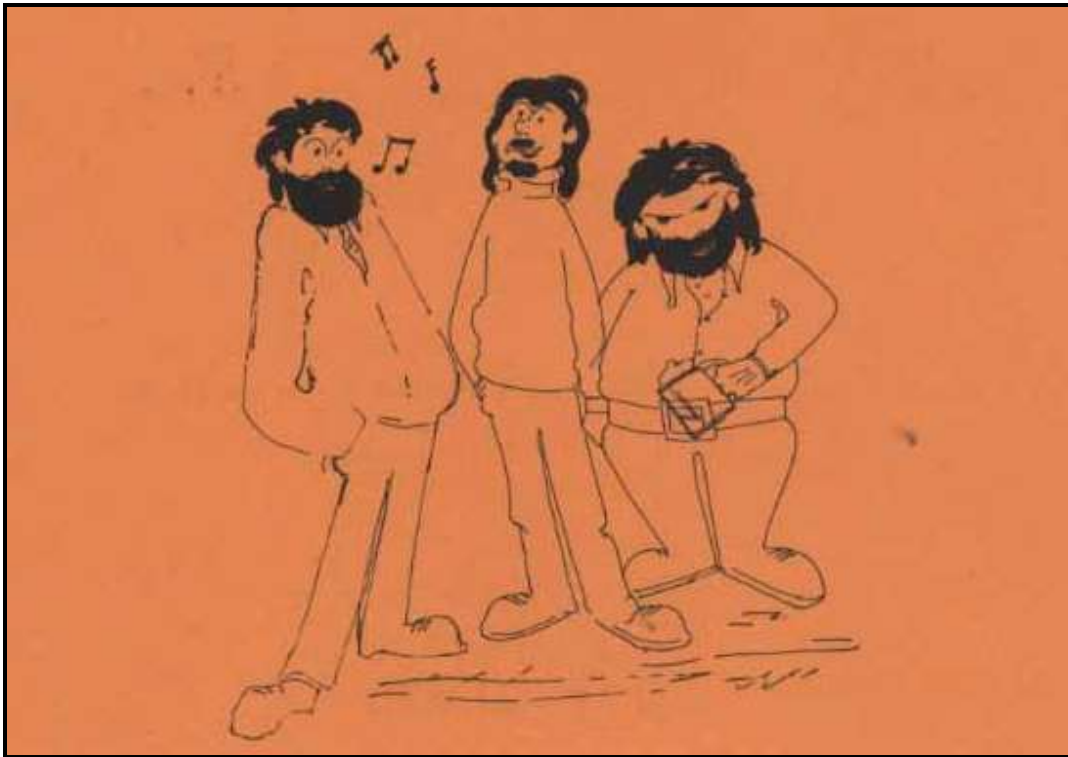


Essex Sound and Video Archive

Sources on Folk Song and Music



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Sources on Folk Song and Music

The Essex Record Office has books, documents and recordings relating to folk music and folk singers and musicians. These illustrate the evolution of folk music and the changing context of performance and listening over a period of 200 years.

1) Written Sources

General

The earliest written source is a handwritten version of *The Shady Green Tree* in an Old Moore's Almanac of 1781 in the papers of the White family of Bulphan (**D/DZg/18**). This song was later collected by Vaughan Williams in Billericay Workhouse in 1904.

A Harvest Supper Toast sung in the 1820s was noted in ***Essex: Its Forest, Folk and Folklore, 1928 (ERO Library 634.9)***, as was *The Beggar's Daughter of Bethnal Green*.

The May Day Carol sung in 1857 was noted in ***Essex Review 1895, iv, p.263 (ERO Library)***.

Curiosities of Essex by David Occomore (D/DU 1726/3) is a collection of broadsides relating to Essex. There is a discussion of the role of broadsides both here and in ***"That precious legacy"*** (see below).

