

# Charles Parker Archive

## Annual Report & Accounts 2012-2013

**Celebrating more than Fifty Years of the Radio Ballads**

First broadcast 3rd July 1963

### The Fight Game

A radio Ballad by  
EWAN MACCOLL, PEGGY SEGER and CHARLES PARKER



First broadcast 13th February 1963

### On The Edge

A radio Ballad by  
EWAN MACCOLL,  
PEGGY SEGER  
& CHARLES PARKER



*Thanks to The Library of Birmingham  
and all the help from our friends.*

**The Charles Parker Archive  
is owned by the Charles Parker Trust  
established by Mrs. Phyl Parker as grantor  
on 3rd March 1982.**

It is a registered charity, No. 326082.

**Tim Blackmore MBE: Trust Chairman,  
Ian Parr: Hon. Secretary  
Matthew Parker, Hon. Treasure, maker of musical instruments  
Pam Bishop, musician  
Peter Cox, author  
Andy Cartwright, university lecturer and programme maker  
Mary Kalemkerian, consultant commissioning editor, AudioGo  
Helen Lloyd, oral history consultant  
Sara Parker, radio producer  
Alan Hall, radio producer/feature-maker**

The Objects of the Trust are:

- \* **The advancement of education and knowledge in folk language, lore and music.**
- \* **The collation of the material and its maintenance and preservation**
- \* **The administration of the material including the making of it available to those members of the general public indicating an interest therein.**

The Charles Parker Archive is held in the Archives and Heritage Department of the Library of Birmingham.

*It holds some 5000 tapes, Charles Parker's files and papers and a small library of books on folk culture, music and politics. The Archive is open for research by people from any background. Individuals interested in topics such as radio, political theatre, trade union and racial politics and folk culture will find the Archive of particular interest.*

## **A Message from the Chairman      Tim Blackmore MBE**

The Trust's three principal activities are the preservation of the archive (a task delegated to Birmingham Library), promotion of the Archive's use (now largely achieved through websites including the Trust's own) and the organisation of the annual Charles Parker Day.

2013 sees the move of Birmingham Library into new premises located between the Repertory Theatre and the previous site. With a spectacular external appearance and exciting new state of the art facilities internally, our hopes are high for the future and for even greater collaboration between the Library's Archive Department and the Trust. To that end, it is our intention to hold the 2014 Charles Parker Day in association with the Library in Birmingham - the Archive's home city - where Parker was a BBC producer most of his working life.

The last few months have seen the creation of the Trust's new website and I am grateful to Pete Ashton and our own Pam Bishop for the time and energy they have contributed to its design and implementation. I have no doubt that further developments and expansion of its content will follow as we get used to it.

In May last year Mary Kalemkerian gave up her role as the power behind the BBC's 4 Extra radio service. The Trustees wasted no time in extending an invitation to Mary to join them, and her contribution has already been significant. Through her BBC role Mary has been an enthusiastic champion of the Radio Ballads in particular, and her love and knowledge of Charles' contribution is very warmly welcomed indeed.

In March, Trustee Andy Cartwright organised yet another brilliant Charles Parker Day in association with Salford University for whose hospitality we are deeply appreciative. You can read about the Day in more detail elsewhere in this Report but I cannot let the opportunity pass to say how thrilled I was by the final session in which producer John Leonard with Vince Hunt and Julie Matthews gave us a live recreation of one of last Year's Olympic Radio Ballads. We are especially fortunate that Andy has been prepared to put so much into ensuring the ongoing and increasing success of this annual treat.

Finally I offer my thanks to all my fellow Trustees, and in particular to Ian Parr whose enthusiastic embrace of the Honorary Secretaryship is a model of efficiency and dedication. Alongside them, it is important also to recognise the enormous help given to the Trust by Sian Roberts and Fiona Tait of the Library's Archive, Heritage and Information Services. The transition to their new premises has been demanding and we are grateful for their continued support through both the good and the uncertain times.



### **Secretary's Report for 2012/13**

Since publication of the last Annual Report the Trustees' committee has met twice, the first being the 2012 AGM in September. The other was in January 2013.

At our AGM in September, we welcomed Peter Cox to his first meeting as a Trustee although as noted in last year's Report Peter's nomination had been accepted previously.

It was also a first meeting for Mary Kalemkerian who had been nominated earlier in the year and was formally appointed by the Trustees at the AGM.

