula, appear largely to have consisted of young girls. To a lesser extent, this also appears to have been the case further south on the Iveragh Peninsula. The disguises and masks worn by the Wren Boys on the streets of Dingle today are very varied and include white garments, cross-dressing, straw, patchwork, stolen curtains and even, more recently, a sumo suit. Modern Biddies also dress in white and straw. The customs have evolved and changed over time. In the late nineteenth century, mock battles with wooden swords were a feature of the Dingle Wren Boys but these have long since died out.

The Wren Boys of Dingle regularly feature hobby-horses, known as *Láir Bháin* ('white mares') in their processions. These were also, apparently, a common feature of May Boys' festivities elsewhere in the county during the early nineteenth century. The *Láir Bháin* of Dingle appear to resemble those hobby-horses commonly known as the 'tourney horse' type. However, in Dingle, the performer supports the framework on his shoulders rather than around

his waist. In a small, very localised, area of south Kerry, another type of hobby-horse, known as the *Capall* ('horse') appears on the night following Biddy night. The *Capall* is accompanied from house to house by disguised youngsters, many of whom may have already been active the night before as Biddies. The *Capall* appears to have more in common with the 'mast horse', as described by E.C. Cawte in 1978, rather than with the 'tourney horse'.

Patricia O'Hare would like anyone who has more information about the history of these different types of hobby-horses to send it to her at Muckcross House, Killarney, Co. Kerry, Ireland. Email: library@muckcross-house.ie

Caroline Oates

Dan Graham

Dingle, County Kerry: Nineteenth-century maritime connections with Britain and beyond

An Ghorta Mhór (The Great Famine) was a calamity in many parts of Ireland, including Dingle and its peninsula. Yet, what followed was a remarkable resurgence, a new awakening, and an economic revival that was based on what P. Bevane of Dingle marketed as "the pride of the sea : sweet, fat and juicy : Irish cured mackerel". Vast shoals of mackerel had arrived off the west coast of Ireland in the 1870s. Initially, local men went to the Isle of Man to learn how to build nobby boats, to catch the mackerel. Having gained skills both in boat-building and in fishing, they then developed an industry that focussed on spring and autumn seasons.

The spring fishery concentrated on the provision of fresh fish. Packed into iced boxes, these were sent out by rail, via Rosslare and Fishguard, and were at Billingsgate market within two days of being caught. The autumn fishery was even more remarkable. The mackerel were packed into wooden barrels, then pickled for several weeks. Subsequently, they would be re-pickled, before being dispatched by sea to Liverpool, and then – usually via the White Star Line – sent on to north America, to cities such as Boston, Baltimore and Philadelphia, whose sub-

stantial Irish diaspora craved a taste of home. This trade continued for decades: in 1927, S. H Levins of Philadelphia ordered 200 barrels, at 42/6 (£2.12) per barrel, from a Dingle supplier. Volumes supplied were remarkable, with one image shown of the pier at Dingle stacked, from end to end, with barrelled mackerel awaiting shipment.

The economics of mackerel processing rescued Dingle's economy. By the early 20th century, a dozen local factories had been established to process and pack the fish, in total employing about a thousand men and women. Emigration was pushed into the background, and the port saw regular steamer services – many provided by the Clyde Shipping Company – linking Dingle with other west coast ports, with Cork and with Glasgow, on a weekly basis. It was by no means unusual to see "three great ships" together, lying alongside the pier at Dingle, and these brought with them a huge range of products for use in the town and its hinterland. They could also bring with them some intrepid visitors – but no women, apparently, as accommodation for passengers aboard these small steamers was of the "men only" variety! Trade was not confined to the Irish Sea ports, by any means. Vessels from ports in Western Europe and beyond served Dingle, with this pattern continuing into the 1930s. This was maritime Dingle's "Golden Age", a far cry from its earlier calamities

Dafydd Roberts

J. J. O' Shea

The Irish Schools' Folklore Collection Scheme of the 1930s through the eyes of school children today

O' Shea's paper reminded us that folklore texts should not be hidden away in an archive never to see the light of day. Folklore is alive in the telling and in the use we make of it in our daily lives and this point was reinforced again and again throughout this year's conference. J.J.'s discussion shed new light on the Schools' Scheme, a joint initiative by the Irish Folklore Commission and the Department of

Education in 1937-38 which saw schoolchildren aged between 10 and 13 acting as voluntary fieldworkers and collecting the folklore of older relatives and neighbours several evenings a week. The Scheme was unique in that the material was collected by children known to the informants in the informal setting of their own homes, thus giving the folklore material an added value and intimacy.

Undoubtedly the Schools' Scheme was a huge success, with more than 500,000 manuscript pages of folklore amassed from all over the country. However, a lot more remains to be done to present this material to the public in an appealing way. The main reason for this is a lack of funding, with the visual arts enjoying a higher status than oral history in most government funded schemes. As an independent radio producer and presenter, J.J. makes the valid point that radio – a non-visual medium – is a very appropriate platform for presenting archival folklore material to a wider audience. Without the distraction of visual images, radio is the closest we can get to the 'fireside chat' which would have been a central component of the traditional storytelling experience.

The highlight of J.J.'s paper for me, as I'm sure was the case for many of those present, was the playing of audio recordings of local Kerry schoolchildren reading and responding to the material collected in their hometowns almost 80 years ago, some of it by grandparents or relatives of the children themselves. Their inquisitiveness, wonder and keen interest in the stories and traditions of their ancestors gave new life to the material. It also reminded us that, even in today's technology-oriented world, archival folklore material such as that housed in the National Folklore Collection can hold new meaning each time it is rediscovered, and that more should be done to proudly display the wealth of material in our national archives. The work currently underway in digitising and presenting this material on www.duchas.ie is a very welcome development in this regard.

Ailbhe Nic Giolla Chomhail

Brian Coakley and Deirdre McCarthy *The Folklore and Folklife of a Section of the Kerry Way*

Brian Coakley and Deirdre McCarthy's paper informed us of their innovative project to enhance the touristic experience of the renowned Kerry Way walking trail using folklore and heritage. Combining Brian's expertise in mapping, database design and heritage with Deirdre's specialist knowledge of archaeology and folklore, they have developed a model which will promote rural tourism in Kerry using modern technology.

To date, they have mapped a 20km section of the Kerry Way and developed a database that consists of oral interviews, placenames lore and historical and geographical information. This database, which in the next phase of the project will be developed into a smartphone app, will give tourists and local people alike a virtual experience of this picturesque walkway. Rather than simply appreciating the area's natural beauty, app users will be able to enhance their experience of the walking trail by gaining knowledge of the area's folklore, fauna and flora, historical photographs and much more. Deirdre's exciting new discovery of a *fulacht fia* (ancient cooking-pit) and a standing stone will undoubtedly feature as a star attraction!