The Golden Vanity (Lowlands low) and a children's song *Oliver Cromwell lay buried and dead*, as sung in Leigh-on-Sea at the end of the nineteenth century, both appear in ***Cunning Murrell*** by Arthur Morrison. (**ERO Library B/Murr**).

Ballads about Dick Turpin are quoted in 'Essex Cavaliers', ***Essex Review 1902, xi, p.30 and p.67 (ERO Library periodicals)***, including *O Rare Turpin Hero* (1738-9) which was collected by Vaughan Williams in 1904.

Folk Songs Collected in Essex by Dr. R.V. Williams, transcribed by David Occomore and Philip Heath-Coleman (D/DU 1726/1) gives 120 songs collected by Vaughan Williams in 1903-9.

Vaughan Williams in Perspective, edited by Lewis Foreman, 1998 (ERO Library 784.4).

Dialect and Songs of Essex by Hugh Cranmer-Byng (ERO Library Box 111b) provides a few songs collected in the 1920s.

Bushes and Briars by Occomore and Spratley (ERO Library Box 111) is a collection of folk songs from Essex collected from various sources, including some collected by the authors in the 1970s (see also Dave Occomore recordings SA 21 below).

Much of the above is described in ***"That precious legacy": Ralph Vaughan Williams and Essex Folksong*** by Sue Cubbin, which is an Essex Record Office publication. Excerpts from the Essex Sound and Video Archive played at an exhibition about Vaughan Williams and Essex Folksong can be heard on **SA 30/1/22/1**. A video recording

of the launch of the exhibition including songs collected by Vaughan Williams is on **VA 30/29/1**.

Information about folk clubs, festivals and other events in Essex can be found in **Essex Folk News (ERO Library periodicals)**.

Church bands

In the **Essex Review, vol.1, 1891 (ERO Library periodicals)**, G.W.J.Potter quotes Mr. E Walford describing the church band in Hatfield Peverel in 1846 as consisting of fiddle, bass viol, clarinet and bassoon; and in **vol.2, 1892**, there is a reference to a band in Foulness church in 1847 with violin, violincello and clarinet.

There had been a church band at Ingrave in the mid nineteenth century, recalled by Arthur H. Brown in the **Essex Review of 1913**, consisting of fiddles, flute, cello, bassoon and clarinet*. This last was played by John Steel, who was blacksmith in Ingrave from circa 1850 to 1875. Brown mentions the band playing the old ranting tune *Shireland* for the hymn.

Not all churches had church bands. For Great Leighs, Little Leighs and Fairstead there was a travelling company of musicians who attended one in three Sundays at each of these churches. In Good Easter in 1834 the church paid 7s 6d for a pitch-pipe for the singers. The singing was probably unaccompanied until a harmonium was purchased in the 1850s, **Essex Review, 1917**.

An interviewee in Great Sampford recalls the church band in the 1880s which included the bass viol, cornet, violin, flute or clarinet and bassoon. She also recalls harvest and "horkey" songs in the 1920s. She recalls singing *While Shepherds Watched* to one of the "Sheffield" tunes and says that she didn't learn that in church but just going round to people's houses with the carol singers, accompanied by a piano accordion (**Acc. SA497**).

2) Audio and Video Sources

The Essex Sound and Video Archive holds a copy of the English Folk Dance and Song Society recording *A Century of Song*, which includes the wax cylinder recordings made by Ralph Vaughan Williams of Mrs Humphries of Ingrave singing *Bushes and Briars* and *Tarry Trousers* in about 1909 (**SA 30/1/12/1**). There is also a recording of Harry Green of Tilty (born 1874) made in 1967 by Fred Hamer, and produced for Veteran Tapes in 1998 (**SA 30/1/5/1**).

In 1975 the Essex County Council Education Resources Centre produced a tape and booklet for schools containing dialect stories and songs from Essex (**SA 6/304/1 and SA 6/305/1**).

