



Recording Communities

Third Annual Conference of the Cornish Audio Visual Archive

Saturday 27th June 2009 at 10.30 am
Quaker Meeting House, St Austell

Speakers – Cath Camps, Helen Cornish, Robert Dickinson, Karin Easton, Jesse Harasta, Bob Keys, Kayleigh Milden, Olivia Rowse, and Joanie Willett

CAVA

Rescorla
festival

The third annual conference of the Cornish Audio Visual Archive was held at the historic Quaker Meeting House in St Austell on Saturday 27th June in association with the Rescorla Festival. It explored local storytelling, the role of the fieldworker in the community and the cultural heritage of Cornish communities. The opening lecture was given by Helen Cornish of Goldsmiths College, University of London, who investigated issues of witchcraft and storytelling in reference to narrative accounts of Joan Wytte, the so-called 'Fighting Fairy Woman of Bodmin'. Cornish showed how such stories can provide an ancestral connection for contemporary pagan practitioners. Kayleigh Milden's paper on the market

gardening communities of the Tamar Valley highlighted the importance of an auto-ethnographical perspective. Based on evidence obtained through oral history interviews she explored the complexities of border and family identities. Robert Dickinson of the Institute of Cornish Studies continued the theme of identity in relation to his recent oral history interviews with farmers in West and South East Cornwall. He concluded that a sense of 'Cornishness' in the farming community tends to cluster at two different levels: on a relational basis in terms of everyday interaction at a personal level and in other cases as a collective self through shared symbols and social representations.

Bob Keys of the University College Plymouth St Mark & St John showed how film studies can enhance our understanding of Cornish and Celtic representations. Using extracts from early films produced in the 1930s he pointed to the way in which such terms as 'On the Edge of the World' and the 'Periphery of Modern Life' when used in relation to Celtic communities are reinforced by the power of the moving image. Joanie Willett of the Politics Department, University of Exeter, took the occupational community of 'decision making elites' as the unit for analysis by identifying organisations and figures which are vocal and influential in strategic decision making in Cornwall. Karin Easton of the Cornish Audio Visual Archive and Perranzabuloe Museum explored the elements, both public and private, that have helped to maintain communal networks in Perranporth throughout the social changes of the past sixty years from both insider and outsider perspectives.

There was a particular focus on the Clay Country in the papers presented during the afternoon. Jesse Harasta of the University of Syracuse in the USA investigated the contrasting tourist experiences of the Eden Project and the China Clay Country Park at Wheal Martyn in a communal and regional context. Olivia Rowse from the University College Plymouth St Mark & St John used oral evidence to highlight the continuing importance of the brass band tradition in Cornish culture with a particular emphasis on the Bugle Band contest and clay bands like St Dennis. Cath Camps of Truro College deployed a case study of a video documentary from the St Austell area to raise wider ethical implications of using community oral history projects in an educational context notably the Foundation Degree programmes delivered by the college. The archive would like to thank Seb Averill, Sue Le Tissier and Lynne Vosper for their valued support on the day.