



Working Life

Belief, Custom, Ritual, Narrative

A Folklore Society Conference in association with, and at, the
Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, 6 Redlands
Road, Reading RG1 5EX

Friday 27 to Sunday 29 April 2018

PROGRAMME

NB: the conference talks will take place in Room L022 G01 the University of Reading's London Road campus, 4 Redlands Road, Reading RG1 5EX, 5 mins walk from the Museum of English Rural Life.

Friday 27th

- 13:00-14:00 Registration opens at Room L022 G01
- 14:00-14:30 **Welcome** to the conference, by Dr Oliver Douglas, Curator, Museum of English Rural Life, and member of the FLS Council.
- 14:30—15:30 **Prof. Patricia Lysaght, The Folklore Society Presidential Address 2018:** “From ‘Collect the Fragments...’ to ‘Memory of the World’. The Irish Folklore Commission (1935–1970): Achievement, Legacy, and the Digital Era.”
- 15:30-16:00 Tea/Coffee
- 16:00-18:00 Session 1 **Folklorists, Monks, Millers and Drinks**
Dr Paul Cowdell: “Second Impressions: What We Make of What Makes us Folklorists”
Prof. Anne Lawrence-Mathers: “The Monks of Reading Abbey as Creators and Custodians of Images of Working Lives.”
Jeremy Harte: “‘How Many Sacks Hast Thee A-Stole?’ The Miller as Folk Villain.”
Dr Matt Cheeseman: “Friday Drinks.”
- 18:00-19:30 Friday Drinks Reception at the Museum of English Rural Life: with folk music
- 19:30 Free to roam and forage for food. Conference pub: The Mercure George Hotel, RG1 2HS

Saturday 28th

- 9:30-11:00 Session 2 **Work Songs**
Dr Devender Kumar: “Peasantry in North Indian Women’s Folk Song *Jakari*.”
Hasmik Matikyan: “Lullaby as Work Song.”
Ernie Warner: “Work Songs and Occupational Identity in Song and Dance.”
- 11:00-11:30 Tea/Coffee
- 11:30-13:00 Session 3 **Spinning Yarns**
Rosalind Kerven: “Spinners, Servants and Midwives: Women at Work in British and Irish Folk Narratives.”
Mark Norman: “Spindle, Shuttle and Needle: The Folklore of Wool and Yarn.”
Dr Kate Smith: “From Hard Labour to Art and Leisure”
- 13:00-14:00 Lunch

- 14:00-15:00 **Keynote talk: Prof. David Hopkin:** “Lace Legends, Patrons and Celebrations: Craft Pride and Women’s Work.”
- 15:00-16:00 Session 4 **Potters and Publicans**
Dr Ceri Houlbrook: “‘A Folklorist Walks into a Bar...’: The Publican as Curator of the Concealed Revealed.”
Dr Meredith McGriff: “Individuals Together: Independent Professional Potters as an Occupational Folk Group.”
- 16:00-16:30 Tea/Coffee
- 16:30-18:00 Session 5 **Rural Labour, Landscape and Legend**
Fiona Mackenzie: “‘Bho mhoch gu dubh’: From Dawn to Dusk—a Day in the Working Life of a Hebridean Crofter.”
Dr Nick Jones: “Encountering Tolpuddle: Landscape , Ritual and Power.”
Robert McDowall: “William Cobbett: a 21st-Century Evaluation of Rural Rides.”
- 18:00-- Free to roam and forage for food. Conference pub: The Mercure George Hotel
- Sunday 29th**
- 9:30-11:00 Session 6 **Grave-digging, Corpse Roads and Funeral Handicrafts**
Dr Helen Frisby & Dr Stuart Prior: “Law, Lore and Landscape: Gravedigging in 19th- to 20th-Century England.”
Dr Stuart Dunn: “Corpse Roads: Connecting archaeology, folklore and landscape.”
Dr Mu Peng: “Doing Handicraft: Balancing Diversity and Uniformity in Rural China.”
- 11:00-11:30 Tea/Coffee
- 11:30-13:00 Session 7 **Fairies, Toadmen and Charcoal-burners**
Jo Hickey-Hall: “‘Wilt gie us the lend of thy plough and tackle?’: Fairies at Work’
Dr Maureen James: “‘Catch a ‘walking toad’: Exploring the Rituals and Practices of the Toadmen of East Anglia.”
Dr Tommy Kuusela: “The Charcoal-burner, the Hunter and the Female Forest Spirit.”
- 13:00-14:00 lunch
- 14:30-16:30 Tour of the Museum of English Rural Life

ABSTRACTS

Dr Matthew Cheeseman (University of Derby)

'Friday Drinks'

This paper discusses perceptions of a customary work practice: the regular consumption of alcohol amongst work colleagues. It understands such 'Friday drinks' as an aspect of working life that has, in some respects, undergone change and memorialisation. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with participants of different backgrounds, genders and ages. Questions were asked on: a) the time and place of regular drinks in the working calendar; b) who attended; c) connections to work narratives. Participants were also invited to share their thoughts on perceived changes to the practice, especially in relation to perceived changes in work and the world at large. 'Friday drinks' were thus used as a way of discussing wider issues. This presentation presents some of the preliminary results of this study.

