

# Endnotes – Major Sources

## The Radio Ballads themselves

The Radio Ballads are available on CD from Topic records, [www.topicrecords.co.uk](http://www.topicrecords.co.uk), and from the book's website [www.setintosong.co.uk](http://www.setintosong.co.uk). The records each differ slightly from the broadcast programmes, and in the case of *John Axon* by a quarter of an hour, because it was broadcast originally in a 45-minute version. Incidentally it was a (modified) version of that length that was entered for the Italia Prize, and the entry for *Singing the Fishing* two years later was similarly truncated. Here are the eight Radio Ballads with their first broadcast dates and CD numbers:

2 July 1958	<i>Ballad of John Axon</i>	TSCD 801
5 November 1959	<i>Song of a Road</i>	TSCD 802
16 August 1960	<i>Singing the Fishing</i>	TSCD 803
18 August 1961	<i>The Big Hewer</i>	TSCD 804
27 March 1962	<i>The Body Blow</i>	TSCD 805
13 February 1963	<i>On the Edge</i>	TSCD 806
3 July 1963	<i>The Fight Game</i>	TSCD 807
17 April 1964	<i>Travelling People</i>	TSCD 808

## The Life of Ewan MacColl (Jimmie Miller) before Peggy Seeger – Chapters 2 and 5

Ewan MacColl's biography *Journeyman* covers his early years in great detail, the theatre and radio before and after the war, and the folk revival. About the war years he is silent after mid 1940, and he writes little about the period after 1971. As well as providing additional recollections of their pre- and post-war life together and in the theatre, Joan Littlewood's *Joan's Book* covers his call-up, return, arrest and release. Further details are available from Jimmie Miller's MI5 file (started when he was 17...) in the National Archive at Kew and now partly available online, and Army Personnel Records in Glasgow. The two autobiographies are essential and vivid reading, though for both authors telling the story is more important than absolute precision (and we would not wish it otherwise), and neither is very good on dates. Where they matter the most rigorous arbiter is Ben Harker's recent biography *Class Act*, essential readings for those interested in Ewan MacColl's life. Charles Parker's interviews with Ewan's mother Betsy Miller in 1962 and 1969 are a crucial added source for his childhood. For the background to conditions in pre-war Lancashire the first port of call for source documents is the Working Class Movement Library in Salford.

The excellent 1985 radio series by Mary Orr and Michael O'Rourke, *Parsley, Sage and Politics*, provides a good general background and includes extracts from interviews with his pre-war friends. Transcripts of the original interviews, especially the lengthy one with Ewan himself, are held in the MacColl/Seeger Archive and are particularly fascinating. Ewan talks about his early life in the TV programmes *Daddy, What Did You Do in the Strike?* and the posthumously broadcast *Ballad of Ewan MacColl*, and on several radio programmes.

For Ewan's theatre work before and after the war further sources are *Agit-prop to Theatre Workshop*, edited by Ewan MacColl and Howard Goorney; Goorney's *The Theatre Workshop Story*; *Theatres of the Left 1880–1935* by Raphael Samuel, Ewan MacColl and Stuart Cosgrove, and the Theatre Royal Archive at Stratford East. Derek Paget was helpful in reviewing the (belated) development of radical theatre after Theatre Workshop settled in Stratford.

For Ewan MacColl's pre-war radio work see Geoffrey Bridson's *Prospero and Ariel* and Olive Shapley's *Broadcasting a Life*, and the extensive BBC Archive at Caversham. For Alan Lomax see *Ruth Crawford Seeger* by Judith Tick, and *Alan Lomax: Selected Writings 1934–97*, by Ronald Cohen. To disentangle the often unrecorded early years of the folk revival see *Dazzling Stranger* by Colin Harper, and, of course, the exhaustive resources of the library of the EFDSS (English Folk Dance and Song Society) in Camden, London. Brian Shuel's magnificent photographs, of which I reproduce only a small proportion in this book, provide the perfect picture of the early folk clubs for one who, alas, wasn't there.

### The Life of Charles Parker – Chapters 3, 12, 13 and 20

The major source is, of course, the Charles Parker Archive, set up after his death by his wife and children, and I'm indebted to them and to those at the Archive and the Charles Parker Trust who have assiduously developed it since. That has culminated in a project to digitise the great collection of interviews of which he went to extreme lengths to keep copies. The unpublished autobiography of his late friend and colleague Philip Donnellan, provisionally entitled *Corporation Street*, is immensely valuable in illuminating his working life at the BBC, as well as being an absorbing read. There are some important letters in the MacColl/Seeger Archive, and further career record information is available at the BBC Archive. There is little documented about his pre-war life, while his war record and experiences come from the National Archive and various interviewees, notably his university friend Philip Cox. His post-war career in the North American service was brought vividly alive by his old boss Peggy Broadhead and his one-time secretary Rosemary Fitch.

