

PAUL COWDELL

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Education and Qualifications

2008-2011 **PhD**
'Belief in Ghosts in Post-War England'
<<http://bit.ly/13aielN>>

University of Hertfordshire
Supervisors: Professor Owen Davies
Professor Richard Wiseman
Examiners: Professor Richard Jenkins (Sheffield)
Dr Katrina Navickas (Hertfordshire)

2004-2006 **MA with Distinction**
Folklore and Cultural Tradition
(Dissertation: 'Towards Understanding Traditional Singing in a Social Context: A Study of Romney Marsh', supervised by Jonathan Roper)

National Centre for English Cultural Traditions
University of Sheffield

1985-1988 **BA (Hons) 2:2**
Classics

Magdalene College
University of Cambridge

Prizes and Awards

2006 President's Prize, Folklore Society, for the essay 'On Dating an Unpublished Agricultural Protest Song from the Collinson Collection'

Memberships

Folklore Society (Council member 2008- , Editorial Board member *Folklore* 2017-)
Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF)
English Folk Dance and Song Society (Editorial Board member *Folk Music Journal* 2014-)
Traditional Song Forum

Publications and Presentations

Journal Articles

2021

'Violet Alford and the Persistence of Edwardian Thinking', *Folklore*, forthcoming

2019

"[P]ractising witchcraft myself during the filming:" Folklore, Folk Horror, and Hammer's *The Witches*', *Western Folklore*, 78.4, 295-326

2018

"I have believed in spirits from that day unto this": "The Ghostly Crew", Ghostlore, and Traditional Song', *Folk Music Journal*, 11.4, 77-99

2014

'Ghosts and their Relationship with the Age of a City', *Folklore*, 125.1 (2014), 80-91

2010

"You Saw the Ghost, Didn't You? There's Someone Wants to Ask You about It": Occupational Ghostlore, Narrative, and Belief', *Contemporary Legend, New Series*, 9 (2006 [pub. 2010]), 69-82

'Cannibal Ballads: Not Just a Matter of Taste ...', *Folk Music Journal*, 9.5 (2010), 723-748

Edited Collections

2022

'Ghosts in Belief, Practice and Metaphor', in *Contesting Authority: Vernacular Knowledge and Alternative Beliefs*, ed. Marion Bowman and Ülo Valk (Sheffield: equinox), forthcoming

2021

'Folklore as MacGuffin: British Folklore and Margaret Murray in a 1930 Crime Novel and Beyond', in *Folklore and Nation in Britain and Ireland* (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis), forthcoming

2013

"A Giant Bedsheet with the Holes Cut Out": Expectations and Discussions of the Appearance of Ghosts', in *The Ashgate Companion to the Paranormal*, ed. Sally Munt and Olu Jenzen (Basingstoke: Ashgate), pp.159-169

2011

'Purposely to Please the Palates of Pretty Prattling Playfellows', in *Alliteration in Culture*, ed. Jonathan Roper (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp.62-73

2010

'In London You're Never more than 10 Feet from a Rat (Stencil): The Rat and Urban Folklore', in *Wild Signs: Graffiti in Archaeology and History*, ed. Jeff Oliver and Tim Neal, Studies in Contemporary and Historical Archaeology 6 / BAR International Series 2074 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), pp.93-100

2009

"If Not, Shall Employ 'Rough on Rats)": Identifying the Common Elements of Rat Charms', in *Charms, Charmers and Charming: International Research on Verbal Magic*, ed. Jonathan Roper (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.17-26

Reviews and Conference Reports

To date these have been published in: *Folk Music Journal*; *Folklore*; *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*; *Journal of Folklore Research Reviews*; *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*; *Journal of Victorian Culture*; *Oral History* (2000); *Social History*; and *Western Folklore*.

I peer review folklore articles for several journals and am on the advisory board for *Folk Life*. I am currently Convenor of the Folklore Society's Non-Print Media Award. I have been responsible for indexing *Folklore* since 2016.

I have also published popular reviews and articles in *Folk London* and on *Humphrey with his Flail*, <<http://humphreywithhisflail.blogspot.com/>>.

