

Charles Parker Archive

Annual Report & Accounts 2010 -2011

Celebrating more than Fifty Years of the Radio Ballads
with the "Big Hewer" (18th August 1961)



*"I'm the son of the son of the son of a collier's son.
Go down!
Coal dust flows in the veins where the blood should run.
Go down!"*

*Thanks to Birmingham Central Library
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.

The Trustees are

Tim Blackmore MBE: Trust Chairman, producer
Ian Parr: Hon. Secretary
Robert Whitworth: Hon. Treasurer
Gillian Reynolds MBE, journalist and broadcaster
Pam Bishop, musician
Philip Cox, QC
Andy Cartwright, university lecturer and programme maker
Helen Lloyd, oral history consultant
Matthew Parker, maker of musical instruments
Sara Parker, radio producer

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.
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 3 HQ
(telephone 0121 303 4217)

It holds some 5000 tapes, Charles Parker's files and papers and a small
library of books on folk culture, music and politics.

Chairman's Report

Tim Blackmore MBE

In April, Charles Parker Day returned to the North East and this time to the fine city of Newcastle Upon Tyne, an appropriate setting for the 50th anniversary year of 'The Big Hewer'. Once again the day was organised by Andy Cartwright with the enthusiastic support of the University of Sunderland. Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who made the day possible and for those unable to attend, a full report appears on Page 7.

The Trustees met twice in the year and at our last meeting were sorry to learn that due to the budgetary restrictions placed on local authorities by the incoming government, there loomed the very real prospect that Birmingham Library would need to severely limit access to the Archive and to the Library building itself. Since then, the cuts have been confirmed, so much so that the Trustees are no longer able to use any of the Library's rooms for their meetings. As I write we are investigating the implications for the Trust and our thoughts are very much with the Library staff who must bear the brunt of the current economic gloom. In particular we want to record our thanks to Sian Roberts and Fiona Tait whose ongoing support has been invaluable.

At the last AGM, Cathy Mackerras indicated her wish to resign as a Trustee. Cathy has served the Trust enthusiastically since its inception and her input will be sorely missed. Several Trustees took the opportunity to pay tribute to Cathy's contribution and she assured the meeting of her ongoing support. As a result of the vacancy this created, it was proposed that Andy Cartwright be invited to become a Trustee. I am delighted to report his subsequent acceptance, and our hope is that he will continue to take the main responsibility for organising our annual Charles Parker Day.

I also am pleased to report that BBC Radio Two have commissioned Smooth Operations to produce a further 6 Radio Ballads. Transmission will coincide with next year's Olympics and each programme, again produced by John Leonard with John Tams as Music Director and word interviews by Vince Hunt and Charles' daughter Sara, will follow a specific theme associated with the Olympic story.

Thank you for continuing to support the Trust and if you have any new ideas on how the use of the archive might be expanded, then do please contact our Secretary Ian Parr: cpatrustsecretary@gmail.com.

Tim Blackmore

Secretary's Report for the 2010/11 Annual Report

Since publication of the last Annual Report the Trustees' committee has met twice, the first being the 2010 AGM in September. The other was in January 2011. I was unable to attend because of a heavy cold. I am, therefore, grateful to Tim Blackmore for supplying detailed notes that allowed me to produce minutes of the meeting consistent with previous ones.

Dissemination, Education and Use, (DEU), topics which arise from the objectives of the Trust, remain important to the business of the Trust. So our AGM focussed upon material from the Archive, various Trustees presenting recordings they felt were of interest.

Wally Kinder phoned the Library prior to the AGM and we are grateful he was able to attend to entertain and inform us with stories of his contacts with Charles and Philip Donnellan during the making of *The Blind Set* and *BD8*. Peter Cox' book "Set Into Song" Chapter 20 has programme details. However, Wally gave us a closer insight into Charles' and Philip's working in the 1960s. More than that, though, he was able to emphasise the personal impact of the two programmes, amplifying the political undercurrent recounted in Peter's book.

