

# Charles Parker Archive

## Annual Report & Accounts 2014-2015

**Celebrating more than Fifty Years of the Radio Ballads  
And the centenary of Ewan MacColl's birth  
(25 January 1915 – 22 October 1989)**



*Photos courtesy of "Set Into Song"*



*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.

**Mary Kalemkerian, Trust Chairman,**  
**Ian Parr: Hon. Secretary**  
**Matthew Parker, Hon. Treasure, maker of musical instruments**  
**Pam Bishop, musician**  
**Andy Cartwright, university lecturer and programme maker**  
**Peter Cox, author**  
**Simon Elmes, Radio Documentarist and Creative Consultant**  
**Jimmy Ewing, feature maker and Charles Parker Prize winner**  
**Alan Hall, radio producer/feature-maker**  
**Helen Lloyd, oral history consultant**  
**Sara Parker, 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.*

## Introduction from the New Chairman **Mary Kalemkerian**

It is just over 3 years since I was invited to become a Trustee of the Charles Parker Archive Trust. My response to the then Chair Tim Blackmore was an immediate and enthusiastic...YES!! Little did I think at the time however that I would one day be asked to step into Tim's illustrious shoes and become Chair myself of this extraordinary organization dedicated to the Radio Ballads and the work of such a pioneering radio producer as Parker.



I became a fan of Charles Parker via the Ballads back in 1964, when The Travelling People was originally broadcast. That year, on my first holiday abroad, hitch-hiking and camping in France, with the then boyfriend, we regaled every driver who gave us a lift, with a lusty rendition of "I'm a freeborn man" ..... I can still sing along to it, word perfect, to this day.

The Radio Ballads were an inspirational coming together of three great talents, Charles Parker, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. Many years later, when I helped to set up BBC 7, a new BBC Archive Radio network, I knew that the Ballads just had to be featured, and taken to a wider audience. So in 2009 we commissioned Tim Blackmore and Gillian Reynolds, eminent Radio critic and the first chair of the CPA Trust, to present a 3 hour special celebrating the Ballads. It was a hugely popular programme and has been repeated on Radio 4 Extra several times since.

Now on to 2014, when after serving five years as Chair and over 10 years of commitment to the CPA Trust, Tim sadly decided to stand down as Chair and Trustee. To follow on from him and Gillian Reynolds – such respected giants in the radio industry – is a daunting task and I am grateful for the support and encouragement of my fellow trustees.

2015 is a special year for the CPA with January 25<sup>th</sup> being the centenary of Ewan MacColl's birth. As the new Chair, I took particular delight in the fact that the Charles Parker Day was to be held in my homeland of Scotland – and more importantly that of Ewan's parents. Organizer of the day, Andy Cartwright, compiled a superb programme of speakers, which began with an uplifting presentation from the erudite Sean Street, exploring the importance of sound and music throughout our lives. (*see pages 20/21*)

Later Peggy Seeger, also celebrating a special birthday this year, spoke about working and living with Ewan, alongside a panel which included Jimmie McGregor, Alison McMorland, Bob Blair and Geordie McIntyre, discussed the Scottish influence on Ewan's life, music and radio work. The day was packed full of treats as Andy reveals in more detail on pages 8 and 9.

As we look to the future of the CPA, it's worthwhile reminding ourselves of the three objectives of the Trust. Advancing knowledge in folk language, folklore and music, collating and preserving the archive material, and making it available to the public are all pertinent objectives for an exciting project which we are planning to support.

The Trustees were approached earlier in the year by Archive Consultant and Researcher Sarah Baylis, about the project which Rural Media, publishers of the Travellers Times, is developing – and we gave unanimous approval to explore the venture further. A group of us met at the beginning of August with Richard Elms, Development Producer at Rural Media. On pages 14 and 15 he outlines the aims of the venture and its background.

This year the Trust welcomed a new Trustee to our team – Simon Elmes (no relation to Richard). Simon is an award winning programme maker and until his recent retirement, was Creative Director for BBC Radio. Now a freelance documentary producer and creative consultant, Simon brings a wealth of experience to the Trust and has chaired the judging of the Charles Parker Prize for the past 11 years since its inception. (more on page 18)

In a year of several changes, we are very sorry to bid a farewell to Fiona Tait, Sian Roberts and Paul Hemmings of the Library of Birmingham's Archive and Heritage Services. Their support for the CPA over the years, sometimes through difficult times, and their dedication in helping to keep the Charles Parker Archive alive, including the digitisation of the archive, has been immeasurable. They will be very much missed. Our splendid Honorary Secretary, Ian Parr, gives an up-date on the current situation at the Library, on page 19.

And finally my heartfelt thanks to the CPA Trustees, past and present, Friends, academics, students, programme-makers and radio enthusiasts for their continuing support and appreciation of this valuable archive. I look forward to meeting many of you over the next year at events such as the AGM in October, and the Charles Parker Day, 2016, which will be held in Bristol.