Another significant aspect of the AGM is that it was Gillian Reynolds' final meeting as a Trustee. Many Trustees paid tribute to her service to the Trust. Without Gillian's presence the January meeting indeed felt strange at times. Also at the AGM the Trust Honorary Treasurer, Robert Whitworth retired and gave notice of his intention to resign as a Trustee at the January meeting. Consequently, Matthew Parker was elected Treasurer. Whilst formally recording these changes it's important to acknowledge that our Chairman reported them for our last Annual Report.

At the January meeting it was reported that Philip Cox, who has not enjoyed recent good health, was to resign. His recollections of Charles in the days before he came to Birmingham were always of interest and gave a wider perspective to Trust meetings.

From the Trust's point of view, the Library staff have maintained their efforts on our behalf in circumstances that seem not to have been easy and at the time of writing final arrangements of the AGM cannot be put in place until organisation and room allocation within the new Library are more certain.

We have lost several Friends of the Trust in the last year. It is always sad yet interesting to hear of them and their lives. However, we continue to record new Friends associating themselves with the Trust. However, overall numbers are declining, which is something the Trust may have to address in future.

During the year I have handled four responses to enquiries from the Trust website. There is nothing substantial of note to report. When additional pages have been added to the website which are thought to be of interest to those on the Trust register of Friends and contacts a special email is sent out with an appropriate link. Anyone who expects and does not receive emails please let me know. Details are at the Trust website.

Data Protection Act: In accordance with a report submitted to the 2009 Annual General Meeting, and again in 2010 and 2011, the Trust's compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and related government guidance for organisations such as ours has been reviewed. In the last year I have reviewed and substantially revised addresses, both postal and email, of Friends of the Trust, supporters and contacts. There are no significant changes, special recommendations or observations beyond those noted in the aforesaid Reports.

At a personal level I think the Hon. Secretary and Hon Treasurer need to work well together for the smooth running of any voluntary body. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with Robert Whitworth our now retired Treasurer and I wish him well for the future.

Finally my thanks to the Library staff for their help this year in what must have been difficult circumstances for them. I'm grateful also to follow Trustees and Friends of the Trust for their support.

**Ian M Parr**

**Treasurer's Report - year ending 28 April 2013****Matthew Parker**

The main event of the year was Charles Parker Day. We are grateful to the BBC for financial support for the Day, and with this support our finances for the year will show a surplus. We currently hold about £5,000 mainly arising from the generosity of Friends over the years. This balance is available for new initiatives when opportunity arises.

The increase in the subscriptions and donations this year is due to a very generous donation from Gillian Reynolds.

I would also like to say that Gillian's incredible work, dedication and patience as trustee and Chairman for the trust over the years has been absolutely vital and greatly appreciated.

Please note the BBC grant has not yet been received and the expenses have only recently been claimed, and so, strictly speaking, are not within this financial year I have listed them for the sake of continuity. Changes in the gift aid claims procedure and the changing of the treasurer required more form filling etc. than usual and consequently the tax refund has not yet been received.

Forms for the renewal of subscriptions are being sent out with the Annual Report.

RECEIPTS	£
Friends' subscriptions and donations	784.00
Tax refunds on gift-aid contributions (claim ongoing)	
Grant from BBC for Charles Parker Day (invoiced 500)	
Bank interest	1.00
Total (1284)	<b>785.00</b>
PAYMENTS	
Printing, postage etc.	276.00
Website	371.00
Charles Parker Day (expected 289)	
Total (936)	<b>647.00</b>
Excess receipts over payments	<b>138.00</b>

**Balance statement at 28.04.13**

Opening balance in Barclays Bank at 29.04.12	5,057
PLUS excess receipts over payments	138
Closing balance in Barclays Bank at 28.04.13	<b>5,195</b>

**The Charles Parker Day 2013****Andy Cartwright**

This year's Charles Parker Day took place in the birthplace of Ewan MacColl the *Dirty Old Town* itself – Salford. We were the guests of the University of Salford based in MediaCityUK next door to the BBC and ITV studios. The Charles Parker Day 2013 celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first broadcast of two Radio Ballads *The Fight Game* set in the world of boxing and most significantly *On the Edge* the ballad about teenagers much of which was recorded in Salford itself. So it seemed appropriate to start the day with local celebrity, historian, writer, broadcaster and musician CP Lee who gave an illustrated talk on Ewan's teenage years – describing what it was like for him growing up in Salford and CP sang some of the songs he would have heard at home, in the music hall and on the streets and canals when this area was all docks and slums and not a MediaCity!

