

# Charles Parker Archive



Annual Report & Accounts  
2004 – 2005

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

**It is a registered Charity, number 326082**

The Trustees are:

**Pam Bishop, musician**

**Philip Cox, Q.C.**

**Catherine Mackerras, community arts worker**

**Matthew Parker, maker of musical instruments**

**Gillian Reynolds, MBE, journalist and broadcaster (Chair)**

**Dave Rogers, Banner Theatre**

**Hon Secretary: Ian Parr**

**Hon Treasurer: Robert Whitworth**

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 include the making of it available to those members of the general public indicating an interest therein**

**Any other purpose consistent with the first item above**

The Charles Parker Archive is held in the Archives Department  
of the Central Library, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3HQ  
(telephone: 0121 303 4217)

It contains 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 individuals  
especially Trade Union members interested in  
radio, political theatre and folk culture.

## Chairman's Report

Gillian Reynolds

This has been a year of real achievement. Our digitisation project, *A Future For Ordinary Folk*, principally supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, was completed.

We formally opened it to the public on June 12, 2004, with a celebration at the Library Theatre. Voices from the past, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, Cecilia Costello and Charles Parker himself (from the newly CD accessible segment of the Archive) were heard alongside such potent voices from the present as Sandra Kerr and Dave Rogers. Katie Foster, Chair of the HLF Committee for the West Midlands, warmly welcomed this new beginning. Marie Stephens, former project archivist, described setting it up. Sara and Matthew Parker spoke movingly of the realisation, after so many years, of so many CPA hopes.

Sian Roberts, Head of Archives, linked us to the future with the new challenge which lies ahead. *Connecting Histories*, a pioneering archives and education initiative, embraces the two thirds of the CPA collection as yet undigitised and catalogued, aligns our material with significant other collections and will train archivists to make all of them truly community assets both now and for future generations.

*Connecting Histories* received Heritage Lottery funding later in 2004 and was launched in February 2005 (see Sian Roberts report, p4). Exciting times lie ahead. The CPA is a partner in this project. This means we must raise some £5000 of matching funding. But it also means we will play a part in seeing archives become an active educational tool for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, reaching all ages and the widest possible range of citizens. As Chairman of the CPA I am part of its steering group and, after our first meeting on June 10, I can report my absolute confidence in its aims and objectives. This is a project other cities will be sure to follow. The date for completion is in 2007, the same year as our Trust will mark its own 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We go forward to that date with a good team of our own. As Sian Roberts goes to run *Connecting Histories*, David Bishop becomes our Library representative. Ian Parr, our new Secretary, and Robert Whitworth, our new Treasurer, bring much appreciated expertise and enthusiasm. Ian, a "semi-retired" engineer, had corresponded with Charles for over a decade about folk song and performance before they met in the mid-70s. This year, on a trip to the USA, Ian did some powerful detective work for us in Washington D.C. (see p5) Robert, like Charles (as well as Trustee Philip Cox and former Trustee, Secretary and Treasurer the late Paul Shilston) is a Queens' College, Cambridge man. His subsequent career was on the staff of the School of Physics at the University of Birmingham.

Our partnership with the Central Library, I am delighted to report, continues to bloom. Their patience, encouragement and support remain unstinting. We are fortunate beyond measure to have such hosts, backers and friends. Fiona Tait, who took over from Marie Stephens as Project Archivist on *A Future For Ordinary Folk*, has brought it to completion beautifully. A second *Charles Parker Day*, organised by Dr. Paul Long and very well attended, was held at the University of Central England, in April. The first Charles Parker Prize (see Sean Street's report p6) was awarded.

The Project Board is now wound up. The Trustees have met four times in the past year. To all our Friends (see p7) and champions, among them Sean, Fiona, Sian and David as well as Paul Hemmings and Brian Gamble, our warmest thanks.

## 2.

**Treasurer's Report, year ending April, 2005**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS  
FOR THE YEAR 29/04/04 to 28/04/05

RECEIPTS	£
Friends of the Charles Parker Archive	2,000.00
Donation towards Connecting Histories Project (Cadbury)	1,000.00
Sales at Charles Parker Day	18.00
Bank interest	403.89
	<hr/>
	3,421.89
 PAYMENTS	
Birmingham Central Library (HLF grant)	36,071.09
Birmingham Central Library (partnership funding)	3,841.20
Printing Annual Report	182.13
	<hr/>
	40,094.42
 Excess of payments over receipts	 36,672.53