Further sources for his BBC Midlands career come from a lengthy recorded interview with Trevor Fisher from 1971, who subsequently wrote the summary *Charles Parker, Aspects of a Pioneer: A Personal View*. Dilip Hiro, Doc Rowe and others gave a picture of his personality and working methods in the period

after the Radio Ballads, while Daniel Snowman and Michael Mason discussed his work on *The Long March of Everyman*. Particularly helpful too were the interviews for Sally Flatman's 1995 radio programme *The Ballad of Charles Parker*. His teaching and involvement in the early days of the Grey Cock Folk Club were recalled by Eileen Whiting in letter and interview, and by meetings with Joy Ashworth, Bob Etheridge, Pam Fisher, Trevor Fisher, Barbara Miller and Doug Miller. His involvement in the founding and early years of Banner Theatre was explained by Dave Rogers and Rhoma Bowdler, and there is a detailed case study of Banner in Alan Filewod and Davis Watt's *Workers' Playtime*. His work as a lecturer in Birmingham and London was described by Trevor Fisher and Andy Cheal. His lectures themselves were painstakingly assembled, edited and introduced by the late Anthony Schooling, and lie in the Charles Parker Archive, awaiting a publisher still. There are many other unpublished articles, lectures and discussion transcripts in the Archive, and extracts from some of them are on this book's website.

### **The Life of Peggy Seeger – Chapters 4 and 21**

The principal sources for Peggy Seeger's early life have been Judith Tick's biography of her mother, Ruth Crawford Seeger, and Peggy Seeger's substantial unpublished writings, augmented by several conversations. Her life, too, is well illustrated in *Parsley, Sage and Politics*. For Pete Seeger, see *How Can I Keep from Singing: Pete Seeger* by David Dunaway. Peggy's life in England is covered extensively by the MacColl/Seeger archive. An invaluable study of her later song writing and life after Ewan's death is Amber Good's prizewinning 2002 thesis *Lady, What Do You Do All Day*. Peggy's informative website is a model of its kind, as is her *Songbook* and its introduction.

### **The Radio Ballads themselves – Chapters 6, 8, 10–15 and 19**

The prime sources for the details of the creation of the Radio Ballads are the documents in the Charles Parker Archive, with some extra material in *Journeyman*, the MacColl/Seeger Archive and the BBC Archive in Caversham. Peggy Seeger went through each of the Radio Ballads with me over a three-day period, and without her insights the book would be substantially poorer. The following living participants all gave interviews (those asterisked spoke over the phone): Jim Bray\*, Ian Campbell, Lorna Campbell, Bob Clark\*, Fitzroy Coleman\*, Bryan Daly, Bob Davenport, Rae Fisher\*, John Faulkner\*, Kay Graham, Ronnie Hughes, Stan Kelly-Bootle, Louis Killen, Jimmie McGregor, Colin Ross\*, Elizabeth Stewart and the back-from-the-dead Dave Swarbrick. Interviewed for research into *John Axon* were the retired Edgeley railwaymen Edwin Bolus, Terry Burkitt, Jack Moores and Johnny Smith, and I'm indebted to the film-maker Andrew Johnston for finding and interviewing Ron Scanlon, Axon's fireman.

Further information on the musicians with a jazz background comes from John Chilton's *Who's Who of British Jazz* and his *Hot Jazz, Warm Feet*, and Bruce Turner's *Hot Air, Cool Music*. An interview with Dave Arthur was particularly helpful on Bert Lloyd's life, ahead of his forthcoming 'Bert' – *A Life of AL Lloyd*. I have drawn heavily on Ian Campbell's unpublished articles, in particular that on *Singing the Fishing*, but also his piece on Centre 42, which was reinforced by Eileen Whiting and Bob Etheridge. The section on the 'Birmingham Ballads' was brought to life by Ian and Lorna Campbell, Brian Vaughton and Alan Ward.

Many people have written articles on the Radio Ballads, and while I haven't quoted from these directly their articles have all been of considerable benefit, notably those of Lawrence Aston, Karl Dallas, Fred McCormick and Ian Parr. Ian, secretary of the Charles Parker Trust, has done pioneering work researching the Radio Ballads and other Charles Parker programmes.