## Secretary's Report for the 2014/15

Ian M Parr

Since publication of the last Annual Report the Trustees' committee has met twice, the first being the 2014 AGM in October. The other was in March 2015, a short time before Charles Parker Day. Draft minutes of the Friends AGM can be found on the Trust website.

The AGM for both Trustees and Friends of the Trust, reported on the Trust's continuing development, in particular our involvement beyond the Archive itself. Though the Archive remains central to all we do, it is increasingly promoted through activities such as Charles Parker Day which we now fully manage with financial assistance from supporters, sponsors and the BBC.

Increasing use of social media is a way of recording and highlighting the achievements made not just by the Trust itself but by our support for and through such events as the Charles Parker Prize. In contrast one of our supporters, Sarah Baylis, has demonstrated how material in the Archive can be used within new radio programmes on new subjects and we expect increasing collaboration with the Travelling communities arising, initially, from CP Day in 2014.

At our March 2015 Trustees meeting, Mary Kalemkerian took over as Chair of the Trust from Tim Blackmore. Tim followed on from Gillian Reynolds. It must have seemed a daunting task. I have enjoyed working with Tim just as much as Gillian. Different styles of leadership but the same intense desire for the Trust to succeed, as indeed we have been able to demonstrate in this Annual Report. How management of the change in direction of our activities has been undertaken has been fascinating seen from the privileged position of Secretary. I look forward to working with Mary as she must now lead us through a period of uncertainty regarding the Library and access to the Archive as well as consolidation of our new initiatives.

The Trust is already benefiting from the involvement of Simon Elmes who joined the Trustees for his first meeting in March 2015. At this meeting we also had a briefing from Paul Hemmings. Paul attended Trust meetings and like Fiona Tait was a representative of the Library. Paul briefed us on the future plans for access to the Archive. A number of Trustees have been active, along with Friends of the Trust, in opposing the cuts and reorganisations to the Library, especially Archives. *(For further information see page 19.)*

During the year I have handled four responses to enquiries from the Trust

website. We have also had a spate of spam which now seems to have abated. It has become a regular practice that when additional pages have been added to the website or there are articles in social media etc., 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 for all subsequent reports, the Trust's compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and related government guidance for organisations such as ours has been reviewed. Recently I have contacted people who have attended CP Day events and asked if they wish to receive communications from the Trust and brought to their attention our provision for Friends. In addition I have continued the review I undertake annually of 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 previous Reports.

As always I extend my thanks to the Library staff and to fellow Trustees and Friends of the Trust for their support.



## **Treasurer's Report 2014/2015**

**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 especially to Tim Blackmore who contributed £500 to support it. We currently hold just under £5,000, mainly arising from the generosity of Friends over the years. This balance is available for new initiatives when opportunity arises.

As you can see overall we have remained static this year, with a small profit on the CPA day, although without Tim's donation we would have made a loss. I have also included a summary of the Income and Expenses for the CPA day as the receipts and payments usually cross into two financial years.

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

**Financial Statement for the year 29.04.14 to 28.04.15**

RECEIPTS	£
Friends' subscriptions and donations	227
Donation from Tim Blackmore	500
Tax refunds on gift-aid contributions	53
Grants from BBC for Charles Parker Day 2014 and 2015	1000
Bank interest	1
Ticket sales	3017
<b>Total</b>	<b>4798</b>
PAYMENTS	
Printing, postage etc.	183
Website	65
Charles Parker Day expenses 2014	1078
Catering costs	1803
Concert expenses 2014	1582
<b>Total</b>	<b>4711</b>
Excess receipts over payments	<b>87</b>

**Balance statement at 28.04.15**

Opening balance in Barclays Bank at 29.04.14	4491
PLUS excess receipts over payments	87
Closing balance in Barclays Bank at 28.04.15	<b>4578</b>

**Summary of the 2015 CPA Day Receipts and Expenses**

<b>Income</b>		<b>Expenses</b>	
Tickets sales	£1563	Catering	£1760
Donations	£1000	Expenses	£699
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2563</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>£2460</b>

## The Charles Parker Day 2015

Andy Cartwright



To celebrate the centenary of Ewan MacColl this year's Charles Parker Day was held on Friday 27th March, in his spiritual homeland and was hosted by the excellent Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) in Glasgow. We were pleased to be joined again by Peggy Seeger to help mark this event along with friends and fellow musicians Bob Blair, Jimmie Macgregor, Alison McMorland and Geordie McIntyre who acknowledged the Scottish influence on Ewan's life, music and in the Radio Ballads.

We were also pleased to be joined by presenter and oral historian Alan Dein and producer Simon Elmes who demonstrated how they made a number of BBC Radio 4 'Lives in the Landscape' programmes about the Craigmillar Estate in Edinburgh – *The Doo Men of Burdiehouse* – about pigeon racers and *Craigmillar's Caravan Converts* about evangelical Christianity in the Travelling community.