We thank Wally for his contribution and wish him well. His comments upon recordings he obtained from Charles remind us that many people and organisations have tape recordings of the Radio Ballads. They might be dissimilar to the commercial recordings on vinyl or CD (longer or shorter), and not necessarily the same as any of the broadcast versions. None are necessarily definitive.

The January meeting was constrained by uncertainty regarding the Library in connection with the move to the new location and the effect of any reorganisation. At the time of writing it was not possible to confirm arrangements for the Trust and Friends AGM for 2011. However, details will be enclosed with copies of this Report.

During the year four responses have been made to enquiries from the Trust website. Occasionally these produce something of interest which is followed up, by Pam Bishop or by me. Nothing substantial

of note has arisen to date this year. When additional pages are 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.

Data Protection Act: In accordance with a report submitted to the 2009 Annual General Meeting, and again in 2010, the Trust's compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and related government guidance for organisations such as ours has been reviewed

Addresses, both postal and email, of Friends of the Trust, supporters and contacts are revised where necessary. There are no other changes, special recommendations or observations beyond those noted in the aforesaid Reports.

My thanks to the Library staff for their help this year as in previous ones. Also, I'm grateful to the Trustees and members of the committee for their support.

Ian M. Parr

In Memory of Bill Shreeve

Sadly Bill Shreeve died on October 5th in New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton after a short illness. He had a long-time association with Charles both as an interviewee (an extract of an interview with him was played at the last AGM and will be repeated at this) and also through his involvement in various projects including Centre 42's Leaveners' group. A trade unionist and former boxer, he was also involved with the Grey Cock Folk Club and Banner.

As author Peter Cox writes in his book 'Set into Song'

"Here's a guy; a boxer, trade union activist, involved in the working class cultural dynamic that was Centre 42 and the Grey Cock Folk Club a man loved by his family and no doubt much else that outsiders like me can't be part of"

Bill will be remembered as someone who brought his world to many beyond those who knew him and we extend our condolences to his family

Sara Parker

Treasurer's Report - year ending 28 April 2011**Robert Whitworth**

We have been fortunate to receive generous donations during the year, including gifts in memory of Bill Shreeve. These donations have given us confidence to take responsibility for the whole of the Charles Parker prize and to assist the library staff to attend the Charles Parker Day. There is currently no major activity requiring funding, but we are grateful to those Friends who support the Trust, so maintaining a small balance to prime new initiatives when the opportunity arises.

Forms for the renewal of subscriptions are being sent out with the Annual Report. Please act on them now while the Report is fresh in your mind.

Financial Statement for the year 29.04.10 to 28.04.11

RECEIPTS	£
Friends' subscriptions and donations	1,414
Tax refunds on gift-aid contributions 2010 & 2011	449
Bank interest	2
Total	<u>1,865</u>
PAYMENTS	
Printing, postage etc.	147
Website	30
Charles Parker prize	500
Travel grant	182
Total	<u>859</u>
Excess receipts over payments	1,006
Balance statement at 28.04.11	
Opening balance in Barclays Bank at 29.04.10	4,015
PLUS excess receipts over payments	1,006
Closing balance in Barclays Bank at 28.04.11	<u>5,021</u>

Charles Parker Day 1st April 2011
Castle Gate Centre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

by

Andy Cartwright*Organiser – Charles Parker Day 2011**Senior Lecturer – University of Sunderland**Executive Producer – Soundscape Productions*

The eighth Charles Parker Day took place on April 1st in the Castle Gate Centre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. A city partly built on the profits of the mining industry it was a suitable location to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of fourth Radio Ballad - *The Big Hewer* and the idea of miners and mining became one of the main themes of the Charles Parker Day 2011.

The day was again held under the auspices of the University of Sunderland and was introduced by the university's Head of Media, Professor Guy Starkey. After a short welcome from Tim Blackmore, the Chair of the Trust, and myself, Peter Cox, the author of 'Set in Song', put *The Big Hewer* into context and compared it with last year's Ballad of the Miner's Strike' produced by Smooth Operations for BBC Radio 2. Peter excellently illustrated talk ended with a surprise as he introduced Louise Killen who sang on the Big Hewer as Louis Killen!

