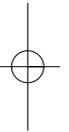
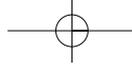


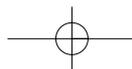


*Cecil Sharp*





# Still Growing





# Still Growing

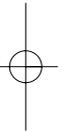
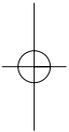
English Traditional Songs and Singers  
from the Cecil Sharp Collection

Compiled and edited by Steve Roud, Eddie Upton and Malcolm Taylor

Additional research by Bob and Jacqueline Patten

Introduction by Vic Gammon

Select Bibliography by David Atkinson



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in association with Folk South West*

2003





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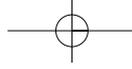
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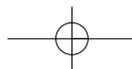
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# Introduction



## Introduction

# Cecil Sharp and English folk music

VIC GAMMON

Cecil Sharp is the most important folk song and folk dance collector that England ever produced. His achievements were, to quote Mike Yates, 'truly monumental'.<sup>1</sup> His collection of material is many times larger than any comparable English collection. He wrote the first important book on folk song. He popularised folk song and dance as recreational forms in the twentieth century. He created a national institution, since 1932 known as the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Perhaps most interestingly Sharp is still the subject of heated, sometimes vitriolic debate and this is indicative of his influence and significance.

I want to emphasise a positive view of his achievement at the start of this essay because I am viewed in some quarters as a critic of Sharp. Through endeavour, determination, and enthusiasm he achieved a great deal in the field of folk song and folk dance collecting. This was done with scant resources, financial insecurity, and no small amount of personal suffering due to ill-health. I will return to the arguments over Sharp later, but it should be remembered he

was no mean controversialist himself, and the debates we hear today have their origins in the supposedly genteel world of Edwardian England.

Sharp was born in Denmark Hill, South London (the year Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, Samuel Smiles *Self-Help*, and John Stewart Mill *On Liberty*, and John Brown was hanged following his

leading of the Abolitionist raid on Harper's Ferry). He died in Hampstead in 1924 (the same year as Kafka, Puccini, and Lenin, and the first, ill-fated Labour ministry came to power under Ramsay MacDonald). His father, James Sharp, was a London slate merchant, and Sharp remained very close to him during his lifetime. Sharp senior had artistic inclinations and was sufficiently well off to

retire from his profession before he was fifty. Sharp's mother, Jane Bloyd, the daughter of a City lead merchant from Wales, was a music lover and an able pianist. Theirs was a large family, of eight children (four brothers and four sisters), Sharp being the third child and the eldest boy.

He was educated privately in Brighton and



then at public school at Uppingham. He went on to study mathematics at Clare College, Cambridge, in 1879. At Cambridge, Sharp seems to have devoted more time to his musical activities than to his mathematics and finished with an ordinary degree. Coming down from Cambridge in 1882 and probably at his father's behest, Sharp did what many young men of uncertain future did (or were pressured into doing) and went to one of the colonies, in this case Australia.

His years in Adelaide have been the subject of an interesting study by Hugh Anderson.<sup>2</sup> Anderson finds the account of Sharp's time in Australia in the biography by A. H. Fox Strangways and Maud Karpeles to be 'inaccurate, highly selective in its facts and subtly misrepresentative'.<sup>3</sup> Fox Strangways and Karpeles, he argues, did not attach much importance to Sharp's Australian years, other than to remark that the experience he gained stood him in good stead for the future and developed his social talents. Anderson, however, feels that it is 'probably true to say Cecil Sharp was an opportunist and social climber',<sup>4</sup> and points to the significance of

the contacts he made in Australia for securing work in England after his permanent return. He certainly mixed with the social elite in Adelaide, often using his musical abilities as an entrée into colonial high society. It was also there that he met the outspoken Christian Socialist clergyman Charles Marson, who was later to prove an important link between Sharp and folk song. For most of his time in Australia Sharp worked in the public service, only turning professionally to music in his last few years, and then perhaps through force of circumstance. He returned to England for good in 1892, with the thought that he might return to Australia at some time.

Back in England, Sharp married Constance Birch in 1893. He had known her since before his departure for Australia, and she shared some of his artistic interests. He earned a living as a schoolteacher, firstly at Ludgrove in New Barnet (a preparatory school for Eton) and then, additionally, as principal of Hampstead Conservatoire, from 1895. Like many musicians, Sharp earned a living by combining different sources of



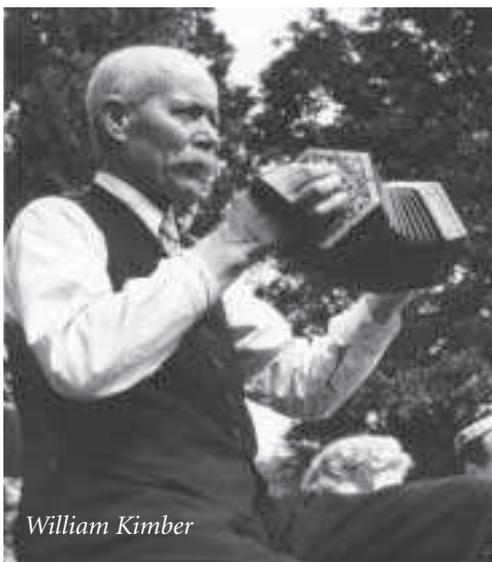
*Clare 2nd Boat Lent 1880. Sharp back row on the right.*

income and part-time jobs – private music teaching, lecturing, conducting, directing amateur choral societies, and trying to get performances and achieve recognition as a Schumanesque composer. He eventually became music tutor to the children of the royal family, and was from all accounts reputed a good teacher.<sup>5</sup>

I have long felt that Sharp's experience as a teacher was an enormously important aspect of his development, structuring the way he thought about the world and his ideas about what he should do with the material he was later to collect.

#### *Discovering folk song and dance*

There are iconic or mythic moments in Cecil Sharp's life. To call them iconic or mythic is not to imply that they never happened, but rather to say that in the retelling they have taken on a significance that they may not have had at the time. Thousands and thousands of people had seen morris dancing before Sharp did so at Headington on Boxing Day 1899, without its having been a life-changing experience for them. The following day Sharp notated five tunes from William Kimber, the team's concertina player. Later, Sharp was to say that that was the turning point in his life. But it is only in retrospect that the event takes on particular significance: his conversion to considering the collection and notation of dance as being



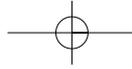
*William Kimber*

of equal importance with his work as a song collector was a staged and relatively long-term process.<sup>6</sup>

The other important epiphany for Sharp was hearing Charles Marson's gardener, John England, sing 'The Seeds of Love' in the garden of the vicarage at Hambridge in Somerset in September 1903. Fox Strangways' account of this event (which circulated widely in essentially the same form during Sharp's lifetime) describes the way in which, within the space of a day, Sharp discovered, notated, harmonised, and re-presented the song with piano accompaniment.<sup>7</sup> This was supposedly the trigger that projected Sharp and Marson into folk song collecting. However, the striking thing about the account (and I am not doubting that it has some truth) is the way in which it both encapsulates and prefigures the central activity that would engage Sharp over the next two decades.

