



English
Folk
DANCE & SONG SOCIETY

Vaughan Williams
Memorial Library

BROADSIDE DAY

Saturday 12 February 2022

Online, via Zoom



Supported by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

PROGRAMME

	All times are London (Greenwich Mean) Time
9.45am	Welcome
10.00am	Oskar Cox Jensen — Protest song and the politics of print
10.30am	Pam Bishop — The political song tradition in Birmingham
11.00am	<i>Break</i>
11.30am	Colin Bargery — A short farewell to smoke and noise : Travelling for pleasure in street literature
12noon	Mary Emmett — The enduring structure of a hunting song: If it ain't broke, don't fix it!
12.30pm	<i>Lunch</i>
2pm	Catherine Ann Cullen — From transportation to diversion: Ballads, singers and printers in Irish courts 1825–1850
2.30pm	Michelle Holloway — How were seventeenth-century attitudes towards early modern English women perpetuated in the contemporaneous broadside ballad?
3pm	<i>Break</i>
3.30pm	Tom Pettitt — The earliest murdered sweetheart ballads: On the genesis of a broadside genre
4.00pm	David Atkinson — The Ballad Partnership after 1690
4.30pm	<i>Goodbye</i>

David Atkinson

THE BALLAD PARTNERSHIP AFTER 1690

A ballad partnership was in existence before 1624 and was maintained through connections based on apprenticeship, marriage, and inheritance more or less throughout the seventeenth century. Cyprian Blagden's *Notes on the Ballad Market*, published in 1954, remains unsurpassed for understanding the evolution of the partnership during the second half of the century. The intention here is to try to add some details to the somewhat confusing picture of the ballad market when in the 1690s the last (known) manifestation of the partnership began to fragment.

David Atkinson is the author of *The English Traditional Ballad* (2002), *The Anglo-Scottish Ballad and its Imaginary Contexts* (2014), and *The Ballad and its Pasts: Literary Histories and the Play of Memory* (2018). With Steve Roud he has co-edited *Street Ballads in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and North America* (2014), *Street Literature of the Long Nineteenth Century* (2017), *Cheap Print and the People: European Perspectives on Popular Literature* (2019), *Street Literature and the Circulation of Songs* (2019), and *Printers, Pedlars, Sailors, Nuns: Aspects of Street Literature* (2020). He has published articles on cheap print in *The Library*, *Publishing History*, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, and the *Journal of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society*. He is the editor of *Folk Music Journal*, Honorary Research Fellow at the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, and Executive Secretary of the Kommission für Volksdichtung (Ballad Commission).

Colin Bargery

A SHORT FAREWELL TO SMOKE AND NOISE - TRAVELLING FOR PLEASURE IN STREET LITERATURE

In 1780 — for ordinary folk — travelling for pleasure meant a day at a fair within walking distance or perhaps a short trip on a carrier's cart. By 1880 the seaside holiday was an established feature of working-class culture. These developments were driven by wholesale migration from country to town which was, in its turn, driven by the Industrial Revolution. The importance of travelling for pleasure is evidenced by dozens of topical songs produced during this time. The songs celebrate the joys and perils of travel and the adventures shared by excursionists and holiday makers

Colin Bargery has been singing folk songs for forty years. During the 1980s he was asked to write a history with songs about the navvies who dug the canals. This prompted an enduring interest in songs about the industrial revolution. Since retiring from his role as a risk manager in the NHS he has been researching these songs and is curating a website called *Songs from the Age of Steam* <http://songsfromtheageofsteam.uk/> which gathers together songs about the social impact of steam power and puts them into their historical context. He has given papers at several EFDSS Broadside Days and at conferences organised by the National Railway Museum, and the British Commission for Maritime History. He has contributed to *Street Literature of the Long 19th Century* [Atkinson & Roud Eds. 2017]; *Street Literature and the Circulation of Songs* [Atkinson & Roud Eds. 2019] and *Printers, Pedlars, Sailors, Nuns: Aspects of Street Literature* [Atkinson & Roud Eds. 2020].