Matthew Cheeseman is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at University of Derby. He runs Spirit Duplicator, a small press (spiritduplicator.org). His handle on Twitter is @eine.

Dr Paul Cowdell (Folklore Society)

'Second Impressions: What We Make of What Makes Us Folklorists'

Any occupational group will have its own folklore, encompassing the working and social practices within the occupational group and, further, contributing to the construction and consolidation of an esoteric self-identity within the group: the folklore will cement what the group does and why this makes it distinct. This applies equally to us as folklorists. There has been some scholarly writing on this (eg Richard Reuss's 1974 JAF article), but the 'folklore of folklorists' circulates largely at an informal, folkloric level. I will here examine some of our general folkloric tendencies, like our customary calendar, but will focus particularly on the tendency of folklorists to do impressions of each other. What does this tell us about our understanding of narrative traditions and our place within them? What does it tell us about how we learn to be folklorists, and how we understand being a folklorist?

Paul Cowdell wrote his PhD at the University of Hertfordshire on contemporary belief in ghosts. His MA dissertation, completed at NatCECT, University of Sheffield, was on traditional song in social context. He has published and presented on these topics as well as on folklore about rats, cannibalism at sea, tongue twisters, graffiti, and a range of other sensationalist subjects. He was last introduced at MERL as 'an expert in morbid eschatology' and gave up in his attempts at being offended by this. He is currently a Council member of the Folklore Society and on the editorial board of the *Folk Music Journal*.

Dr Stuart Dunn (Kings College London)

‘Corpse Roads: Connecting Archaeology, Folklore and Landscape’

Ancient roads, track ways and paths are notoriously difficult to date with any confidence, and to interpret archaeologically. However, it is well documented that such routes can become imbued with social and cultural meaning, and exert a powerful draw on the imagination. Some go on to become subjects of localized folklore, stories and beliefs. This paper will focus on one particular aspect of the history of ancient rural pathways: the beliefs and significance attached to routes used by communities to transport the dead to burial in pre-Enclosure societies, so-called “corpse roads”. I will discuss how evidence for these beliefs, which are manifested particularly strongly in rural north west England, and in remote areas such as moorland, can be assessed using inferential methodologies from both archaeological and historical practice; with a particular focus—in keeping with the conference themes on working life—on how we can develop a perspective on corpse roads grounded in an understanding of agricultural landscapes, practices and infrastructure.

Stuart Dunn is Senior Lecturer in Digital Humanities at King's College London. He started out as an archaeologist, with interests in the history of cartography, digital approaches to landscape studies, early-modern landscapes, and spatial humanities. He currently works on projects in spatial narrative theory, critical GIS, Cypriot cultural heritage, and the archaeology of mobility. Stuart gained an interdisciplinary PhD on Aegean Bronze Age dating methods and palaeovolcanology from the University of Durham in 2002, conducting fieldwork in Melos, Crete and Santorini. In 2006 he became a Research Associate at the Arts and Humanities e-Science Support Centre, having previously worked at the AHRC, after which he became a Lecturer in the Department of Digital Humanities. He is also a Visiting Scholar in Stanford University's Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis's Spatial History project.

Dr Helen Frisby and Dr Stuart Prior (University of Bristol)

‘Law, Lore and Landscape: Gravedigging in 19th- to 21st-Century England’

As late as the mid-nineteenth century, English burial and commemorative practices remained almost entirely unregulated by law. The burial legislation eventually passed in the 1840s and 50s, in reluctant response to the consequences of rapid urbanisation, was restricted in scope and largely permissive in nature. This is still the case: the UK Government’s most recent review in 2012 concluding that, despite burial still accounting for nearly 25% of disposals annually, cemetery provision should remain a matter for local decision-making and management. Thus in England day to day burial and commemorative

practices remain as much a matter of informal custom—lore—as they do of law. It is thus all the more surprising that academic cemetery studies to date have so consistently overlooked the gravedigger’s pivotal role in shaping and mediating such customs. Operating daily - and usually with minimal training - within a complex, often contentious web of law and lore, gravediggers influence virtually every aspect of burial and commemoration of the dead, and continue to do so long after the deceased have been forgotten by family and community. Drawing upon data from our pilot research project in South-West England, this paper explores change and continuity since the late nineteenth century in the tools and techniques employed by gravediggers in locating, cutting, backfilling and reopening graves, exhumation practice and the gravedigger’s wider role as caretaker of funerary and commemorative space.