The BBC in the North West has always been a creative powerhouse of radio feature making and it could be argued that the programmes made by Olive Shapley, Joan Littlewood and DG Bridson in Manchester became a template for the Radio Ballads. Radio actor and University of Salford lecturer Malcolm Raeburn talked to three of the producers who worked (or still work) for the BBC in Manchester/Salford. Peter Everett relived the golden days of the Manchester Features Unit he ran with Alistair Wilson and spoke about how easy it was to get ideas commissioned; Ian Bent, the present day Head of Radio Production at the BBC in Salford talked about how technology is changing the way we can make programmes – and we can now all be radio producers thanks to mobile phone technology. The final panel member Lindsay Leonard was unfortunately trapped by snow in the Pennines so Malcolm's radio experience was called upon as he read a script Lindsay sent via email about early feature making in Manchester and played audio of Olive Shapley talking about the innovative features they made in the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

Returning to *On the Edge* Ieuan Franklin (University of Portsmouth) and Paul Long (Birmingham City University) introduced us to the BBC film made by Charles' friend Philip Donnellan based on *On The Edge* and played some of the first film Denis Mitchell made for the BBC in 1955 which may have been the inspiration for a radio ballad examining the attitudes of teenagers in the early 60s.

After lunch we heard *On The Edge Too?* a new 21st century Radio Ballad made especially for this year's Charles Parker Day by the winner of last year's Gold Charles Parker Prize Jimmy Ewing. Jimmy's ballad, commissioned by Soundscape Productions, featured contemporary teenage voices and contemporary original rap and indie music to ask if teenager attitudes have changed in the half century since the original *On The Edge* was made? You can decide for yourself as this *On The Edge Too?* is available to listen to on the Charles Parker Archive website.

This was followed by another discussion – Is the radio feature fighting a losing battle for teenage minds in a multi-platform world? Gillian Donovan, a young up and coming producer, quizzed Jo Meek, from Manchester based SparkLab Productions, who has produced many features for BBC Radio 1 and Sam White who has experimented with visualising radio – his most famous radio feature 'It's Grime Up North' took his presenter Charlie Sloth on a tour of the north looking for UK Grime artists which was transmitted on radio, digital TV and online simultaneously. The general feeling was that we need to catch the teenager eye through their mobile phones and tablets but nothing beats the personal engagement you can have with a story by listening to a great story well told by the people who have experienced it - is there still room for a radio ballad in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

That question was answered in the final session of the day when we witnessed a brilliant deconstruction and 'live' recreation of one of the 21st century radio ballads made by Smooth Operations for BBC Radio 2. Taking us through the making of last year's Olympic Ballads were Vince Hunt, who recorded most of the interviews, John Leonard, the producer, who edited all the material and musician and songwriter Julie Matthews who illustrated how the interviews were turned into song. The session ended with a 'live' performance of part of one of the ballads – Vince acting as announcer, John the SM and Julie performing alongside a live play-in of the interviews. This was how Ewan, Peggy and Charles made the programmes 50 years ago - it was like being in the studio with them - although we only had one 'take' not the 17 or so Charles preferred. It was a beautifully crafted performance with a moving dedication to the Radio Ballad pioneers at the end. We all felt uplifted hearing a radio ballad coming to life before our ears and eyes and the extended applause was fitting tribute to John, Julie and Vince; and, of course, Ewan, Peggy and Charles.

Unfortunately the snow meant another speaker – Joe Gallagher, a former boxer and now a trainer, was unable to discuss *The Fight Game* from the point of view of a boxer. Instead Andy Cartwright gave a short illustrated talk on how, after the perceived failure of *On The Edge*, Ewan, Peggy and Charles redefined what a radio ballad should be and how *The Fight Game* got the genre back on the road – and looked ahead to the success of *The Travelling People* – the final radio ballad and the theme of next year's Charles Parker Day to be held at the brand new Library of Birmingham, the home of the Charles Parker Archive on Friday April 4<sup>th</sup> 2014.



**Congratulations to the winners of the 2013 Charles Parker Prize. Mel Harris from SparkLab Productions, one of the judges, presented the awards at the Charles Parker Day.**



*Copyright—Jonny Blackburn.*

**Gold** to Hana Walker-Brown, from Goldsmith College, London for ‘Four Metal Plates’. Hana wins a SADiE professional editing system and a 2 week placement in the BBC Radio Features Department.

**Silver** to Flora Neve also from Goldsmiths for ‘5-7-5’. She wins a 2 week placement at Falling Tree Productions. (Her award was collected on her behalf by fellow student Evy Samuelsson).