One of the problems about a great deal of the writing on Sharp is the way in which he seems to be portrayed as a lone and heroic figure. The concentration on Sharp obscures the fact that he was part of a movement. He became the most significant and outstanding member of that movement, but his origins as a collector still lie in a current of thought, a sharing of sentiment, that ran through late Victorian society. The early signs of a genuine folk song movement in England can be identified in the 1880s, a dozen or more years before Sharp first collected a song. Within a few years and from dispersed parts of England there appeared collections of songs more and less faithfully gathered from oral tradition. The names of the collectors are well-known: Baring-Gould, Broadwood, Kidson, and Barrett. This initial activity seemed to falter a little in the 1890s, but the foundation of the Folk-Song Society in 1898 gave the small – and, I would argue, fragile – movement some sort of focus and institutional base.

Sharp was not a founder-member of the Folk-Song Society; he did not join until May 1901. The date is interesting. Clearly he was not in at the start, but equally his awareness of folk song predated by more than two years



*Seeds of Love, above as it appears in manuscript (September must have been when it was transcribed from Sharp's notebooks), and right as it appears in Folk Songs from Somerset, 1904*



*Marson family with John England (front, holding dog)*





*Charles Marson*

the encounter with John England in September 1903. The encounter could not have been so naive, so serendipitous, as the accounts make out. Marson, for example, writes that when Sharp heard the song: ‘In a moment he recognised its value and we started a vigorous song hunt.’<sup>8</sup> As a member of the Folk-Song Society, he would have received its *Journal* complete with song variants and learned notes contributed by such people as Frank Kidson and Lucy Broadwood. He would have been exposed to some of the theorising on the subject. He had drawn on some folk song sources for his 1902 *Book of British Song for Home and School*. In that book, he commented on the work of previous folk song collectors: ‘we have now, by the addition of this late but precious harvest to our garner, a collection of national song such as any nation might be proud of.’<sup>9</sup> He was a reader of the *Musical Times* and other periodicals that reported on folk song activities and publications. Above all, Sharp was a bright and intelligent man, notwithstanding his ordinary degree from Cambridge. My own feeling is that Sharp knew quite well what he was doing in that Somerset garden and had merely found the

opportunity to do it. As with his involvement in the revival of folk dance, he recognised the potential of what others had started, carried it on, and by one method and another (not always admirable) outdid them. His energy cannot be doubted, and neither can his enthusiasm for the task. W. M. K. Warren, one of the Somerset clergymen who assisted him in his early collecting, wrote: ‘What struck me most about Mr Sharp was his boundless enthusiasm for the preservation of what he recognised as a national treasure and was in danger of being lost to the country for ever.’<sup>10</sup>

Sharp was very direct about his estimation of the early achievement of the Folk-Song Society. His sense of urgency about the task of collecting would brook no delay. The Society had only published 109 songs in six years; it had not met for two years and was moribund. There was, he argued, ‘an immense amount of work to be done.’ Sharp’s impassioned outburst had an effect on the Society. The annual report for 1904 states blandly: ‘Mr. Cecil Sharp, Principal of the Hampstead Conservatoire of Music, who has lately collected some hundreds of songs in Somersetshire and North Devon, joined our Committee.’<sup>11</sup> The decade following Sharp’s commencement as an active collector – along with his friend Ralph Vaughan Williams, Percy Grainger, and those they inspired, including the great Scottish



*Maud Karpeles and Cecil Sharp at Berea railway station, Kentucky, 1917*

collector Gavin Greig – represents something of a golden age of folk song collecting. The movement, however, was already losing momentum before the First World War took the wind out of its sails. But Sharp was to demonstrate his resilience and determination. In America between 1916 and 1918, accompanied by Maud Karpeles, he made a rich collection of songs from the Southern Appalachian Mountain region. Bertrand Bronson described this as being, in the American context, ‘the foremost contribution to the study of British-American folk-song’.<sup>12</sup>

Sharp remained interested in folk song throughout his life, but during the first decade of the twentieth century dance increasingly occupied his consciousness and became a focus of much of his activity. Here the crucial influence was that of the social worker and feminist Mary Neal. In two brilliant articles Roy Judge has traced Sharp’s development in relation to traditional dance. In the first of these, he shows how Sharp at first collaborated with Neal, then came into open conflict with her over questions of artistic standards and authority, and finally ousted her from the directorship of the Stratford-upon-Avon summer school and from her unofficial position of leadership in the folk dance revival itself.<sup>13</sup> The second article traces the way in which Sharp’s interest shifted so that morris dance became

the centre of his concerns and preoccupations. The crucial period here is 1906 to 1909. In 1906 his knowledge of morris dance was really quite limited and was ‘a peripheral concern’. At this stage, he took more interest in the music than the dances themselves. By the end of 1909, by actively pursuing the subject in the field and by thinking about it, Sharp had developed real expertise in the morris dance as well as its music, and elaborated a whole set of ideas about its nature and function. His motivations for seeking to become an expert on this form of dance were no doubt twofold: first, a growing awareness of the potential of morris, and folk dance generally, as mass-participation revival forms; and second, the need to acquire power through knowledge in order to bolster his position in the growing rift with Mary Neal and their rivalry over the leadership of the folk dance revival.<sup>14</sup>

Sharp’s relationship to the Folk-Song Society was always rather tense as a result of his criticisms and his unwillingness to conform to what might be described as a party line. In the case of folk dance, however, he simply outmanoeuvred the opposition and set up his own organisation in 1911 – the English Folk Dance Society. These two organisations came together, not without some difficulties, in 1932 as the English Folk Dance and Song Society.<sup>15</sup>



Mary Neal



*Sharp collecting in Warwickshire, 1910*

### ***Sharp as collector***

The evidence seems clear that Sharp was a talented collector of traditional material. We have to try to imagine ourselves back to that rather odd social encounter, the act of collecting folk songs. Contact with a singer may have been made through a local acquaintance of the collector. Often, a humble country person might get no more than a knock on the door, and be confronted by a stranger wanting them to sing old songs so that he or she could write them down. It is an encounter that is fraught with problems relating to differences of social background and gender, with a strong likelihood of things going wrong.

Sharp seemed to manage these situations very well indeed. As W. M. K. Warren wrote:

*In his dealings with the old folk he exercised the most extraordinary tact and patience; it was only his undoubted love of these folksongs that overcame the suspicion of the singers. They had been accustomed to be laughed at by the younger generation for the pride that they took in what was called the old-fashioned song; naturally they were very chary of producing them if they thought that they were to form an entertainment; for they were to them their most treasured possession and were taken very seriously.<sup>16</sup>*

As can be seen from some of the biographical sketches in this volume, some of Sharp's informants would speak very warmly of him. No doubt, once over the initial

Charlynde Rectory  
Bridgwater

Warren Collectors  
15/11/26  
Dated on 5.11.26  
Surrey etc.

Dear Miss Karples.

I regret to say that I cannot find any letters of Mr Sharp, I am afraid that I do keep any more letters than I am bound to. If I find any I will forward them. I had a great deal to do with Mr Sharp in the early days of his folksong collecting, when I was Curate of Bridgwater as he used to make use of my lodgings as a kind of centre during his holidays.