The project reminds us how modern technology can be used creatively to promote our oral history and cultural heritage, rather than being detrimental to them as is often perceived to be the case. Although it is still only in its early stages of development, the project could undoubtedly serve as a template for some of the country's other walking trails, and could even eventually be combined with sections of the 'Wild Atlantic Way,' a 2,500km driving route stretching the length of the country's west coast. The archives of the National Folklore Collection, which can be searched according to locality, could significantly add to the scope of such a scheme.

Ailbhe Nic Giolla Chomhail

Mary McGrath
The History of the Kerry Bog Pony

Mary McGrath's paper charted the history of the Kerry Bog Pony, a small breed of working pony indigenous to South Kerry, from the first potential references in tenth-century carvings to the present and future quest to find a sustainable role for them in modern-day Kerry.

It is not known when or how the ponies arrived in Ireland. In 1992, Kerry local John Mulvihill collected twenty mares and six stallions and brought them to the attention of Dr John Flynn of Weatherby's Equine Laboratory for DNA testing. The results showed that the ponies are a genetically distinct breed in so-called 'Haplogroup E'. Haplogroup E represents around 3% of all horses, and is generally associated with breeds in western and northern Europe and Iceland. Most interestingly, the ponies were not closely related to other Irish horse breeds. A possible solution may be that the ponies arrived with the Vikings by boat, but the mystery remains unsolved.

The ponies stand at between 102 and 117cm tall, but are sturdy despite their small size. Traditionally, they have been used as pack-carrying animals – they can carry very heavy burdens for long distances due to their relative strength and good levels of endurance. From the late-18th to the early-20th century they were particularly used for sending butter to the market in Cork, an important exporter for the world-wide butter market. Each pony could carry two firkins of butter, weighing 56lbs each. Other roles included collecting seaweed which was brought to improve the land, bringing turf from the bog (they are particularly sturdy when walking on bogs, hence their name), bringing milk to the creameries, ploughing, and pulling small wagons and slide carts.

Gradually most of these functions died out and the ponies were simply no longer needed. One exception to this is tourism – as far back as the 1850s, visitors were using bog ponies to help them explore Kerry's scenic Gap of Dunloe. Tourism has much potential to aid in the survival of the breed, one suggestion being that they could aid Kerry Way trail walkers as hired pack-carriers. Other roles might



include breeding, showing and use as conservation grazers.

Mary also made the important point that the use of the ponies supported a wide range of ancillary crafts. Straw rope plaited mats were placed over their backs to protect them from the wearing of their pack baskets. Many houses had a sally garden for the making of willow creels as pack baskets for the ponies. Others produced straw rope harnesses and collars specifically for the ponies. When the industries that supported the ponies disappeared and the use of the ponies declined, these supporting crafts also suffered. Any future efforts to find a role for the ponies in today's Kerry are also a fantastic opportunity to support a wider network of associated crafts and skills.

Felicity McWilliams

Karena Morton

Material culture around Irish bog butter

Karena Morton, conservator at the National Museum of Ireland, Country Life, is an archaeologist by training and you can hear it in the enthusiasm with which she describes that happy squish in the wellies as you work in the gold mines of waterlogged sites, in this case, on the hunt for bog butter. The field has grown in leaps and bounds and she recalled that Caroline Earwood's work on wooden domestic utensils up to a decade ago had brought nearly 300 butter containers to view, while the present count stands at about 500, all periods taken together, and bears witness to a remarkable diversity in container types, running from the methers – which may well have been units of measure – on to firkins, tubs and vats to hollowed-out logs sealed at the ends, as well as far more ephemeral materials such as linen or woollen cloth, leather, rawhide, bladders, intestines or other difficult-to-identify membranes. Just getting close enough to work on the object of interest is a major challenge, as “rancid” takes on a new depth of meaning when the storage time stretches back hundreds, at times, thousands of years. Needless to say, the fascination with bog finds and perhaps a taste for adventure spurred finders, occasionally, to try the

stuff themselves, though they do not seem to have left much testimony on the experience. What was often left are detailed accounts and handsome drawings in accession papers that dovetail with more recent photography, digital processing and chemical analysis to fill out our picture of this “gold” in the bog. It is clear that containers were often repaired and hence re-used, most probably indicating that the users were well aware the butter would expand in storage. Comparison of finds in Ireland and Scotland has revealed that not all finds were butter, at least in Scotland, but can be other animal fats in the form of tallow.

The bog butter finds hold out tantalising clues for the researchers, was crabapple used in some containers because it is well known in healing practices? Did the butter hoards perhaps mark boundaries, as the more spectacular bog bodies may have? Lastly, what could have been the multiple motivations for leaving at times impressive quantities of butter where they have been found – for preservation, to keep them safe from raiding neighbours, as votive deposits, perhaps even to enhance the taste? What the analyses consistently confirm is that bog butter was not salted – salting not being a traditional practice in Ireland, even though the wave of international exportation from the late 19th century on made it a necessity. The butter finds confront us perhaps with another world, whose motivations confound our expectations – again, another fine mystery in the bog.

Cozette Griffin-Kremer

Claudia Kinmonth

Bringing home the bride: nineteenth century Irish marriage traditions through art

Focusing primarily on paintings, but also introducing other forms, Kinmonth provided a very clear while complex discussion of Irish marriage traditions as represented in art. Briefly outlining the differing status of oil and watercolour paintings, she showed how numerous nineteenth century narrative paintings were in oil, emphasising that these were therefore in no way to be considered ephemeral. She also discussed the skilled way in which nineteenth century observers would 'read' these narrative paintings, interpreting the symbols used by the artists. She related this method of using symbolism to the wider field of European art, and showed how European as well as Irish and British artists were involved in creating these works.

Kinmonth explored a comprehensive range of themes depicted in narrative painting, including the way in which rural Irish marriages were arranged and events such as the 'race' for the wedding whiskey (or perhaps broth) and other celebrations associated with marriage. She addressed the idea of bringing home the bride and the realities facing the newly married woman as she negotiated her way of life in the home of her parents in law. In addition to exploring accepted behavioural forms as shown in these paintings, Kinmonth demonstrated that transgressive behaviour (particularly in the form of the 'runaway', through which the personal choice of a young couple took precedence over parental wishes in relation to marital partners) was also widely known. Appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, particularly on the part of young women, may be clearly observed in these paintings. Kinmonth also introduced Katharine Tynan's early twentieth century analysis of the depiction of such transgressive young women as shown in art, clearly demonstrating that the message of the paintings could readily be observed by contemporaries. While rural practice was reflected in the majority of the works shown, urban life was also observed through transgressive behaviour such as elopement and bridal abduction to

be found in early to mid nineteenth century engravings.