Dr Stuart Prior is Senior Teaching Fellow in Archaeological Practice at the University of Bristol, with research interests in adversity and conflict, death, burial and ritual. He is also a former gravedigger.

Dr Helen Frisby is an Honorary Research Associate in Archaeology & Anthropology at the University of Bristol. Her PhD (Leeds, 2009) was on Victorian funerals, and her research interests are mainly concerned with the folklore and social history of death, dying and bereavement. Helen has previously taught History at the University of the West of England, Bristol, and Funeral Directing (yes you read that correctly) at the University of Bath. Helen is a Council member of the Folklore Society and Secretary of the Association for the Study of Death & Society (ASDS). In her spare time she’s a keen armchair Egyptologist, supports Cardiff Devils ice hockey club and is learning to play the theremin.

Jeremy Harte (Bourne Hall Museum)

“How Many Sacks Hast Thee A-Stole?” The Miller As Folk Villain’

The watermill was adopted throughout early medieval Europe, while the windmill followed some centuries later. They became necessities of human life – no mill, no meal, as the proverb said – and for a thousand years the miller ranked with the smith and the priest as a standard village figure. But for most of that time he was vilified as a cheat, a thief, and a lecher. At the beginning of the Middle Ages, mills had been associated with saints and kings, so what went wrong? This paper looks at the triangular relationship between technology, economics and social stereotyping. The first mills, which could be worked without a specialist operator, retained an aura of the supernatural. As they were superseded by more effective technology, owned and maintained by manorial lords, the miller took a special position as the appropriator of peasant surplus on behalf of the powerful, and was loathed for it. But as soon as an open market was developed in grain products, the miller lost his pre-eminent status as a feudal parasite and became just one amongst many tradesman. The wicked lustful miller of

proverbs, ballads, superstitions, children's games and local lore gradually lost ground before the model of a successful rural businessman.

Jeremy Harte is Curator at Bourne Hall Museum, Ewell, Surrey, and a member of the Folklore Society's Council. He has organized the society's annual Legendary Weekends for thirteen years, and has published extensively on folklore—his *Explore Fairy Traditions* (Heart of Albion Press) won the Katharine Briggs Award in 2005.

Jo Hickey-Hall, MA (University of Bristol)

“Wilt gie us the lend of thy plough and tackle?": Fairies at Work'

Over the centuries, fairies have surfaced from time to time in the course of people's ordinary working lives, imparting a sense of magic to the mundane. Admittedly, more often the instigators of mischief, fairies may choose to bestow good fortune upon the hard-working labourer and have even provided unexpected servitude at times. The narrative highlights a close connection between working people and the land (arguably fairy territory!) a relationship that is increasingly rare in the 21st century. We will explore how belief in fairies undoubtedly shaped the way in which people carried out their daily endeavours, forging customs, regulating behaviour and guarding morals.

Jo Hickey-Hall is a social researcher, historian and folklorist with a long-held interest in the relationship between supernatural experience, local landscape and oral tradition. She is particularly inspired by the survival of oral lore in rural communities and the cultural taboo that exists around fairy belief. Jo's MA in History, supervised by Professor Ronald Hutton, focused on the portrayal of fairy in Medieval Irish literature. She is currently collecting and researching modern accounts of fairy sightings and is a contributing author to Simon Young and Ceri Houlbrook's, *Magical Folk: British & Irish Fairies, 500 AD to the Present*.

Prof. David Hopkin (University of Oxford)

Keynote: 'Lace Legends, Patrons and Celebrations: Craft Pride and Women's Work'

Lace has almost no documented history, but lacemakers in different regions told many legends about the inception, the diffusion and the protection of their trade. Lace is often ascribed a supernatural origin: in legends reproduced in both Le Puy and Bruges the Virgin Mary inspired a poor girl to invent the technique as a means to overcome her poverty. In other regions a human patroness takes a lead role initiating a regional tradition, such as Queen Katherine of Aragon in the English Midlands or Barbara Uthmann in the Erzgebirge Mountains. Many of these stories emerged in literature and date from the nineteenth century when ecclesiastical and aristocratic patrons were attempting to preserve the

handmade lace industry. Nonetheless they sometimes drew on older oral narratives. Lacemakers, unusually for this overwhelmingly female and domestic manufactory, had a highly developed sense of craft pride, an awareness of themselves as skilled workers whose product was highly sought after. Nonetheless, they were amongst the most poorly paid workers in Europe, and there was a constant tension between their commitment to lace and the poverty they endured. I will explore how lacemakers' put their legendary history to work in defence of their craft and their own occupational identity in their stories, songs and their public festivities. I will try and tease out the conflicts between lacemakers' own narratives and later literary reworkings.

