

Charles Parker Archive



Annual Report & Accounts 2005 – 2006

**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

It is with great pleasure and pride that I can report a year of solid progress. Our own Heritage Lottery funded scheme, *A Future For Ordinary Folk*, completed in 2005, provided for the digitisation and conservation of only one third of our collection. Birmingham Central Library's new project, *Connecting Histories*, embraces the rest, linking it to the kind of archival outreach and community involvement of which Charles Parker himself, as well as former Trustees of the Charles Parker Archive Philip Donnellan, Richard Groves, Mary Baker and Paul Shilston, would have been proud.

Connecting Histories, as you will see from Sian Roberts' report (p4) is half way through its HLF backed programme and progressing very well indeed. Through it, the rest of the CPA collection will be digitised, conserved, catalogued and made accessible to the public in precisely the ways laid down in our Deed of Trust.

As partners in *Connecting Histories* we have a financial commitment to the project. We were pledged to raise a further £5000 this year. This we have done. As you will see from the Treasurer's report (p3) this has been made possible through the generosity of ShareGift, the George Cadbury Trust and Tim Blackmore, MBE. All have supported us in the past and we are once again very grateful indeed to them.

We also congratulate ShareGift, this year celebrating its tenth birthday, on making a good idea – to collect unwanted small holdings of shares and release their value for the benefit of charities in the UK – into a magnificent achievement. So far, they have given away almost £10m to over 1000 charities. You can find the full list on their website sharegift.org

Tim Blackmore has been a Charles Parker fan since he first heard *Singing The Fishing*. He worked at the BBC with the legendary Anna Instone, went on to help found Capital Radio, left to set up Unique in the first wave of independent radio production companies. Unique now owns Smooth Operations, the company which produced this year's new *Radio Ballads*, (see p8 and also pp9 and 10) six one hour specially commissioned documentaries with music which went out on Radio 2 from February to April 2006. Copies of all the *2006 Radio Ballads* are now in the Archive. The power of radio to move and connect remains truly remarkable.

The third Charles Parker Day was held in Bournemouth on April 7 (see Sean Street's report, p6) and is now very much part of the academic, archival and broadcasting calendars. Folk music is now riding very high, with increased audiences and booming CD sales, the *Folk Britannia* season at the Barbican this spring and broadcast on BBC4 television, and Radio 2's Folk Awards, the great highlight of the annual awards scene, a showcase of the best talent, a celebration of traditional music and its evolution into new forms. The search is now on for the *Radio 2 Young Folk Award 2007*. If you know of a performer in the UK aged 15 – 20 in folk, roots or acoustic music, go to bbc.co.uk/radio2 or e-mail info@mrs-casey.co.uk or call 01629 827012 for more information on the associated workshops and masterclasses and how to enter. Closing date is 11.9.06

2.

Next year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the CPA. With good luck and the continuing support of all our friends and associates we hope to mark it appropriately. We have come a long way from our homeless beginnings, through an era of complete technical change from analogue to digital with, in parallel, the arrival of the Heritage Lottery Fund to sponsor and support (for the first time) the work done in Britain's libraries for our rich inheritance of archival material in all its many forms.

We are proud to have our place in Birmingham's Central Library and a part in *Connecting Histories*, a magnificent project which, I am sure, will provide a template for many other cities in the future. We are on many websites, including the BBC's bbc.co.uk/radio2/radioballads. A Charles Parker award is now made annually by the BBC to a new documentary maker. Academics at home and around the world will, as of next year, have complete access for the first time to our whole collection.

None of this could have been accomplished without the patient work of the Trustees, the incomparable support we have had from Birmingham in general and the Central Library in particular, the backing of our Friends, the cooperation of the BBC and the generosity of our donors. Thank you all, very much indeed.