The eagle eye that observed and interpreted artistic symbolism also detected depictions of many fascinating details of Irish marriage tradition such as the buckle (or couple) beggar who, particularly prior to legal changes in the 1840s, might conduct weddings. Substituting the loop of a door key for a wedding ring was also illustrated, providing visual evidence of yet another tradition known from oral tradition. Kinmonth's expertise as a furniture historian was also brought into play, with skilful and fascinating discussion of depictions of material culture to be found alongside depictions of traditional life and attitudes. This was a completely absorbing presentation, as enjoyable and engaging as it was erudite.

Linda-May Ballard

Regina Sexton

Toasting the oatcake: an exploration of the use of the hardening stand as a baking utensil

Food historian, Regina Sexton, took the hardening stand as the starting point for her exploration of the Irish oatcake. The hardening stand was used – as its name suggests – to harden and dry oatcakes in front of the kitchen fire. They were made variously of wood, iron and stone but it is the blacksmith made wrought-iron stands which were the inspiration for her research. Typically of a horse shoe shape, these wrought-iron stands consisted of decorative open-work with a shallow lip or shelf at the base on which the oatcake rested and a jointed leg which propped the device up at an angle in front of the fire. Like all iron hearth equipment wrought by the smith, each stand is unique combining ornament and decoration with a certain ruggedness and coarseness of finish.

From fascination with the intrinsic qualities of the object, Regina then took her audience on a tour de force of research which combined a comprehensive

survey of the published word on the subject with observations based on her own practical research. The oatcake – a simple mixture of oatmeal and water bound with a little fat – was a staple food of ordinary people in Ireland over many centuries and Regina cited references to the consumption of oatcakes stretching back to John Dunton in 1698 and Arthur Young in the 1770s. They were a substantial food and went well with butter and formed a convenient meal for working men but as early as the 1830s, she noted, were giving way to baker's bread.

In the twentieth century, oatcakes inevitably attracted the attention of twentieth century ethnologists and food historians such as E. Estyn Evans and Florence Irwin. Today, the stands take their place as a reminder of lost skills and of the work of Irish women in the home and also as material evidence of an essential part of Irish cultural identity.

David J Eveleigh





Excursions

Guided Tour of Muckross House and Muckross Traditional Farms.

On Friday afternoon we visited the Muckross Traditional Farms in the company of Farm Manager Toddy Doyle. A visit to the farms is always a highlight of a trip to Killarney: whitewashed walls and smoke from peat fires glimpsed over the hedgerows, dripping with blackberries. Traditional, but not original: the site was first developed in 1993 in the extensive grounds of Muckross House and has been gently evolving ever since.

However this is no Disney attraction, rather a sensitive and pragmatic recreation, using traditional building methods, of Irish farming life before the advent of electricity. Small-scale and therefore providing great coherence for the visitor, the 'small, medium and large' farms tell the story of rural Ireland in a very direct way. There are no clumsy interpretation panels, audiovisuals or mock-ups. Strong use of material culture, both inside the farm-

houses and in the yards, speaks volumes instead. But the real strength of the experience is the presence of discretely-costumed staff, hoeing their potatoes or making butter or soda bread, who engage the visitor in farm life almost without them knowing it! It is easy to see why the Traditional farms have twice won the Heritage Education Trust's Sandford Award.

It was a real treat to see so many traditional skills and crafts on display: the blacksmith; the uilleann pipes maker; the farm 'wife' churning butter from the farm's cows' milk. We particularly enjoyed Pat Broderick's straw work which brought home to us an important point: knowledge marginalised as a museum-piece in the developed world still has great currency and potential elsewhere. Muckross is working with groups from India and Ethiopia to teach them how to fashion harnesses and burden mats for their animals from local materials – by using traditional Irish straw-working skills.

Toddy spoke candidly about the challenges faced. A people-based interpretation strategy is not without

problems – with little tradition of volunteering in Ireland, it costs 1000 Euros a day to keep the farms open. New livestock regulations have to be responded to. The oat harvest was poor, as overuse of certain fields nearest to public view was leaching the soil. And then there are the more sociological challenges. The light-touch interpretation works beautifully for now in Kerry, where many families are still close to their rural roots, but what happens when future generations become more removed from the land?

Our visit ended in the newest addition to the site, the schoolhouse. Here, traditional building methods are referenced but not followed to the letter, in order to make a space which can both speak of the past for school groups and other visitors, but also provides a fully-functional venue for income-generation.

There was a very special codicil to our afternoon down on the farm. On the Saturday night, we arrived at Quill's farm at dusk, as the horses and Irish wolfhounds were being stabled for the night, and the musicians were tuning up for a *seisiún*. *Over a wonderful meal served at the long farm table, lit by oil lamps, we joined in the singing and felt very much at home. This was a sprinkling of fairy dust; a glimpse behind the curtain. Authentic? At an emotional level, most definitely: the 'period rush' felt by joining in proved to be the best interpretation strategy of all.*

Sarah Blowen

**Excursions visiting key historical sites of interest
in and around Killarney led by
Patricia O'Hare**

Four places, westward from Killarney. First, Ross Castle, a grey pile beside Lough Leane, near the copper mines and once seat of the Browne family, Earls of Kenmare. They were ultra-loyal to the crown and this enabled them to hold their land despite being Catholics: they were ennobled after one of them, a member of parliament, in 1800 voted for the union of Ireland with the United Kingdom. Third, beside a thicket of thorns, upright ogham

stones like split laths. Fourth, the Gap of Dunloe, a rock-strewn declivity. But the second place we visited was the one, Aghadoe and the view over the lakes, to the Boggeragh Mountains in the east, Mangerton and Torc in the south and the steep Reeks [ricks] in the west.

On that fine day these were large, gentle hills, in their delicate lines and shades like friendly animals asleep. Poetic phrases drift across the landscape – the woods and the water, the tangle of the isles, blue remembered hills, brown heath and shaggy wood, land of the mountain and the flood. The early Christians so often found numinous spots for their churches, but few have such a powerful presence as Aghadoe, the field of God. We paused to remember Paddy MacMonagle, who strode over the country we could see from his grave.

John Burnett

**Peter Foynes
*The Creamery in Rural Ireland***

Peter Foynes's paper gave an introductory overview of the role of the creameries in Ireland from the late-19th century to the 1970s. The first important point to note was that a creamery is not the same as a dairy; it produced butter by an off-farm, industrial process and the butter itself was not seen as farm produce.