**Bronze** to Joanne Feather from University College Falmouth for ‘Speaking Out About Disability Hate Crime’ and she wins a week placement with Smooth Operations.

All of the winners also received a PURE Digital Radio . The other judges this year were former Trust chair and trustee Gillian Reynolds, the radio critic of the Daily Telegraph and, as always, the chair of the panel was Simon Elmes the Creative Director of the BBC Features Department.

## To the Archive

**Ian M Parr**

In my past working life archives were places we dumped stuff; almost always letters, memos and notes of meetings, just in case something went wrong in the future. It was not so with engineering drawings. They were working things, sometimes hundred year old ones. We kept them in files, like a library, because chemical works and the equipment in them last a long time and their imprint upon our lives even longer. They also change frequently.

In nearly ten years as Hon. Sec. to the Trust I’ve learnt that things we took for granted in folk music and radio (because that’s what brought me to Charles Parker many years ago) in the nineteen sixties are alive too. From the Archive, a memo from Charles to Ewan and Peggy after “Song of a Road” changed the Radio Ballads. It gave us “Singing the Fishing”. It also gave us a great deal more, even you might say, the present folk scene and much of our best radio and TV. But, it’s simplistic to ascribe the present day to a single letter. Hence the need for an archive such as the one the Trust looks after in a broad sense and our friends in the Library in the most direct.

To write, to say these things; reads, sounds and feels like semantic poppy-cock. In a material world it’s the artefacts, the tools and the outputs that give us the justification for opinions. I’ve had the privilege of meeting people who have been part of the processes that gave us not just Charles Parker’s output but also today and tomorrow’s output. How do we transport people from the world of the early Radio Ballads, indeed before the advent of the EMI L2 midget recorder and the Brennell editing deck and that heavy microphone to Charles’ programmes? From the programmes by Brian Vaughton, the equipment he used to make the Birmingham Ballads and others with Charles and Philip Donnellan. How, too, do we ensure those moments captured and edited digitally by John Leonard’s team in the 2006 and their subsequent Radio Ballads; the songs, the interviews, the reflections such as at the presentation given at Salford – how do we make these relevant and accessible and place in front of people now and in time to be?

Drawings that I knew lived in big files. We pulled them out when we needed them. We didn’t live with them. Indeed we created more and in time all became digitalised. The Charles Parker Archive ought to be a living thing, not just added to. Every year Sian Roberts and her team report on the use of the Archive. The new building brings us opportunities. More use, more life!

**The following photos and descriptions may give some appreciation of the tools I've referred to in the preceding article; for the outputs you'll have to visit the Archive!**



Sometime before Brian Vaughton was making his programmes for Charles Parker he found he needed to use the sort of equipment that was in use in the BBC for making recordings in the field and getting scripts in to a basic condition for production editing. As a freelance and part-time programme maker Brian had to acquire the tools of his trade out of his own pocket. In 2012 Brian kindly donated this equipment to the Trust. It will eventually be lodged in the Archive. All the items have been photographed in a quasi-realistic manner, though without the benefit of a BBC studio, for these notes. It is hoped that a more

true-to-life arrangement can be created some time in the near future.

*The photographs comprise:*

1. A general arrangement showing the main elements: Brennell editing deck at the far end of the desk and to the front of the photo, the L2 Midget tape recorder. Between the two main items are the cover for the L2 which is of canvas and alongside it a tape box and reel and the handbook for the L2. In front of the L2 is the STC4032 microphone.



2. A detail side view of the L2 which includes part of the microphone and associated attenuator. Photo 5 shows the L2 controls in more detail.

They are on the other side of the machine. Photo 6 shows the nearside from which the machine is viewed in 2 with the battery compartment open.



3. The Brennell deck is shown with 7" tape and reel in place but not spooled up.



4. The STC4032 microphone is shown in close up. This is the mic normally used with the L2 recorder and with appropriate attenuator depending upon the ambient sound levels. The equipment has both 10dB and 20dB attenuators. Many of the photographs you see of Charles Parker in the field show him holding a similar mic. They almost never show the tape recording machine.



5. This side view referred to in 2 gives a clearer idea of the simplicity of the L2 controls. But also it indicates how clumsy the machine



would be to operate in the field.

6. The battery compartment (see notes in 2) also has the connection for the microphone.

7. The equipment donated to the Archive by Brian Vaughton includes a handbook for the L2 machine as well as a canvas cover for it and simple headphones. One of the attenuators is also shown in this view.