The Trustees have met twice this year. We have had correspondence with, among others, Janey Buchan, widow of Norman Buchan M.P., both strong CPA supporters, on her concern at the clearing of Traveller sites to build London's Olympic facilities. Why could not the BBC, she asked, put on *The Travelling People* to highlight this lamentable situation? Why not indeed, we add. We salute our long time champion, Lord Briggs, on his 85th birthday. We mourn the passing of Stephen Peet, distinguished documentary film maker, founding father of *Yesterday's Witness*, and look forward to the session on his work that the BFI, who now holds his archive, hopes to mount at the Oral History Conference later this year. And congratulations to Dominic Delargy, speaker at last year's AGM, for getting a distinction in his radio degree from Bournemouth University.

**The Topic CDs of the Radio Ballads
are all available to buy at
Birmingham Central Library,
either individually at £13.99 each
or as a complete set of eight,
at the discount price of £100
Details from Fiona Tait in Archives**

**We also have postcards for sale of the famous Eric Gill postcards of
John Axon, Singing The Fishing and The Big Hower
15p each or 40p per set (Friends rate: 12p and 30p)
Details: Pam Bishop, 35 Waterloo Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 7SD**

Treasurer's Report: year ending 28 April 2006 Robert Whitworth

This year we have handed over to the Birmingham Central Library the final payment for the Heritage Lottery-funded project *A Future for Ordinary Folk*. The next project that involves the Charles Parker Archive is *Connecting Histories*, and our commitment to this work has most generously been met by donations from the Orr Mackintosh Foundation (ShareGift,) the George Cadbury Trust and Mr T. Blackmore. During the year we have contributed our first £2000 of partnership funding to this project.

For accounting purposes the funds of the Friends of the Charles Parker Archive have now been combined with those of the Trust giving them full charitable status. The balance transferred is included in the accounts below. In future, subscriptions will be paid to the Trust, as you will see from the form on p11, but their purpose remains unchanged.

Financial Statement for the year 29.04.05 to 28.04.06

RECEIPTS	£
Heritage Lottery Fund for <i>A Future for Ordinary Folk</i>	16,432
Donations	4,023
Tax refunds on Gift Aid contributions	294
Transfer of funds of the Friends of the Charles Parker Archive	1,364
Sundry	55
Total	<u>22,168</u>
PAYMENTS	
Birmingham Central Library - <i>A Future for Ordinary Folk</i>	16,432
Birmingham Central Library - <i>Connecting Histories</i>	2,000
Printing etc.	226
Total	<u>18,658</u>
Excess receipts over payments	3,510

Balance Statement at 28.04.06

Opening balance in Barclay's Bank at 29.04.05	£2,222
ADD excess receipts over payments	£3,510
Closing balance in Barclay's Bank at 28.04.06	<u>£5,732</u>

Connecting Histories

Sian Roberts

Connecting Histories is a partnership project involving Birmingham City Archives, the School of Education at the University of Birmingham, the Sociology Department at Warwick University, the Black Pasts Birmingham Futures group and the Charles Parker Archive Trust. The project is supported financially by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

We are now one year in to the project and are well on the way to meeting our targets and completing the different elements. Several of the archive collections included in the project have been catalogued and the response from community groups in the city has been far more positive than we ever anticipated, so much so that we have had to take on an extra member of staff, Adisa Folarin, to deal with the demand from groups who wish to participate. Since I wrote about the project in last year's Annual Report we have also recruited two Research and Learning Officers, Dr Andy Green and Sarah Dar who will write the project learning materials, and this now brings the project team to 13.

One of main aims of the project is to preserve the remaining two thirds of the Charles Parker sound archive, some 3000 recordings, and make it accessible through digitisation and cataloguing.

The tender for the work was awarded to Inflight in Dublin, who previously undertook the digitisation in the **Future for Ordinary Folk** project for the Trust. 1000 reel to reel recordings have been transferred to date and work is in progress on the second 1000. The processing and cataloguing of the returned CD-Rs started in May. This work will take roughly a year and is scheduled to be completed in April 2007.

As the digitisation and cataloguing is completed by the cataloguing team the project's community outreach workers will use the material in educational and outreach work with community groups. For example, the project is working with a group of young Bangladeshi people in Aston who are very keen to use the recordings for the *Asian Teenager* programme and *Under the Apple Tree* in a project they are doing exploring their own histories and identities as young British Asians.

