

Nov. 22nd 1859

Sharp born (on St. Cecilia's Day) [Eldonson]
Father interested in music. 'old buildings'
Mother of Italian-Welsh extraction. Loved music.
Brother (Lewen) architect. Chairman of Fire Brigade Committee of L.C.C. d. 1914 (Notice LCC connexion)
Elder sister Ethel - later Mrs Malcolm McCall
Youngest Evelyn - later Mrs Sharp-Nevinson
 (novelist; social worker; member of Labour Party)
 of nine. Militant suffragist.

1869 Entered Uppingham - a school where music was taken seriously. Commemorated as 'the writer and musician, the Collector of English Folk Songs'

1874 Sent to Mr. Heppel for coaching. Family theatricals, music making; there met Constance Birch (future wife)

187- To coach at Royston

1879 To Clare College Cambr. Read mathematics.

(This is, I think, important in view of his unique ability to take down steps and configuration of dances)

"Worked harder at music than mathematics"

(No mention of 'tuition' or formal study: but had among fellow students an exceptional 'knowledge of' ^{of music} music. See above)

Went all out for anything that interested him, full blooded, excitable argumentative, warm-hearted. Views founded 'not in the deeps but in the shallows'

It is evident (see Life p.8) that Sharp found his pleasure and many friendships in music. No mention of any 'qualification': but the general impression is of the able, useful, likeable amateur.

1882 Came down from Cambridge
 No mention of degree (could be ascertained) No degree

(Hon. Degree of Master of Music in Cambridge 1923)

1882 Told by father to seek his fortune: recommended Australia (NO reason given - but his father was a reputable 'merchant' & may have felt unable to give his son any 'start' that appealed to his gifts. All the same - this seems rather odd: in the 1880's Australia does not strike one as the place to make a musical career: but things turned out otherwise.

1883 Took clerk's job in Comm. Bank of South Australia ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ & began to read law.

1884 (4) Became Associate to the Chief Justice of S. Australia (later described as 'the gay, debonair Associate')

1889 Resigned 'when situation became 'difficult'
 Devoted himself to music.

Became, through Arthur Boult, Assist. Organist at Adelaide Cathedral:
 Hon. Director of String Qt. Club. Conducted Govt. House Choral Sec. &

Quintet

Adelaide Philharmonic Choir.

1889-91 Took private pupils for pianoforte, theory and composition: entered into partnership with Gottfr. Reimann as Director of Adelaide Coll. of Music: Reimann put up capital, Sharp supplied the connexion

(I think here is an important part of the story. Sharp had no formal qualifications, but by personal ability and social address was able to embark - in Australia - on a professional career. In England, which he visited at this time, he could neither obtain employment nor get his compositions published. Without entering the musical profession in the accepted way, he neither then nor later, gained acceptance by the academic musical world: nor has the EFDSS, which now regards such acceptance as sour grapes! The FSS on the other hand was founded under the aegis of leaders of the musical world (profession))

1889-91 In England

Songs of the West published, ed. Rev. S. Baring Gould & H. Fleetwood Sheppard
Sussex Songs coll. by John Broadwood, additions by Lucy Broadwood published.

1891 Partnership with Reimann dissolved, under whom the College was continued.

Sharp had not the heart 'to begin all over again'

1892 In England, without resources: desired to live, and make a living, so as to "improve and satisfy ambition" (in music). Gained work in lecturing and conducting choral societies: private teaching not a success. People 'afraid to give unknown man a trial'.

1893 Appointed to Finsbury Choral Assoc. and Metropolitan Coll. Holloway
Resigned from former after row with Sir Herbert Parry concerning a pupil to whom he refused a professional opportunity. (Mumford)

1893 In England ed. Lucy Broadwood & J.A. Fuller-Maitland. [Guide, p. 30]
English County Songs published. "The first fruits of systematic collecting of folk songs over a wide area, in which a number of people have been engaged" This collection was the 'first' real stimulus of public interest. The songs were widely sung, and many published in usual sheet-music form. Miss Broadwood, and her cousin J.A. Fuller-Maitland (later music critic of The Times) were both persons of social standing, and moving in the leading musical circle of the time.

1893 Sharp appointed music-master at Ludgrove (at New Barnet) a prep. school mainly for Eton. In this year he became engaged to Constance Birch. They were married by C.L. Marson, at Clevedon Somerset. (Marson was at that time priest in a London slum) (See Life, p. 21) Poverty, ill-health, a disappointment at Sharp's engrossment in folk music saddened her life. There were 4 children: - Dorothea, 1894 Charles, 1896, Joan, 1898, Susannah. 1900

1896 Appointed by the owner, Arthur Blackwood, Principal of Hampstead Conservatoire: collected distinguished staff. In 1904, being no longer on good terms resigned (See Life p. 24) The main cause of quarrel seems to have been one of salary, or fulfilment of agreement. The Committee later sent Sharp a letter & testimonial of regard (possibly one formed for the occasion)

1898 Folk Song Society founded. President: Sir Hubert Parry. The

See Guide to Folk Song Collections 1953. p. 29

See inform. provided by Sir Sydney Carterell cited in my Guide to Folk Song Collections. (Intro.) 1953.