That struck me most about Mr Sharp was his boundless enthusiasm for the preservation of what he recognised as a national treasure + was in danger of being lost to the country for ever. In his dealings with the old folk he exercised the most extraordinary tact + patience; it was only his unshakable love of their folksongs that overcame the suspicion of the singers. They had been accustomed to be laughed at by the younger generation for the pride that they took in what was called the old-fashioned song; naturally they were very chary of producing them if they thought that they were to form an entertainment; for they were to them their most treasured possession + were taken very seriously. Mr Sharp had to try various tricks in the first place to catch them out into an acknowledgment that they knew any thing about them at all. I have heard men who turned out to have an

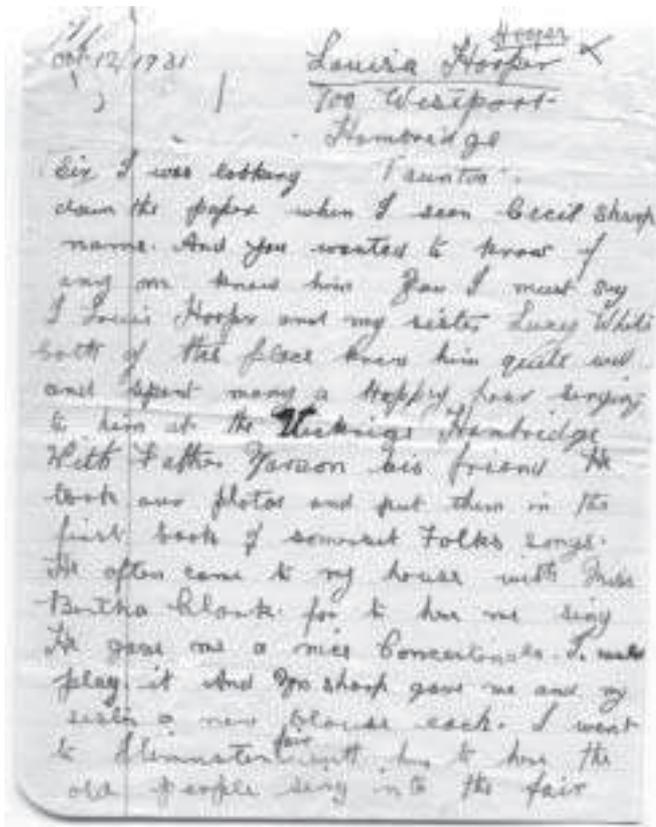
Page one of Warren's letter to Maud Karples, 15/11/1926

A CONCERT-LECTURE  
OF THE  
**FOLK SONGS OF SOMERSET**

WILL BE GIVEN  
In S. Mary's Parish Hall,  
**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3rd, 1906.**

Lecturer - **CECEL J. SHARP.** Vocalist - **BIRD KAY.**

TO COMMENCE AT **3 P.M.**  
**TWO SHILLING TICKET.**



Page one of Louie Hooper's letter to Fox Strangways, 12/10/1931

shock, many people enjoyed the interest he took in them and their songs. In America, Olive Dame Campbell thought Sharp knew how to deal with country people: 'I found the singers very easy to handle,' he told her. Having studied Sharp's letters from his time collecting in the Appalachians, David E. Whisnant concludes that he 'was serious and industrious and uniformly gracious to and respectful of local people'.<sup>17</sup>

The other side of this coin is that in his obsessive search for traditional material one senses that Sharp was calculating as well as energetic, manipulative as well as affable. The giving of gifts or money (well documented in the sources), the ways in which he would lead singers on to give him songs, can be interpreted in different ways. On one level, as Sharp said to Louie Hooper, 'fair exchange is no robbery', but one doubts that it always was a fair exchange. On more than one occasion, Sharp writes about 'emptying' his

informants. In pursuit of William Riley Shelton (known as Frizzly Bill or Singing Will), he wrote, 'Directly I have caught him and emptied him, I am going across the border into Tennessee ...';<sup>18</sup> and of Mrs Carter of Beattyville, Kentucky, 'I have taken thirty songs off her already, and have not emptied her yet!'<sup>19</sup> I find this image disquieting because it suggests the material was much more important than the people were, but perhaps I am being oversensitive. There can be no doubt that Sharp took delight in the company of some of his informants and he must have communicated that feeling. He writes warmly in a number of places about happy hours spent talking and listening to songs.<sup>20</sup>

Sharp's method of song collecting was a pencil and paper one. I have no doubt that he had an acute ear and as far as is humanly possible

notated the songs with a high degree of accuracy. The 'humanly possible' qualification is important, for there is a lot of evidence that even the most accurate human ear is fallible and well-trained musicians are liable to make mistakes. There is also a tendency to hear things in terms of pre-existing ideas and schemata that are already in the hearer's mind. An important part of Sharp's intellectual make-up was his belief in a 'scientific' method. Accuracy was important to him, but without actual sound recordings of the performances he notated it is difficult to be sure quite how precise his notation was.

The phonograph was the technological alternative, used by Percy Grainger in England and other researchers doing fieldwork in other countries – Béla Bartók in Eastern Europe and Frances Densmore among Native Americans in the USA, for example. It allowed, Grainger argued, a more considered, complete transcription of the



*Cecil Sharp using a favoured method of transport for his collecting trips*

performance. Sharp tried the phonograph but evidently felt more comfortable with his more impressionistic aural method. He thought that the phonograph made singers self-conscious and sometimes nervous, and that therefore the recording might give a false impression of the usual performance. He argued that 'it is not an exact, scientifically accurate memorandum that is wanted, so much as a faithful artistic record of what is actually heard by the ordinary auditor.'<sup>21</sup> Sharp did make a few cylinder recordings, but generally he was happy to present a sort of 'idea type' of the tune, sometimes indicating melodic variations. One can sympathise with Sharp's points, but in taking this view, unlike Percy Grainger, he deprived later generations of the experience of hearing some of the singers who gave him songs. Thank goodness, we have Grainger's recordings of the wonderful Joseph Taylor. In addition, the BBC recorded Louie Hooper in 1942. A very few cylinder recordings of traditional performers made by Sharp do survive and are in the care of the National Sound Archive at the British Library.

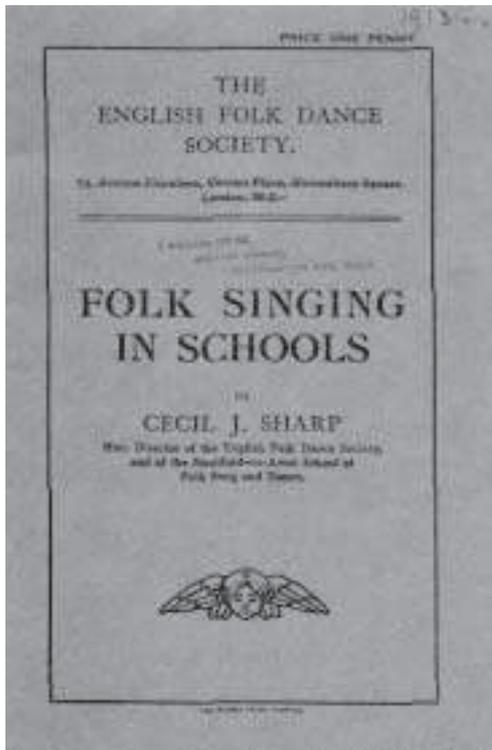
E. C. Cawte has written an interesting study of Sharp's working methods in relation to the collection of sword dances and their associated songs in the north-east of England. By careful comparison of the archive and published material, he shows both the general accuracy of Sharp's accounts of the dances and the areas where he felt free to 'improve' on the material. In the published

versions, indelicate song texts were suppressed (although this may have been at the behest of the publisher, and it is noteworthy that Sharp, true to his belief in 'scientific' collecting, did note them down). Cawte concludes that Sharp 'often preferred his own judgement to that of his informants in publishing dance tunes'.<sup>22</sup>