The project is also creating 5 online learning packages on community histories and the history of political and social campaigning in the city in which material from the Charles Parker Archive will also be used. In particular, one of the learning packages called *Performing Resistance* will largely be based upon the Parker Archive and the related archive of Banner Theatre. The learning packages will become gradually available on the project website which will go live in late June or early July this year.

To download the Connecting Histories project newsletters go to www.birmingham.gov.uk/connectinghistories

Secretary's Report 2005/2006

Ian M Parr

This is my first report as Secretary. My first meeting was October 2004 and, prior to this coming June 2006 Annual General Meeting of the Trust, I have attended five meetings including the AGM of June 2005.

Of necessity, much of the Trustees' business has been concerned with A *Future for Ordinary Folk* and *Connecting Histories*. Matters associated with these projects have been covered by previous Annual Reports and you will find they are also in this one. They are important. They ensure the Charles Parker Archive material is available and recognised more widely and the projects, through digitisation of recordings, enhance that accessibility. The question of funding, mainly to sustain our commitment to these projects, has also been a significant part of the Trustees meetings.

Similarly, other topics that have been covered by our agendas have also been directed towards extending the availability and awareness of the Archive. These have included

- A review of the Trust's Action Plan
- contact with Sea Britain in connection with Charles' work with maritime themes, principally *Singing the Fishing* radio ballad
- development of the web site
- support for Charles Parker Days in 2005 and 2006
- various matters associated with radio and television programmes culminating in the new Radio Ballads but including *Sing Christmas*, *The Archive Hour*, *Folk Britannia*

Details of the Trust are now available for viewing on the web site of GuideStar UK. Logon to www.guidestar.org.uk and search against Charles Parker. This will take you to a menu that shows the financial report. Other menus enable other details of the Trust to be viewed. All this is information which the Trust provides to the Charities Commission.

Members of staff of the Central Library have continued to provide the facilities for our meetings. Their attendance has been consistent. Although there have been changes in personnel and roles within their organisation I have not perceived any adverse effects upon the business of the Trust. I thank them and I much appreciate their efforts.

It has been heartening to be a small part of the development in the work of the Trust in these last eighteen months or so. I am struck by how much has been achieved in difficult circumstances in previous years. To use the Archive is to experience directly the efforts of many people to bring Charles Parker's work into a new century, and it is still so relevant. I am indebted to committee members for their tolerance as my emails fly through cyberspace into their homes and offices. I have had not one complaint. It is amazing! I also receive much help and advice, all of it is gratefully accepted if sometimes, imperfectly, followed.

Charles Parker Day, 2006**Professor Sean Street**

April 7th saw the third annual Charles Parker Day conference, organised by the Centre for Broadcasting History Research, Bournemouth University, and held at the Miramar Hotel on Bournemouth's East Cliff.

In a varied day, and living up to its promise to deliver radio features-related topics which consider the past, the present and the future of the genre, speakers included both academics and practitioners. Gillian Reynolds opened proceedings with an over-view of the Charles Parker Archive Trust and its work, followed by Sian Roberts, who gave an exciting presentation about the development of the *Connecting Histories* project. BBC producer Kate McCall talked about Norman Corwin, the veteran American producer, whose programme, *The Lonesome Train* had influenced Parker in terms of style, and Graeme Miles brought the spirit of Charles himself to life in a moving and amusing talk in which he painted a vivid picture of working on some of the programmes which followed *The Radio Ballads*. Ken Hall, from the University of Teeside provided valuable discussion relating to Parker's work beyond the *Radio Ballads*, while Seán Street discussed vernacular radio and community, with special reference to CBC Radio's Newfoundland-based *Fisheries Broadcast*.

