

Traditional Song Forum's Spring Conference:

FEAST FROM THE EAST: Traditional Song in Eastern England

Saturday 6th April 2024

**Stowmarket Scout Centre, Milton Road North, Stowmarket, Suffolk
IP14 1EX**

TIMETABLE FOR THE DAY

10.00am WELCOME

10.15am KATIE HOWSON – Fred Whiting – A Life in Songs

11.00am ALAN HELSDON – Walter Pardon – Craftsman & Singer

BREAK

12.00pm MARTIN NAIL – Walter's Dark Arches

12.30pm ROBERT ASHTON – Where Are The Fellows Who Cut The Hay?

LUNCH

Stalls, Exhibition, Book & CD Sales, Song Session with MC Eammon Andrews

2.00pm HAZEL MARSH - Singers and Songs - Gypsy and Traveller Voices in Music Archives

2.30pm CHRIS HOLDERNESS – Des and Me – Collecting Musical Memories in Norfolk

3.30pm CHRIS HEPPA – E J Moeran in Norfolk – An 'assiduous collector'?

BREAK

4.00pm JOHN MARSHALL-POTTER & SIMON SAUNDERS – Keeping the Ship Afloat

4.30pm Discussions, Winding Up and Farewells

MEETING ROOM STALLS

EATMT – book sales Blyth Voices, Before the Night Was Out, The Brightest of Entertainers, The Secret Stream - Volumes 1 & 2 and CDs

VETERAN – CDs

TSF – Numerous books for sale/Information stall

ROBERT ASHTON – Where are the Fellows who Cut the Hay book sale
Keeping the Ship Afloat - The Blaxhall Ship Exhibition

THANKS from EATMT and TSF

Thank you to our speakers who have given up their time freely to present their work at this event.

Thank you to Mark Bartholomew, Technical advisor and to Jake Lee-Savage who will be filming/recording this event.

Thank you also to our volunteers – in particular Eammon Andrews, Trustee, Shirley Harry, Steve Atkinson and Eliza Bartholomew.

Donations are gratefully received!

If you are watching this conference online and you like what you have watched, please consider making a donation via Paypal to EATMT!

The Traditional Song Forum was formed in 1998 and is an international organisation based in the UK

www.tradsong.org – tsfsecretary2020@gmail.com

East Anglian Traditional Music Trust is a registered charity based in the heart of Stowmarket in existence since 2000

www.eatmt.org.uk – info@eatmt.org.uk – 07495 054669

PRESENTATIONS with important links:

Katie Howson

Fred Whiting – A Life in Songs

Fred “Pip” Whiting was a singer and fiddle-player from Kenton, near Debenham in Suffolk. He had a stock of rare and apparently unique songs, many of which were recorded by John Howson, Keith Summers, Carole Pegg and Mike Yates. I knew Fred well for ten years and was always fascinated by his choice of songs and his deep affinity for them. In this audio-visual presentation I will look at Fred’s life (1905-1988) and why these songs meant so much to him, and I will also look in some depth at one or two of his very special songs.

I am a musician, researcher, historian and writer. My late husband John and I moved to Suffolk in the 1970s and immediately became involved with the older generation of singers and musicians, playing alongside them and recording them. In 2000 we founded EATMT, and after creating and producing many successful projects, publications and exhibitions, I retired in 2017. In 2010 we were each awarded the EFDSS Gold Badge. I now run Veteran Records, founded by John in the 1980s, and I continue to play traditional music and to research traditional music: much of my recent writing is published on my website *Unsung Histories*.

Veteran: <http://www.veteran.co.uk/index.htm>

Unsung Histories: <https://unsunghistories.info/>

Katie Howson: <https://katiehowson.co.uk/>

Alan Helsdon

Walter Pardon, Craftsman and Singer

A brief look at the material recently gifted to the EATMT by Jim Carroll and Pat Mackenzie; Walter's song books, diaries, notebooks and photos etc.

From about 1957 to July 1961 I went to Bignold Junior School in Norwich. I suppose it would be called an inner city school these days. We had to walk 2 miles to another school's playing fields for Games.

Miss Thorpe, in Year 3 (9 - 10 year-olds) took us all for Country Dancing, and she must have taught some Morris and Sword as, when I got to College 10

years later and joined the Morris side there I found I knew most of the common figures.

She also took singing with the BBC radio broadcasts and, probably on her own initiative, taught us Tonic Sol-fa, which, in its final form, was the construction of a Norwich lady anyway.

Couple all that with my mum who, if she wasn't singing while hoovering was whistling while dusting, both of which activities were accompanied by the canary, and I didn't stand a chance really!

Alan is a musician and researcher and regular EATMT Volunteer.

Martin Nail

Walter's Dark Arches

We will be investigating the history of *Down by the Dark Arches* (Roud 1442), one of the songs which Walter Pardon sang to Jim Carroll and Pat Mackenzie in 1977.

Martin is a librarian who spent most of his working life with the British Library. Since retirement he has worked on various cataloguing and indexing projects for the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, at times as a volunteer and at others as a paid project worker. He continues to work on the development of the VWML Folk Song Subject Index, managing the thesaurus which is central to the index. He is also a keen amateur singer and Anglo concertina player. His involvement in the organisation of a number of folk clubs etc in London led to his being one of the first people to create a website for a folk club in the mid 1990s.

Vaughan Williams Memorial Library: <https://www.vwml.org/>

Robert Ashton

Where are the Fellows who Cut the Hay?