Then Karl Dallas and Doc Rowe presented a personal memory of the Ewan MacColl 70th Birthday Concert which took place on the 21st January 1985 in the middle of the year-long 1984-85 Miner's Strike. Karl was in charge of publicity and Doc took the official photos which provided a backdrop to their presentation. Their talk brought back memories of both the occasion and the folk impresario Bruce Dunnet who took a gamble on booking (and filling) the Queen Elizabeth Hall on London's South Bank. It was also a chance to hear about Ewan being presented with a Miner's Lamp (twice!) and listen again to some of his most politically motivated songs taken from the mini radio ballad launched at the concert - 'Daddy, What did you do in the Strike?'

Then Dr Andy Green, who has worked on a number of Birmingham based projects including Connecting Histories and Birmingham Stories, showed, in a fascinating talk, how the Charles Parker Archive in Birmingham was being used in local communities to help both stimulate fresh memories and also what it is like to be challenged by members of the community in Birmingham remember things differently.

After lunch Sara Parker talked about two programmes she made during the past year about Pornography - *Sex, Porn and Teenagers* presented by Miranda Sawyer on BBC Radio 4 and the highly publicised *Porn Again*, presented by former Home Secretary Jaqui Smith on BBC Radio 5live. These both illustrated the importance of in-depth interviewing techniques perfected by her father and demonstrated the need to not limit storytelling to journalism but making programmes that let the listener draw their own conclusions.

This was followed by an exploration of storytelling through radio drama with Professor Andrew Crisell of the University of Sunderland and the drama producer Mel Harris from Sparklab Productions. The session began with an extract from the first original radio drama written in 1924 by Richard Hughes which, being set in a mine, returned to the theme of this year's Charles Parker Day. In 'Danger' the couple visiting a mine are suddenly plunged into darkness as the lights fail placing the protagonists into a position where they cannot see – just like the listener.

Andrew Crisell then explored how this 'blind' world becomes a wonderful canvas which has the potential to paint complex pictures in the human imagination. Mel Harris then illustrated this by introducing extracts from a variety of her productions, like the creative radio adaptation of the 'The Red Balloon' and 'Nina Black', a drama which dramatised a real person's life but also featured an interview with Nina herself, using techniques which echoed some of the ideas Charles used in the Radio Ballads.

Then Paul Allen, the writer and broadcaster, looked back at the life of Dave Sheasby, the Sheffield based, award-winning poet, radio dramatist and producer who died suddenly last year, using Dave's own creative poetic BBC Radio 3 feature *Strata*, about the former mining community in Yorkshire's Dearne valley, a programme which celebrated the rocks and workers under our feet.

Paul illustrated how deeply Dave's work was affected by the Radio Ballads (which he always insisted new radio producers should hear in order to understand the creativity of the medium) and that Dave's Sheasby's own creativity is a huge loss to UK radio.

The final presentation was by Dr Trish Winter, again of the University of Sunderland, who presented her research into how Englishness is articulated through the resurgence of interest in English folk music and dance and controversially touching on the interest in traditional music of far-right groups and folk musician's response to such an adoption of their music.

As usual the day closed with the presentation by Tim Blackmore and Sara Parker of the Charles Parker Prize 2011 for the Best Student Radio Feature. Three Prizes were awarded again this year – Gold, Silver and Bronze. The judges this year were Simon Elmes, BBC Creative Director, Features and Documentaries, Sara Parker and the Observer's radio critic Miranda Sawyer.

The GOLD Award of a SADiE6 editing system, a two week placement in the Radio Features and Documentaries Unit in the BBC and £200 from the Charles Parker Trust, was presented to **Mair Bosworth of Bournemouth University** for her feature '**Winter Swimming**'.