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BALANCE SHEET AT 28/04/05	£
Balance at 29/04/04	
Barclay's current a/c	680.21
Business premium a/c	639.67
Digitisation a/c	7,574.91
Business tracker a/c	<u>30,000.00</u>
TOTAL	38,894.79
 LESS excess payments over receipts	 36,672.53
 Balance at 28/04/05	 <hr/> 2,222.26
 Represented by	
Barclay's current a/c	516.08
Business premium a/c	1,643.56
Digitisation a/c	<u>62.62</u>
TOTAL	<hr/> 2,222.26
 <b>Robert Whitworth, Hon. Treasurer</b>	 <b>30.04.05</b>

## Project Archivists's Report 2004-2005

Fiona Tait

The cataloguing of the recordings digitised as part of the project, '*A Future for Ordinary Folk*' were finally completed by September 2004.

### Use of the Archive

Most researchers this year have concentrated on Charles Parker and his work, though one person who was excavating a ship off Lowestoft, visited to listen to the field recordings for '*Singing the Fishing*', to find some background information on the period.

Enquiries have included some from museums and archives in the north east of England looking for recordings with mining communities and local folk singers. This year there has been considerable use of the Charles Parker Archive by the City Archives staff, for training and promotion. This has included playing extracts from the CDs to students and other groups, and the new archives and outreach staff in the '*Connecting Histories*' project.

The Education Outreach worker, Nikki Thorpe, who was appointed by the City Archives in October 2004, is developing three projects which make use of the archive with different schools in the Quinton Education Action Zone of Birmingham. These include using recordings of children's games to promote play, a sense of rhyme and rhythm and explore cultural diversity; using the radio ballads '*The Body Blow*' and '*On the Edge*' to help children with disabilities and their carers to speak about their experiences and perceptions of the world; and using stories and music from the archive to explore migration and diversity. This means that nearly 300 children will be introduced to the Charles Parker Archive !!

### Promotion

Other promotion of the Archive included some networking/leafletting at the Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture conference day, on 19 March 2005. Particularly useful was contact with the Elphinstone Institute, Aberdeen, and it was interesting to hear of their projects on travellers' culture. A donation of '*Binnorrie*', a CD by the traveller Elizabeth Stewart, was made to the Charles Parker Archive.

The Radio 3 programme, '*A Microphone for the People*', produced by Julian May, written and presented by Professor Sean Street on 7 April 2005, promoted the Archive and included extracts of Charles Parker singing.

On the Charles Parker Day, 2005 a tour of the Archive was given for some of those attending the conference.

Nautical connections of the archive are also being featured on the SeaBritain website/newsletter, with an appropriate addition to the City Archives website.

There have been nine additions to the Archive in the past year.

#### 4.

## Connecting Histories

**Sian Roberts**

In last year's annual report I wrote about a funding application which Birmingham City Archives had submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project called **Connecting Histories**. One of the aims of the application was to preserve the remaining two thirds of the Charles Parker sound archive and make it accessible through digitisation and cataloguing.

This year I'm very happy to report that our application was successful and that the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded the project a grant of £821,500. The project is being undertaken in partnership with the School of Education at the University of Birmingham, the Sociology Department at the University of Warwick and the Black Pasts Birmingham Futures group.

The project started officially on 1 February 2005 and will be completed by the end of July 2007. Most of the project team is now in place and the team members are:

Project Manager	Siân Roberts
Community Access Officer	Izzy Mohammed
Archivists	Helen Fisher, Jim Ranahan and Anna Riggs
Positive Action Trainee Archivists	Aishling Fox and Arike Oke
Digitisation Officer	Brigitte Winsor
Academic Advisors	Professor Ian Grosvenor, University of Birmingham, and Dr Robert Carter, University of Warwick

As this report went to press work was underway on the tendering process to recruit a company to undertake the digitisation of the Charles Parker Archive. This involves the digital transfer of some 3,000 remaining reel-to-reel tapes to CD-R format. The digitisation work should begin before the end of 2005 and will take about 12 months to complete. Once the digital transfer of the recordings to CD-R has taken place then the cataloguing team will catalogue the archive and the completed catalogues and the sound recordings will be available by the Summer of 2007.

In addition to the digitisation and cataloguing, the team will be undertaking a significant amount of community outreach work to publicise the archive and enable volunteers who are interested in getting involved in the work of the project to develop archive skills. The project will also create 5 online learning and research skills packages which will draw on material from the archives and which will be created on the theme of campaigning for social justice. The learning packages will become gradually available on the project website which will hopefully be up and running by the end of 2005.