THE POLITICAL SONG TRADITION IN BIRMINGHAM

In 1965 the newly-formed Birmingham and Midland Folk Centre (BMFC) embarked on a collection of folk songs and related material from the region. Among its members were BBC radio producer Charles Parker and Roy Palmer who was then a local head teacher. Some 1200 songs were transcribed from traditional and broadside sources. Broadside printing in Birmingham flourished for at least 150 years, drawing on many sources including political and traditional songs. Many of these songs were sung at BMFC's Grey Cock Folk Club (1966–1987) and 66 of the traditional songs were published in *Songs of the Midlands* (EP Publishing 1972). Various documentary shows were developed based on the material, and this activity led to new songs being written in Birmingham, and eventually to the formation of Banner Theatre (1973 to date). What emerges is a picture of regular production of political songs in the city. John Freeth, a local publican (1731–1808) wrote and published songs in a series of books called *The Political Songster*. The Traditional Arts Team, founded in 2000, seeks to carry forward this legacy. In recent years, as well as traditional song sessions, it has run a monthly Sing Political session, where old and new political songs are shared, and new ones published as an online Political Songster. The Team is now preparing a book of traditional, broadside and contemporary songs selected from the BMFC and Team archives.

Pam Bishop was a founder member in 1965 of the Birmingham and Midland Folk Centre which researched some 1200 Midland songs from traditional and broadside sources, now stored with the Charles Parker Archive, of which she is a Trustee. She has been influential in getting people to participate in folk activities and in 2000 became music director of the Traditional Arts Team which organises performance and training in the Midlands. She was music editor for *Songs of the Midlands* (1972) and *Singing the Changes* (2005), also the ongoing *Political Songster*, collections of songs from Sing Political sessions.

Catherine Ann Cullen

FROM TRANSPORTATION TO DIVERSION: BALLADS, SINGERS AND PRINTERS IN IRISH COURTS 1825–1850

In 1827, Dennis Ring of Cork was transported to Australia for seven years for singing and selling a ballad in praise of a secret society that targeted landlords. Ring's sentence is an extreme example of the view taken by the authorities of songs that reflected popular political views. A decade later, William O'Brien, a ballad singer in Kerry, was charged with libelling 'Protestants' and 'Tories' in song. A case in Tipperary in 1844 led to a government enquiry after a policeman dressed himself as a ballad singer to induce a printer to copy a controversial song. Ballads celebrating the 'heroes' of the 1798 rebellion against British rule in Ireland particularly outraged the magistrates. Despite the dangers, some singers used the courts as a theatre in which to show off their skills of composition and comic performance. The legendary Dublin balladeer, Zozimus, when a judge refused his request to pay a two-shilling fine in weekly instalments, dumped 24 halfpennies before the magistrate, while a friend sang a ballad in court in the voice of the arresting constable's sweetheart, praising his looks and brains. The policeman withdrew the charges. This paper will interrogate a sample of ten court cases involving ballads in the courts in Ireland between 1825 and 1850. It will detail charges preferred and penalties incurred, but place particular emphasis on the songs performed or read, some of which survive solely in court records.

Catherine Ann Cullen was inaugural Poet in Residence at Poetry Ireland 2019–2021. She is a recipient of the prestigious Kavanagh Fellowship and a prize-winning poet, children’s author and songwriter. Her six books include three poetry collections and three children’s books. *The Magical, Mystical, Marvellous Coat* (Little, Brown, 2001) won a gold award for poetry and folklore from the American Parents Association. She has two books forthcoming in 2022, *The Song of Brigid’s Cloak* (Veritas) and a book of poems for children in Irish and English (as co-author). She holds a PhD from Middlesex University. This is her fourth Broadside Day presentation.

Mary Emmett

THE ENDURING STRUCTURE OF A HUNTING SONG: IF IT AIN’T BROKE, DON’T FIX IT!

It is well acknowledged that the printed word has had a significant influence on British folk song, but the evidence for this in the case of hunting songs would appear incontrovertible. Analysis of Lakeland hunting song texts as part of my PhD research revealed that, in songs directly outlining a day with the hunt, the general structure and content of hunting songs has essentially remained unchanged since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this paper I will outline what I have identified as the six key elements usually required to create a recognisable hunting song through a brief comparison of contemporary Lakeland hunting songs with examples from eighteenth-century broadsides and chapbooks. I will then consider the reasons why this apparent formula has endured to the present day. Cumbria (or formerly the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland) has historically had notably high levels of literacy and so the text-based nature of Lakeland hunting songs is perhaps not surprising. This is further evidenced in songs which do not pertain directly to a day hunting on the fells and I will aim to demonstrate some of the ways in which these songs remain ‘of Lakeland hunting’ through their textual compositions.