The creameries emerged in the 1880s and despite being perceived as being a part of the fabric of rural Ireland in general, they were in fact largely confined to two specific localities – a band running across the north of Ireland and a southern band across North Kerry/Limerick. They developed as a centralising solution to the problem of the cost of separating cream from milk. Cream is made from cow's milk as its fat globules are bigger than in other milk – they rise to the top as cream. To separate cream by hand, you simply wait for it to rise and then skim it off the top. This process takes 36 hours, however, making it expensive.



Creameries developed with the arrival in the 1870s of the mechanical separator – essentially a centrifuge which spins the heavier cream out of the lighter milk. Farmers brought their milk to a central creamery to be separated by machine and then took away their remaining milk. The first estate creamery was set up in 1881, followed by the first farmer-owned creamery in 1884 and the first co-op creamery in Drumcollogher in 1889 and by 1900 they were very widespread across the two geographic bands. A major factor in the commercial viability of creameries was distance and supply – the biggest creameries needed plenty of local grassland to feed enough cows to support them within a maximum radius of about 12 miles travelling distance.

The nature of the creameries changed over the course of the 20th century. Many were nationalised, with farmers being allocated a specific creamery to take their milk to. Improved roads and faster transport removed the main impediments to further centralisation and there were many fewer but larger creameries supported by a network of smaller auxiliary separating stations and travelling creameries. They were also not without their critics – many

claimed their work opportunities kept children out of school, temperance advocates were concerned at the number of pubs which appeared around them, and others claimed they would aid the spread of diseases (a not necessarily unfounded concern).

Peter's paper was wonderfully illustrated, giving a great sense of the scale and nature of the creameries. We were also treated to some gruesome examples of the various 'foreign bodies' found in the milk – numerous unfortunate cats drowned in search of a meal, and even a handful of frogs added by a farmer to agitate the milk by their swimming!

Felicity McWilliams

Jonathan Bell

Farming and the Landscape in Ireland 1750-1900

Jonathan Bell spent many years as the agricultural curator at Cultra (now National Museums Northern Ireland) and his knowledge of the subject is exceptional. He covered this huge topic thoroughly from both a large-scale and a small-scale perspective.

He started at the very beginning with the first farmers in Ireland about 4,000 BC, noting that some field patterns from that date can still be seen. Enclosure of the land began in the 16th century and progressed rapidly from the early 17th century onwards but was not universal. On unenclosed land, animals were hobbled to stop them straying. This was a particular problem on islands, for example Rathlin Island, where free-roaming animals were apt to fall over cliff edges. From 1750 to the time of the famine there was a great increase in the population, putting a strain on available land. Most land was owned by absentee landlords but the land-tenure system of rundale allowed some land to be held in common and divided up between a number of tenants. This was an open-field system consisting of a township with vegetable gardens, open fields with cultivation strips and unenclosed grazing on the uplands. This system had mainly died out by the 1840s.

Pressures for more land in the early Victorian period led to landlords encouraging the settlement of marginal land so people spread up into the hills where poor soils and difficult terrain made life very hard. The Great Famine, 1845-9, led to these impractical settlements being abandoned and the land returning to rough grazing.

A different system in some areas allowed the development of long strip farms where the tenant had access to some good land but with some poorer land and rough grazing as well. The striping caused by these long farms can still be seen in some parts of Kerry where the remains of stone walls are distinctive.

During the 19th century, some state sponsored reclamation of land took place creating improved settlements and farming. Clare Island is an example of this.

At a more detailed level, as enclosure spread so too did the development of field boundaries. Land agents for the absentee landlords were involved in promoting the establishment of hedges on a significant scale. The hedges were mainly of hawthorn and gorse, whilst in some areas hardy fuschia spread from gardens into the hedgerow. (I have been so impressed with fuschia hedges on my visits to Ireland that I have tried for several years to grow a similar variety in my garden. After several attempts I now have a well established fuschia bush, though hardly a hedge yet!) In some areas the Louth Hedge was used – a stone wall with hawthorn planted on top – to ensure that the boundaries were stock proof. The gorse was also cut and used for fodder and bedding and in some areas gorse was specifically grown as a crop for this purpose.

But Jonathan reserved his greatest enthusiasm till the end – lazy beds. Cultivation ridges from prehistoric times are visible under more recent layers of peat showing that this method of preparing the land has a long history. The ridges forming the lazy beds were created entirely by hand using specific spades, of which Ireland has an amazing range. Jonathan pointed out that the term *lazy bed* derived from the French *laissez* meaning untilled, rather than making reference to the energy level of the farmers, for whom creating these ridges must have involved a lot of hard work. The ridges of the lazy beds could be up to 7 feet broad. Creating them was a matter of pride in local communities, with competitions for the best and straightest ridges. Some were still being created in the 1980s as some farmers had perfected a technique of creating them with a tractor.

The lazy bed landscape is unique to Ireland and some parts of Scotland but is increasingly under threat. Jonathan argued persuasively for there to be some protection and long-term preservation of the best examples, as a testament to those who created this special landscape.

Jonathan's deep knowledge of his subject and quiet passion for it all made for an informative and inspiring talk. I shall look at my fuschia bush with much more understanding in future.

Catherine Wilson

Mary Mitchell-Ingoldsby

The Traditional Music of North Kerry: The work of a music collector during the 1980s

On Saturday morning Mary Mitchell-Ingoldsby gave a very entertaining and engaging presentation about the The Muckcross Music Collection. The project began in the summer of 1980 and an archive of some 400 tapes of music, song and dance now resides in Muckcross House Research Library. Collectors used reel-to-reel full-track magnetic tape and video tape for dancing. Ian O'Leary's premature demise prevented him from implementing his concept of conserving Kerry's traditional music for the future at the museum. Ned Myres and Micheál Ó Súilleabháin subsequently led the project. Mary was one of five collectors working at various times in various areas to document all the regions. Another of those involved, Catherine Foley presented during the conference dinner the previous night. After introducing the project's general aims, Mary gave a fascinating account of her own fieldwork over a seven year period from 1983-1990. Among many interesting points she made were the waning interest in traditional music in the 1920s and 30s. Emigration loomed large in the personal stories of the musicians. She detailed her work with an impressive range of musicians giving memorable vignettes from time to time.