A central part of the afternoon – and a highlight of the day – was a two-handed presentation by Sara Parker and John Tams, in which they talked through the making of the six new *Radio Ballads*, recently broadcast on Radio 2. The sense of reflection by practitioners on a process on which – in John Tams' words “the ink was barely dry”, made for fascinating insights. Andy Cartwright of Soundscape Productions took delegates through the process of his innovative radio feature, *Then – Now*, broadcast in January; this carried the spirit of Charles Parker's “gathering” into a new age – the recording of a single agreed minute by more than 100 recordists all over Britain, to create a sound poem made up of a murmur of voices – “people greeting people who they'll never, ever know.”

The day ended with the presentation of the Charles Parker Prize for Student Radio Features. This award, created by the Centre for Broadcasting History Research, carries with it a cheque for £500, and a work placement at BBC Radio Documentaries and Features. This year, the judges were Simon Elmes, Director of Documentaries and Features, Jane Anderson, Radio Editor, *Radio Times* and Piers Plowright. The Award went to Ruth-Anne Lynch, a recently graduated MA student from the University of Sunderland, for her feature, *Family Ties*, which chronicled her return to her family home in Guyana, and the illness of her father. Of this feature, Simon Elmes said ““The voices and personalities were strong and arresting – it was quite literally a slice of life, moving and amusing. The complete freshness of the programme and its sheer zest were what took my imagination.”

Next year, Charles Parker Day will return to Birmingham, organised jointly by the Centre for Broadcasting History Research at Bournemouth University, and the University of Central England. The Parker Prize will be adjudicated by Simon Elmes, Julian May, (this year's Sony Gold winner of the Features Award) and Paul Donovan, radio correspondent of *The Sunday Times*. The date for the diary: 30 March, 2007.

Train Spotting & the Radio Ballads

Ian M Parr

1957, the year John Axon died, or 1958, when *The Ballad of John Axon* was first broadcast, you'd have found Bill Wilson and me at Longsight locosheds, Stockport station or Manchester mainline stations along with other little lads, just like you hear on the Radio Ballad. Were we ever at Edgeley locoshed? You'd have to ask Bill, he has a better memory. Collecting train numbers, we marked them into the Ian Allan book for LMS locos. The bright lads (not me) tell you about the different makes, Stanier, "Baby Scots" and so on.

Train spotting was about detail. It's like comparing the versions of the Radio Ballads we have in the Archive. Look at the scripts. Listen to the recordings. You can tell the big changes from the little ones (what did happen to the Sailor's Alphabet in *Singing the Fishing?*). But try explaining subtle changes in dynamics, small additions or deletions to actuality, a few bars of song inserted, removed. Does it matter? Are they important?

The recordings from the Smithsonian I described last year are in the Archive along with a report explaining some differences I've found compared with those versions you bought from Topic and those vinyl LPs, from Argo, years ago. A few seconds difference here, a few seconds there. So what's new? It's different detailing.

The ending of *The Big Hewer* is a revelation to me. Listen to "Chip, chip, chip....". It's the Big Hewer picking away at the seam until "doomsday in the afternoon".

In *Singing the Fishing* Ewan sings a verse of Shoals of Herrin' you'll not hear in the commercial recordings but one we've always sung. You'll also find a bit more of dear old Sam Lerner. Deleted from the commercial recordings is the introduction, "This is the BBC Home Service from The Midlands". In both versions the closing announcement is limited. The credits exclude most of the performers and speakers "from real life" (as some of the Smithsonian versions of the programmes have it). Read the report. There's lots more, but it's work in progress.

Why are these differences important? I think, if we say we value the *Radio Ballads*, that they tell us something about ourselves, our history, then we must recognise those things which are transient (speech idioms, rhythms, technology and so on) and to which we can apply relative measures of excellence. However, other things are immutable; the sense of humanity, perfection of form, musical values. Here relativity is invalid. Arriving at the conclusion of any endeavour is a process of creation, dismantling and rebuilding. The detail is important.

Trimming ten seconds from a Radio Ballad to suit programme timing might be arbitrary or creative editing, enhancing the work. With hindsight we decide. The Smithsonian recordings give us just that bit more information to do so.