The collecting of songs involved making choices about which songs to collect. A considerable amount has been written about the processes of selection that took place during the act of collecting and afterwards in the processes of editing and publishing. All the collectors – and Sharp more than some – took from country singers those songs that conformed to the collectors' own notions of what constituted folk song. Sharp wrote his important 1907 book, *English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions*, precisely in order to define what was and what was not a folk song. All the evidence we have suggests that English country singers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sang an eclectic mix of songs. Of course, they sang what we think of as typical folk songs – 'The Seeds of Love', 'The Dark-Eyed Sailor', 'The Wraggle-Taggle Gypsies', and the like – and for this reason I find the idea of 'fakesong' unhelpful. However, in the case of Henry Burstow of Horsham (whose songs were collected by Lucy Broadwood and Vaughan Williams), Broadwood estimated that only about fifty or sixty of his songs – that is less than one-fifth – were 'of the traditional ballad type'.<sup>23</sup> Sharp did a great service in preserving examples of songs and song genres that otherwise would have perished and we owe him an enormous



*Swalwell Sword Dancers,*



but unless ‘made by the people’ they were not folk songs. In another pithy statement, he wrote: ‘If “traditional” means anything at all, it means that which has been handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth and not by printed or written document.’<sup>25</sup> Here is Sharp trying to make himself clear in a letter of 1922:

*The word ‘folk’ has a very definite scientific meaning used as an affix to song, dance, lore and other products of the race that belong to primitive times and without this word I do not see how we are to distinguish between the art-product[s] that were the natural, instinctive human emanations from those that are the product of cultivated, sophisticated and conscious people.*<sup>26</sup>

Sharp opposes the natural to the cultivated, the instinctive to the sophisticated and conscious.

In making these statements Sharp places himself firmly within, and draws on, a tradition of romantic thought that stretches back to the eighteenth century – to J. G. Herder, who could be said to have invented the term ‘folk song’ (*Volkslied*); to the brothers Grimm (whom Sharp both criticises and uses in his work); and to F. J. Child, the Harvard ballad scholar who held the ballads of oral tradition to be far superior to those ‘contaminated’ by print. Sharp’s view is a version of what Jacob Grimm expressed as *Das Volk dichtet*, ‘the people creates.’<sup>27</sup> These notions, deriving from the romantic movement, fuelled nineteenth-century interest in what became known (after 1846) as folklore – the collection and study of all sorts of traditional material, often obtained from poorer people in rural areas. Folklore collecting prefigures and in a sense gives the model for folk song collecting. Nineteenth-century folklore studies embodied two central ideas that were hugely influential. The *doctrine of survivals* sought to see the primitive within the civilised, the ancient within modern customary practices. The related *theory of origins* involved writers in a pursuit that was often very speculative and rarely definitive. Folklore defined a mode of

debt for that, but in considering what country people sang we should not mistake the part for the whole.

To understand what he did and why he did it, we need to look more closely into the complex of ideas that Sharp drew on, thought through, and articulated. I can do no more in the space available than give a sketch of what I consider to be some important aspects of Sharp’s thought. I believe that his ideas and aspirations were a key motivating force behind the work he did. I want to talk about three complexes of ideas, and to give them each a brief handle I will call them romantic nationalism, aesthetic Darwinism, and the idea of national regeneration.

#### **Romantic nationalism**

To Sharp a folk song was ‘... a song made and evolved by the people, as well as sung by them. The distinction is not academic; nor is it archaeological. It is intrinsic, for it distinguishes between two kinds of music that are fundamentally different from one another.’<sup>24</sup> The people may sing other songs,

thought that was highly influential and from which Sharp drank deeply.<sup>28</sup>

There is another aspect of romanticism that Sharp picked up on (and I think this may have come via Wagner rather than directly from Herder). The German word *Volk* (the basis of the anglicised stem 'folk') can be translated as 'people' or 'race'. To Sharp, 'the earliest form of music, folk-song, is essentially a communal as well as a racial product. The natural musical idiom of a nation will, therefore, be found in its purest and most unadulterated form in its folk-music.'<sup>29</sup> In an pamphlet on *Folk Singing in Schools* (undated but ascribed to 1913) he wrote:

*... folk-music has all the characteristics of fine art; that it is wholly free from the taint of manufacture, the canker of artificiality; that it is transparently pure and truthful, simple and direct in its utterance; and free from pretence and affectation, which are the invariable concomitants of bad art in general, and of bad music in particular.*

*A nation's folk-song is then: (1) the expression in musical idiom of racial ideals and aspirations; (2) the foundation upon which all the subsequent developments in music have been built; while (3) its intrinsic value – apart altogether from those special qualities which arise from its peculiar life-history, or its communal origin – is, within its own limits, as great as that of the finest examples of art-music.<sup>30</sup>*

These appeals to nature and purity are very significant. Because it is unpolluted, the folk song somehow fights pollution. Such ideas as 'racial product', linked with ideas of purity, could and soon did have disastrous consequences. There is no doubt that Sharp is putting forward a racial theory: '... the songs are racial, *i.e.* they are couched in a musical idiom which must be the natural form of expression for the children of those who created it ... [it will] be found simpler to teach children the music of their own country than that of any other.'<sup>31</sup> In his 1912 'Folk-Song Fallacy' debate with Ernest Newman in the pages of the *English Review*,

Sharp seems to shift from ideas of race to nationality, but one doubts that there was a real shift in the nature of his thought. The pamphlet on *Folk Singing in Schools* post-dated the exchanges with Newman and clings to the notion of race.

Such ideas of race could easily be manipulated in the sorts of ways that were witnessed in Italy and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s – yet, in many ways, they were common currency in late Victorian and Edwardian England (the Empire was built on them), although they were not usually given the particular direction Sharp gave them. England had long suffered from the gibe that it was 'the land without music', the accusation that the English were an unmusical people.<sup>32</sup> Like a significant number of musically interested people of his time, Sharp had a complex relationship with German music – awe mixed with jealousy, wonder with a sense of national inadequacy, and delight with feelings of inferiority. He was not the first to propose the idea that something should be done about English music in order to improve its quality and status, but he was part of a small albeit vocal minority in declaring so emphatically that a new national music should be founded on the basis of folk song: 'When every English child is, as a matter of course, made acquainted with the folk-songs of his own country, then, from whatever class the musician of the future may spring, he will speak in the national musical idiom.'<sup>33</sup> Sharp, who had performed and conducted a great deal of German music, thought that 'the present vogue of training English musicians to lisp in the tongue of the foreigner can have no beneficial outcome. It is, emphatically, not that way that salvation lies.'<sup>34</sup>