For further information contact [sian.roberts@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:sian.roberts@birmingham.gov.uk) or 0121 464 1607

## Those “Missing” Tapes....

Ian Parr

In last year’s Annual Report Gillian Reynolds mentioned the launch by Topic Records of the Radio Ballads and of master tapes of them in the Library of Congress in Washington DC. I planned to visit the Library of Congress as part of my vacation this year and obtained the Trustees’ agreement to enquire about the tapes and determine their content (are they originals or copies?)

From minutes of meetings and correspondence in our files it was evident much had been done and much was uncertain. The focus had been on obtaining release of the MacColl/Seeger Radio Ballads. The Library of Congress website showed there to be a substantial folk music section. Further enquiry brought me into correspondence and later a meeting with Jennifer Cutting of the Folklife Center at LOC. However, the file correspondence on the tapes related to The Smithsonian Institute.

The Folklife Center was not the best starting point to locate the tapes. The custodians were indeed The Smithsonian, appropriate since it was founded by a British philanthropist! However, Jennifer Cutting and the staff at LOC turned up some interesting material. From the Library of Recorded Sound I learnt of BBC programmes made available in the 1980s which included some associated with Charles Parker. They included references to material from *Body Blow* a later documentary, *No Surrender*, and *The Iron Box* a documentary in the series *A Story of our Time*.

The Folklife Center also had a letter from Ian Campbell in 1999 relating to two radio ballads he had done with Charles, *The Jewellery* and *A Cry from the Cut*.

The Radio Ballads tapes in The Smithsonian were confirmed by Jeff Place as a set of seven each comprising two ten inch reels. The missing programme is *The Travelling People*. Jeff believes these tapes were lodged with Moses Asch and there is correspondence referring to them. There are also seven inch reels of *The Big Hewer*, *On the Edge*, *The Ballad of John Axon* and *Singing the Fishing*. Jeff thinks these were lodged later and are copies. Besides all this there are two seven inch reels of *The Factory* made with Alasdair Clayre in 1965, musical direction by Peggy Seeger and contributions from David Kennard. There are scripts of *Dog in the Manger* and *The Ballad of John Axon*.

The Charles Parker Archive interest in obtaining copies of the tapes and the substantial documentary material has been made known to Jeff Place and we hope to have them in the next few months.

We should soon know more about the background to some of the material in the CP Archive. Discussions with Peggy Seeger whilst she is in the UK in May and June may shed more light on things. The existence of other programmes made by Charles with other writers and performers is known to many of us. However, this information from the USA should help further our understanding and help future users of the Archive appreciate the context of Charles’ work.

In April, 2004, the Centre for Broadcasting History Research at Bournemouth Media School, Bournemouth University, established Charles Parker Day, a seminar/conference based on the work of Parker, with its first event held in Bournemouth, the birthplace of Parker. From the start, the aspiration of the initiative was to celebrate not only Charles Parker and his work, but the radio feature itself, its past, present and future. With this in mind, the Centre created the Charles Parker Prize for Student Radio Features, an annual award open to students studying radio at Further or Higher Education establishments within the United Kingdom. The competition offered a prize of £500, provided from CBHR funds, and a two-week work placement, offered by the Documentaries and Features Department of BBC Radio. The judges were Gillian Reynolds, Sara Parker (Charles Parker's daughter, and an eminent features producer in her own right) and Simon Elmes, Head of Documentaries and Features, BBC Radio.

Entries were received from students attending academic institutions from all over Britain, and the generally high standard of submissions was noted by all the judges. In the end, after much debate, the winner proved to be Mark Williams, a first year student on the Communications and Media degree course at Goldsmiths College, University of London, with his moving feature, *Inside Out*. Mark discovered radio while serving a sentence at Wandsworth Prison. *Inside Out* is an audio diary of his last hours before release, and his first minutes as a free man. It chronicles his emotions as he awaits his moment of freedom, the euphoria which follows it and the mixed feelings on encountering the outside world again.

Mark received his award from Simon Elmes at the second Charles Parker Day event in Birmingham in April, 2005. Presenting him with his prize, Simon praised the power of the piece, the moving nature of the content and the control with which it was handled, adding: "This was an amazing piece of work, technically assured, beautifully assembled, with an unbeatable mix of actuality and personal confessional." Receiving the award, Mark said that making *Inside Out* and receiving the prize had changed his life, and would continue to do so. Charles Parker would have approved.