David Hopkin is Professor of European Social History at the University of Oxford. He is author of *Soldier and Peasant in French Popular Culture* (2002) and *Voices of the People in Nineteenth Century France* (winner of the Folklore Society's Katharine Briggs Prize). He is also co-editor of the collections *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century* (2012) and *Rhythms of Revolt: European Traditions and Memories of Social Conflict in Oral Culture* (2017). He is currently writing a book, the product of a Leverhulme Fellowship in 2015-16, on Lacemakers – poverty, religion and gender in a transnational work culture.

<https://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/about/people/professor-david-hopkin>
<https://laceincontext.com/>

Dr Ceri Houlbrook (University of Hertfordshire)

“A Folklorist walks into a bar...”: The Publican as Curator of the Concealed Revealed

A wide variety of objects have been found hidden away within buildings, from old shoes up chimneybreasts to cats bricked up in walls. Their purposes remain a mystery to us, but some believe they were a form of domestic magic, possibly to protect the buildings and their occupants. The Concealed Revealed Project at the University of Hertfordshire is less concerned with recycling theories behind the enigmatic concealment of these objects, and more with what becomes of them once found. Only a small minority of found 'concealed objects' are on public display. Some are simply discarded, while many are retained by their finders, either to be re-concealed or privately displayed in the home. Of those that are donated to museums, many remain in storage. There is, however, one category of concealed object that remains on public display: those found in public houses. Pubs across the British Isles are proudly displaying their finds, and this paper explores the publican's extracurricular role as curator of the historically concealed object.

Ceri Houlbrook is an Early Career Researcher in History and Folklore at the University of Hertfordshire. With Simon Young, she co-edited the volume *Magical Folk: British & Irish Fairies, 500 AD to the Present*.

Dr Maureen James (Independent Scholar, Cambridgeshire)

‘Catch a "Walking Toad”’: Exploring the Rituals and Practices of the Toadmen of East Anglia’

This paper presents an insight into the research on the rituals and practices of Toadmen—rural, highly-competent men who controlled the heavy horses that worked on the land in East Anglia—with particular reference to the Cambridgeshire Fens. Drawing on research by George Ewart Evans (1979), Enid Porter (1961) and G.W. Pattison (*Folk-Lore* 64:1953) in the past and the more recent investigations of Russell Lyon (2008) and oral historian Neil Lanham, this paper will attempt to answer the questions: Who were the Toadmen? What did they do to achieve their status? and why did the traditions die out?

Maureen James is an independent folklore scholar, lecturer, writer and historian. She lives in the Cambridgeshire Fens and has talked on the subject of folklore and customs to many local groups. She has also written published articles on local aspects of folklore and customs and has lectured on the subject to adult groups in Cambridgeshire and the Fens, both independently and for the WEA. Her website is www.tellinghistory.co.uk

Dr Nick Jones (Bournemouth & Poole College)

‘Encountering Tolpuddle: Landscape, Ritual and Power’

In 1834, six men from the village of Tolpuddle in rural Dorset were sentenced to seven years transportation having been found guilty of administering oaths of secrecy. This paper examines how the experience and accounts of the Tolpuddle Martyrs is embodied in the landscape as well as the meaning the landscape yields for trade union activists. The extent to which the annual festival at Tolpuddle organised by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) can be understood as a pilgrimage from which trade union activists derive power through ritual process in a densely storied landscape will be further explored using a range of theoretical perspectives and phenomenological fieldwork.

Nick Jones is a lecturer at Bournemouth & Poole College teaching Geography and Physics where he has taught since 2001. He holds a BSc (Hons) in Environmental Protection from Bournemouth University, MSc and PhD in Radiation and Environmental Protection from Surrey University and is currently studying a part-time MA in Ancient Religion with the University of Wales, Trinity St David at Lampeter.