Mary Emmett is an independent researcher and has recently completed her PhD through the University of York. She was a recipient of the Jane Moody Scholarship for 2020–21 and worked with a digital musicologist and a computer scientist on creating an Archive Exploration of the songs collected as part of her PhD research. Soon Mary is hoping to put together a songbook of the repertoire collected throughout her previous fieldwork. Current research interests include further work on the Lakeland Fell Packs, but also folk music of her native Craven area of the Yorkshire Dales.

Michelle Holloway

HOW WERE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ATTITUDES TOWARDS EARLY MODERN ENGLISH WOMEN PERPETUATED IN THE CONTEMPORANEOUS BROADSIDE BALLAD?

Seventeenth-century social ideologies placed women in a role subordinate to men and the broadside ballads often reflected this. In a world dominated by protocol, hierarchical social structures, and the enactment of appropriate gendered behaviour, it is unsurprising that women who transgressed their social expectations were mocked and shamed, whilst those who were pious, innocent, and subordinate were praised. In my proposed presentation, I will explore how the male-authored broadside ballad was in a prime position to

perpetuate these attitudes towards women. This was achieved both through ballad lyrics and the specific ballad tunes. My particular concern is with musical content, and more specifically the means by which the practice of contrafactum (the reusing of familiar tunes) added layers of additional associations and meaning to certain tunes. Evidence shows that this procedure enabled ballad writers to manipulate an audience's interpretation of a ballad by connecting to their previous associations of a tune. The familiarity of these tunes was often influenced by the nature of their melodies and harmonies, with simple rhythms and melodic lines making them easy to learn and spread their message amongst the mainly illiterate early modern public. I will look in detail at two specific tunes, following their path through different reiterations and exploring how this perpetuated attitudes towards women: 1: Fortune My Foe – associated with female transgression 2. Bonny Sweet Robin – associated with socially expected female behaviour

Michelle Holloway is a recorder player, singer, teacher, and community musician based in Birmingham. She recently returned to education, studying for an MA in Music at the University of Birmingham where she is exploring women and music. She is passionate about high quality performance and connecting with audiences, performing regularly with her (un)traditional fiery folk band Bonfire Radicals. Fatea Magazine have praised her “extraordinary vocal work [which] acutely voices [a] song’s drama... distinctive lead vocal taking no prisoners”. In her spare time, Michelle volunteers with Birmingham’s homeless choir ‘The Choir with No Name’.

Oskar Cox Jensen

PROTEST SONG AND THE POLITICS OF PRINT

For five centuries, English protest song has been sustained by the mechanisms of cheap print. Now in the second year of their project, panellists from Our Subversive Voice – Oskar Cox Jensen, Alan Finlayson, and Angela McShane – discuss how the materiality of its dissemination has affected the rhetoric and the impact of protest songs. For their examples, they investigate the persuasive power of imprints and typographies in the maelstrom of the Exclusion crisis; and they consider the songs and songwriters of Birmingham – from John Freeth and John Collins, the self-publishing entrepreneurs of the eighteenth century, to Steel Pulse and The Beat, with their manipulation of other forms of media, the album sleeve and the TV broadcast. The paper also takes this opportunity to showcase the project’s newly-launched website, oursubversivevoice.com – a site that we hope will be a useful resource (and bone of contention) for the EFDSS community. Our Subversive Voice is a two-year AHRC-funded research project led by Professor John Street at the University of East Anglia. Oskar Cox Jensen is its senior research associate. Alan Finlayson is Professor of Political and Social Theory at the University of East Anglia; Angela McShane is Honorary Reader in History at the University of Warwick; they are both project co-investigators.