The tone of the pamphlet on *Folk Singing in Schools* is more firmly nationalistic:

*Then, again, one of the first objects of education should be to arouse a spirit of patriotism in the children, to inspire them with a love of their country, with a just pride in the nation to which they belong. We in this country have suffered not a little from the cosmopolitan idea*

*in education. It is not citizens of the world that we should strive to produce in the first instance – or, rather, if that is our ideal, we should realize that the first step towards its attainment is the production of citizens distinctively national in type. And that, I would observe, is what we cannot expect to produce if we bring up our children on German Kindergarten games, Swedish dances and foreign music. What we should do, of course, and what I believe every other European country does, is to see that our children in their earliest years are placed in possession of all those things which are the distinctive products of the nation to which they belong.*<sup>35</sup>

It is interesting, perhaps ironic, to see the way Sharp uses German ideas to combat the dominance of German music in England. The combination of romanticism and nationalism was nothing new; it is a commonplace of nineteenth-century thought. In the context of England in the decades around the turn of the century, the idea of folk song as a basis for the creation of a national musical idiom was new. It was not exclusive to Sharp – but he did more about it than most people who thought in a similar way.

#### ***Aesthetic Darwinism***

The model that Sharp proposed to explain the development of folk song derives from Darwinism. This is historically important, as it became the basis of an internationally agreed definition of folk song.<sup>36</sup> Sharp made no secret of this model, for he entitled Chapter 3 of *Some Conclusions* 'Evolution'.<sup>37</sup> He was not the first to try to apply Darwinism to music: Herbert Spencer, Hubert Parry, and others had tried it before him.

There is, however, one basic problem with trying to apply Darwinian ideas to social phenomena: Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection deals with chance occurrences, random happenings, accidents in nature. In human society, the intervention of human culture and human agency, customary usages and the making of conscious choices, place human affairs in a different category from the laws of nature. In this respect, it is interesting that Sharp often used metaphors

from nature in connection with folk songs – for example, comparing them to wild flowers. One can argue that it was necessary to do this in order to make evolutionary ideas applicable – for folk songs are not natural, they are products of human culture.

Here is an example of Sharp's take on Darwin:

*Many, perhaps all of its [folk song's] most characteristic qualities, have subsequently been acquired during its journey down the ages, and represent the achievements of many generations of singers. Individual angles and irregularities have been gradually rubbed off and smoothed away by communal effort, just as the pebble on the sea shore is rounded and polished by the action of the waves. The suggestions, unconsciously made by the individual singer, have at every stage of the evolution of the folk-song been tested and weighed by the community, and accepted or rejected by their verdict. The life history of the folk-song has, therefore, been not only one of steady growth and development; there has also been a tendency always to approximate to a form, which shall be at once congenial to the taste of the community, and expressive of its feelings, aspirations, and ideals. It is clearly a case of evolution.*<sup>38</sup>

Sharp goes on to suggest that this concept of evolution involves three principles: *continuity*, *variation*, and *selection*. *Continuity* is vouched for by the 'amazing accuracy of the memories of folk-singers' and counters the idea that oral tradition is a very inaccurate process.<sup>39</sup> Continuity links the past with the present and the future. I am convinced that some oral traditions do have considerable stability over long periods of time, but equally, in some conditions, oral traditions change rapidly or disappear all together.

When Sharp considers *variation*, he gives a set of reasons for this widely observed aspect of traditional song. Some of his views seem reasonable enough, but I am not at all sure he is correct when he argues that the traditional singer 'is habitually unconscious of the tune that he is singing' and so 'any variation that he may introduce will be

unconscious and unpremeditated also'.<sup>40</sup> I find this aspect of Sharp's explanation very unconvincing; it seems to be a version of the idea of the unschooled illiterate. Sharp knows that traditional singers vary in skill. He writes that there are singers who 'display inventiveness of a high order' and names Mrs Overd and Henry Larcombe as examples.<sup>41</sup>

The most difficult aspect of Sharp's aesthetic Darwinism is that of *selection*. In the evolution of species in the plant and animal kingdoms, those variations will be preserved that are of advantage to their possessors in the competition for existence. However, in the evolution of folk tunes, as we have already seen, the corresponding principle of selection is the taste of the community. Those tune variations that appeal to the community will be perpetuated as against those that appeal to the individual alone.<sup>42</sup>

One of the important arguments in relation to Sharp's use of Darwinian ideas was put forward by Ernest Newman in his debate with Sharp in 1912. He asked, why should we assume that the passing of a song from person to person will improve it, when in fact its quality might deteriorate?<sup>43</sup> Such a view finds much support from the fragmentary nature of much collected song. Sharp's vision of a community selecting its folk songs, and so bringing about their evolution to a higher level of artistic beauty, might hold good for some ideal state of society, but it hardly works in the increasingly commercialised world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even so, the thought seems profoundly un-Darwinian. The evolutionary outcome for many species is oblivion. If we are to draw a Darwinian analogy, then the equivalent to a plant or animal species would be not an individual tune but rather, perhaps, a genre – for example, that which Sharp termed 'folk song' itself. Elsewhere in *Some Conclusions*, Sharp laments that folk song is dying. It is precisely because of selection by the community, because of its preference for other forms of musical expression – a social form of 'natural selection' or, rather, cultural selection – that folk song loses out. In the struggle for aesthetic survival, folk song bears

a resemblance to the dodo, although perhaps it takes longer to die.

What, then, are we to make of Sharp's aesthetic Darwinism? Perhaps surprisingly, I think it has a lot going for it even if it is profoundly flawed. It is an attempt to theorise some interesting and complex issues. That Sharp does not get it quite right in a book written in hurry almost a century ago does not invalidate the attempt – on the contrary, it gives us something to build on.

### *National regeneration*

Sharp believed that folk song and dance could play a role in a form of national regeneration. This in turn relates to some of the themes I have discussed earlier. Sharp clearly felt that his collecting and dissemination work was of vital importance. Writing to Olive Dame Campbell in 1915, he said: 'I look upon it as a great privilege to have been able to do work of this kind, because ... posterity will need the primitive songs and ballads to keep their two arts of music and dance real, sincere and pure.'<sup>44</sup> He maintained his dedication to collecting in spite of financial insecurity, and a 1917 letter from Maud Karpeles to Mrs Storrow reinforces this point: 'Really, the whole thing amounts to this – that he cannot do the collecting work and have the worry of earning a living at the same time. And, of course, there is no question but that he must go on with the collecting. That is the most important work for him to do, even though it meant that in doing it he would shorten his life by a few years.'<sup>45</sup>

Sharp actually came out with what seems like a social analysis of what he was doing, declaring publicly at Stratford-upon-Avon that he had but one aim: 'to ensure the transference of the songs and dances from one class to the other without hurt or harm'. He was heartily cheered for this.<sup>46</sup> He sincerely believed that the songs and dances carried some sort of regenerative power in themselves. Writing to an unnamed fellow collector he said:

*I think it is very easy to be too touchy about the vulgarisation of things like folk-songs which one loves. A lover of Beethoven's music*