In all almost 200 musicians contributed to the collection in North Kerry during the period from 1980 to 1990. The average age of the contributors was sixty years. The approximate breakdown of performance categories is as follows: 44 played fiddle, 42 button accordion, 17 tin whistle, 4 flute, 2 uilleann pipes and over 21 others, ranging from banjo, bodhran, concertina, drums, electric guitar, guitar, mandolin, melodeon, mouth organ and piano accordion. Eighty-two singers contributed and other vocal categories included interviews, recitations and whistling. In all almost 3,000 pieces of music, songs, recitations and interviews were collected. More men than women contributed. More women singers (housewives mainly) than men (farmers mainly). The paper will appear in a future edition of the journal.

Lillis Ó Laoire

SFLS Killarney 2014

Concluding Remarks

Our first words must be the thanks we owe to our friends at Muckcross for the attention they have lavished on us and the extraordinary deal they cut with the powers above for pouring beautiful weather upon us.

Our sincere thanks to Michael, Patricia, Toddy, Dennis and Claudia for the marvellous program they prepared and to Steph for acting as ever efficient mediator. I believe, this year, we have often felt we were standing in for absent friends, and Michael Larkin has done that perfectly for Paddy MacMonagle, a gentleman with a great gift, an Irish gift most especially, for making guests welcome with flair.

Now, on to the specifics of the **Killarney 2014 Society for Folk Life Studies annual meeting**, which brought together many threads in a remarkable tapestry of nuance.

A first remark, when in Ireland, that there is a noticeable way of composing, positively, with the past, a way of finding what is best in all you want to keep and all you cannot change. Needless to say, it is a place where one feels especially that charity begins at home. Alas, so does colonialism and the deep sentiments it creates on all sides. We see it every day in the news around us and many of the talks spoke directly - or indirectly - to our concerns today. They spoke of subjects as varied as wiping an ecosystem off the face of the map, and of endeavouring to repair the damage. They spoke of economies, when the seemingly most local of objects spread - even in the Neolithic - half-way across Europe and then far beyond and the once tiniest fishing village is caught up in the web of the globalisation that existed before we managed to put a name to it. They speak of unspeakable irresponsibility and equally deep sacrifice in the face of invisible threats such as epidemics that we fear as much today as in the 1840s. Of the immigration that scars lands and carries human treasures to far shores, to wilt or to prosper, of the inequality that dissolves the social fabric and of human resilience that manages to bring it all, however bitter, into song and a laugh.

No one could say we did not have enough songs, or laughter, or fine food. They invaded our evenings and spread through the homes in Muckross Farm where we spent quiet times with all your *mna an tí*, and listening to the uilleann pipes or being stirred by the bold strokes of a *cipín* on a *bodhrán*. We let ourselves be enchanted by the songs of Cork folk and then surprised, when you gave us real biddies to bring us luck for at least a year, not to mention the wealth of fine food and entertainment for our evening in the Quills house, when we brought you our own voices and storytellers, as well.

The hospitality was the icing on the cake. For many of us, the centerpiece was Muckross House and Farms. We listened to **Michael Larkin** tell the stories of the people who made Muckross a vibrant source of inspiration. He and another of the trustees, Senator **Paul Coghlan**, generously graced our meeting with their pithy humour, as well.

Pat Dawson reminded us that no landscape remains untouched by human hands, be it but indirectly, just as often brutally, to reap profit for the few, but – still – while creating work for the many, a world of skills and trades we often wish we could recapture, the importation of plants that served an industry of art, of others, that we wish we knew how to get rid of, however pretty their importers thought they would look in a garden.

If anyone had any doubts that popular custom is a web then **Patricia O'Hare** convinced us we have but to look at the St Bridgit's and St Stephen's customs to see the flowering of variety that would please in a garden of paradise, in the wealth of possible symbols that nourish a community in its difference and in all it has in common with every community that hopes for good luck and a future for the young. Here, Muckross strives to honour their collectors and collections and show the way forward to make them live for the broadest public possible.

We turned to the sea, with **Dan Graham**, to watch the quiet pier in Dingle fill with thousands upon thousands of barrels of mackerel that would be shipped out into the wide world, to compete in

faraway lands. We can certainly say that for all our researchers who presented their quests – even for a little mackerel tin "that has a whole story packed inside it". We see, too, not a nascent, but an already full-fledged tension between local, national and international that is as pertinent today as in the golden age of Dingle.

On to sound and its magic, as **J.J. O'Shea** proved to us through his own, but most especially, children's voices, taking up, as "insiders", the tales their grandparents recorded when they were small, to enliven the past, when today, they are more apt to know a Japanese manga tale better than a ghost story about the Earl of Desmond. They - and the expertise that knew how to capture their voices and hearts – show that today's media can serve the understanding of the past and create a future that springs from it in all the joy of discovery in storytelling.

The voice of the radio blended in pertinently with the multi-media "pathway" that **Brian Coakley and Deirdre McCarthy** described to enhance the Kerry Way, to bring folklore into the highest quality tourism, the tourism that brings a sense of place, that can walk in the "footsteps of the Fianna" with a hand on an i-Phone app. *Nota bene*, they also demonstrated – fiddling a bit to get their clips up and running – that "technology" provides just as much suspense at times as a good story.

When we went off to Muckross Farms, **Toddy Doyle and Pat O'Hare** spoke to us with an uncommon passion and an equal pragmatism, of the challenges of treading that fine line between having a mission to honour as well as the money to underwrite its continued existence. If there is a bit of anxiety in the air at times, the spirit of adventure carries the day.

The tour of Muckross House brought home the importance of a far more official history – of the hopes and striving of every class for recognition, and the depths of disappointment which that dance among unequals often brings.

A new day dawned, and most of us got up late, but **Mary McGraw** was there with her love of the Kerry

bog pony (not forgetting the draft horses) to plead for the value of another ecosystem – the web of work and works bound around a pony that has sturdy bones, will eat the plastic flowers off your sunhat if you don't watch out, but is not quite cute enough. It needs broader recognition such as the geneticists are more than ready to give it and we owe it a helping hand – perhaps through museum networking to begin with – to make sure it will thrive to join the people discovering the Kerry Way.

So, on to the bog with **Karena Morton**. There is nothing like an archaeologist to be happy with squishy boots and one must admit that Ireland is among the most blessed of lands, with even lasagna psalters popping up in diggers' shovels and – true patriots of human heritage – the farmers and Bord na Móna digger-drivers to stop the shovels in time and call for help. Overcoming the rancid charms of thousand-year butter hoards is all in the line of duty and has revealed the skills of ancient (and more modern) coopers or wood turners, as well as the mysteries of why in the world they left the damn stuff there in the first place, a wonder we may all ponder, next time we spread butter on our oatcakes!