The day also examined the work of radio producers working for BBC Scotland who make programmes for the BBC networks that reflect the lives of individuals with fascinating stories to tell. Matt Thompson, from North Berwick based Rocket House Productions, chaired a discussion with Liza Greig (*The Meaning of Mongol*), Peter McManus (*The Digital Human*) and Dave Howard (*Being Edan*) which were illustrated by extracts from their programmes.

The conference also explored two key features of both Charles Parker's and Ewan's lives – 'political theatre' and 'political song'. The curator John Powles introduced us to The Janey Buchan Political Song Collection which is housed in the University of Glasgow and examined the relevance of the collection today and revealed his own personal connection to the radio ballads – as a distant relation of the legendary Sam Lerner from *Singing the Fishing*.

We were also joined by Dave Anderson who, in an interview with writer and producer Pam Wardell, examined the glorious history of 7:84 Scotland and Wildcat Theatre – he also entertained the audience with a selection of political songs from their shows.

The day was bookended by two talks exploring the meaning and memories of sound from radio programmes from the past to contemporary sound art. Opening the conference Sean Street, Emeritus Professor of Radio at Bournemouth University and the founder of the Charles Parker Day, introduced the ideas in his new book *'The Memory of Sound'* exploring the importance of sound and music throughout our lives. At the end of the day sound artist Mark Vernon previewed *'Radiophrenia'* a sound-art radio station which broadcast from the CCA during April.

This year the winners of The Charles Parker Prize for the Best Student Radio Features were announced just before the lunch break so that the winners could celebrate their success with the professional radio producers present. This year's winners are:-

### **GOLD**

**Joseph Ovenall**

*Black Shuck - Hellhound of the East* (University of Westminster)

### **JOINT SILVER:**

**Peter Cernik**

*Both Sides of Dying* (University of Sunderland)

**Weidong Lin**

*Trace of a Cloud in a Chest* (Goldsmith's College)

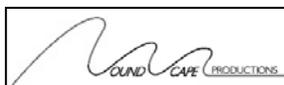
### **BRONZE**

**Tom Glasser**

*See Without Seeing* (Goldsmith's College)

All this features were broadcast on BBC Radio 4 Extra and can be heard on the Charles Parker Prize website – [www.charlesparkerprize.com](http://www.charlesparkerprize.com)

The next Charles Parker Day will be held in Bristol at a venue to be confirmed on Friday March 18<sup>th</sup> 2016.





CPA Chair Mary Kalemkerian, with the 2015 Charles Parker Prize Winners

### **Simon Elmes, Chair of the Judging Panel 2015 reports:**

Judging was shared between Stephanie Billen, radio previewer of the Observer, and Mike Hally of Square Dog independent productions and myself.

The overall numbers of entries this year dropped substantially, with fewer than half the total entered last year. Also showing a decline was the range of universities and colleges entering. However, a decline in numbers was not matched by a decline in quality, and the leading candidates were certainly of a very high standard. There were some excellent entries that deployed simple ideas and interesting soundscapes to great effect, and the issue that has, in this observer's opinion, repeatedly vitiated many entries over the years – the unjustified and wilful use of a music track – was far less evident this year. There were few entries that could be said to have directly followed in Charles Parker's footsteps – no real *ballads* this year – but imagination and technically assured production were in good supply.

## THE CHARLES PARKER 2015 PRIZE CITATIONS

### 1ST PLACE & GOLD AWARD

CP509 **Black Shuck - Hellhound of the East**

Joseph Ovenall – University of Westminster

The judges were unanimous in their appreciation of this powerful and professionally made documentary: “Very well made, well researched and entertaining”, commented one, while another said “the voices have authority, and the unpacking of the different elements keeps you listening. The music, actuality and effects are extremely well handled and subtly done, and the final ghostly encounter with the mysterious dog is really chilling.” The programme has “a good soundscape and real attempt to understand the true nature of the horror” and “shows exemplary command of the narrative documentary form.”

### JOINT 2ND PLACE & SILVER AWARD

CP511 **Trace of a Cloud**

Weidong Lin  
Goldsmiths

CP505 **Both Sides of Dying**

Peter (Jordy) Cernik  
University of Sunderland

The tightness of the competition this year was amply illustrated in the awards made for second and third place. In the end, given two very different yet equally well-executed entries, it was decided to divide the second place Silver Award between Weidong Lin and Jordy Cernik.

**Trace of a Cloud** is a finely crafted piece of imaginative radio, with a gentle, Zen-like contemplative quality, something indeed that marked both this programme-maker’s two entries. Two men discuss death, and specifically the recent deaths of their mothers, in a piece that mixed amusing and sharply observed anecdotes with more mystical thought. “Very moving, slightly hypnotic, innovative and imaginative”, said one judge, while another observed that the maker “brings an oriental sensitivity and originality to the production, transforming the dialogue by subtle use of gongs and bells, drones and audio overlays.” The judges also praised “a great piece of straight interviewing given how much the man opened up”; although the elusive quality of the piece was less liked by one of us and left them “struggling to follow”. “Some nice details and some lovely use of sound” were nonetheless appreciated. Another minor critique from the judges was that the title was rather too puzzling for its own good!