Rosalind Kerven (Independent Scholar and Author)

‘Spinners, Servants and Midwives: Women at Work in British and Irish Folk Narratives’

The stereotype of female characters in folk tales is of passive princesses and malevolent witches. However, an analysis of British and Irish traditional narratives reveals that many of the women who appear in them are engaged in either artisanal work or service provision in return for payment. Moreover, their exclusively female work is often intrinsic to the plot. This paper examines the broad range of female occupations portrayed in such stories, then takes a deeper look at three case studies: the spinner needing supernatural help to escape her endless drudgery; the maidservant whose employment far from the safety of home and family makes her vulnerable to dangerous adventures; and the midwife whose specialist knowledge of the mysterious birth process may lead to disturbing interactions with the faery people.

Rosalind Kerven is an independent scholar, and the author of over 60 books published in 22 countries, including several bestsellers. With an academic background in social anthropology, she has been collecting and retelling myths, legends, folk tales and fairy tales from around the world for over 30 years. This paper will be based on research for two of her books for the National Trust, the bestselling *English Fairy Tales & Legends*; and *Faeries, Elves & Goblins: The Old Stories*. Her books are also published by The British Library, British Museum Press, Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Dorling Kindersley, Pearson, and many other publishers including her own small imprint, Talking Stone. Her most recent titles are *Native American Myths collected 1636–1919* (which will be published in July); and *Viking Myths & Sagas*. Her other books include: *Arthurian Legends*; *The Mythical Quest*; *Aladdin & Other Tales from the Arabian Nights*; *The Rain Forest Storybook*; *In the Court of the Jade Emperor* (Stories from Old China); *Earth Magic Sky Magic* (Native American Stories) and *The Slaying of the Dragon* (Tales of the Hindu Gods). She has also written children’s fiction and non-fiction, and numerous articles for magazines and journals. Her website is www.workingwithmythsandfairytales.blogspot.co.uk

Dr Devender Kumar (Banaras Hindi University, Varanasi)

‘Peasantry in North Indian Women’s Folk Song *Jakari*’

Agriculture had been the mainstay of Indian economy for ages before the advent of the colonial era. Afterwards it became merely a source of subsistence for the masses in the absence of any far-sighted plan to develop this sector as an industry. Naturally the majority of the farmers and farm labourers nowadays constitute the peasantry in this region. These impoverished masses toil in the fields despite heavy odds against them, natural as well as cultural. Being the constant companions of these peasants, women weave the testing moments of peasantry into their folk songs especially *Jakari*, a genre of work songs. Unlike ritual songs, *Jakari* songs project a realistic picture of the hard life peasantry in this region leads. These folk songs are remarkable for their first-person narratives in which a young peasant woman narrates tiny incidents from a peasant's daily life. This paper analyses four *Jakari* songs which can provide a clue to a peasant woman's attitude towards farming as a way of life. The fact that North Indian agrarian societies are essentially masculinist imparts *Jakari* as a genre of folk songs the significance of a potential site to unearth what the 'second' sex thinks about the dominant masculinist culture.

Dr Devender Kumar is Associate Professor in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. He wrote his PhD thesis on D.H. Lawrence from Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana. His academic areas of interest include British Fiction, Gender Studies, Indian Literature in English and Folklore Studies. He has published about 15 papers in various national and international journals of repute so far. His latest publication is a paper 'Jatanaa: A Peasant Woman's Folk Ballad from North India' in the journal *Folklore* Vol. 128, 2017, Number 1. He has two books to his credit—*The Unknown Voices: A Translation of Folk Songs of South Haryana* (2011) and *Jakari: Haryanvi Mahilaon ke Sarv-Sulabh Lok Geet* (2015). He has been collecting various folklore items especially women's folk songs from Haryana region in North India since last 15 years in audio-visual format. He made an ethnographic documentary titled 'Jakari: Life-Songs of Haryanvi Women' and uploaded the same on www.youtube.com on 15 March 2015. In recognition of his contribution to the preservation and dissemination of Haryanvi folk culture, the Rah group Foundation, a non-governmental organization, bestowed on him the 'Haryana Gaurav Award' in 2016.

Dr Tommy Kuusela (Institute for Language and Folklore, Uppsala)

The Charcoal-burner, the Hunter and the Female Forest Spirit.

A great number of Swedish legends speak of solitary workers, mainly charcoal-burners and hunters, who are said to have encountered a mysterious and dangerous female being that approached and tried to seduce the men. But if she was treated with respect and the men responded to her (sexual) invitations, she was believed to bring good hunting luck. She was also believed to be able to help the coal-burners in their cabins and notify them of dangers. There seems to be a close connection between the female forest spirit (the spirit is seldom male) with the woods and its wild game. The legends can be divided into different types and

motifs. Among the legends, there occur traits typical not just of the forest spirit. They belong to migratory legends known from other legend types that have been attached and attributed to her with time. Many accounts speak of the animals as her cattle and the woods as her dwelling and hunting ground. The various traditions and stories associated with her can be related to geographical areas, and to the livelihood of respective tradition bearers. Legends about her are known in Sweden from the 17th Century when some men were sentenced to death, accused of having sexual encounters with her. In this presentation, I will describe how legends about the forest spirit can help us understand the lives and conditions for men working solitary in woodlands in the 19th and early 20th Century Sweden. I will also give a brief presentation of how the forest spirit was usually depicted.