Dave Occomore recordings (SA 21). These are recordings donated by Dave Occomore which include some made in folk clubs in the Loughton area in the late 1960s, and recordings made by Dave Occomore and Phil Spratley of Mrs Raven and Miss Drain in 1975 as part of the research for the book *Bushes and Briars* (see above).

John Durrant recordings (SA 30/2). John made a series of recordings in 1971 and 1972, mostly in Hornchurch Folk Club, which were broadcast on his show on Harold Wood Hospital Radio. During the same period he made recordings at other local folk

clubs in Upminster, Havering and Harold Hill. He also made good quality recordings for a number of local performers. He made recordings at Dartmoor Folk Festival and Sidmouth Folk Festival in the mid 1980s, and also in Cornwall. There is also a file of miscellaneous papers (**SA 30/2/3/4**) relating to folk clubs and performers.

Dennis Rookard recordings (SA 19 and SA 30/3/1 – 37). Dennis was a local radio broadcaster who was interested in folk music. Back in the 1960s he used to record Brentwood Folk Club, play it on hospital radio the following Sunday, and re-use the tapes (which were expensive) the following week. After a while he decided to keep copies of some of the best stuff, which includes Paul Simon at Brentwood Folk Club in 1964. Later he did a folk show for Essex Radio and for a year he went round the county recording evenings at folk clubs and broadcasting them on the radio. Later still he worked for BBC Essex and regularly brought local and national performers to the studio in a show loosely modelled on *Folk on 2*. He also produced a number of documentaries which used folk song or songs written for the purpose by a number of collaborators.

Dennis Rookard LPs (SA 30/3/38-66). These are LPs by local Essex performers played by Dennis Rookard on his radio folk shows in the 1980s and 1990s.

Jim Etheridge recordings (SA 30/6). Jim recorded almost every Chelmsford Folk Club between 1978 and 1986. With his open reel tape recorder and microphone he would record the whole evening - announcements, floor singers, applause and so on – and dub it all onto cassette, reusing the tape the following week. These unedited tapes are in this context a unique record of the dynamics and atmosphere of live performance through a whole evening. There are usually two cassettes per evening. At Chelmsford Folk Club there would be an MC for the evening (a job which rotated through 5 or 6 people), there would be a number of floor singers in the first half, then the guest would do their first spot, there would be an interval, then the raffle would be announced. There would be floor singers in the second half, and then the guest would do a final spot. There was usually an encore. Jim also recorded at some other clubs, including Blackmore Folk Club (which did not have paid guests) and he made recordings of Chelmsford Morris. In all there are 770 tapes.

Miscellaneous recordings (**SA 30/1**) include Harold Wood Folk Club 1969 (**SA 30/1/21/1**), the Folk Carol Service at Old Leigh, 1998 and 2000 (**SA 30/1/1/1 and SA 30/1/2/1**) – there is also a video of the service in 2000 (**VA 30/9/1**) – music sessions at “Square Monkey” 1995 (**SA 30/1/9/1 and 30/1/10/1**), a promotional CD from the Walton Folk Festival 2001 (**SA 30/1/24/1**), CDs from the Metric Foot Band (**SA 30/1/15-19**) and Tony Kendall (**SA 30/1/6-8**), *Music of Thaxted*, which includes songs from Cliff Yeldham (**SA 30/1/27/1**) and *The Best of Dave Strutt* (**SA 30/1/28/1**).

There are some video recordings of folk clubs, including **VA 30/28**, which shows the last Maldon Folk Club in 1995, and **VA 30/32 and 33** which show Romford Folk Club 1993-4 and 2000. **VA 30/19** shows bluegrass and American oldtime music at The Star in Ingatestone, 1989. The last BBC Essex Folk Show was recorded on video in 1994 (**VA 30/27/1**).

All these items can be consulted at the Essex Record Office. For more information search the online catalogue SEAX at www.essex.gov.uk/ero

In general the Essex Record Office does not own the copyright in these recordings.