Oskar Cox Jensen is a Senior Research Associate in Politics at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Vagabonds: Life on the Streets of Nineteenth-Century London* (Duckworth, 2022); *The Ballad-Singer in Georgian and Victorian London* (Cambridge, 2021); and *Napoleon and British Song, 1797–1822* (Palgrave, 2015); and co-editor of *Charles Dibdin and Late Georgian Culture* (Oxford, 2018) and a special forum of *Journal of British Studies: Music and Politics in Britain* (2021). He was a founding member of the Romantic National Song Network and the Nineteenth-Century Song Club. From October 2022 he will be a NUAcT Fellow in Music at Newcastle University. Oskar also writes both songs and novels, and is represented by Joanna Swainson.

THE EARLIEST MURDERED SWEETHEART BALLADS: ON THE GENESIS OF A BROADSIDE GENRE

The 50 or more English Murdered Sweetheart Ballads form an unusually well-delineated genre within broadside balladry, persisting from the 17th to the 19th century. As powerful narratives of femicide in the context of couple formation, they also invite study from the perspective of socio-cultural aspects, including gender relations and attitudes. This paper will focus on the three earliest known ballads in the genre: “William Grismond” (Roud 953), ca 1630–1656; “Reward of Murther”, 1640; “The Bloody Miller” (not Roud 263), 1684. Reference will also be made to “Thomas Caress”, 1670, and to the unsettling woodcut illustrating the “Bloody Miller”, evidently designed to accompany a quite different ballad. The exercise will revisit an earlier discussion, based on only 25 ballads, not least with regard to the balance between the two narrative impulses competing within it: journalistic crime and execution report versus sub-Gothick tragic romance (the punishment visited upon the murderer taking a more personal form, including supernatural intervention). Surprisingly, these earliest, fully-fledged murdered sweetheart ballads are uniformly and emphatically journalistic: “Reward of Murther” is quite specific on names, dates and places, and for the other two, despite the early date, there is independent contemporary documentation on the murders concerned. This suggests that the emergence of commercial, print journalism (for a popular market) was itself a contributory factor in the genre’s genesis. But its success may have deeper causes...

Tom Pettitt is an affiliate Research Professor at the Cultural Sciences Institute (IKV) of the University of Southern Denmark, where his research is devoted to the history of English vernacular culture in the pre-modern period, together with its sub-modern continuations and analogues (aka Folklore). His studies of the traditions themselves – customs (carnival; charivari; folk drama), songs (broadsides; traditional ballads), and narratives (urban legends; wondertales) are accompanied by exploration of their interactions with conventional literature, drama, popular culture and journalism. Also encompassed are folkloristic approaches to canonical narrative and drama.

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IS LOCAL, TRADITIONAL MUSIC DYING?

BY MICHAEL CHURCH

Wednesday 16 February ⇨ 7.30pm

A summary of the pitfalls and problems of field-recording, and some measures to arrest – or at least slow down - the process by which musics can wither and die.

Michael Church's book 'Musics Lost and Found: Song Collectors and the Life and Death of Folk Tradition' was published in October.

SONGS, TALES AND DROLLS

BY JOAN PASSEY

Wednesday 16 March ⇨ 7.30pm

In the nineteenth century Cornwall was the last county to be connected to the national rail network. Folk collectors mobilised to preserve narratives threatened by the perceived onslaught of tourists and modernity, and some of these collectors also wrote fiction. This talk considers the relationship between folklore collecting and literature set in Cornwall at that time.

Dr Joan Passey is a Lecturer in English at the University of Bristol, specialising in nineteenth-century literature and the Gothic from the eighteenth century to the present.

'ALL TOGETHER IN THE DANCE'

BY MATT SIMONS

Wednesday 20 April ⇨ 7.30pm

Alec Hunter (1899–1958) was an artist, textile designer and Morris dancer. Raised on Arts and Crafts precepts, he perceived Morris dancing as a highly developed form of English 'social art', an apt panacea for an age of disenchantment and division. This illustrated lecture will examine Hunter's influence on the interwar Morris revival and will explore many of the threads woven throughout his life.

Dr. Matt Simons is a Morris dancer and scholar. His doctoral thesis examines ideas of Englishness in the Morris dance revival of the early twentieth century through a series of intellectual biographies.