**Both Sides of Dying** is a simple, yet moving tale about surviving a meningitis attack. This is a very powerful short piece that tells its story very simply by intercutting the two voices of the victim and his wife. The judges appreciated the programme's assembly: "cleverly edited, (with) good use of sound." "The use of music is quite subtle," commented another, "and enhances the dreaminess. But it's above all the powerful words of the victim whose ability to describe his feelings during the episode that make this piece stand out." "Humane and moving," commented another, "even life-changing, given its message about death." "Very effective radio" was the overall judgement.

### **3RD PLACE AND BRONZE AWARD**

#### **CP504 See Without Seeing**

Tom Glasser – Goldsmiths

This programme is ideally suited to radio: the story of a man who's spent his life capturing and thinking about sound. It's simply made, and all the better for that. The sounds are commented on with energy and the speaker, Louis, comes over as a strong and interesting character. The programme was well liked by the judges who felt it was "very clever, ideally suited to radio, mindful and with a great twist so managed to be both about an individual and about a different way of living."

### **2012 CP Prize Winner, Jimmy Ewing, is now a Trustee**

I have been a member of the trust since October 2014. In 2012 I won the gold Charles Parker Prize and have since worked for: BBC 6 Music, as a Broadcast Assistant with Tom Robinson; the Prison Radio Association, as a producer training prisoners in radio production skills at HMP Brixton; BBC Radio Leeds, producing live breakfast, lunch and drive-time programmes and have managed a prison radio project at HMP Stoke Heath. I am now lecturing in Radio at Staffordshire University and keep myself busy establishing an online radio station aimed towards children and young people in education. My new part-time role in lecturing will enable me to spend more time managing the Charles Parker Prize social media/website and this will link with my other commitments in the coming year.

**....And he has now successfully taken the CPA  
into the age of social media ....**



**Jimmy writes:**

In February 2015, the Charles Parker prize website ([www.charlesparkerprize.com](http://www.charlesparkerprize.com)) was launched along with a new Facebook page and Soundcloud account. Aimed towards students and young radio producers, the new website holds information regarding prize entry and an archive of past winning features. The Charles Parker Prize Facebook Page has 40 likes (followers) including students, past prize winners, radio lecturers and other radio professionals. The Soundcloud page has accumulated 234 listens across all past winning features (statistics correct from Feb 2015 to Aug 2015).

Moving forward we plan to promote the prize website to universities and colleges offering radio production and media courses. We hope to engage with younger radio producers through more proactive blogging and social media engagement. We hope to create an online forum for young radio producers to share their ideas and radio content, in the near future.

**Amongst the Facebook messages the Trust has received was this poignant one from Sheila Stewart MBE, the well known Scottish Traveller Singer and Storyteller. Sheila posted this message in November 2014 shortly before her death.**

**Sheila Stewart**

27 November 2014 11:54

I knew Charles very, very well in the 60's and stayed with him many times. I also performed in Centre 42 with Ewan and Peggy and of course Charles. He was a great man and so dedicated to his work.

There will never be another like him. My name is Sheila Stewart M.B.E. and I am the sole survivor of 'The Stewarts of Blair'. We were a travelling family. Good on you for this page i love it XX

## Travellers' Times Project

**Richard Elms**



I have to be honest, but I was totally oblivious to the importance of The Travelling People Radio Ballad to the Gypsy and Traveller community until I quizzed my colleague Damian Le Bas, a native Romany speaker from a large Gypsy family and Editor of Travellers' Times. His reply was heartfelt, that Charles Parker's last radio ballad was one of the first ever programmes to allow Gypsies and Travellers to speak out about their own lives,

transforming the way they were presented in the media because for the first time it was the Travellers themselves doing the talking (and singing). While its music was so steeped in Traveller culture that for many years he himself believed its ballads were Gypsy folk songs from 200 years gone by.

I work for the Rural Media Company that publishes Travellers' Times, the UK's only national Traveller magazine, giving a voice to the Gypsy and Traveller communities that over half a century on from their Radio Ballad still suffer from extreme levels of prejudice and discrimination. And in my role of Development producer, not only do I appreciate the Travelling People's impact on the community we work with, but I consider myself privileged to be co-designing this project. That will take the original unedited recordings and publish them online to widen access and availability in a broad range of social, academic and educational contexts; but more importantly to reconnect the Gypsy and Travelling communities (our readership) with voices and stories from their past.

This seldom heard material will be segmented into different themes such as work, travelling, identity, courtship and marriage, family life and childhood, education, health and wellbeing, language, sites and stopping places, fairs and gatherings, labels and discrimination – and of course music and singing – in order to teach us while challenging lazy perceptions of this often misunderstood community. Through creating an important educational and research tool, through raising awareness of Romany and Traveller languages and by exploring what if anything has changed for the Travelling People in the fifty one years passed since the ballad was first broadcast. And to do so by using the archive material as inspiration to train today's young Gypsies and Travellers in digital media and oral history skills to produce new contemporary oral testimony and a new "video ballad" for wider appreciation and understanding.