The SILVER Award (2 week placement at Falling Tree Productions + £200 from the Charles Parker Trust) was won by **Daniel Eycott of Canterbury Christ Church University** for his feature '**Lightness**' and BRONZE (2 week placement at Smooth Operations + £100 from the Trust) was awarded to **Cheryl Johnson of the University of Sunderland** for '**Compulsion to Alcohol – Andrew's Story**'.

Walls of Sound Revisited

by
Seán Street

In March 2011 Professor Seán Street and Julian May visited the British Library Sound Archive to make an edition of 'Archive on 4' about the conservation and preservation work that the department undertakes. Here Seán reflects on that programme, and some of the issues it raised.



There is a growing understanding that media archives – sound and vision – are key resources in our understanding of ourselves, documents as important as any of the more traditionally prized books, manuscripts and artefacts so lovingly housed in our libraries and museums. In 2007 a new conservation centre was opened at the British Library on three floors, with ten audio studios, a lab for rescuing sounds in all formats, some on the verge of extinction, and just about every kind of playback facility known today. This investment recognises a real sense that now, audio artefacts are becoming understood to be as important as any other kind of documents from history.

Walls of Sound set out to explore this resource, and to celebrate the fact that in such places, as in the Charles Parker Archive, we have the means to understand not just our past, but our present and future too. From the voice of Florence Nightingale, and moving recordings of dialect made in a German Prisoner of War camp during World War 1, to the extraordinary stories of ordinary people captured by the oral history archive, sound archives are about much more than the words themselves: by their very nature they are witness to the *time* and the *place* in which they were recorded.

The very word 'record' means at its most basic, 'a record of an event'. They are also about the *sound* of orality itself, something over and above the words themselves, what Roland Barthes called 'the grain of the voice'.

There remains for all media archives, the ongoing and thorny issue of access. Matters of Intellectual Property Rights too often stand between the material and the would-be user. This however will change, because it must; in Spring 2011 the government commissioned the Hargreaves Report into Britain's Intellectual Property Rights regulations.

One of the key recommendations of Professor Ian Hargreaves and his team was that 'the Government's IP policy decisions...should pay more attention to the impact on non-rights holders and consumers'. Meanwhile we must continue to endure a certain amount of frustration that access to our audio treasures remains occasionally problematic.

Time is unrelenting. Tomorrow's narrative hasn't happened yet, and the past exists only as a memory. This is what makes recorded sound so vital, to preserve the sound of a present moment that cannot happen again. Everything that goes on at the Sound Archive in the British Library, it seems to me, is in some way, an expression and recognition of that.

This was epitomised in a heartbreaking recording played to us by Curator of Natural History Sound, Cheryl Tipp. A bird, recorded in Hawaii, calling to its mate, not knowing that she had died in a hurricane a few days before. This was a re-recording of the last of its species, calling out and waiting for an answer that would never come, not knowing he was the last of his kind on earth. In such moments, sound becomes a poetic metaphor.

Seán Street is Professor of Radio in the Media School at Bournemouth University, and founder of Charles Parker Day.

Legacies?

At the last AGM Wally Kinder described his association with Charles Parker in the 1960s, mainly in connection with “The Blind Set”. The programme from 1968 was treasured or criticised depending upon artistic as well as political sensibilities. Listening to the recording of it I’d made at the time, reviewing Peter Cox’s description of it in “Set Into Song” and thinking further of Wally’s comments suggest to me, a couple of topics to pick up later, including the “R” bit of the initials RNIB.

This August is, of course, the 50th anniversary of the first broadcast of “The Big Hewer”. The ending recalls the beginning and the chip, chip, chip of a pick on the coalface fading into eternity. It’s a shame it’s not there in the versions we have on LP and CD. However, you can’t help but compare “Hewer” with the last radio ballad by John Leonard and his team. Both programmes featured in last year’s Report.