Tommy Kuusela works as a researcher and archivist at the Institute for Language and Folklore in Uppsala. He earned his PhD in the History of Religion from Stockholm University in 2017 for his thesis *There was inviolable truce within the hall: War and Peace between Gods and Giants in Old Norse Halls*. He has written a number articles on Old Norse Religion, Folklore and Tolkien. He has also co-edited the academic volume *Folk Belief and Traditions of the Supernatural* (Beewolf Press: Copenhagen 2016) and co-convened a conference on "Folk Belief & The Supernatural in Literature and Film" in Svalbard in 2017.

Prof. Anne Lawrence-Mathers (University of Reading)

‘The Monks of Reading Abbey as Creators and Custodians of Images of Working Lives’

This paper will focus on two records produced by the monks of Reading Abbey in the thirteenth century, which preserve surprisingly detailed insights into contemporary working lives. The first, now Gloucester Cathedral Ms 1, contains a collection of 28 miracle stories. Recipients of these miracles include not only clerics and aristocrats but also a milkmaid, woodcutters, a huntsman, and a fisherman’s daughter. Glimpses of their working practices, beliefs and occupational dangers are included in the narratives, with details apparently supplied by the informants themselves. The second manuscript, now BL Ms Harley 978, contains the well-known song ‘Sumer is icumen in’. However, this is far from being its only vernacular text. Also included are: herbal remedies; further miracle stories; and ‘lays’ supposedly based on traditional stories. All these offer glimpses of working lives, together with insight into how such experiences were shaped into varying types of narrative.

Anne Lawrence-Mathers is a Professor of Medieval History at the University of Reading, who works and publishes on medieval manuscripts, monastic life and its impact on broader society, and on the intersection between magic and science in medieval culture. (Monographs on: Manuscripts in Northumbria [Boydell]; The True History of Merlin the Magician [Yale]; and Medieval Meteorology [C.U.P., forthcoming]). Her paper draws on all of those areas.

Prof. Patricia Lysaght (Folklore Society President)

The Folklore Society Presidential Address 2018

‘From “Collect the Fragments...” to “Memory of the World”’: The Irish Folklore Commission (1935-1970): Achievement, Legacy, and the Digital Era.’

The Irish Folklore Commission was established in 1935 to collect, preserve, index, and publish the folklore of Ireland. In November 2017 the International Advisory Committee of UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme recommended that the *Irish Folklore Commission Collection (1935-1970)*, held by the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin, be inscribed to the Memory of the World International Register. This presentation will examine the manner in which the Irish Folklore Commission carried out its remit of documenting the oral, social and material cultural traditions of the people of Ireland, including the diverse aspects of their everyday and seasonal working lives, how it made the data collected available to research and to the public in the past, and how it will continue to provide access to this documentary heritage in the digital age.

Patricia Lysaght is Professor emerita of European Ethnology and Folklore (University College Dublin, Ireland), an elected Member of the Royal Irish Academy, and of the Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture which awarded her the *Torsten Janckes minnesfond* prize for scholarship in 2012. She was Editor of *Folklore* from 2004 to 2012 and was awarded The Harold Coote Lake Research Medal by The Folklore Society in 2013. She is currently President of The Folklore Society (2017–2020).

Fiona J. Mackenzie (Canna House, National Trust for Scotland)

“*Bho mhoch gu dubh*”: From Dawn to Dusk—A Day in the Working Life of a 1930’s Hebridean crofter’

During the course of their 60 year folkloring partnership, John Lorne and Margaret Fay Shaw Campbell saved for us a complete visual, aural and literary jigsaw of Hebridean life, all now housed in the archives of Canna House on the Isle of Canna in the Inner Hebrides. Canna Archivist for the National Trust for Scotland, Fiona J. Mackenzie presents the working life of the Hebridean crofter of the 1930s using both still and moving black-and-white images of Margaret Campbell, the work songs of John Campbell’s sound archive, excerpts from private and published, papers and diaries and live sung Gaelic song to bring their story alive.

Thatching, fishing, reaping, ploughing, spinning, milking, the hard work of lulling a baby to sleep- the Campbells of Canna weave us a rich tapestry of a way of life which no longer exists.