8. The L2 recording machine, shown below, can be operated closed up. Here the cover is on and there is a handle on one side which allows the tape inside to be rewound; there is no re-wind motor!



## The Charles Parker Prize .....what's NEXT?



**My Name is Jimmy Ewing.** I graduated with a First Class BA (hons) degree in Radio Production at Bournemouth University in 2012. That year is a particularly memorable one for me as I also won the *Gold Charles Parker Prize* for a 15' feature titled *Ward 13* about people who work in a hospital mortuary.

I was surprised to find out I had won and felt extremely proud with the added bonus meant that my piece would also be broadcast on *BBC Radio 4 Extra*. Within a few weeks of winning the prize, I went to work for the multi award-winning Prison Radio Association (PRA). I started

at the charity as a Broadcast Assistant intern and worked my way up to Producer level in the space of a year. My experience making the feature for the *Charles Parker Prize* certainly helped when I came to planning packages for prison radio.

Meanwhile Andy Cartwright from the *Charles Parker Trust* stayed in touch and commissioned me to make a piece for the *Charles Parker Day 2013* to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *On the Edge*, a radio ballad about young people in the 1960's. My commission was to make a modern version of the original and I began by re-listening to the Radio Ballad. I found that 1960s young people and young people today shared much common ground but they also had obvious differences. For example, in the original; the young people spoke about marriage as if it was just around the corner and they couldn't wait to get married. Whereas in my modern version; the young people have quite a negative view of marriage. Subjects where they shared similar views were about fashion and in both the original and in my modern take; they spoke very passionately about how it made them feel about themselves and the importance of image.

The music was also very important and although I am keen on folk music and play in a band, I looked to give my piece a heavier contemporary feel with the help of Jimmy B who I had met whilst working for Prison Radio. He had raps and songs which he had already written and also wrote some specially. This is something of a departure from the original '*On the Edge*' where the musical narrative grew from the interviews and is very folky, but so good is Jimmy's music in capturing the feelings of those difficult 'growing up' years that I feel if anything it is more authentic.

I was joined at the 2013 *Charles Parker Day* by my boss Phil Maguire (Chief Executive of the Prison Radio Association) and Jimmy B who both found the day as interesting and inspirational as I did. The contribution of Jimmy and I was to talk the audience through the creative process for the piece and it was well received.

But the success of the piece went further than the Charles Parker Day when I got another play on BBC Radio 4 Xtra and was paid for the commission. I now work for BBC Radio Leeds as a Producer working across all of the station's output. I used my piece 'Ward 13' in a show-reel when I first contacted BBC Radio Leeds and the Deputy Editor, Katrina Bunker, said that the piece really stood out whilst I am sure that putting *Charles Parker Prize* winner on my CV, also helped.

I am very grateful to the *Charles Parker Trust* for all their support which I believe has helped me to get to where I am today in my career. It is important to keep the memory of Charles Parker's work alive and even more important to inspire young Feature Makers and Producers with his work. I know that the Charles Parker Day is a must for most radio enthusiasts and the people I have met there said they can't believe how interesting and inspirational the day is. I look forward to next year!

**Jimmy Ewing.**





## The new-look website for the Charles Parker Trust - Pam Bishop

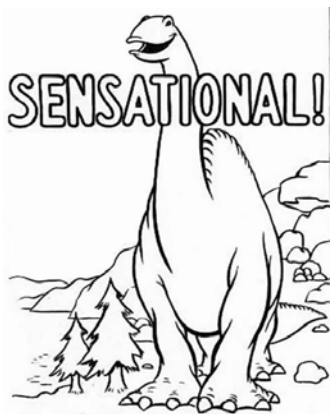
Last September there was substantial discussion on the role of the website and the content necessary to meet the ongoing objectives of the Charles Parker Trust. It was agreed that the existing site needed development, not only with regard to design, but also with regard to content and the capacity to handle more audio material.

Since then, the existing content has been restructured and placed within a Wordpress system, so that any authorised person can maintain it using a web browser. The new-look site was launched at the Charles Parker Day on 22 March, and can be viewed at the same address as before:

[www.cpatrust.org.uk](http://www.cpatrust.org.uk)

The next stage will be to add more content and give a clearer picture to the outside world as to what the Archive has to offer and how it can be used. In particular we would like to include many more audio clips, whilst recognizing the copyright issues involved in such an enterprise.