Conference Papers

2021

‘Written in the Back’, *Folklore, Learning and Literacies*, Folklore Society

2018

‘Critical Reception and Critical Rejection: Frazer, Folklore and Folklorists’, *Folklore and Anthropology in Conversation: Revisiting Frazer, Lang and Tylor*, Royal Anthropological Institute/Folklore Society

‘Afterlives: Ghosts, Spiritualism and What Remains’, *Living in a Magical World: Inner Lives, 1300-1900*, St Anne’s College, Oxford

‘Not Unknown But Still Unsung: The Awkward Case of Violet Alford’, *Locating Women in ‘The Folk’*, University of Sussex

‘Second Impressions: What We Make of What Makes Us Folklorists’, *Working Life*, Folklore Society, Museum of English Rural Life, Reading

2017

‘Recognisably Folklore and Anthropology Without Being Either: Violet Alford and the Shared Afterlives of (at Least) Two Disciplines’, *Folklore and Anthropology in Conversation*, Royal Anthropological Institute/Folklore Society

“Folklore Gone Wrong” Revisited: When Folklorists May Be Right but Still Miss the Point’, *Folklorists Are Fallible*, University of Tartu

‘Ghosts, Grandparents, Family Tradition and the Intergenerational Transmission of Folklore’, *Folklore from the Cradle to the Grave*, Folklore Society, University of Edinburgh

2016

“I Like to Think I Was Practising Witchcraft Myself During the Filming”: Folk Horror, Hammer’s *The Witches* and Folklore’, *Reflected Shadows: Folklore and the Gothic*, Folklore Society, University of Kingston

2015

‘The FLS’s Early Intellectual Networks and the Edmund Veckenstedt Scandal’, *Folklore Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Folklore Society, Sheffield University [paper read by James Grayson]

2014

‘What Victorian Peasantry? The Surprising Class Warriors of English Folk Song Scholarship’, *Folklore, Thomas Hardy & Rural Writing*, Folklore Society/Thomas Hardy Society, Dorchester Corn Exchange

‘Ghosts and Belief: Folklore and Religion’, Museum of English Rural Life Intangible Cultural Heritage Seminar Series

2013

“She Won’t Come to Haunt Me and Taunt Me I Know, ‘Cause I Buried her Face Downward, She’s a Long Way to Go”, *Popular Antiquities* 3, Institute of Archaeology/Folklore Society, UCL

‘The Folklore Society: National and International’, *The Folklore Society and the Continent, 1878-1914. Intellectual Networks and the Development of the Social Sciences*, BEROSE (Base d’étude et de recherche sur l’organisation des savoirs ethnographiques), Lahic (Paris)

“You All Worship the Same God”: Ghosts and Religious Belief’, SIEF, University of Tartu

“By Australian Standards [it’s] Very Old. It’s 120 Years Old”: Ghosts as Indicators of Age in the City’, *Urban Folklore*, Folklore Society, Cardiff University

2012

- ‘There Are No Ghosts at Auschwitz’, *Supernatural Places*, University of Tartu [paper read by Jonathan Roper]
‘How Much of It Is Actually True Must Be Left to the Gentle Reader’s Own Discretion, but it Makes Interesting and Entertaining Reading’, *Folklore and Fantasy*, Folklore Society, University of Chichester

2010

- “I Have Believed in Spirits from that Day unto this”: Oral Narratives, Belief, Literary Adaptation, and Transmission’, *The Supernatural*, Folklore Society, Leeds Trinity and All Saints University College

2009

- ‘Spirits and Spirits: Seeing Ghosts under the Influence’, Exploring the Extraordinary Network First One-Day Conference, University of York
‘Singing about the Custom of the Sea: It’s not a Question of Taste ...’, *The Sea in Legend and Tradition*, Folklore Society, Time and Tide Museum, Great Yarmouth
“I Wouldn’t Have Just Randomly Mentioned It”: Deliberate and Accidental Documentation of Supernatural Narratives and Beliefs’, *Collecting Folklore*, Folklore Society, Bishopsgate Institute

- ‘Rats, Redstarts and Ravens: Animal-Identified London’, *London Lore*, South East London Folklore Society and the Folklore Society, Bishopsgate Institute

2008

- “I’d Never Heard it Sung by Anybody but Us”: The Millen Family and the Un-Englishness of an English Repertoire’, 9th Congress, SIEF, University of Ulster, Derry
“You Saw the Ghost, Didn’t You? There’s Someone Wants to Ask You about It”: Two Occupational Ghost Narratives’, *Folktales Revisited*, Folklore Society, Warburg Institute

2007

- ‘Cecil Sharp and the Witting and Unwitting Class Warriors of English Folk Song Scholarship’, *The Voice of the People: The European Folk Revival 1760-1914*, University of Sheffield
‘Purposely to Please the Palates of Pretty Prattling Playfellows’, *Alliteration and Culture*, Folklore Society, Warburg Institute
‘Darts and Singing: Context or Pretext?’, *Traditional Games, Sports and Pastimes*, Folklore Society, University of Sheffield
‘The Farmers of Old England: Dating an Unpublished Agricultural Protest Song’, 5th Anglo-Scottish Young Folklorists Graduate Conference, Elphinstone Institute, Aberdeen University

2006

- ‘Cannibal Ballads: Not Just a Matter of Taste ...’, *Sound Effects: Orality/Aurality and Literature*, University of St Andrews
‘Revisiting Some Questions of Folk Song’, 4th Anglo-Scottish Young Folklorists Graduate Conference, NATCECT, University of Sheffield
“If Not, Shall Employ ‘Rough on Rats’”: Identifying the Common Elements of Rat Charms’, *Charms, Charmers and Charming*, Folklore Society, Warburg Institute
‘In London You’re Only 100 Feet from a Rat (Stencil): The Rat and Urban Folklore’, *Scrawl and Scribe: Writing in the Margins*, The Archaeology Group, University of Sheffield

I have also given papers at departmental and school graduate conferences at Sheffield University and the University of Hertfordshire.