The second Charles Parker Award has now been launched. The closing date for entries is 10 February, 2006, and the winner will be announced at the third Charles Parker Day, to be held in Bournemouth on 7 April, 2006. This year entry will be extended to those studying at Further or Higher Education institutions in Ireland. The judges will be: Simon Elmes, Head of Documentaries and Features, BBC Radio  
Dr Piers Plowright, features producer  
Jane Anderson, Radio editor, *Radio Times*

Details of the competition, conditions, and an entry form may be found at:

[http://www.media.bournemouth.ac.uk/cbhr\\_parkerprize.html](http://www.media.bournemouth.ac.uk/cbhr_parkerprize.html)

For further information about the activities of the Centre for Broadcasting History Research in the Bournemouth Media School, Bournemouth University, may be found at:

<http://www.media.bournemouth.ac.uk/cbhr.html>

## Friends of the Charles Parker Archive

Pam Bishop

This group was set up in 1981 at the same time as the Charles Parker Trust, and since then has been supporting the Trustees in two main ways. Firstly and most importantly it is a source of volunteers – to support the cataloguing and copying process, and to help in the organisation of events, some highlighted below. Secondly it raises money in a small way which can be used as matched funding against grants from funding bodies. This is particularly true in relation to the Heritage Lottery grant for the recently-completed digitisation project, where the finance was completed with a cheque for £2000 from the Friends.

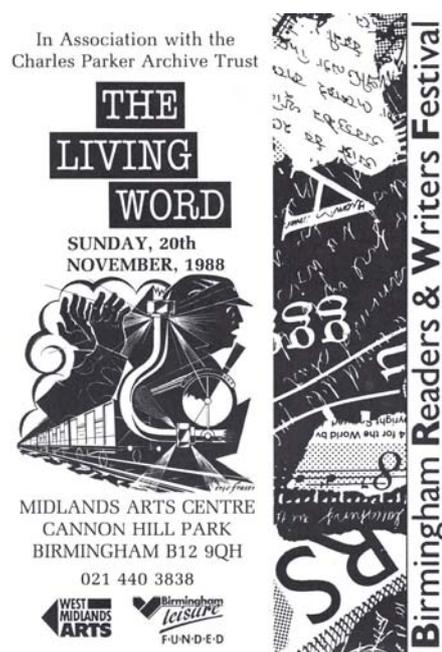
### Some events that volunteers made possible

When the archive moved to Birmingham Public Libraries in 1986 the Trustees were able, with the help of the Friends, to feature a grand launch in the city centre, as well as support BPL staff in mounting an exhibition from 11am-6pm daily for a month. A large number of singers and musicians took part in a Street Festival in Chamberlain Square on Saturday 14 June, with a folk concert in the Library Theatre that evening, and another one a week later.

The exhibition *The Living Word*, featuring Charles Parker's work and ideas 1954-1980, was a major feature of the Readers and Writers Festival in November 1988. For two weeks our volunteer Friends staffed the Midlands Arts Centre gallery from 12 noon till 8pm. On Sunday 20 November there was a full day event, with contributions from the National Sound Archive, Banner Theatre, Living Archive and S Wales Miners Library, the Sandwell Popular Archive and Black Country Oral History Cookbook as well as many singers and musicians.

Friends gave huge support behind the scenes in the making of the Travelling Exhibition CD-ROM, launched in 1995. They also organised, as part of the Readers and Writers Festival, an evening of song, photographs and discussion – *The Travelling People, Then and Now* – on 20 May that year.

Ten years later they are still involved. The digitisation project *A Future for Ordinary Folk*, was launched in June 2004. Singers, musicians and other Friends contributed to make this a memorable occasion. They will continue to support the work of the Trustees in making the contents of the Archive accessible.



**Friends in the Future**

**Pam Bishop**

I have acted as secretary and treasurer to the group ever since it started, and perhaps now is the time to look at widening participation. If you are interested in helping to support the Trustees of the Charles Parker Archive and are not already a Friend, you will find a subscription form below. If you would like to take a more active role, then I would be happy to discuss how my role might be shared.

**Subscriptions for 2005/6 are now due.  
Membership of the Friends entitles you to an Annual Report or periodical newsletter, to concessionary prices for publications in print or sound and to be actively involved in the future of the Archive.  
If you can interest new Friends, please do. We need you more than ever!**

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Please complete and return to:  
**Pam Bishop, 35 Waterloo Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 7SD**

**Name:** .....

**Address:**  
.....  
.....  
.....

**telephone:** ..... **e-mail:** .....

**Will you covenant an annual sum to the Archive?** .....  
(If "Yes" we will send you a Covenant/GiftAid form)

**I/We enclose cheque for.....to cover my/our annual subscription**  
(organisations: **£15** individuals: **£7.50** unwaged: **£4.50** donation £

**Date:** ..... **Signature:** .....

**Please make cheques payable to "Friends of Charles Parker Archive"**