“Things should come in threes,” I thought; so to a recording from a BBC broadcast, “Close the Coalhouse Door”, the stage cum radio play; stories by the late Sid Chaplin, script by Alan Plater, songs by Alex Glasgow (much missed) and Alex’s lines;

*“Geordie’s signing on the dole
And Mrs Jackson like a fool,
Complains about the price of coal.
Close the coalhouse door Lad;
There’s blood inside.....”*

Within these programmes do we find a truer perspective on coal? The stories, the people, their heritage survives in spite of (or because) in the last two hundred years a quarter of a million coal miners in Britain have died in pit accidents, excluding, of course, those who died later from coal dust. We must return to “The Big Hewer” for that;

“.....and it have destroyed an army of the miners”.

Wally reminds us we have a “Royal” NIB. Yes, and we now have a “Royal” Wootton Bassett. And who would deny their deserving of the appellation? But a “Royal” Gresford, Trimdon Grange, Lofthouse, Blantyre (by Clyde’s Bonnie Banks)? What then of Aberfan? And what of every other mining community and every other place where working people have died in pursuit of some interest greater than (or different from) their own?

“The Blind Set” included a song;

“When I was a little boy that’s when the world was young.....”
New words made to a tune you find in the “Penguin Book”. Originally noted from a Shetland performer, John Stickle, and popular around the folk clubs in the 60s, it was also used in “Singing the Fishing”. It connects with research I’m doing on the background to “Fishing”, hence an interest in Ewan MacColl’s association with George Bruce and Hugh MacDiarmid. MacDiarmid had written a poem around 1949, ten years before the Radio Ballad, about the herring fishers of Shetland. Also a Scots poet, Bruce came from the Moray Firth and introduced the area to Parker and MacColl.

MacDiarmid leaves a philosophical conclusion to these observations. “The Storm Cock’s Song” prompts me to assess what we have of value for the next fifty years; Heritage and Legacy; Heritage to conserve and admire but Legacy, to put to good use.

The final two verses go...

*Blessed are those who have songs to sing
When others are silent; poor song though it be,
Just a message to the silence that someone is still
Alive and glad, though on a naked tree.*

*What if it is only a few churning notes
Flung out in a loud and artless way?
His “Will I do it? Do it I will! is worth a lot
When the rest have nothing to say.*

Ian M Parr

The US National Jukebox Project



The Library of Congress in Washington DC has opened a large chunk of its national archive to online public streaming.

Founder Trustee folk musician and singer, Pam Bishop who runs the Charles Parker Archive as well as editing the magazine Folk Monthly, investigates the copyright issues:

On 11 May I read this message on an internet forum:

“This week the Library of Congress made available online a treasure trove of recordings from the turn of the 20th century. In the “traditional/country” genre, the recordings include Devil’s Dream (1908), Lamplighter’s Hornpipe (1918, production supervised by folkdance pioneer Elizabeth Burchenal), Darling Nellie Gray (1905), Turkey in the Straw (1901), Uncle Steve’s Quadrille (1923, square dance with calls by Billy Murray), and my favorite, “Medley of Old-Time Reels” (1905).”

Of course I went to have a look at www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/6008 and as a musician I too loved the Old-Time Reels, which are actually in the repertoire of my own country dance band. I also found the song “Wish I was a single girl again” recorded by Kelly Harrell in 1925 at item 10213 – treasure trove indeed.

But it wasn’t only the treasure trove that fascinated me – issues of copyright are a high priority in the National Jukebox project, as I learned from Randy Lewis:

“The question is how many people will have access to [the Jukebox]. Beyond the library’s mission of physical conservation

and restoration of its vast archive, providing public access to it is both a driving goal and key hurdle these days. Physically converting aging films or recordings to contemporary playback media is a breeze compared with navigating the copyright clearances that would permit broad access.” (Los Angeles Times, 8/5/11)

Some of the 10,000 titles on the Jukebox website have been unavailable for more than 100 years. The shift to digital technology that makes streaming access possible is pushing the boundaries of copyright law –the US Congress is already considering a proposal to enhance public access to earlier recordings. As the law stands, many recordings dating as far back as 1890 will not enter the public domain until 177 years after they were made.