Other Presentations

2021

‘Old Clem! Blow the fire, blow the fire: St Clement’s Day and Dickens’, Folklore Society online talk

2019

‘Rats, Abraham Elder and Folklore’, Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeology Society

2018

“I Have Believed in Spirits From That Day Unto This”: *The Ghostly Crew* [Roud 1822], Ghostlore and Traditional Song’, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library Lecture

2017

“In the Dead of the Night, When All People Were Sleeping”: Ghosts in Folk Songs’, *The Haunted Landscape 2017*, London Fortean Society, Conway Hall

‘Folklore: More Than Just A Word’, *The Folklore Podcast*, Episode 15, <<http://bit.ly/2rNSRZD>>

2016

‘Happy Birthday to a Word: An Introduction to Folklore’, South East London Folklore Society

2014

‘It’s Not a Question of Taste: Cannibalism, Songs and the Custom of the Sea’, South East London Folklore Society

2013

‘Ghost Night’, London Fortean Society

‘Ghosts and Folklore’, The Ghost Club, London

‘The Kalevala and Folklore’, Audiobook launch for *The Kalevala*, tr. Keith Bosley, Finnish Embassy, London

2012

‘The Grey Lady – and There IS a Grey Lady’: Ghosts in London Hospitals and Theatres’, London Ghost Conference, London Fortean Society

‘London’s Strange World of Rats’, Treadwell’s Bookshop

Participant on *Faces of Europe: The British and Their Ghosts*, Deutschlandfunk [radio]

Discussion of superstitions, BBC Radio Scarborough

Discussion of St Valentine’s Day customs, BBC Radio Coventry

2011

‘Old Clem! Blow the Fire! Blow the Fire!’, South East London Folklore Society

‘Investigating Ghosts’ panel, London Fortean Society

2009

Discussion of ghost belief, Mercury FM News [Radio]

‘The Songs and the Singer’, convenor of a discussion with traditional singer Bob Lewis, Folklore Society, Warburg Institute

2008

‘Rats, London and Folklore: You’re *how* far from a rat?’, South East London Folklore Society

2007

‘Dogwood Stage’, Panel discussion of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Tenterden Folk Festival

Moderator of panels on seasonal customs, naming traditions, musicians’ day jobs, ballads, and singing styles, Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Washington DC

2006

‘The Folklore of Rats’, The Moot with no Name

Employment and Experience

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|-----------|---|
| 2018-2021 | Visiting Research Fellow in Folklore, University of Hertfordshire |
| 2017 | Consultant on ethnography/oral history, ArtEcology (Sandown) |
| 2014 | Visiting guest lecturer, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu |
| 2013 | Co-tutor (with Steve Roud), 'Introduction to Folklore' summer school course, City Lit |
| 2013 | Early Career Researcher, All Our Stories project, University of Hertfordshire. (Short-term oral history project leader) |
| 2011-16 | Library and archive assistant at the Folklore Society, listing uncatalogued rare book and pamphlet collection for finding aids |
| 2008-11 | Doctoral research into contemporary belief in ghosts by interview, qualitative questionnaire and participant observation, funded by interfaculty research studentship |
| 2009 | Field recording Irish Traveller traditional singers in London |
| 2009 | Undergraduate research methods seminar, Anthropology Department, University of East London |
| 2008 | Undergraduate oral history training, University of Hertfordshire, linked to oral history project at Palace Theatre Watford |
| 2007 | Graduate research seminar, National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, University of Sheffield |
| 2006-7 | Fieldworker for the Smithsonian Institution: research, identifying participants, interviewing and summarizing interviews for the Roots of Virginia Culture programme at the 2007 Smithsonian Festival, Washington DC and presenting at the Festival |
| 2001 on | Researching song and traditions around East London, including hop-picking, family singing traditions, calendar customs, and occupational narratives |
| 2000 on | Researching folk song and undertaking oral history interviews in agricultural and fishing communities on Romney Marsh, Kent |
| 2000-2004 | Animateur, freelance performer, using historical research material in performance pieces and teaching children's drama classes |
| 1998 on | Researching song and oral history study in the Kent coalfield |