This is an ambitious programme and we welcome comments on the work so far and how it might be developed in future which you can send to me at [p.bishop@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:p.bishop@blueyonder.co.uk)



**Trustee Pam Bishop** pointed us in the direction of a great online resource: [www.dinosaurdiscs.com/](http://www.dinosaurdiscs.com/) Dinosaur Discs is a history of American music of the early 20th century and the technologies that allow us to hear it today.

The website is worth exploring. See next page for an extract from their blog.

## A Blog Entry from “Dinosaur Discs” dated 1 July 2013

An amazing set of free downloads of a definitive set of albums by the Library of Congress can be found at <http://blog.dinosaurdiscs.com/post/54340976113/folk-music-in-america>, with the following explanation:

### Folk Music in America

"Folk Music in America" is a series of 15 LP records published by the Library of Congress between 1976 and 1978 to celebrate the bicentennial of the American Revolution. It was curated by librarian/collector-cum-discographer Richard K. Spottswood, and funded by a grant by the National Endowment for the Arts.

The music, pulled primarily from the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song (now Archive of Folk Culture), spans nearly a century (1890-1976) and virtually every form that can be considered American music. This includes native American songs and instrumental music, music of immigrant cultures from all over the world, and uniquely American forms like blues, jazz and country.

The whole archive (1.1GB) can be downloaded in a single click, or individual albums.

At 15 LP records (252 songs, 12 hours), the series stretches what can be considered a single publication, but represents a somewhat comprehensive survey of American folk music of the 20th century. The booklets (included here in PDF form) transcribe lyrics, share images and tell short stories about sources and symbols helpful in understanding the material. Each disc is organized along a theme, which follow. Click the links below to download the “discs” individually, or the image above to download the whole anthology. If you absolutely have to choose, I’m partial to volumes 1, 6 and 14.

*Please turn over for full list of tracks*

1. Religious Music - Congregational and Ceremonial
2. Songs of Love, Courtship, and Marriage
3. Dance Music - Breakdowns and Waltzes
4. Dance Music - Reels, Polkas, Etc.
5. Dance Music - Ragtime, Jazz, Etc.
6. Songs of Migration and Immigration
7. Songs of Complaint and Protest
8. Songs of Labor and Livelihood
9. Songs of Death and Tragedy
10. Songs of War and History
11. Songs of Humor and Hilarity
12. Songs of Local History and Events
13. Songs of Childhood
14. Solo and Display Music
15. Religious Music - Solo and Performance

Some notes about method:

- All tracks are in "mono". Some of the tracks were recorded in stereo, but for the sake of keeping a sane workflow, minimizing hosting and serving cost, and cleaning up after well-used records, I decided to sum them all to mono.

Some tracks skip or have otherwise unavoidable blemishes, it's just part of transferring old records. Try to enjoy it despite these. If you catch something particularly grievous, [email me](#) and I'll try to make it better. Alternately, if you're an engineer and would like to try your hand at a better production, email me and I can send you the Audacity project files.

- All tracks are listed under the genre of "folk" in the ID3. This can obviously be broken down more meaningfully, but I don't want to confuse anyone's libraries or misidentify.

Finally, many of the foreign language recordings include diacritics that I couldn't be bothered to include in the titles, but they're correct in the booklets. It was a big project, ok?! I hope you enjoy the recordings despite some of these imperfections.



## Gone but not Forgotten



**When you think of all the wasted lives it makes you want to cry.  
I'm not sure how to change things but by Christ we'll have to try.**

*From Ian Campbell's **The Old Man's Tale***

Ian Campbell, an apprentice engraver in the Birmingham Jewellery district, had come down from Aberdeen with his folksong-immersed parents after the end of the war. Enrolling in Katherine Thomson's Clarion choir, in the late 1950s he formed with his sister Lorna the Clarion skiffle group, which soon became the Ian Campbell folk group, drawing Midlands enthusiasts in great numbers to their club the Jug o' Punch in Digbeth. It was in late May 1960 when Ian met Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker and Peggy Seeger, auditioning for the chorus in Singing the Fishing. Ewan was somewhat exasperated because most of the choir's voices were too educated for fishermen like Sam Lerner, but within seconds of starting Barnyards o' Delgaty as his solo audition piece Ian could see Ewan in the soundproof control room enthusiastically joining in. Soon he was singing solos in the programme, an exacting and intense experience. Peggy Seeger told me: 'Ian did a beautiful job on the Radio Ballads, his voice is true, absolutely true'.