Hot off the press, published on 4th April, *Where are the Fellows who Cut the Hay* explores how rural life continues to evolve, drawing on stories from 12 books by George Ewart Evans, and introducing people who today, are bringing back ways those Evans interviewed 70 years ago would recognise. Hear Robert talk about why he wrote the book and what he learned from those he met

while researching it. He will be around all day, and would be delighted to chat, as well of course as sell you a copy of his book!

For more than 50 years, Suffolk author Robert Ashton has been fascinated by the writing of oral historian George Ewart Evans. He was taught at school by his wife, and later worked at weekends on farms near Blaxhall, where Evans wrote the book for which he is best remembered. Sunday 7th April will see a George Ewart Evans afternoon in Blaxhall, starting with the unveiling of a blue plaque, then both *A Writer's Suffolk* which Evans wrote and narrated, and *Here's a Health to the Barley Mow*, filmed in 1955 at Blaxhall Ship, will be screened in the village hall.

Robert Ashton: www.robertashton.co.uk

Hazel Marsh

Singers and Songs - Gypsy and Traveller Voices in Music Archives

Romani Gypsies, and Irish and Scottish Travellers, have greatly influenced folk song traditions in the UK and Ireland. Yet in England, institutional recognition of their significant contributions to traditional music heritage has largely been absent. Rather than simply critique a lack of progress regarding representation, however, our collaborative project brings together Romani and Traveller communities with archivists, cultural events organisers, and universities, to connect archival collections with various publics. In this way, we seek to address stereotypes, and help increase access to and understanding of a shared musical heritage in Britain.

The project, funded by University of East Anglia (UEA), is a collaboration between Dr Hazel Marsh (UEA), Dr Esbjörn Wettermark (University of Sheffield), and Tiffany Hore (Library and Archives Director, VWML). Marsh is an interdisciplinary academic from a Romani background. Wettermark, an ethnomusicologist, focuses on issues of diversity and participation in the folk scene. Hore is proactive in tackling the colonialist legacies of classification and cataloguing practices. In collaboration with Traveller and Romani participants, the project is working to raise the visibility and accessibility of the Romani and Traveller collections at the VWML.

**Hazel Marsh: <https://research-portal.uea.ac.uk/en/persons/hazel-marsh>
Gypsy & Traveller Voices in Archives:**

<https://vwml.org.uk/vwml-news/7001-gypsy-and-traveller-voices-resource-free-download-now>

<https://www.efdss.org/images/present/Docs/Library/Gypsy-Traveller-Voices-PDF.pdf>

Chris Holderness

Des and Me - Collecting Musical Memories in Norfolk

A reminiscence about collecting information around Norfolk with Des Miller, for the "Rig-a-Jig-Jig: Norfolk Music History Project", periodically across a decade from 2004. A talk about what we collected, how we went about doing so and how the information was used by me to write a series of articles for Musical Traditions and later for the East Anglian Traditional Music Trust.

"Rig-a-Jig-Jig: A Norfolk Music History Project" was established by Des Miller in the 1990s to collect information about Norfolk's traditional musical heritage, from those who remembered it, were related to performers, or occasionally musicians themselves. I became involved in 2004 and, building on what Des had already gathered, we set about collecting everything we could, amassing a huge archive as a consequence, which is now housed with the East Anglian Traditional Music Trust.

Chris Holderness' Archive: <https://www.eatmt.org.uk/the-chris-holderness-archive/>

Christopher Heppa

'E.J. Moeran in Norfolk - an 'assiduous collector'?

This paper will examine the classical composer E.J. Moeran in his role as a collector of folk songs in Norfolk, where he 'discovered', among others, Harry Cox of Catfield. Although he was able to collect many great songs, his collecting was intermittent and included large gaps, and the paper will examine this aspect. Various reasons might be suggested - that after an early flurry, Moeran thought his work was done, and so he then concentrated on his 'classical' work (often using folk melodies), only returning to folk much later to make sound recordings. Other suggestions are his lifelong health problems, caused by serious injury in the First World War, resulting in painful headaches, depression and more, including a gradual slide into alcoholism, resulting in much wasted time. However, these medical reasons have been disputed as grossly exaggerated. His folk recordings culminated in the sessions recorded at

the 'Windmill', Sutton, in October 1947, and subsequently broadcast on BBC Radio's Third Programme, one of the earliest such efforts in the field.

Chris Heppa has been studying Harry Cox and his singer friends in north east Norfolk for coming up to fifty years, largely by interviewing family and friends of the singers, and other people who knew them. He has written many articles and given presentations on this and related subjects.

<https://catalogue.efds.org/cgi-bin/koha/opac-search.pl?q=an:4794>

John Marshall-Potter and Simon Saunders

Keeping the Ship afloat

A static exhibition delving into the Blaxhall Ship's rich folk heritage and a short talk about the current projects concerning the long term future of the pub.

John Marshall-Potter is co-director of FolkEast, which runs the annual FolkEast festival, The Blaxhall Sessions, various satellite events around the county and various project work with folk artists. Simon Saunders is the son of Jack and Midge Saunders, landlord and lady of the Ship for 15 years and the last of the family linked to the Hewitts who had the pub for 101 years.

FolkEast Festival: <https://folkeast.co.uk/>

The Blaxhall Ship: <https://www.blaxhallshipinn.co.uk/>

Blaxhall Sessions: <https://folkeast.co.uk/blaxhall-sessions/>

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Traditional Song Forum

The TSF hosts regular online meetings – the next ones being: 14th April; 19th May and 16th June. Its next live event will be at Cecil Sharp House, London – 20-21 July: Collectomania Conference. For more details visit www.tradsong.org