

David Occomore on researching Essex folk music

Sue: Could you be a little more detailed about actually how you did that? Because, I mean, for example, I never knew until relatively recently that Vaughan Williams collected any folk songs at all, you know.

David: Right, well I think I went up to Cecil Sharp House library, and I obviously must've raided their index and found Essex, and then looked for anything they'd got on Essex, which devoted me to the Vaughan Williams. Having sort of lifted the Vaughan Williams stuff that was published, I then started searching through other books and indexes for other songs. And then I went to local libraries and started finding local history books on the county, to see whether they contained odd references to songs. One or two came that way. One or two came from going up to the Guildhall library and looking through old Victorian periodicals – Folklore Society and such things like that – and references from there. And then, it sort of got very, very difficult to find anything. I went to Chelmsford Record Office and sort of went through – But folk songs, like their counterpart the broadside ballad, are not indexed, so you've got to start going through books from beginning to end, searching, searching all the time, because there's nothing actually indexed. So it takes an awful long time to find even a small thing.

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