This is where **Regina Sexton** stepped in with her savory experimentations to give us a few notions of the nuance in an oatcake stand, citing folk we all admire, from Estyn Evans to Sandy Fenton, and reminding us that the heart of the home is the hearth, its tools and skills, and that getting an oatcake whole into your mouth was akin to a miracle, or may be for us today, with all we have forgotten how to do. These modest – in appearance – cakes fit into another "eco-web", of foods, of soils that cereal grains thrive or do not thrive in, of diet and how it is constructed socially and economically, and finally of tastes that can make a cake into a symbol of identity.

Claudia Kinmonth took us on a voyage through pictures, seeking the romance, the fiddling with fates, the *sotto voce* conversations of matchmaking, that surround bringing the bride home in Irish custom. Painters from outside look in to record the movement of eye and hand, toward romance and the

realities of a dowry. And a broken vessel lies on the floor to remind us that we need a lingering – and loving – look at old paintings and engravings, which still have a wealth of information to tease out and set against the furnishings and the words of reporters to paint a more complete picture, even of life in the so-recent 19th century.

This was an especially strong point in the conference, just as we saw in the presentations on the last morning, largely based on eloquent visual and sound archives. **Peter Foynes** linked the stories to the technologies and the geography of Irish creameries, that broke the logjam of butter production, taking off in the 1880s – not, however, unhindered by resistances, which are never part of the official narrative. Nor are ladies, as the masters of butter-making skills, as he had to resort to a Getty image to put a face on his archives, in which women are regularly listed as head butter-maker, the distribution of labour being but one factor in the intricate waltz of influences – as are the key elements of distance and transport – on whether creameries would sink or swim.

Jonathan Bell took us far back to the origins of the raised ridges, stunning in their variety, and the rundale system whose element of equality contributed so much to ideals, if not always realities, of Irish land use. Raised ridges have such a logic "in their place" that they are still practiced today in mechanised agriculture, reminding us that the "lazy" bed is anything but, and, like the Kerry bog pony or turf-cutting, remains a treasure-house of skills and knowledge of the land. Lazybeds were once pushed up to conquer high and hard marginal ground as the exploding population fought land hunger – the opposite of today's hemorrhaging EU rural areas whose people, in their flight, are leaving behind a wasteland.

The end note in our conference was truly that, because **Mary Mitchell-Ingoldsby** put a fine face to each of the musicians she introduced to us in the tale of how young and rather shy collectors went forth to seek the songs and music so valued today in the Muckross collections, armed nonetheless to the teeth – with weighty RTE-quality recording equipment and the question "where's the music?", to which the

answer was “just up the road”. The ongoing collection shows that county lines were not boundaries in cultural realms, often characterised by “islands of tradition” that sprung up or lived on because of strong local talent and the masters who drew young people to learn, even if they ended up spending much of their adult lives in New York or London, often to come home, drawn back by the certainty that there is “no good jig without the lonesome note in it”, among those notes she shared with us.

So, they closed our conference with a deep respect for older “multi-media” – archives in all their forms, from diaries to methers in bogs to hardening stands to broadsheets to paintings to the schools’ collections and the early sound-recordings. It is a job well done in Muckross and this has made it possible for us to speak together of how to continue honouring the past, to construct the future.

Cozette Griffin-Kremer

Minutes of the Society’s Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the Society’s Annual General Meeting

Held on Sunday 14th September 2014 at the Lake Hotel, Killarney.

Present: past President Catherine Wilson, standing in for President Eddie Cass, and 18 members. The meeting opened with a minute’s silence to remember the late Paddy MacMonagle.

Apologies: received from Eddie and Sheila Cass, Elaine Edwards, Duncan Dornan, Brian and Susan Loughborough, Matthew Richardson, Seb Littlewood, Heather Holmes

Minutes of the 2013 AGM: these had been printed in the newsletter. Proposed by Michael Larkin and seconded by Claudia Kinmonth.

President’s Report [relayed by Steph Mastoris]: it was reported that the President was unwell and the assembled members wished him well. Not much to report- all covered by officers’ reports below.

Treasurer’s Report [relayed by Steph Mastoris]: the financial report provided by Treasurer Duncan Dornan showed finances to be in modest order with a balance at 31st July 2014 of £14,817. Some income from conference payments was pending, but expenditures also. The overall balance had declined steadily from 2012 to 2013 to 2014. Senator Paul Coghlan regretted the depletion of funds and told the meeting that a decrease in the Irish Government’s conference budget allowance per elected member meant that several expected delegates had been unable to attend the Killarney conference. **An increase in subscriptions from £20-00 to £25-00 for individual members was discussed and adopted by the members present.** The increased fee will include new online access to the Journal and its predecessor Gwerin. Steph Mastoris was thanked for providing copies for digitisation. Dafydd Roberts noted that, despite the Welsh name, most of Gwerin’s articles were in English! It was also agreed that the Society’s bank transfer details should feature more prominently, to help members to use online banking more readily.

Editor’s Reports:

Lillis O Laoire, Journal

Lillis reported that the handover from previous editor Linda Ballard had been seamless and thanks and congratulations were recorded to both. Issue 52.2 would come out on October 1st. One article had had to be held over to accommodate a longer article from Andreas Heiss. Pieces had been received from Turkey, Iran and Russia, so the reach of the Journal continues to grow. Cozette Griffin-Kremer was continuing as reviews editor in the absence of anyone standing forward to take over, but would like to hand over the task sometime soon. The relationship with publisher Maney, especially through Rebecca Wilford, continues to be good.

Elaine Edwards, Newsletter

Condolences were sent to Elaine on the death of her father. In her absence, Steph Mastoris thanked Elaine for compiling the great newsletter which had been sent out in April. Delegates were reminded to return their specific conference summaries to Steph by the beginning of November. Cozette reminded members that the Newsletter is a great networking tool and copies can be usefully taken to other conferences, etc. Claudia raised the possibility of putting Society leaflets in other societies’ publications. Linda reminded the meeting that Maney distribute leaflet and can have stands at international conferences,

so any information of note could be disseminated that way. David Eveleigh proposed having a delegate's leaflet table at next year's conference in Dudley. Caroline Oates suggested that inserts can be added to the mailing of the journal *Folklore* and snippets published in *Folklore's* newsletter. Copy deadlines are 15th September, 15th December and 15th May. All present agreed that the Newsletter remained a valuable publication and as many ways of disseminating it should be found as possible.

Heather Holmes, Website

Heather sent her apologies and encouraged members to send as much information and news as possible to be publicised in the website/via Twitter. SFLS Twitter account has 337 followers – up on last year - and has posted 41 tweets! The Society also has a Flickr account managed by Heather, and members' conference photographs could usefully find a home here.