The Smithsonian version of *John Axon* concludes with credits to Birmingham church and school choirs – and the little boys train spotting on Stockport Station.

The Radio Ballads 2006

Sara Parker

The *2006 Radio Ballads* were a year in the making and to begin with it seemed to me to be an almost impossible task. There were interviews to be collected, songs to be written and recorded, editing and mixing. It had taken my father a similar length of time to make just one *Radio Ballad* with Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger and now John Leonard and his team were proposing a whole series in just twelve months.

Times, however, have moved on and so have the technologies available to the programme maker. I sit in front of a computer screen, editing and mixing clips of sound at the touch of a mouse. Charles used to spend long hours editing quarter inch tape and then equally long sessions in the studio, mixing speech with song, actuality with live instrumentalists.

No-one can deny that the original *Radio Ballads* were both pioneering and yet very much of their time. Fifty years on, how would a new series stand up to their predecessors? The *2006 Ballads* had a whole team of singer-songwriters and musicians, headed by John Tams, guiding light of today's folk scene and three times winner at this year's BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards.

It was perhaps inevitable that I should also be involved gathering recordings with the other interviewer, Vince Hunt. Each of the six programmes, broadcast on BBC Radio 2 earlier this year, focussed on a contemporary issue ranging from declining shipbuilding and steel industries to fairgrounds, hunting, AIDS and Northern Ireland.

My father's shadow was never far away. I re-listened to the original *Ballads* and found parallels, for example, between my own interviews with AIDS/HIV sufferers for *The Enemy That Lives Within* (transmitted on 9.3.06) and *The Body Blow* about polio (transmitted on 27.3.62) – a different virus but similar issues of discrimination, isolation and fear, as well as the courage to survive.

Charles used to say that as an interviewer you should sit at a person's feet and listen. I hope in the new *Ballads* we did just that. The original *Ballads* gave communities and individuals an opportunity to find their voice. In 2006 we aimed to do the same. Communities such as the Fairground showmen and women who were suspicious at first, just as travellers and gipsies must have been of Charles' microphone, but who after the programme promised their "friendship for life."

I hope my father would have approved but what I do know for certain is that the 2006 series has brought the original *Radio Ballads* to a new audience – and that can only be for the good.

The Radio Ballads 2006 Daily Telegraph 23.2.06 Gillian Reynolds

Radio 2 is renowned these days for its massive ratings, star studded line-ups, a miraculous reinvention of itself. Only a decade ago it was widely, if often mistakenly, perceived as an old grey cardigan sort of radio station. Now it wears the aural equivalent of Alexander McQueen frocks and Jimmy Choo shoes. On Monday it takes an altogether bolder step with the first of six *Radio Ballads*, brand new, bold, expensive and highly crafted hour-long programmes made in the radical spirit and tradition of the Ewan MacColl, Peggy Seeger and Charles Parker originals from almost half a century ago.

John Leonard, the producer, had tried to get Radio 2 interested in the idea for years. John Tams, singer, songwriter, music producer on the new series, had also been talking about it for a long time and kept, as he says, “putting it into the pot” with Leonard whenever they met or worked together.

Why? Because those first *Radio Ballads* were a significant manifestation of the big 1950s Folk Revival and also because from the day the first of them, *The Ballad of John Axon*, went out on the Home Service in July 1958, they became icons, benchmarks, milestones in broadcasting history. These days we are used to ordinary people speaking for themselves. As late as 1957 it was still pretty revolutionary. Documentaries had narrators. If real speech was required in a programme the contributor’s words would be taken down, typed up and read. Even if the words were exactly what had been said, the tune of the speech would vanish.

MacColl and Parker changed that. It happened almost by accident. Researching *The Ballad of John Axon* they realised the words of ordinary people carried music. Why not, said MacColl, dispense with a narrator and instead write new songs that reflected the story in the words, the tradition behind them? So that was what they did and folk singers picked up the *Radio Ballads*’ new songs, accepting them as traditional, bringing them into the repertoire as if they had always been there.