*must feel the same if ever he thought of the way his favourite composer's music is being rendered in Crouch End, Hornsey, etc. If anything good is to be made popular, many things will happen which will shock the sensitive feelings of the elect. This is inevitable and must be accepted. I accept it in this case because I believe so sincerely in the innate beauty and purity of folk-music that I am sure it cannot really be contaminated, but that it must and will always do good wherever it finds a resting-place.<sup>47</sup>*

We can note the recurrence of the purity theme and the idea that folk music, of itself, will always do good. This is verging on the mystical or religious. It certainly indicates a belief in folk music having some sort of essence of effectiveness in itself, outside of human agency. *English Folk-Song Some Conclusions* originated in a very heated debate over a Board of Education list of songs to be sung in schools. The final chapter is about the future of folk song and advocates the introduction of the singing of folk songs as a staple of school music:

*If some such scheme as this, which we have been considering, were adopted in the State schools throughout the country, and in the preparatory schools of the upper and middle classes as well, not only would the musical taste of the nation be materially raised, but a beneficent and enduring effect would be produced upon the national character. For, good music purifies, just as bad music vulgarizes ...*

*We may look, therefore, to the introduction of folk-songs in the elementary schools to effect an improvement in the musical taste of the people, and to refine and strengthen the national character. The study of the folk-song will also stimulate the growth of the feeling of patriotism.<sup>48</sup>*

In the last sentence the ideas of national regeneration and romantic nationalism are brought together. The tone of the last chapter of *Some Conclusions* is almost messianic: 'Every week adds to the accumulation of the evidence in support of our contention that the

re-introduction of folk-songs into England will effect many and notable reforms.<sup>49</sup>

It would be easy to make light of Sharp's ideas about national regeneration, seeing them as naive and unduly optimistic. By a process of hard work, arguing, influencing, and cajoling, he did get traditional songs into the school curriculum. He became an Occasional Inspector for teacher-training institutions after the First World War and went around inspecting, giving demonstrations, and mostly complaining about what he saw and heard. The notable reforms he hoped for never seemed to happen. The ultimate importance of his ideas is that they motivated his work. He really believed in what he did: no one should ever doubt his sincerity.

#### *Cecil Sharp's legacy*

As a great 'doer', Sharp has left us a large and complex legacy:

- his collection
- his publications
- his ideas and ways of understanding
- an influence on education
- the basis of a great national library
- an institution
- a national monument
- an ongoing debate about his work and his ideas.

Cecil Sharp's collection is a formidable one. It is many times greater than any other comparable collection. It is the real monument to his industry and dedication. The richness of the material is considerable, and it preserves some things that are unique. It is housed both at Clare College, Cambridge, and in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. It would be invaluable to have a proper critical edition of the collection, in the manner of the *Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, but I doubt that I will see such a thing in my lifetime.

Sharp's publications continue to circulate, and people make use of them. They are a part of our culture, but (whatever his apologists say) they cannot be taken as a

wholly accurate record. *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*, edited by Maud Karpeles and published in 1974, was poorly edited, is selective, and while it gives an indication of the richness of the Sharp collection it remains less than totally reliable.<sup>50</sup> Karpeles, as Sharp's literary executrix, was also responsible for the promotion of his work and ideas in the time between his death and her own (in 1976). Indefatigable in her promotion of the Sharpian cause, she was responsible for new and revised editions both of *Some Conclusions* and of *Fox Strangways'* biography. It is she, more than anyone else, who turned Sharp's thought into a rather sterile orthodoxy.

In the short term, I think Sharp's influence on education was significant. As a schoolchild of the 1950s, my impression is that I first came across Sharp's name when singing from *English Folk-Songs for Schools*. Sharp did, for a time, have a direct influence on educational practice. Judging from the frustration evident in his accounts of inspecting folk dance and song among trainee teachers, I am not sure he would have judged his influence to have been a success. In the longer term, it has evaporated.

Perhaps because of its name, it is not always realised that the basis of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library was Sharp's own library, which he left to the English Folk Dance Society on his death with the stipulation that it was to be made available to the public. Building on this excellent foundation, the library is now the foremost archive and place of reference for material on traditional dance and song, a unique and infinitely valuable resource. (It has been underfunded over many years and there is a danger of the permanent loss of unique material if significant investment is not forthcoming.)

And we have an institution, the English Folk Dance and Song Society, and a building-cum-monument, Cecil Sharp House. Like all institutions, it has gone through periods of expansion and contraction. The building, although of listed status, is in need of major refurbishment.

#### *Acolytes and iconoclasts: interest in and interpretations of Sharp's work*

Sharp was a great controversialist and a pugnacious arguer. It is not at all surprising that he has created controversy and no small amount of heated argument. Sharp did battle with some of the great and the good of his day. He fell out with his employer at the Hampstead Conservatoire. He fell out with Sir Hubert Parry over a musical engagement. He fell out with C. V. Stanford and the Board of Education over folk songs in schools and the question of what exactly a folk song was. The Board later – a dozen years later – employed him. He fell out with his original partner and close friend, Charles Marson, although the reasons for this remain obscure. He fell out with his one-time collaborator in the instigation of the folk dance revival, Mary Neal, and the people who sided with her.

Sharp was not an easy man to get on with. On the other hand, he inspired tremendous affection and loyalty among his friends and followers. These included, most significantly, Ralph Vaughan Williams (sometimes a moderating influence on Sharp's excesses), Maud Karpeles, Douglas Kennedy, and Helen Kennedy. He was a charismatic individual who divided people in his own day, and it is clear that his legacy continues to cause divisions. He seems to have courted controversy, ever ready to write to the *Morning Post*, the *Daily Chronicle*, or *The Times* to state his views and challenge his opponents. To those who disagreed with him, all he seemed to do was repeat dogmas as if they were truths. The modest Frank Kidson commented about Sharp's 1907 book: 'Conjectures are not conclusions, for such must stand the scrutiny of men who want proofs.'<sup>51</sup>

Here is Sharp writing to Arthur Somervell (himself a significant educational reformer) who had objected to the 'cheap cant' which assumes that 'no one belongs to the English folk unless he is at the ploughtail'.<sup>52</sup> He recommended that Somervell

*Vacate his armchair for a week or two, forget his theories, arm himself with a stout shovel and pick – for diamonds lie deep – betake himself to the country-side, visit the village*

*taverns, sit in the thatched cottages of outlying hamlets and listen to the peasants singing their own folk-songs.*

If he did so,

*On his return home he will burn his banners with their strange devices of 'Tom Bowling', 'Casablanca', 'Home, sweet home', and the like, and forthwith enrol himself among the select company of the 'cheap canterers'. A new world, the existence of which he has hitherto denied, will be opened before his eyes, and I incidentally shall gain also, for it will relieve me of the well-nigh hopeless task of trying to make him understand that the folk-song proper is a very different thing from the hybrid variety, or the 'composed' song which he now champions with such pathetic ardour.<sup>53</sup>*

Sharp's visionary quality comes through, but visionaries can be off-putting and sometimes frightening. In a manuscript note written after Sharp's death, Somervell recalled some of his encounters with him:

*C# abused me violently for my 'National Folksongs' – 'You are inculcating the children of England with the sickly virus of Tom Bowling' ... (He came to stay with us at Broadway and hectored us so much that we mentally resolved not to ask him again.)*

Somervell and Sharp did make up again:

*About 1920 we became friends again. When FD [folk dance] was introduced into schools he came to me walking on eggs, hoped he would not be hurting my feelings if he interfered so far with the school curriculum. He was the missionary. I was the orthodox church.*

*Latterly he came to care little about the classics, the 3 B's [Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms] and all that.<sup>54</sup>*

Somervell spoke at the 1925 meeting that launched the Cecil Sharp Memorial Fund.<sup>55</sup>

On a few occasions Sharp won over, or at least silenced, those who initially opposed him. He took as good as he gave. Here is Ernest Newman writing a rejoinder to

Sharp's reply to Newman's essay on 'The Folk-Song Fallacy':

*It seems to be an incorrigible habit with Mr. Sharp to parcel out everything and everybody into categories. He is not happy till he has – or fancies he has – us all nicely bottled and labelled. I have already pointed out the fallacies into which he has fallen through the too facile use of such terms as 'the' Frenchman, 'the' German, and so on. Now he has invented a new abstraction – 'the' critic, who, of course, must have his fixed 'characteristics' like 'the' Frenchman. He exhorts me to 'silence my analytical mind, and try to feel the beauty of the folk-song'. The naïve theory apparently is that the 'analytical mind' and the capacity to feel the beauty of a folk-song cannot co-exist in the same person. It is the old idea that a soft heart necessarily implies a soft head – that deep feeling is incompatible with clear thinking. I beg to assure Mr. Sharp that it is not necessarily so.<sup>56</sup>*

A writer in the *Musical Times* thought Newman's the most notable of all the challenges to Sharp's theories.<sup>57</sup>

Sharp, I am sure, perceived himself as an outsider from the musical establishment. He encountered considerable, and often condescending, opposition from those in positions of musical power. He was, after all, attempting something quite profound – to shift the very basis on which we thought about music. W. M. K. Warren gives us a sense of Sharp's feelings of embattlement:

*There was a time when Mr Sharp was accused of faking very cleverly the ancient song and [the accusers] argued also that the charm all lay in the accompaniment which Sharp put to them. People would not believe that this wealth of song really existed all unknown to themselves, among the old and often despised dwellers in the courts of our towns and cottages of our countryside. Others would speak contemptuously of the modes and tunes in which these beautiful melodies were composed, as simply relicts of a barbarous age and well left in their obscurity. But Mr Sharp was daunted by no such treatment; he was*

*convinced that he was on the track of something that was priceless but soon would be lost and he never would give in.*<sup>58</sup>

We forget at our peril that Sharp was a radical figure and certainly not a member of any establishment as we would understand it today.

Sending a copy of his pamphlet on *Folk Singing in Schools* to W. G. McNaught, editor of the *Musical Times* and a senior school inspector, Sharp wrote: 'After reading it – if you have the hardihood to do this – you will I know yearn for my scalp, even at this season of goodwill! But I can't help it. I am beyond the pale and past reformation!'<sup>59</sup> McNaught assured Sharp that he would read the pamphlet with an open mind.<sup>60</sup> Sharp was never employed by any of the major centres of musical learning, and when he did speak to such bodies he found himself received coolly and did not find the experience very comfortable. He described the Musical Society at the Royal College of Music as 'stodgy', and came away with the feeling that 'their views are completely opposed to mine'.<sup>61</sup> He remained an outsider and developed his own institutional base.

When Fox Strangways was collecting information for the Sharp biography in the early 1930s, he got a range of responses from the adulatory to the highly critical. Many people who had encountered Sharp thought very highly of him and stressed his kindness, generosity, warmth, and interest in them. Other, more critical testimonies offered rather different views of Sharp and point forward to more recent debates. His biographers, however, tended not to draw too much on those more negative accounts. Roland Heath, a friend and colleague, thought Sharp was a fanatic who could not keep off the subject of folk dancing:

*As a fanatic, he inspired enthusiasm and affection wherever he went. He went too far, of course: fanatics do, and that was why he succeeded. And in the process he aroused opposition, some of it very bitter. But he was also a scholar: his knowledge of the grounds of his beliefs was profound, and his thought on*

*them continuous and intense. For anyone who disliked folk dancing on purely aesthetic grounds to argue with him was extremely dangerous; he knew far too much about it. And even his most violent opponents, once they had met him and talked to him, were compelled to admit his knowledge, his mental capacity and his perfect sincerity.*<sup>62</sup>

Not everyone agreed in their estimate of Sharp's knowledge. Sir Richard Terry (himself a one-time folk song collector) gave a frank account of his feelings and an analysis of what he thought was wrong with Sharp's work:

*My chief objection to (the later) Sharp is his inaccuracy. He started all right in the folk-song business, but when he found himself in the position of High Priest of a cult he succumbed to the necessity of becoming an oracle. He invested (or rather, enveloped) the simplest things with that halo of mystery which so fascinates female devotees.*

*He was neither a folk-lorist nor an anthropologist, but he had to keep up the pose of being both. Once having formulated a theory it became a dogma with his following, and he was more or less forced into the position of having to make his folk-song 'facts' fit his folk-lore theories.*<sup>63</sup>

We do not have to accept Terry's verdict at face value (which is not to deny that it may have some truth in it), but it is interesting that a prominent musician held such a view during Sharp's life and soon after his death.

By the 1930s and 1940s, when Vaughan Williams' star was in the ascendant and while he was representing Sharpian views in his American lectures,<sup>64</sup> many younger composers and critics became hostile to or dismissive of the idea of composition based on folk song. Constant Lambert decried the 'heartiness' of compositions in the national idiom, with their 'irritating sense of artificiality'.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps more interestingly, the young Benjamin Britten, who was to make a popular success of his settings of traditional songs for tenor and piano, distanced himself significantly from the nationalist movement.<sup>66</sup>

What Terry had described as a cult became



Ralph Vaughan Williams

a national institution, the English Folk Dance and Song Society, with its headquarters named after Cecil Sharp. It necessarily became an organisation that was concerned with its own work and survival, proselytising but also rather inward-looking. Significant members such as Maud Karpeles and Douglas Kennedy kept the banner of Sharpian orthodoxy alive and circulating, although EFDSS members undertook only a small amount of collecting. The American folk song scholar D. K. Wilgus commented in 1959: 'A part of the problem lay in the inflexible attitude of the Society. It is now apparent that England still contained folksong, but little that the Society considered worthy of preservation. Maud Karpeles and others continued to echo the conclusions and restrictions of Sharp.'<sup>67</sup>

By the time Wilgus was writing, the stirrings of the second folk song revival were under way. The magazine *Ethnic* had started making criticisms both of the EFDSS and of Sharp. A. L. Lloyd's *Folk Song in England* (1967) used Sharp's ideas, was fulsome in its praise of him, and also tried to transcend his thinking in the way we understand folk song.<sup>68</sup> Frank Howes'

*Folk Music of Britain and Beyond* (1969) was not really an answer to Lloyd, but was in many ways an informed statement of the Sharp tradition. Howes had been a long-standing member of the EFDSS and for a number of years the editor of its journal, as well as working as a music journalist. It was only in 1972, though, that a significant break with the past occurred with the publication of Dave Harker's 'Cecil Sharp in Somerset: Some Conclusions.'<sup>69</sup> The essay was, and was intended to be, iconoclastic. It was a critique of Sharp which concentrated on what Harker saw as a misrepresentation of the culture of working people in early twentieth century Somerset and on the way the collector had presented that culture to a wider public. Harker produced later work on this subject, most significantly his book *Fakesong* (1985), which contains many of the same arguments. I have been criticised for writing that Harker's work was the 'beginning of serious critical work' on the early folk music movement. I stand by that statement. I think Harker's work was serious and critical, but this does not mean that Harker got it all right.