Fiona J. Mackenzie is an established Gaelic singer and songwriter with a Masters degree in Songwriting and Performance from the University of the West of Scotland. In 2015, she became the archivist and manager of Canna House for the National Trust for Scotland.

Hasmik Matikyan (Shirak Center for Armenological Studies of NAS RA)

‘Lullaby as a Work Song’

Lullaby, as a genre of children’s folklore, resides in nursery. Lullaby is the ‘monopoly’ of mothers, though in specific cases fathers, grannies, other members of families put children to sleep by singing lullabies. In the Armenian mentality there is a stereotype that rocking the child, taking care of him/her is the duty of mothers, it is their work. In this sense, we can define lullaby as a work song. Besides singing a lullaby song, mothers rock children and knit or do some kind of work. And the thread has been considered to be the main component. According to our folklore studies, we have founded out that lullaby has been sung for centuries. We have questioned about 100 story-tellers who live in different regions of Armenia: 70 of them mentioned that lullaby is a work song. Many of the story-tellers compared lullabies with another type of work song ‘*Horovel*’.

Hasmik Hamlet Matikyan Matikyan was born in Leninakan, Armenia, in 1987. In 2008 she graduated from Yerevan State University, Romance and Germanic Philology Department, with a Bachelor’s Degree in English language and literature (Diploma with Honour). In 2010 she graduated from Yerevan State University, Romance and Germanic Philology Department, with a Master’s Degree in English language and literature. Since 2010 she has been a post-graduate student in Shirak State University. Her research spheres are Linguo-folkloristics, Linguo-stylistics, Text Interpretation. Since 2012 she has been working at Shirak Center for Armenological Studies of National Academy of Sciences of RA as a scientific researcher. She teaches English in Armenian State University of Economics Gyumri Branch. She has published about 17 articles on folklore, especially lullaby texts.

Robert McDowall (The Folklore Society)

‘William Cobbett: A 21st-Century Evaluation of “Rural Rides”.’

William Cobbett was born in 1763. He was an English pamphleteer, farmer, journalist and

member of parliament, who believed that reforming Parliament and abolishing the rotten boroughs would help to end the poverty of farm labourers. Cobbett attacked the borough-mongers, sinecurists and "tax-eaters." He opposed the Corn Laws, a tax on imported grain. Early in his career, he was a loyalist supporter of King and Country. Later he joined and successfully publicised the radical movement, which led to the 1832 Reform Bill. Cobbett was elected a Member of Parliament in 1832 as one of the two MPs for the newly enfranchised borough of Oldham. He is now best remembered for *Rural Rides* (1832), a book hastily put together as an account of a series of journeys in southern England as the countryside was changing permanently. The book tends to be viewed as a loving, exact account of the English countryside. This paper will re-evaluate the thoughts and opinions in *Rural Rides* in the context of 21st Century issues such as protectionism vs free trade, the effects of industrialisation, creeping urbanism and foreign influences.

Robert McDowall is a former President of The Folklore Society.

Dr Meredith McGriff (American Folklore Society)

'Individuals Together: Independent Professional Potters as an Occupational Folk Group'

Based on over five years of ethnographic fieldwork with potters living in the Midwest of the United States, this paper explores the means through which these artists develop a sense of community as an occupational group, despite spending most of their time working individually in their studios. These potters have connected through their mutual regional and religious heritage, their educational experiences in local schools and apprenticeships, their participation in annual, collaborative wood firing events, as well as their engagement with the tradition of collecting, trading, and utilizing each other's pottery. Recurrent face-to-face interactions and shared embodied experiences of pots and pottery-making are key elements in the development of their friendships and professional relationships. Overall, this paper suggests a structured approach for the ethnographic study of the social lives of contemporary artists, one which can be applied far beyond the world of ceramics.

Dr Meredith McGriff is currently the membership director of the American Folklore Society. Prior to joining the AFS staff, she taught introductory undergraduate folklore courses and worked for a variety of cultural and arts organizations in Indiana. Meredith trained as a folklorist at Indiana University, Bloomington, and received her PhD in 2016. Her dissertation was titled "The Michiana Aesthetic: Community and Collaboration in an Emerging Pottery Tradition," and her research interests include the folk arts, occupational folklore, and embodied knowledge.