See passage in Mary Neal notes concerning MacLennan's visit at this time.

inauguration was under the aegis of the musical & educational professions.

It should be understood that Sharp was not then even aware of Folk Music.

1899

A Norfolk country factory or mill-hand. Sharp put her in his children's nursery to learn
Heard Mattie Kay (later Mrs Algernon Lindo) in Lancashire: brought her to London; she was given a scholarship at the Conservatoire: sang for his lectures in the next ten or more years.
Saw Headington dancers - noted 5 tunes from W. Kimber (aet. 27) concertina-player. Made no use of this incident beyond harmonising the tunes.

1902

Published Book of British Song. In preface speaks of songs of 'folk-origin' remarks that Chappell made no serious effort to gather the innumerable song and dance tunes still to be heard in country places"

It is difficult to reconcile the latter part of this sentence with the often-repeated statement that Headington was a 'revelation' 'a new world of beauty' My guess is that remarks about 'revelation' and so on are those of his friends and biographers. That Headington proved ~~to~~ later to make a turning point was due to Mary Neal (see her account of visiting Sharp 1905)

British Song seems to have contained folk songs, and he was aware of direct 'transcribing' by 'recent collectors'. He desired to hear folk song for himself & betook himself to

1903

Marson, now at Hambridge

The story of his 'first folk song' and all this episode in the Life is different from Marson's. A footnote says 'Marson was seldom wrong about a fact'

1904

Folk Songs from Somerset, vol. i with Marson

Sharp joined Folk Song Society - *at the same time as Vaughan Williams*

1905

Folk Songs from Somerset, vol. ii & with Marson & FSJ, 6

"Interview in Morning Post"

Resignation from Conservatoire (above)

Visit of Mary Neal - a 'turning point'

Invitation to Kimber & his cousin (?R. Kimber) to teach Esperance Girls.

1906

Folk Songs from Somerset, vol. iii with Marson

Irreparable breach with Marson (after a well intentioned but indiscreet move on Sharp's part) *when Marson's marriage threatened to break up.*

Board of Education's Suggestions recommending Folk Song

Sharp elected to FSS Committee

Writes to Morning Post etc. attacking Board of Education proposals (which were materially supported by FSS)

The FSS took exception to a member of the committee airing his personal views, contrary to his fellow committee members' in the public press.)

1906-7

Wrote, for publication at own expense - English Folk Songs: Some Conclusions. [Malesb. 1907. Dedicated to Baring Gould]

Remained a member of FSS committee. But about 1918 called a meeting to discuss formation of an association of his own. I don't think this is mentioned in the Life. I saw the Agenda etc among papers at CSH.

1907

Morris Book Pt. 1 dedicated to the Girls of the Esperance Club

Nov. Conference at Goupil Gallery

Formation (without Sharp) of Association for Revival & Practice

*H.M. Chubbell
Popular Music of the Olden Time
1852-4 2 vols. [Guide p. 40]*

M.S. 5

See Guide p. 25

*n. P. 10 to 15 Songs from
Somerset I. 1904.*

*See p. 47.
Visit arranged by Herbert
MacLaine.*

*ie. 'Suggestions for Teachers'
usually attributed to
Arthur Somervell, chief H.M.I.*

M.S. 5

with H. MacLaine

of Folk Music, under Presidency of Earl of Lytton (Later Guild of Morris Dancers, or Esperance Morris Guild.)

M.D.S.

[⁹Life p.81: I am not sure that the Life is correct here, in the name 'Esperance Morris Guild' and in the ensuing argument regarding Mary Neal's purpose.]

1909

referring to

Mr Douglas Kennedy, in the 1940's.

Joan Sharp at this time was secretary to Canon Collins of Paul's, active in CND.

1909

Miss Lady Gomme.

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This is a reference to Mary Neal

Sharp, though dissociated from the Esperance Club, from time to time co-operated with Miss Neal - at Stationers' Hall 1908, and in Competitions at Stratford where Sharp & Burrows (HMI) adjudicated. Sharp seriously advocates the Art of folk dancing (later 'Fine Art') this view received its final 'public' judgement at the hands of the Inland Revenue. Maud Karpeles, ~~about that time~~, said to me that the policy of the present Direction had 'got the Society to the place where Mary Neal had wanted it to be 40 years previously.'

Most curiously Pat Sh-Shaw told me that Joan Sharp says - or is reputed to have said - that "her father would strongly approve of the Society today" (1957)

Board of Education recognised the morris dance

Sharp established his school of Morris dancing ~~at the S.W. Polytechnic~~ at the S.W. Polytechnic: himself as Director: the school under Miss Wilkie (headmistress of the Physical Training College): Singing games under direction of Mrs Gomme. (I have here a circular referred to in the Autobiography. The Life quoting circular, states that the "authoritative pronouncement of the Board of Education has made imperative the establishment ~~the~~ of a Training School for folk dancing - what the circular does say is: 'Hitherto the progress of the movement has been seriously hindered by the total absence of any organised provision for the systematic training of teachers. Indeed it is feared that, owing to the dearth of competent instructors many have already learned to dance the morris in ways not sanctioned by Tradition'

~~The last sentence reads below the belt now.~~

It is from this date that the public began to join in a correspondence hitherto civilised (see Life, p.80) and the argument became inflamed into a volcano.