The Library of Congress is keen to give at least to researchers and students remote use of all these materials. And of course the academic world is keen to get it – one music college dean states the obvious:

“There are so many angles from the academic perspective of how this would be a resource. Just in my small corner of the universe of teaching songwriting, the ability to be able to go to the source so students can see the tradition of American music and American songwriting, to see this lineage and to be able to draw upon it is going to be enormous.... To me that’s just gold.”

While copyright laws in the US are not the same as in UK, the same issues face the Charles Parker Archive Trust. Copyright laws everywhere lag several steps behind changes in technology, but it will be a step in the right direction if this initiative begins a general trend for legal issues to catch up. The Trust would like nothing better than to have a “Charles Parker Jukebox” with all its sound recordings available through streaming!

Pam Bishop

Birmingham Archives and Heritage

by **Sian Roberts, Head of Collections Development Birmingham Archives and Heritage.**

The archive continues to be used both by individuals undertaking personal research and by organisations involved in community history and outreach projects and two examples of the latter are described briefly below.

Over the past 6 months much use has been made of the sound archive by the charity *Focus* for their project to research and tell the history of visual impairment in Birmingham from the creation of the first school for blind children in 1847 to present day. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the project started in January and is working with 23 local schools, and with the outreach workers of Birmingham Archives & Heritage, to create a number of outputs including a Key Stage 3 work book for History in schools and a multi sensory exhibition which will be launched later in the year.

Turning to education and outreach projects based in Birmingham Archives & Heritage, Dr Andy Green, who works as a community research officer in Birmingham Central Library, was recently involved in a heritage project entitled “The Cultural Champions” in Castle Vale, Birmingham (2010-2011). The agenda of this project was to engage with local communities in urban areas that deserve more support in accessing the special heritage collections held by the city. Based in the Castle Vale housing estate, Andy worked with the Vale’s community library to deliver workshops and talks on the issues of urban culture, heritage, industrial legacies, family life and social change.

Capturing the audience’s attention, encouraging confidence and creating participation was a vital aspect of this process and in this respect, oral heritage materials contained in the Charles Parker Archive were a vital support. Materials such as ‘The ‘Making of The Midlander’, ‘The Radio Ballads’, and the ‘Maker and The Tool’ provided a bridge with audiences whose lives were often rooted in the industrial language and working class culture of twentieth century Birmingham. At the same time, written research materials held in the Parker Archive were also of great value. For instance, the Parker collection contains papers on the ‘British Industries Fair’ which was previously held near the site where Castle Vale estate now stands [ref: Ms 4000/2/2/2].

This mixture of oral testimony and historic materials provided by the Parker Archive sparked important new stories, memories and connections in an area where not enough work is done to celebrate the contribution of the estate’s community. Dr Andy Green also attended the Charles Parker Day in 2011 to tell the story of these encounters. The learning guide developed through this project can be downloaded from: http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/birminghamstories/faces_and_places.asp

For further information about using the archive contact
0121 303 4217,
e-mail archives.heritage@birmingham.gov.uk or
see www.birmingham.gov.uk/archivesandheritage
and www.connectinghistories.org.uk



The actual recorder that Charles used in the 60s. This so-called "midget" tape recorder was heavy and cumbersome by today's digital standards.

"Technically, it is a full track recorder working at 7 1/2" ips. The frequency response would be about 40Hz to 10Khz. The small valves were powered by a combined H.T. and L.T. battery, with the 12 volt motor running on 8 - U2 batteries. Now known as "D cells." The spools had to be re-wound by hand, using a mechanism in the lid."

Frank Scott-Stapleton, sound engineer.

And finally congratulations to 2007 Charles Parker Prize winner Katie Burningham who won Gold for Best Feature at the 2011 Sony Radio Academy Awards for her programme 'Heel, Toe, Step Together'.

Made for BBC Radio 4 through *Falling Tree Productions*, it follows Katie through two years of dancing lessons with former DJ and dance champion 82-year old Bob Hill. The Sony judges described the documentary as *"An incredible piece of radio, compelling, innovative and touching. This feature found the epic in the everyday, uncovering the richness of ordinary lives. Speech radio at it's very finest."*