To this end I spent a wonderfully inspiring afternoon in early August meeting three passionate trustees of the CPA Trust (Mary, Sara and Andy), Paul and Rob (two extremely supportive British Library Curators) our partner Dr Sarah Baylis (one of the inspirations for this project) and the very knowledgeable Hugh Chignell, Professor of Media History from Bournemouth University. We were all of us agreed on the value of undertaking this work, but also sensed an opportunity for this project to pave the way for Travellers' Times to track down, and gather together, other rare and hard to access audio and visual media from the Travelling Community, all in one place. So this project may just be the beginning.

Now all that remains is to make it all happen (he says tongue firmly set in cheek). To finish – amongst many other things – designing a schedule of activities, finalising the budget and of course, finding the money to pay for it; hopefully from the Heritage Lottery Fund. And while all this is happening, I will be delighted to keep our valued partners at the Charles Parker Archive Trust regularly informed of our progress.

Many, many thanks for supporting us in this venture.



© Alison Chapman



**And for those interested in the Travellers' Project....Paul Wilson,  
British Library Curator-Radio, sent us links to other archives.  
Some are more readily accessible than others!**

**BBC World Service Radio Archive** prototype online

50,000 programmes dating back to 1970s, but most is post-1980s

You need to register to access but there are no fees

About 2/3 of content can be streamed from the site but sound quality is  
(intentionally) low

Subject tags are auto-generated and are often inappropriate but you can contribute  
to the correction/enhancement and augmentation of the data

Stronger on current affairs and arts magazine progs than British Library and main  
BBC Sound Archive collections

About 150 programmes tagged 'Gypsy' (62 streamable), only 8 tagged 'Romany'

e.g. <http://worldservice.prototyping.bbc.co.uk/programmes/X0906705> (subjects include  
both Romanian immigrants and gypsies – last quarter)

**British Library Sound & Vision** – online [SAMI catalogue](#)

Most oral history content will be catalogued

Only a proportion of the radio collections are catalogued within SAMI

Very large catalogue often requires careful search refinement or a large trawl

No radio content in this sphere is yet available for external online playback

Some digitised audio is accessible on the internal Soundserver system within  
reading rooms

e.g. NP1618W ('Life & Hard Times of a Romany Man' 1970)

Subject tag **GYPSY** – 470 entries mostly music

Subject tag **GYPSIES** – 954

Subject tag **GYPSY FOLK SONGS AND MUSIC** – 86

**BBC Sound Archive** [Electronic catalogue](#) is only accessible onsite only.

Printed version and other finding aids available in Humanities 2 reading room

Search options very limited – for this catalogue also use subject term spelling

**GIPSIES**. Some post-2007 audio is streamable, including TV content

But the rest has to be ordered in advance for a return visit.

e.g. <http://bbcpilot.bl.uk/programme/SX+26445/9> (Radio Newsreel 1953)

e.g. <http://bbcpilot.bl.uk/programme/SX+27037/5> (Gipsy Days 1954)

e.g. <http://bbcpilot.bl.uk/programme/SX+27367/8> (The Secret People 1958)

e.g. <http://bbcpilot.bl.uk/programme/SX+29599/9> (The Gipsy in Britain 1968)

e.g. <http://bbcpilot.bl.uk/programme/SX+29600/0> (The Gentlemen of the Road 1968)

e.g. <http://bbcpilot.bl.uk/programme/SX+29695/0> (Life & Hard Times of a Romany  
Man 1970)

e.g. <http://bbcpilot.bl.uk/programme/LDFS933X> (Drawn to the Romany Life 1974)

e.g. <http://bbcpilot.bl.uk/programme/SX+18277/0> (Romany Trip 1983)

e.g. <http://bbcpilot.bl.uk/programme/PEEE522W> (Travellers of Wales 1987)

e.g. <http://bbcpilot.bl.uk/programme/FR+07734/3> (Romany Roads 2007)

**British Library Broadcast News** – [catalogue online](#), video/audio onsite only  
 International TV news programmes since 2010  
 UK radio mostly since 2012

## **BUFVC Collections**

**LBC-IRN News Archive** (1973-1996)

Catalogue is universally accessible but audio only accessible with Athens (UK HFE) login credentials

## **Some non-audio resources**

**BBC News Scripts** – collection of original BBC Radio News Bulletin scripts (1937-1972) on microfilm is available in the Newsroom, catalogue ref. MFM.MLD218C  
 A subject index is available on separate microfilms – one for each year and very laborious to use.

For this project it might be worthwhile transcribing the index for key subject terms. The scripts give you the exact wording of reports on the BBC's national network services (Home Service, Light Programme) which may not survive as audio recordings.

## **Electronic resources:**

Onsite British Library electronic resources:

<http://www.bl.uk/eresources/dbstptitles/eresourcest.html#T>

**Times Digital Archive** is another useful resource, as is **British Newspaper Archive**, but require subscriptions (or access via a subscribing local or academic library).