Mark Norman (Folklore Society)

‘Spindle, Shuttle and Needle: The Folklore of Wool and Yarn’

Accompanied by live spinning by **Tracey Norman**

*SWIFTLY turn the murmuring wheel!
Night has brought the welcome hour,
When the weary fingers feel
Help, as if from faery power;
Dewy night o'ershades the ground;
Turn the swift wheel round and round!*

Those words were written by the great poet William Wordsworth in his “Song for the Spinning Wheel” and they represent both a trade and an art which goes way back into the history of peoples the world over. The skills of weaving, spinning and knitting were vital to clothe and keep warm members of every class, race, religion or social group from the poorest to the richest. And so, we find wool, yarn and thread and the working of those materials rooted very deeply in the folklore of countries around the globe. This presentation, which will be accompanied by live spinning demonstrations, explores the importance of wool and yarn in the lore and traditions of cultures around the globe.

Mark Norman is an independent folklore researcher and author, and a member of the Folklore Society Council. His publications include *Black Dog Folklore* (Troy Books).

Dr Mu Peng (Beijing Normal University, China)

‘Doing Handicraft: Balancing Diversity and Uniformity in Rural China’

For many scholars who are concerned with Chinese cultural diversity and uniformity, ritual standardization, especially death ritual represents a key process in constructing Chinese cultural identity. Mortuary rite is one of the most important practices that embody and produce ideas about the yin world, the Chinese supernatural world, which is contrary to the yang world where we live. Based upon my fieldwork in rural Chaling, Hunan, during the past 10 years, my paper examines ordinary village participants and a range of paid, local religious specialists who do handicraft (*zuo shouyi*) by traveling around and frequenting funerals. With my traveling experience with these specialists, I explore how different local agents shape villagers’ visions and practices of the yin world through funeral practices, and how the tension between diversity and uniformity is balanced at village and community levels.

Religious specialists, I argue, combined with villagers, integrate and standardize regional traditions, promoting the formation and flow of knowledge, ideas, and beliefs about the yin world in communities.

Keywords: diversity, uniformity, ritual standardization, local religious specialist, vision of the yin world

Dr Mu PENG is an Associate Professor in Folklore at Beijing Normal University, China. She is currently a visiting fellow at the Department of Anthropology in the London School of Economics and Political Science. She studies folklore at Peking University (MA 1997) and the University of Pennsylvania (PhD 2008). Her teaching and research interests cover Chinese popular religion, ritual and festival, body, folk medicine, material culture, folk handicraft and apprenticeship, history of folklore studies, and intangible cultural heritage. She has conducted extensive fieldwork on contemporary practices of popular religion in rural China, especially Hunan and Hebei provinces. Based upon her fieldwork, she is working on a project that explores what and how social processes and agents influence and shape the formation, transmission, and reproduction of popular religious beliefs and practices in rural China.

Dr Kate Smith (University of Hull)

'From Hard Labour to Art and Leisure'

As a contemporary cultural practice, knitting is both very popular and a major contributor to the lucrative crafts market. Despite this popularity and the contemporary evolution of “knitting as culture”, with its own communities, festivals, language, hierarchy and tradition bearers, knitting has been a little-studied phenomenon. Indeed, scarcely a handful of scholars have given serious thought to how and why people pick up sticks and yarn to create textiles and garments. This paper presents a review of the available scholarship to date, pulling together strands from archaeology, fashion and social history, contemporary pattern designers, bloggers and community resources. After decades of decline, today’s knitting revival shares characteristics with other revivals; the ways that it has been written about can usefully inform our work as folklorists, particularly when considering the difference between “collecting” and “researching”. In seeking to establish what we can know about historical knitting, I will make a case for a survey of contemporary hand-knitting practice. As part of our material cultural heritage that is both tangible and intangible, we should understand better the evolution of this once humble, often arduous practice into the dynamic, subversive, and creative subculture that it has become today.

Kate Smith completed her PhD at NATCECT (University of Sheffield) in 2007 and taught for several years at various universities. She has been doing other things for some time, including teaching knitting and other kinds of handwork; as those other things grow up and become more independent,

she has the time and energy to re-focus on academic work and research, building on the interests developed in traditions of making and learning by hand.

Ernie Warner (Independent researcher)

'Work Songs and Occupational Identity in Song and Dance'

The British folk tradition is rich in songs about work. From the bucolic image of the jolly ploughboy, whistling and singing his way across the fields, to the grim reality of life in the mines. There are songs about ladies of the night. And of course a great many songs about sailors and sailing. The sailor symbolised freedom at a time when most were tied to the land. There are even modern songs about truck drivers. There are also dances which come from a working background. The rapper dances of the North West came from the coal mines. Then we have clog dancing, which emerged from the cotton mills of Lancashire. Not to forget the sailor's hornpipe. Because of the time constraint, the above topics will be covered in brief, while the presentation will concentrate on the work songs of sailors in the days of sail, sea shanties.

Ernie Warner is a member of The Folklore Society.