

EAST ANGLIAN TRADITIONAL MUSIC TRUST

Vaughan Williams' Folk

Green Bushes



Map: Tilney All Saints

This version of "Green Bushes" was collected from the sexton of Tilney All Saints Church, John Whitby. Vaughan Williams arrived in the village of Tilney All Saints, near King's Lynn on Saturday January 7th 1905 and met with Reverend Newnum, who introduced him to John Whitby. The sexton was the caretaker of the church who would have looked after the buildings and grounds and dug the graves.

John was born in Walpole St Andrew in 1836 and by the time he was 15 years old was an agricultural labourer, a farm hand. He married Rachel in 1864, with whom he had 5 children. He lived in Walpole St Andrew all his life and at the time of Vaughan Williams' visit was living in Kirk Field, very near the site of Anthony Curton Primary School today. In 1901 John was a groom and gardener but a decade later was listed in the census as a sexton and parish clerk so must have only assumed the position as sexton at All Saints a few years before Vaughan Williams visited in 1905. John Whitby was also a singer and knew numerous songs, he would have been 69 years of age when he sang for Vaughan Williams. He died a few years later in 1913 and is buried in the churchyard at Walpole St Andrew.

Picture: Tilney All Saints Rectory,
LuminArt Photography

Transcribed: A. Helsdon

Task: Visit your local church and see if you can find out about some local characters where you live.



Tilney All Saints, Norfolk