Last year John Leonard got a call from Radio 2. The BBC was launching a new initiative, *Real Voices*, featuring the richness and diversity of regional accents. That new *Radio Ballads* project, was he still interested? And could he do it in a short time, say six months? Leonard, knowing the MacColl and Parker *Ballads* had taken at least a year each, said yes and phoned John Tams right away.

Tams said yes too. “I’ve been waiting for this for forty years. I couldn’t have lived with myself if I hadn’t done it.” He started putting together a star team of writers and musicians, including Kate Rusby, John McCusker, Andy Cutting, Bob Fox, Karine Polwart, Chris While, Jez Lowe, Tommy Sands. The first interviews were done last May by Vince Hunt who works with Leonard on the regular series their company, Smooth Operations, also does for Radio 2.

Not long after Leonard heard from Sara Parker, daughter of Charles Parker, in her own right a Sony award-winning documentary maker for Radio 4. She says she made the call “with trepidation.” He says they “circled each other warily.” Neither knew each other’s work. Broadcasting House is a broad church but Radios 2 and 4 sit in separate pews. He asked her to do some interviews and loved what she did. She came onto the team.

10.

He and John Tams had, by this time, chosen their themes, all new ones. They would be, says Tams, “treading fresh snow.” These were not going to be updated versions of the classic series. They would be originals and first would come the steel industry, both Tams and Leonard being from that part of Yorkshire, knowing the people, the places, the changes. Then they chose AIDS, hunting, Northern Ireland, fairground showmen, shipbuilding.

Leonard didn’t grasp at the time how closely they would have to work. Since then, he says, “I have been living in John Tams’ kitchen.” Because the actuality comes first and the songs spring from it, the whole process has to be constantly collaborative. You can’t just write songs and fit the words around them. Tams says he took a bit of time to digest that. “We had to find the style, we made a few mistakes but then I realised that the music provides the landscape for the people to walk.”

Sara Parker, working on the AIDS programme, listened before she began to *The Body Blow*, her father’s *Radio Ballad* from 1962 about polio, becoming more and more aware as her own interviews progressed that there were many similarities, on fear, discrimination, the effects on families, realising the vital importance of the integrity of the words. This came home again as she worked with Vince Hunt on the Northern Ireland programme, a subject she thought so covered already from every angle that there was no obvious way in. She found it listening to Tommy Sands talking about Catholics and Protestants in his youth, working in the fields together, going down to the pub and playing together afterwards. There it was, music. Music illustrates the religious divide and yet also the thing that brings people across it. “I loved making that programme,” she says, “though I didn’t even know I had the right.”

Programme making has gone through a revolution in the years between the original and the new *Radio Ballads*. Where it took Mary Baker, Charles Parker’s dauntless tape editor, twenty seven separate cuts and joins on a piece of tape to produce a single fade into echo, such things can now be done on a computer in the blink of an eye. Then there was the recording. This is how Peggy Seeger described their way.

“Charles put the TR90s- the big machines with actuality on them already cut exactly to the right lead in, lead out, atmosphere added and everything – in the studio, in amongst the musicians, so that you would have three or four chorus members, and then you’d have a glass partition, and then you’d have your trumpet player, and another partition and then your drummers and then a TR90 and then you’d have your guitar player and then another TR90 ...and you would just cue actuality as you would cue a musical instrument. And the TR90 operators got incredibly adept at lining it up exactly so that they could bring in the beginning of a speech bang on a beat....”

There’s a computer program for that too, these days. What hasn’t changed is the heart and soul of a *Radio Ballad*, old or new. In both there is a unique harmony in the close weaving of speech, song and sounds, in people speaking and singing about things that matter.

A romantic might, at this point, imagine Parker and MacColl up in Folk Heaven, applauding Leonard and Tams from those red clouds that hang above steelworks. A traditionalist would see them frowning at the influences of rock and electronics on folk music’s spectacular recent resurgence. Cynics will remark that this series is happening in the BBC’s Charter Renewal year. Listeners, however, will just love it.

11.