Ian was a great fit for the Radio Ballad concept, and for Ewan himself, another strong left-leaning folk singer of Scots descent. He wrote a penetrating analysis of the Radio Ballad construction method, which had left him stunned, exhilarated and exhausted. '...MacColl had isolated not only obvious elements such as vocabulary and phraseology, but subtler elements such as speech rhythms and vocal patterns. (Actuality and songs) ...were overlapped and intertwined... musical rhythm was synchronised with speech rhythm or sound effects, and songs took their tempo and pace from the preceding actuality...

Most of the music took the form of sequences which lasted anything up to ten minutes, and which might demand the rapid alternation of speech with solo song, chorus, instrumental music, sound effects, or any combination of all four... It seemed nothing but perfection was acceptable to Parker; having recorded a sequence for the twenty fourth time the studio would wait with bated breath for the producer's decision, only to be told that one of us had taken an audible breath in a silent bar... Every day Charles became a little more dishevelled, a little more wild-eyed, and a little more volatile...'

After the huge success of *Singing the Fishing* and its successor, *The Big Hewer*, Charles was mortified when he was warned by his bosses at the BBC that if he 'continues to confine himself to a narrow sphere of work, his continued usefulness to the corporation will be in doubt'. It was a sharp tug on reins that had been hanging loose, originating in his employers' concern that the Radio Ballads were costing too much in both money and time, at just the time radio's funds were being squeezed by television's huge appetite, the cuckoo taking over the nest. Charles was keen to see whether he could produce them faster and cheaper, and he seized on Ian, a local worker-folksinger, as someone who could prove it. So it was that he commissioned Ian to make an ersatz Radio Ballad about the Jewellery Quarter, based on work done by Brian Vaughton, an independent pioneer who had his own EMI Midget tape recorder. Ian wrote three songs in five days, and had just a single weekend in March 1961 to rehearse and record what was in essence a radio feature with songs. It went out on BBC Midlands (only), to Charles's annoyance to a disappointing reception, not least from the BBC itself. Two months later Charles tried again, with another Vaughton piece, *Cry from the Cut*, about Birmingham's canal system. Ian – still working by day and singing by night – had eight hours of actuality as the starting point for the five songs he wrote in three weeks, in any spare moments he could snatch. This time it was more of a critical success, actually achieving an audience response rating that matched those of *Singing the Fishing*. But Charles could only scrape up £50 from his budget for Ian and his group, and that was the end of the experiment. Charles went back to Ewan and Peggy when given the chance to make *The Body Blow* in quick time.

Ian and his group took part in Charles's hectic Centre 42 tour in 1962, but the following year, denied time off to go to the Edinburgh Festival, he decided at last to give up the day job and turn professional. This upset Charles, who saw Ian romantically as the archetypal artisan-folksinger, and his reaction left a bad taste in Ian's mouth, though he took part in the sixth, and least well received, *Radio Ballad, On the Edge*.

Throughout the rest of the 1960s and for most the 1970s, despite line-up changes (the dazzling but unreliable Dave Swarbrick came and went), Campbell's was one of the foremost folk groups in Britain, popular in Europe. He stayed with his left-wing roots, writing the influential *The Old Man's Song*, and *The Sun is Burning*, which became a CND anthem and sold 2000 copies on one Aldermaston march alone. But the death of founder member John Dunkerley led to the group folding in 1978. Ian did a degree in theatre studies and went on to work in television for many years. In fact he told me that he felt his best piece of work was a programme he did for the BBC in 1973 as part of a BBC television series called *The Camera and the Song*. 'It was a kind of television Radio Ballad. I did the first one, called *Here Come the Brummies*. A singer/songwriter and a cameraman on any subject they choose. Ralph McTell, Max Boyce, Victoria Wood, Jake Thackray, Alex Glasgow all took part... I was paired with a cameraman I'd never met, brilliant, he found some wonderful stuff. A day in the life of Birmingham, starts at dawn, ends at dusk... Birmingham as the workshop of the world. I wrote new songs like 'Chocolate Paddies', Black Country men cursing black men for taking their jobs... It was broadcast at 9pm... the phone started ringing with congratulations... then Charles Parker came on – 'Ian, you bastard. It was wonderful – you learnt a lot on the Radio Ballads. Nearly brought it off.' 'Nearly', said Ian, 'Oh well... story of my life.'

For the You Tube version of "Here Come the Brummies" see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfnJmZ2FaOw>

**Peter Cox** Trustee and Author of "**Set into Song**",  
*documenting the story of the Radio Ballads.*

## Janie Buchan 1926 - 2012



The phone would ring and Janie Buchan would straightaway say what she needed to say. “Now, Gillian, now have you heard about...”