Secretary's and Membership Secretary's Reports:

Pressure of work meant that both Secretary Matthew Richardson and membership Secretary Seb Littlewood were unable to attend. Indeed, such pressures meant that Seb would be standing down from his role and Matthew taking over the membership database, combining the two roles. Grateful thanks were extended to both for all their hard work. Seb reported that the Society currently has 176 individual members and that responses to invoices had been poor – only about 150. It was noted that the Society needs to make all members, especially those who pay by Standing Order, aware of the rise in subscription rate.

Conference Secretary's Report:

Steph thanked the staff and trustees of Muckross House, especially Patricia O'Hare and Toddy Doyle, and Claudia Kinmonth, for organising a wonderful conference. It had been made all the more poignant by the recent death of Paddy MacMonagle, whose grave the delegates had been able to visit on the wonderful excursion to sites around the Killarney lakes organised by Patricia O'Hare.

The 2015 conference will take place at the Black Country Living Museum. Although Dudley is a market town with a castle and zoo, it is of course well known for its industrial past and industrial heritage will be a theme explored, along with inland waterways – a conference first? – and the dilemma faced by heritage sites walking the line between authenticity and expediency.

In 2016 the conference will move to Dublin in the centenary year of the Easter Rising. Conference themes will include politics, identity and folklife.

In 2017 there is a tentative plan for Dumfries and Galloway but nothing is confirmed.

In 2018 and 2019, visits to St Fagan's (following its refit) and the Cornish Mining World Heritage area are currently mooted.

Conference delegates are invited to give suggestions for further locations via the feedback form.

Election of Officers:

Catherine Wilson thanked Eddie Cass for his work as President and introduced President Elect, Linda Ballard. Linda was proposed as president by Claudia Kinmonth and seconded by Michael Larkin and was elected unanimously. Linda honoured her predecessor for his work.

Duncan Dornan (Treasurer); Steph Mastoris (Conference Secretary); Matthew Richardson (Secretary & Membership Secretary); Lillis O Laiore (Journal Editor); Elaine Edwards (Newsletter Editor) and Heather Holmes (Web Editor) join Linda as Officers of the Society.

The SFLS Council numbers 12 – 15 who serve a three-year term. Catherine thanked those who are standing down as of September 2014: Laura Clydesdale; John Burnett; Dafydd Roberts and David Viner and welcome those elected for a three-year term in their stead: Yvonne Creswell; Caroline Oates; Sarah Blowen and Christine Stephens.

Any other Business:

Claudia Kinmonth thanked Steph Mastoris for his organisational flair in bringing the conference together.

Linda Ballard thanked Caroline Oates and the Folklore Society for providing the wine reception.

All present joined in thanking the staff and trustees of Muckross House for such a wonderful welcome and long may the collaboration with the Society continue!

Catherine Wilson closed in saying that the Society is in good heart and that all members should go out and spread the word.



Recent Publications

Aul'-Farrant Wyes O Biggin; Essays in memory of Sandy Fenton.

Vernacular Building 37 2013-2014

Published by Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group

144 pages with colour & black and white illustrations.

Cost £11 including p& P from SVBWG Book Sales, F & M Dunn, 6 Hillview Rd. Edinburgh EH12 8QN

For more information about the society please see www.svbwg.org.uk

The Medieval Roads of Essex

Helen Walker

Essex is special because much of its road system has survived with little alteration since the Middle Ages, a situation that occurs in only a few other counties in England. This book ties together history, archaeology and map evidence to bring to life the roads and paths of medieval Essex, and thus build up a picture

of the people who travelled them, how they travelled, and what can be seen in the present-day.

Published as an eBook by Kindle and available at Amazon for £3.73

(The book can also be read on the following devices on downloading the free app from Amazon: Android phone or tablet, iPad, iPhone, PC or Mac)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/books>

Forthcoming Conferences/Meetings etc.

"Folklore: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow"

The Folklore Society's AGM Conference,

17-19 April 2015, Sheffield University, UK

More details at: <http://www.folklore-society.com/events/folklore-yesterday-today-and-tomorrow>

**The Rural Museums Network
Annual Conference for 2015
will be held in Scotland on 20th and 21st May.**

It is being hosted jointly by Urras Achadh an Droighinn/The Auchindrain Trust and Scotland's National Museum of Rural Life.

The conference will focus on the preservation and interpretation of historic farm buildings.

For further information please email
Bob Clark
bob.clark@auchindrain.org.uk

***Celebrating 80 years of Am Fasgadh*
Seminar, 23rd September 2015,
at the Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore.**

In 1935, pioneering folklife scholar and material culture collector Dr I. F. Grant founded the Highland Folk Museum in a disused chapel on Iona. She named it Am Fasgadh, Gaelic for *The Shelter*, where she preserved 'homely old Highland things'.

80 years on and the collection has continued to develop, and is now housed in a new collections' facility; *Am Fasgadh*, in Newtonmore.

To celebrate this landmark date we welcome you to attend this seminar.

Tickets are £25 with lunch included, and a curatorial tour of the collection.
£20 for students.

For details phone: 01540 673551, email
Jacob.O'Sullivan@highlifehighland.com or
Rachel.Chisholm@highlifehighland.com

CALL FOR PAPERS

**45th International Ballad Conference of the
Kommission für Volksdichtung**

31 August–4 September 2015

Prishtina, KOSOVO

The Institute of Albanology in Prishtina

Invites submissions for papers for the 45th International Ballad Conference of the Kommission für Volksdichtung

The 45th International Ballad Conference will be held in Prishtina (also spelled Pristina), the capital city of Kosovo and home to the [University of Prishtina](http://www.univ-prishtine.edu.ki).

It is intended that papers will be published.

Please submit abstracts of up to 300 words within an email, or as a Word/RTF attachment, and place IBC 2015 ABSTRACT in the subject line, to:

Arbnora Dushi: arbnoradushi@hotmail.com and
Lumnije Kadriu: lume70@hotmail.com

(If you do not receive email acknowledgement of your submission, please resend).

Important dates

1st May 2015 - Submission of abstracts

1st June 2015- Early registration (reduced rate) closes

**The next Folk Song Conference organised by the
EFDSS will be held at Cecil Sharp House,
London on the weekend 10th/11th October 2015.**

Further details will be announced in due course.