Times Index is complete from 1785 to 1985 and can be ordered chronologically. Watch out for archaic spellings – 'Gypsy' etc. Very useful as a way of tracing early references and historical use of particular terms/language. Throws up some very interesting 19th C material.

**Listener Historical Archive 1925-1991** (291 hits for search term 'Gypsies')

## **BBC Genome**

Complete BBC schedules back to 1920s (not all regional programme data yet included and OCR often needs correcting). About 8,000 programmes can be played through embedded links but much more will be added in coming years. Bear in mind that the vast majority of the programmes do not survive as audio recordings to day.



## Introducing .....A New Trustee

Simon Elmes



Radio has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. Weaned on *Children's Hour*, I clearly recall the excitement of my parents – also radio fanatics – as they waited to tune in to the next Charles Parker *Radio Ballad*. But, perhaps curiously, it was a French documentary (*l'Italien de la rue des Cloys* by Fabrice Pinte) that first opened my ears and imagination to the poetic and elegiac qualities of the radio feature programme.

About the same time, in 1974, I joined the BBC and three years later found myself making my own first efforts at documentary.

A feature on seaside piers, expertly, imaginatively – and hilariously – stewarded on the other side of the mic by entertainer Richard Stilgoe, was my earliest production. It was to be the first of my – what by now must literally be – hundreds of docs for Radios 2, 3, 4 and World Service (some of which have had the good fortune to win awards).

I learned from the very best – Alastair Wilson, Piers Plowright, Nigel Acheson and in recent years from Laurence Grissell – just how the manipulation ('composition' as it's sometimes called) of words, interview, music and silence can conjure imaginative worlds undreamed of by those whose staple diet consists of streamed rock music or news.

Working with Charles's daughter, Sara, has been one of my greatest pleasures. A brilliant talent in her own right, our collaborations – on 24 hours in the life of a phone box, the urban park and the Isle of Sheppey to mention just three – have been radio poems to the human condition, full of pathos and rich humour.

I have also had the privilege of chairing, since its inception over a decade ago, the Charles Parker Award for young radio feature-makers. From the first winner, Mark Williams, an ex-prisoner who searingly documented in real time his own release from detention, to the latest laureate, Joseph Overall (for a high-class historical documentary about an East Anglian legend), the standard has been invariably stellar.

To say that ‘professional documentary-makers could learn from these youngsters’ sounds faintly patronising – yet it’s the absolute truth. Weidong Lin’s two entries this year (silver award 2015) took the feature into new and genuinely original territory, while last year (2014)’s gold award by Adam Allinson about suicides at Beachy Head cliff was a full-length piece, truly professional in its immaculate production. And, over the years, a clutch of short pieces from the masterschool at Goldsmiths, University of London, were gem-like miniatures that have ushered their makers into now well-established careers in radio. It’s a wellspring that thankfully shows no sign of drying up..

### **Library of Birmingham: update on current situation**

Usually the Trust Annual Report includes an item reflecting use at the Library of the Archive and associated matters affecting the Trust. Archivists, in the past Sian Roberts and Fiona Tait, have submitted reports and attended Trust meetings. Consequently Trustees have always been aware of anything significant which might affect management of the Archive.

We are very grateful to Fiona and Sian, and with the recent attendance of Paul Hemmings, for their support of the Trust. Elsewhere we’ve reported more fully on their contributions. In recent weeks they have all left the Library and at the time of this Annual Report there is no clear reporting structure in place.

Many of you will know the effects of the problems local authorities have had carrying out Government policy regarding finance of public services. The Library of Birmingham has been subjected to swingeing reductions in staffing levels as well as opening hours (though fortunately there has been some recent back-tracking in this latter respect).

It is not possible to provide further information on access to the Archive beyond that on the Library of Birmingham website – see <http://www.libraryofbirmingham.com/visiting>. When we become aware of them, changes will be noted on the Trust website.

We know many people associated with the Trust have protested and Trustees are continuing to make efforts to obtain more clarity in relation to access to the Archive. It is hoped that by the AGM on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October there will be something to report that is more encouraging than what has so far been noted.

Finally, on a more optimistic note; a recent meeting between Trustees and other interested groups (reported separately in these pages) has demonstrated how important the Archive is and how it can be used to further the community aims to which Charles Parker was so committed.

**Ian M Parr**

## The Memory of Sound

### Professor Seán Street explores themes from his recent book

John Keats wrote to his friend Benjamin Bailey: ‘(Some) things require a greeting of the spirit to make them wholly exist...’ He might have added, ‘like imagination... or memory’. To actively focus on a sound – as in a radio programme – is to unlock many potential layers of recollection. The shaping and crafting work of the radio producer is composition, a kind of music that preserves memory through the documentation of thought; each time we listen, the moment is recreated. Each time we remember, either prompted by sound, or silently in our own mind, it lives again.