Use of the archive

Fiona Tait

The presence of the Education Outreach officer, Nikki Thorpe, has meant that this year, the Archive has reached new audiences and has been used for several innovative projects with schools. A report is included (see insert) about the project with the pupils and staff at Baskerville Special School, which used the radio ballad '*On the Edge*'.

Otherwise, the archive has been used mostly by academic researchers working on various subjects, e.g. Parker's career, a biography of Ewan MacColl. There was also one visitor who was delighted to be able to see the file about the concert by Folksingers against Vietnam which took place in the Town Hall in Birmingham in 1967, and to be able to listen to a recording of the concert on CD from the *A Future for Ordinary Folk* recordings. [MS 4000/5/3/5/1/9,10,13 and MS 4000/1/8/13/11]

Promotion

The broadcasting of the 'new' radio ballads on BBC Radio 2 from 27 February to 3 April, 2006 was an opportunity to set up the *Man with a Microphone* exhibition again in the Central Library, on floor 6. The exhibition has been retained to fit in with the project *In the footsteps of Giants: Local Heroes, Global Legends*, 27 May – 4 June, 2006, organised by Museums and Libraries in the West Midlands. A link was established from the BBC website for Radio 2 to the Charles Parker Archive pages on the City Archives website.

The third Charles Parker Day, held on 7 April, 2006, in Bournemouth, was another opportunity to introduce new students to the work and the legacy of Charles Parker.

Additions to the archive

There have been 11 additions to the archive from May 2005 - May 2006. These include:

A detailed report by Ian Parr and CD copies of the Charles Parker recordings held by the Smithsonian Institute, USA.

Digital recordings on CD of the six new radio ballads made by Smooth Operations and broadcast on BBC Radio 2 between 27 February 2006 and 3 April 2006.

Who we were, who we are: The Ballad of Baskerville

The Project

We investigated the history of Baskerville Special School to examine 'who we are' by looking at 'who we were'. Children learned filmmaking and interviewing skills, song writing and other art skills to record peers, teachers and parents/carers on their experiences of their school, taking inspiration from the Charles Parker Radio Ballad:

"From song to music to sound effect to the spoken word and back again, revealing the effect of a way of life upon those who lead it"

Art worker Marcus Belben and Filmmaker John Hill-Daniel worked with children over 12 days of workshops. The City Archives supported the project through access to the Charles Parker Archive, Quinton area maps and photographic material and The Woodlands Hospital Trust Archive.

"When something gets their attention, that's what we do." Film maker

Using the Charles Parker Radio Ballad, 'On the Edge', as a starting point we developed our thoughts about aging and how things changed as you got older. We chose words to describe a ballad, and examined why we chose them. We played with those words to form a new meaning. We drew pictures from the music, again to explore our feelings about it.

"This project has been a really worthwhile experience for them. Hike the way they had something different to think about every week." Teacher

We used archive photos to re-enact scenes using the green screen, and literally placed ourselves in the photograph. We then imagined ourselves as that person and responded to questions, to explore what it might feel like to be that person.

"We're thinking of music and words but also thinking of visual as well. I think the visual work will help to engage them" Film maker

We imagined what was happening in the old Harborne archive photos. We wrote songs based on the photos (one of which became *The Fellow of Fellows Lane*). We drew pictures from the students' own music. The pictures proved very useful in allowing students to separate themselves from their music, and to talk about their own and each other's music unselfconsciously.

"I think this project is absolutely brilliant. It's a great opportunity for the students to get involved in something that they wouldn't normally be asked to do." Teacher

Each class concentrated on a particular aspect – model making, interviews and documentary, sound effects, music and choreography. As the project developed we all worked closely together, to produce our single continuous film. The film became a whole school effort, with all the teaching staff, care staff and students involved to make the project possible.

"I've enjoyed taking part in it, and I think the kids have as well. We've done the music, and filming and making models and different activities to suit the different children. I really looking forward to seeing the film at the end and having something to show for all the hard work that everyone's put in." Teacher

Nikki Thorpe
Education Outreach Worker, Birmingham City Archives