Anyone interested in giving a paper, please contact one of the conveners:

Steve Roud: sroud@btinternet.com

David Atkinson: david.atkinson@zen.co.uk

Obituaries

Dr Eddie Cass:

a personal reflection from Linda-May Ballard

It was with great sadness that I learned of the death of a dear friend, Dr Eddie Cass, Immediate Past President of the Society for Folk Life Studies, who passed away on 17 September last year. Dr Caroline Oates, another great friend, is preparing a formal obituary which will shortly appear in our journal, *Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies*. Meanwhile, I am honoured to be invited by the Editor of our *Newsletter* to prepare a short, personal reflection on Eddie, and I am certain that others too will have very fond memories of someone highly regarded and respected as a scholar while much beloved as a friend.

I first met Eddie several years ago, at an SFLS conference when he came up and introduced himself to me, telling me he knew of me through yet another mutual friend (such is the world of folk life studies). A scholar of folk drama, Eddie was a great admirer of my own mentor and former boss, the late Dr Alan Gailey. We soon discovered many shared interests and another firm friendship was quickly formed. It was my honour as Editor of *Folk Life* to publish two articles written by Eddie ('J.M. Carpenter, Ethel Rudkin and the Plough Plays of Lincolnshire' in vol 41, and 'The Lower Heyford Folk Play: James Madison Carpenter's Use of Dialect in his Cylinder transcriptions' in vol 45), while his Presidential Address to the Society, 'James Madison Carpenter and George Baker: An Analytical Description of an Artistic Relationship' appeared last year, under the editorship of Dr Ó Laoire. In addition to his strong scholarly contribution to SFLS, Eddie was involved in many other ways, including serving as Hon Secretary and as President. As journal editor, I also had good reason to be grateful to him for his work to ensure the smooth transition of *Folk Life* to a digital format some years ago.

On a more personal level, I am very grateful to Eddie, and to his wife, Sheila, for extensive and gracious hospitality shown to me when I visited their home on many occasions. Eddie made it possible for the Office Bearers of SFLS to hold our meetings at the People's History Museum (to which he also made an important contribution), and, travelling to these from Northern Ireland, I received regular invitations to stay. These visits were wonderful opportunities to enjoy great conversation with Eddie and Sheila on a vast range of subjects, to relax in genial company and to visit exhibitions either in their company or at the recommendation of one or other. The subsequent discussions were always lively, great fun and an opportunity to exchange ideas. I remember one morning being beguiled watching greenfinches visiting the numerous bird feeders available in their garden, and breakfast conversation that day covered the variety of wildlife made welcome in a lovely urban sanctuary. There were many opportunities to admire the extensive library and to learn more about the wide range of topics that engaged both Eddie and Sheila. It was a delight to discover that, while they had many individual interests, both enjoyed the diversity of folk life, and who could ever forget the wonderful SFLS conference hosted in Manchester during 2012?

When, a couple of years ago, I had the great honour of being elected as Vice President of SFLS, I was

delighted when Eddie's congratulations included confirmation that we could work well together. As I became President, I selfishly imagined that I would be able to rely on Eddie's knowledge and good counsel as he occupied the role of Immediate Past President. It was with great sadness that we learned last autumn of ill health that would prevent him from attending the annual conference, and with shock that we heard of his death a few days later. Eddie was a source of quiet, good advice and solid support to many of us who greatly valued the warmth of his friendship. Extending our sympathy to Sheila, we will sadly miss him and he will long be remembered with deep affection.

Linda Ballard

We are very sad to report the death at the age of 88 of **Trefor M. Owen**, a former President of Folk Life, A graduate in geography and anthropology at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Trefor went on to the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh, followed by a year studying ethnology the university of Uppsala, Sweden. He was appointed to the staff of the Welsh Folk Museum, St Fagans in 1954 and became its head from the retirement of Iorwerth Peate in 1971 to Trefor's own retirement in 1987. The author of numerous scholarly works about Welsh folk life and its study, he is perhaps best known for his volume *Welsh Folk Customs*, first published in 1959 and reprinted many times.

Beth Thomas

Paddy MacMonagle

Paddy MacMonagle was a devoted member of the Society for Folk Life Studies and attended its annual conference with dedication of some 30 years. He was buried in Killarney on the 22nd August 2014. Members visited Paddy's grave during the September 2014 Killarney Conference. Paddy was a Master Printer. With his brother Sean, he joined his father's business, Killarney Printing, in 1939, passing on the business to three former apprentices in 2001. Paddy was a prodigious photographer and provided the magnificent shots of Killarney and Kerry for the MacPOSTCARD range among many other pamphlets, books and collections.

A Trustee of Muckcross House since 1977, serving as Chairman in 1996/97, Paddy gave long, unstinting and devoted service, always willing to serve in any capacity. Muckcross House was a closed up

building until his mid –forties and Paddy vigorously promoted its heritage and its part in Killarney’s past, both as the local “big house” and the centre of Ireland’s premier National Park. In June 2014, he was made Honorary Vice-President, the first and only serving Trustee to have received that distinction.

Regular Conference attendees valued Paddy’s friendship and commitment. A pre-prandial glass of whiskey in Paddy’s room before dinner was always enjoyable. He entertained after dinner gatherings with stories, recitations and songs. Paddy acted as photographer during conferences and many speakers later received an envelope full of conference photos. Among his many conference papers his talk on “The Narrow Gauge Railways” of the West of Ireland” remains especially memorable. In it, he detailed particularly the history of the West Clare and Tralee to Dingle lines, quoting poems and songs, including Percy French’s humorous lyrics in “Are you right there Michael”. Conferences will not be the same without him.

Lillis Ó Laoire

SFLS Subscription Change

The society has held the membership subscription steady for several years now, in spite of meeting increased costs in providing the journal, web site and newsletter. It is with great reluctance therefore that at the AGM we agreed an increase in membership subscriptions this year, to £25. This will provide financial stability for the society over the next few years. We are pleased to advise members that as part of this change we will however be able to provide full on-line access both to the entire run of Folk Life but also to Gwerin, the predecessor journal. This will be included as part of the standard membership package.

Members who pay by standing order should update the details with their bank, if you currently pay by cheque, it would be helpful if you would consider standing order or bank transfer.

**BACS to;
Bank; HSBC
Sort code; 40-35-18
Acct code; 11226363
Ref; SFLS membership 2015/16 (name)**

Your continued support is very much appreciated.

**D M Dornan
Treasurer.**

Change of Membership Secretary

Thanks go to Seb Littlewood for many years service as our membership secretary and a welcome is extended to Dylan Jones who has kindly offered to take over.

Have you, or are you about to change *your* address?

If so, please can you let Dylan know

Email address: dylan.jones@museumwales.ac.uk

Postal: St Fagans: National History Museum, St Fagans, Cardiff CF5 6XB

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

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

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

Printed & published by the Society for Folk Life Studies, spring 2015. All opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not represent -the policies or views of the Society.