That was the Janie way, direct, positive, thoughtful. Her voice was deep, melodious, urgent, until a laugh broke through. It often did.

She was a remarkable and consistent Friend of the Charles Parker Archive from the start. When I was CPA Chairman sometimes she would write to me, her hand writing sloping sharply forward, the address on the top, (the old Westminster one where she lived until the death of her husband, Labour MP Norman Buchan), thriftily crossed out, the message straight to the point. “*Page from Antique Trade Gazette enclosed. See the John Axon item. They’ve called him AXOM*”

That was about the plaque from John Axon’s engine, not the original one but she thought it worth pursuing and maybe buying. But not to the point of paying way over the odds. “*The restored item went for £500 which I thought was awful*” Then she went on, “*Interestingly the director/curator at Buxton had never heard of the Radio Ballad but that, we’ve all agreed, is not going to be used.*” (I think she meant against him.) “*Such people are having one hell of a time right now.*”

There was news of a book, “*the first in all my 84 years I’ve ever bought on an advert, NYRB review...*” and then a bit about the EU paying Elton John out of Eurofunds “*for a folk concert...*” The indignation at this practically set alight the ink on the page. Then a note about an enclosure, a few handsome postcards from the set marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Penguin books, “*Do what you like with them...*” This was the woman who, when she was a Glasgow Councillor, helped finance the early films of Bill Forsyth and organized the first ever UK sale of charity Christmas cards, who served as a Labour MEP from 1979 – 94. Her father was a tram driver, her mother a servant. She left school at 14.

That was the last letter I had from her. She’d moved by that time to the south coast which, once or twice, she told me over the phone was “a bit boring.” No wonder. From what she said and wrote to me over a couple of decades her agile brain, darting intelligence, fierce conscience and warm compassion, her remarkable gift for connection and friendship were all still vivid, ready for a good old clash of opinion, a proper meeting of minds.

We never met. I was blessed to have known her, if only by phone and post. I really miss her.

**Gillian Reynolds**

## Birmingham Archives and Heritage

*Sian Roberts*

It’s been a frantically busy year for the archives team as we have spent most of the past twelve months preparing our archive, photography and local history collections for the move from the now empty Central Library building into the new Library of Birmingham on Broad Street. Although we were only moving a short distance geographically, the process of ensuring that we could safely move almost 7 miles of archives, over 2 million photographic images, and the printed book collections has been a significant undertaking, and of course also included the preparation and packing of the Charles Parker Archive. The physical relocation of the collections started at the end of April 2013 and will be complete by 31 July. During the same period all the staff and their associated equipment have moved into the new building.

The Library of Birmingham has vastly improved storage areas for the collections with state of the art environmental controls and a range of storage environments for different media. So, for example, parts of the Parker Archive will now be stored in a specialist audio-visual store at different temperatures and relative humidity to the paper material in the collection.

The Library opens on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September and the research facilities for the archive, photography and heritage special collections will be concentrated on the fourth floor. Other new facilities available to us in the new Library include an exhibition gallery which has been designed to feature and promote our collections through a dedicated exhibitions programme, and a British Film Institute Mediatheque which will feature film content from the BFI’s archive relating to Birmingham and the West Midlands.

All details of opening hours, contact details and appointments etc. will be available on the new website <http://www.libraryofbirmingham.com>. The website will also include details of the opening festival which takes place between September and December and which will feature artist residencies, events and talks to mark the opening of the Library. You can also access the online catalogue to the Charles Parker Archive through this website – it can be found on the online catalogues page by clicking on the link to the Archives & Heritage Catalogue. Once in the online catalogue then the easiest way to pull up the entire Charles Parker Archive catalogue is to go to Advanced Search and type MS 4000 into the ref. no. field.

The next few months will be a very exciting time for the archive as we settle into our new home and get to grips with the new services and ways of working, and we hope that the Friends of the Charles Parker Archive will take the opportunity to visit the Library of Birmingham, either on the occasion of the Friends AGM in October or when the Charles Parker Day is held here in 2014.

For further information about using the Charles Parker Archive after September 2013 go to the new Birmingham Library website <http://www.libraryofbirmingham.com> or telephone 0121 424 4242 or e-mail [enquiries@libraryofbirmingham.com](mailto:enquiries@libraryofbirmingham.com)

The catalogue can also be browsed via the national website Access to Archives as explained on the Trust's website [www.cpatrust.org.uk](http://www.cpatrust.org.uk)"