In 1980, I produced an essay on the first English folk revival, 'Folk Song Collecting in Sussex and Surrey, 1843–1914'. At the time, I was undertaking a doctoral study of music and music-making in nineteenth-century Sussex. I wanted to assess how far the evidence produced by the folk song collectors was reliable as historical source material. I was also interested in the first folk song revival as a movement. Collectors, after all, shared ideas and motivations. I was concerned about the concentration on Sharp – a sort of cult of personality, if you like – which had dominated the subject. As it was, Sharp did little collecting in Sussex and so had only a minor role in my paper. In 1993, Georgina Boyes produced *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*. It is an interesting book, highly stimulating if uneven in its quality and disputable in some of its interpretations. It was a pioneering work in that it attempted to provide a history of twentieth-century folk revivals. (It was certainly not, as some have accused, merely a version of Harker.) Much

the book focuses on Sharp, his legacy, and the movement that he created around him. Sharp does not come out of it well: he is presented as the autocratic male leader of a predominantly female movement. This movement was peopled by 'classical musicians, schoolteachers and his personal following among the upper middle-class'. The basis of his career was making 'vernacular arts fit bourgeois aesthetics'.<sup>70</sup> In contrast, Gordon Cox's *A History of Music Education in England 1872–1928* (1993) sees Sharp in a generally more positive light, as an informed and progressive music educator who acted as a catalyst for the liberalisation of music education. To Cox, Sharp was a 'significant transitional figure' who helped music education advance from the rote methods of the nineteenth century towards a more imaginative approach.<sup>71</sup>

By the mid-1990s Sharp's reputation may have been at something of a low ebb after the depredations of Harker and Boyes, but a knight in shining armour was poised to rescue him in the shape of C. J. Bearman. Bearman's work is well informed, interesting, and adversarial. It is a strange mixture of sound common sense and fury. At its best it is very good indeed, but at times he seems to have been inspired by some of Cecil Sharp's less temperate outbursts. Of particular interest is his article in *Folklore*, 'Cecil Sharp in Somerset: Some Reflections on the Work of David Harker'. Here, Bearman claims to have shown that Harker's account of Sharp is 'inaccurate, innumerate, flawed in its methods, and unjustified in its assumptions'.<sup>72</sup> This is lively stuff and worthy of Sharp at his most outspoken. Bearman, as ever, makes some very good points. His 'Who Were the Folk? The Demography of Cecil Sharp's Somerset Folk Singers' deals in detail with the singers represented in this book.<sup>73</sup> He argues that it is wrong to see folk song as 'the cultural property of the working class' and shows that songs were current among a more diverse spectrum of society than the term 'working class' implies. (This is argued even though occupations such as agricultural labourer and general labourer loom large among Sharp's informants.) I have not space

to analyse these articles' strengths and weaknesses but I urge readers to seek them out and read them, as well as Harker's originals. They will not be bored!

There has been some excellent work on Sharp, particularly in the writings of Roy Judge, centring on Sharp's interest in folk dance. In contrast to some who have written about Sharp, Judge was a judicious and temperate writer as well as being an excellent scholar. His work on the rift between Sharp and Mary Neal is beautifully done, and his essay on the development of Sharp's interest in the morris shows the writer at the height of his abilities. Other scholars are worthy of mention. Theresa Buckland insightfully places Sharp in context in a review article on English folk dance scholarship.<sup>74</sup> John Francmanis' work is primarily on Frank Kidson of Leeds but nonetheless contains a lot about Sharp.<sup>75</sup> Paul Burgess has written on how Sharp discovered Gloucestershire morris.<sup>76</sup> Even I have been unable to resist the lure of this strange and fascinating man: I have lectured on him and hope to publish some pieces on his educational work in the future.

Within a few weeks of writing this essay I noticed that Mike Yates, a major English folk song collector of the post-war period, has written a recanting article influenced by C. J. Bearman's work on Harker and stating his admiration for Sharp's achievements.<sup>77</sup> And so it goes round, and round. Interest in and controversy over Sharp's work is alive and well and being carried on much in the same spirit in which Sharp conducted his own debates when he was alive. A man that can inspire controversy three-quarters of a century after his death has certainly had an influence and left an impression. The centre of a great deal of that controversy and interest is the work he did in Somerset and north Devon in the early years of the twentieth century. The songs he collected there and the lives of the singers who gave them to him are a source of interest and fascination in their own right, and they have been, and continue to be, the focus of much argument and discussion.

May 2003<sup>78</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Mike Yates, 'Cecil Sharp in America: Collecting in the Appalachians', *Musical Traditions*, Article MT052  
<http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/sharp.htm> (accessed 14 May 2003).
- <sup>2</sup> Hugh Anderson, 'Virtue in a Wilderness: Cecil Sharp's Australian Sojourn', *Folk Music Journal*, 6 (1994), 617–52.
- <sup>3</sup> Anderson, p. 618, referring to A. H. Fox Strangways in collaboration with Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), and subsequent editions.
- <sup>4</sup> Anderson, p. 625.
- <sup>5</sup> Fox Strangways, p. 52.
- <sup>6</sup> Fox Strangways, pp. 26–28; Bob Grant, 'When Punch Met Merry', *Folk Music Journal*, 7 (1999), 644–55.
- <sup>7</sup> Fox Strangways, p. 33.
- <sup>8</sup> Box 4, Folder A, Item 1, Cecil Sharp Correspondence, VWML.
- <sup>9</sup> Cecil J. Sharp, ed., *A Book of British Song for Home and School* (London: John Murray, 1902), pp. vi.
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- <sup>11</sup> Annual Report of the Folk-Song Society, June 1904.
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- <sup>17</sup> David E. Whisnant, *All That Is Native & Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*, The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), p. 116.
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- <sup>34</sup> Sharp, *English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions*, p. 132.
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- <sup>42</sup> Sharp, *English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions*, p. 29.
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- <sup>50</sup> Cecil Sharp's *Collection of English Folk Songs*, ed. Maud Karpeles, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).
- <sup>51</sup> *Musical Herald*, August 1913, p. 228. I owe this splendid quote to the kindness of John Francmanis.
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- <sup>53</sup> *Musical Times*, 1 December 1906, p. 808.
- <sup>54</sup> Box 4, Folder I, Item 29, Cecil Sharp Correspondence, VWML.
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- <sup>78</sup> I would like to thank the following people: John Francmanis for conversations and for sharing so much of his work with me; Malcolm Taylor for his help and support with this essay; Luke Windsor for checking a section about transcription and ideas derived from the psychology of music; David Atkinson for his careful editing; and Sheila Gammon for proofreading, comments, and a great deal else.



## NOTES ON THE MUSIC

To come from Eddie