Sharp supplanted Mary Neal at Stratford
Miss Neal in America

Folk Dance Club started: germ of EFDS

Public correspondence in Morning Post - in which Sharp expounded the need for 'expert knowledge' to 'appraise the traditional value of the revived dance, to detect faked dances, & exercise wise discretion with regard to corrupt dances'

her lecture - for 1910
had been cancelled 1910 -
she had her back and had
s-s-s-s-s only
with difficulty. 1910

M.D.S.



[One asks now, where or how this 'expert knowledge' was to be found, & who possessed it: and if the inference is, that it was to be found in Sharp alone of the three progenitors of the Revival, on what grounds other than self-styled supremacy, could Sharp claim this expertise?]

Miss Neal's Guild won a good deal of public support by its organisation & 'effective results'

The Guild's summer school at Stratford was an 'attraction' but the Board of Governors now began to consider if the 'inaccuracies' of the dancing might not 'sully the reputation of the Festival' (sic. Life p.82)

It was at this point that Miss Neal visited Kimber to test this question of 'accuracy' with the result described.

It is not clear what the outcome was in 1910 - i.e. which body of dancers was invited to the school

In June 1910, Sharp lectured and gave demonstrations at Crystal Palace Festival of Empire: Chelsea students performed. Miss Neal proposed having a question asked in Parliament about the 'exceeding of rights' in using the students for 'private advantage'. Sharp had received no fee for the lectures, so the question did not in fact arise

(This sounds very odd - but perhaps Sharp asked for a 'platform' at which to publicise his views and the 'entertainment' provided by the demonstration was held to offset the use of 'space' in the Palace Grounds: while any gate-money went to the 'objects' of the Festival. I have no idea how these things are conducted.

probably that cited 1910 (cont) Grove's Dict. of Music (new ed. prob. 2nd) Article on Folk Song
by Fuller-Maitland did not mention Sharp's name - Check author's article.

1910-11 Miss Neal accepts invitation to America. Arrives to find engagements cancelled, through the activities of 'a friend of Sharp's' who reported that 'The Board of Education in England had thrown her over

1911 Miss Neal returning, found she 'no longer had the whole-hearted support of the Stratford Festival Governors following a 'conference' to discuss 'diverse views' Sharp's 'programme was substituted for Miss Neal's.

Sharp felt this to be a 'grand opportunity': among the staff appointed were Miss Maud and Miss Helen Karpeles: Miss Walsh (later Mrs Kettlewell) Mattie Kay

The School was repeated for a week at Xmas

Morris Book iv published. MacIlwaine declining to be cited as joint-author (see Preface)

Foundation of EFDS
from friends of the dance
Club

Some members of the Chelsea classes - the Misses Karpeles, Miss Walsh & other friends got up dance-meetings among friends - as 'The Folk Dance Club' they gave a public charity performance at the Portmann Rooms. Since the 'Club', distinct from the Polytechnic had 'come about in a natural way, Sharp threw his aegis over it': it became the EFDS, formally constituted on Dec. 6 1911.

From this, the actual progenitors of the EFDS were Maud & Helen Karpeles. In the committee appointed, Sharp was included: he is not at this time described as 'Director' or 'Founder'. Helen Karpeles was first Hon. Sec.

1912

Conference at Stratford to discuss relative claims of 'Accuracy affording artistic delight' or 'enjoyment with such accuracy as then obtainable' The Conference proposed a 'National Board' with Sharp & Mary Neal both on Directorate: Miss Neal expressed willingness to assist, RVW (on EFDS Committee and at the Conference threw weight on the side of 'accuracy') Nothing eventuated, and both parties continued independently. EFDS conducted the School at Stratford during the Shakespeare Festival.

'Shakespeare's England' in London, with Miss Neal's dancers - including sword by boys from the Reckitt's Factory at Hall, & from Thaxted, attracted Royalty and many other visitors.

One interesting thing in this unedifying story is the continued attachment of the dance to 'Shakespeare' - with the subsequent establishment of a popular notion that what was at the time being collected was an "Elizabethan" survival.

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In actual fact no-one knows what 'morris' was like - in terms of dance - in Shakespeare's day - and virtually no tunes collected in 1905-12 period can be claimed as 16th or even 17th century.

In all the talk about accuracy, historical accuracy was overlooked altogether, & the Art of the Morris Dance was left in a vacuum.

The above full-time activities may explain why folk song publishing & even collecting, came to a standstill

ie. by Sharp. /
see Guide to Folk Song
Collections. 1953