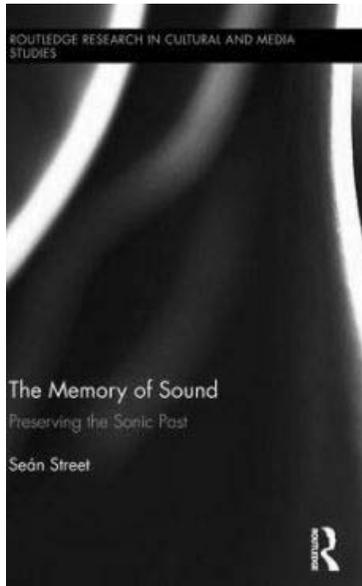
So where does memory begin, and when does it start to link with sound? We now know that listening begins in the womb. A year ago, when my daughter Jemma was expecting her baby, she regularly played a gentle piece of piano music from a CD designed for pre-natal relaxation. A week after her baby was born, back at home, on a day when the little girl was quite distressed, she played the track, and the child stopped crying, her eyes opened wide and she showed what can only be called recognition. It was an expression Jemma hadn't seen on her face before – it was recollection.

It happens at the other end of life too. As we move forward into a world where memory loss in various forms becomes increasingly a part of what we have to deal with – either in those we love or in ourselves – music and sound can unlock profound keys. For my book, I spoke to Colin Robinson, an academic from Liverpool John Moores University. He recalled the last days of his father, Phil, who in his youth during the 1950s had played in a skiffle group. Phil suffered from Alzheimer's, and during visits to his care home, Colin experimented with music as a way of sparking memory:

*I played a recording of Freight Train, a song I knew he'd performed with the group. As the tune started up, I heard my father start to sing, his voice changed and soared, his smile was wide and for those brief minutes as he sang, the father I knew was there. As the tune faded out, his face faded too and he was gone.*

Our lives are framed by song and sound. Mundane sounds can be the most potent of all, things we never think about because of their pure utility, sounds that inhabited our everyday world just a few short years ago. Heard again when we least expect them, these things can jolt us back into a former self: Proust's sense of involuntary memory can suddenly open a window, pull back a curtain. Samuel Beckett said, 'The man with the good memory doesn't remember anything because he doesn't forget anything.' As with an everyday sound, so with a voice, perhaps that of a long-gone loved one. We may think we have forgotten their sound, but we'd know it if we heard it now. And while we have their sound – even be it silently held inside our mind's recording machine – we can invoke their memory. Their sound declares their existence.

Seán Street's book,  
*The Memory of Sound: Preserving the Sonic Past*,  
is published by Routledge.



## **Ewan MacColl Peggy Seeger and Charles Parker**

### **The Radio Ballads and the Epic Vernacular**

**Ian M. Parr**

When he knew I was interested in some articles and theatrical presentations he'd been arranging Sam Richards, a long-time friend, writer, musician, lecturer and folklorist, was good enough to send me his material and with characteristic generosity said I could do with it as I wanted. What I wanted was to get as much as possible into the public domain hopefully via the Trust's website. The material Sam sent me was to do with the centenary of the birth of Ewan MacColl, an event celebrated at Charles Parker Day this year as well as at many other gatherings and media programmes.

What's special to me about Sam's contribution is his focus on music. There are two items. The first is a script of a programme, a biography in song, *The Ballad of Ewan MacColl*, which Sam has been presenting around the South West of England. The second is a detailed biography of Ewan's contribution to music with an emphasis on the Radio Ballads. Grandly it's called *The Radio Ballads and the Epic Vernacular*. I think it's an important treatise; originally intended as a magazine article, it commences with the late 1950s and works by Cage and others in the USA and Stockhausen in Europe.

Moving then to Sun Ra and other jazz influences of the same period Sam goes on to discuss the musical shifts elsewhere with Leonard Bernstein and the growth of rock 'n roll. Interestingly, developments in that field with Carl Perkins and Mississippi blues generally go back earlier than Cage's groundbreaking compositional techniques. The Lomax family is indeed mentioned.

Sam places these movements in the context of the post-war boom and change in world socio-economics and politics, referencing in the UK other cultural milestones such as John Osborne's plays etc. He then suggests that the Radio Ballads belong to this new avant-garde. To do this requires him to explain what many reading this article will take for granted as the key elements of the work of Ewan, Peggy and Charles.

The article is fundamentally historiography therefore it needs and does include short biographies of Ewan, Peggy and Charles. However unlike previous reviews of their work Sam concentrates on the musical aspects and influences that brought the Radio Ballads into being rather than exclusively the political and theatrical. Thus, I guess, Peggy Seeger becomes a pivotal figure and Sam has interviewed her as part of his research for these pieces. Peggy also

provides a narrative on the Radio Ballads that is picked up and analysed within the several layers of Sam's thesis which seems to me to be saying that the Radio Ballads are a reflection more on Ewan's desire to work within the musical frameworks of the time rather than outside of them. Or as Sam says, "...it is possible to feel that the hegemony of the established arts was a somewhat magnetic pull."

So where should we go from here? This paper and the presentation are not a homage to the Radio Ballads. The overall impression is that musically we have a long way to go; although we already have much to build upon. The recordings – samplers (really) of the Radio Ballads – by Broadcaster, "*Primary Transmission*" made in cooperation with Calum MacColl provide an emerging alternative. Whilst Sam is pessimistic about the future for vernacular (which vernacular?) epics his concern revolves around the continuing failure as he sees it for contemporary musical epics to address their need for a given rather than implicit narrative. Is he right? I'm not sure.

In the near future, with Sam Richard's help, we will make the material accessible on or from the Trust website. So keep a look out for an email circular that will be sent out at the time.



*Charles, Peggy and Ewan performing at one of the many folk clubs set up as part of the 60's folk music revival*

## **Roy Palmer (1930-2015)**

### **A tribute from Graham Langley and Pam Bishop**

Graham first met Roy Palmer in 1965 at a performance of the anti-apartheid play *Of One Blood* directed by Charles Parker and performed by members of the Birmingham and Midland Folk Centre. Soon after they opened their first folk club and with Roy's encouragement Graham took part in a young singers night.

Following this the Grey Cock Folk Club became the venue for a series of folk plays drawing on Roy's growing collection of historical documents and the Folk Centre's song collection. Roy's political interests were evident, especially in the unlikely titled "The Funny Rigs of Good and Tender-hearted Masters" about a carpet weavers' strike in Kidderminster. The line "Damn you James Male" will be seared into the hearts of all who took part as it toured Midlands venues. These presentations later developed into Banner Theatre who are one of the few political theatre companies still in action.

The Folk Centre had for some time been collecting folk songs from the Midlands and, after a publishing deal with Pergamon fell through, Roy took up the baton and a revised version was published as *Songs of the Midlands* to be followed soon after by the Topic LP *The Wide Midlands*.

This is where Roy really began to show his strength, collecting material and publishing books with a genuine historical social comment and a love of folk song and custom. More recently our paths have crossed again as the Folk Centre collection, in which he played such an important part, is being sifted once again to produce a Birmingham songbook and as always his extensive knowledge and advice has proved invaluable.

We will all miss Roy's scholarship and enthusiasm for traditional song, music and lore, but his published work will stay with us and continue to inspire us. The British Library has made many of his recordings available online at <http://sounds.bl.uk/World-and-traditional-music/Roy-Palmer-collection>.

Anyone can listen to these 140 hours of field recordings of soldiers' songs and folk drama recorded for the most part in Birmingham, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire.

The heading to the collection states: "Roy Palmer has been involved from the 1960s in singing and seeking traditional songs. This collection of field recordings includes performances of songs and tunes as well as discussion and reminiscences about repertoire. Some of the recordings were given to Roy as he gathered information for his many anthologies of traditional songs and street ballads reflecting different aspects of social, military, maritime, industrial, agricultural and recreational history."



*Roy, Graham and Pam were all resident singers at the Grey Cock Folk Club in the 1960s. This photograph shows Roy singing at the club, accompanied by Pam on the guitar. Photo: Bob Etheridge.*

## FRIENDS OF THE CHARLES PARKER ARCHIVE

Enclosed with this Report you'll find a loose-leaf sheet with an application and subscription form for Friends of the Archive.

We'd love it if you were to apply or renew your subscription this year. And you'd be most welcome at the Friends AGM, the agenda for which is part of the same sheet.

Friends subscriptions continue to provide the financial base for the Trust. We don't lightly draw upon them. The main financial outgoings continue to be Charles Parker Day and production and distribution of our Annual Report, (this report). The Financial Statement on page 7 explains where the money comes from and, just as important, where it goes.

The Trust's reserves, currently around £4500, are necessarily held for major projects and to provide for extraordinary items such as a license for Microsoft Publisher which we had to obtain this year.

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**The Friends 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, (now complete) and to help in the organisation of events. 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 digitisation project, where the finance was completed with a cheque for £2,000 from the Friends.

### **Some events that volunteers have 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, with a folk concert in the Library Theatre that evening, and another one a week later. Concerts remain a periodic feature of CP events.

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. 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.

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. In 2014 they were involved in the organisation and concert for Charles Parker Day which celebrated the opening of the new Library

An Annual General Meeting of Friends is held each year reflecting the Trust's activities and introducing speakers whose subject matter relates to Charles Parker's work. In 2010 Wally Kinder spoke about his contact with Charles including his contribution to the programme "The Blind Set". In 2013 Friends took part in discussions with Rod Stradling and Patrick Costello relating to the release of the Cecilia Costello recordings which are in the Archive.

### **Advantages of membership**

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. Annual Reports such as the one you are reading, are published each year, and back copies are available to Friends on request or from the Trust website.



For further information about using the Charles Parker Archive

<http://www.libraryofbirmingham.com>

<http://theironroom.wordpress.com>

<http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk>

**The Charles Parker Archive Trust**

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