### BBC Voices – Chapter 7

Again, *Prospero and Ariel* and *Broadcasting a Life* are excellent on pre-war broadcasting in Manchester, and in the former Geoffrey Bridson brings the story of BBC radio features up to the Radio Ballad period. For general histories see in particular *A Social History of British Broadcasting* by Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, Sean Street's *A Concise History of British Radio*, and Asa Briggs' *History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*. There are two books both entitled *Life on Air*. David Attenborough's covers the period when television was on the rise, and David Hendy's history of Radio 4 takes us into the modern radio era. Interviews with Sean Street, Piers Plowright, Gabi Fisher and Sara Parker shed light on present-day radio feature making.

### Creating the Radio Ballads – Chapters 9, 16, 17 and 18

The Charles Parker Archive contains his voluminous writings on the difficulties of early recording, in field and studio, and editing. John Clarke, Gillian Ford and Alan Ward, who all worked in the studio with Charles Parker on several of the programmes, were immensely helpful in unravelling the mechanics of the recording and editing process, and bringing the studio to life. So, too, was the late Mary Baker, Charles's editing 'assistant' – a word that does scant justice to her immense contribution – whose explanation of her working life with him is now in the Archive. Edward Pawley's *BBC Engineering 1922–1972* is a solid factual history of engineering in the BBC: other views from the users come from *Prospero and Ariel* and *Corporation Street*.

Both Charles Parker and Ewan MacColl wrote and spoke at length about interviewing methods: for example in their *Singing English* discussion broadcast in 1962 and Charles Parker's paper on *Field Recording Techniques* of 1965. An important source for Ewan's elaborate approach to song writing

for the Radio Ballads is their 1965 *Landmarks* discussion in Beckenham, held in the Parker Archive: *Journeyman* has nothing to say on his precise methods. For the songs themselves and the background to their writing *The Essential Ewan MacColl Songbook* is indeed just that. The principal source for Chapter 18 was Peggy herself, while Tessa Murray improved my negligible musical education.

## **Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger – Chapter 21**

Their lives together are covered in copious detail in the MacColl/Seeger Archive. Peggy Seeger's introduction to Ewan's *Songbook* is compelling and honest, and their early years together are also covered by her own unpublished writings, which extend to the Critics Group and *Festival of Fools* period. That was amplified by interviews with Frankie Armstrong, Bob Blair, Kathy Henderson, Sandra Kerr, Gordon McCulloch, Jim O'Connor and Brian Pearson; conversations with Jimmy Carroll and Denis Turner; and an email exchange with Michael Rosen. *Journeyman* is very selective about Ewan's later life, with some areas completely unmentioned, but I've had much help from Jacquie Dunnet, Karl Dallas, Richard Humm, Neill MacColl, Geordie McIntyre, Ian McDeson, and Alison McMorland – and above all Peggy Seeger herself.

## **Sound in Vision – Chapter 23**

The major source is Philip Donnellan's *Corporation Street*, willingly provided by his widow Jill: I hope it soon finds the publisher it deserves. I'm indebted to Paul Long for providing me with an electronic version, and to Ken Hall for copies of and advice on the three Radio Ballad films.

## **A New Generation – Chapter 24**

The story of the making of the 2006 Radio Ballads is based on interviews with John Leonard, John Tams, Vince Hunt, Sara Parker, Jez Lowe, Julie Matthews and a conversation with Annie Grundy, and the views of Peggy Seeger, Sandra Kerr, Gillian Reynolds and several others. The 2006 programmes are available from Gott Discs.

## **Bibliography, Sources and Footnotes**

Note that a full bibliography, list of sources, and footnotes are available online at [www.setintosong.co.uk](http://www.setintosong.co.uk), together with a complete transcript of the text of the programmes (as recorded, rather than as broadcast).

# List of illustrations

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# Picture acknowledgements

My particular thanks are due to the generosity of Brian Shuel, whose photographs are a magnificent record of the early Folk Revival years; to the family of Eric Fraser, for permission to include his iconic Radio Times illustrations; to Charlotte Tucker at the Birmingham Library digital laboratory; and to Peggy Seeger and Kitty MacColl for their help with the family collection.

Specifically : Eric Fraser family pp. 1, 96, 109; Bryan Ledgard and Mike Harding p. 268; Charles Parker Archive: cover and pp. 19, 86, 166, 234; Punch p. 62; Seeger family collection: cover and pp. 4, 28, 36, 61, 96; Brian Shuel pp. 174, 185, 201, 203, 206, 207, 210, 212, 214, 215, 217, 219, 236, 246; Richard Yeend p. 227.

# Simplified timeline

	Ewan MacColl	Peggy Seeger	Charles Parker
1915	born Salford		
1919			born Bournemouth
1931	first street theatre		
1934	first radio work		
1935	marries Joan Littlewood Theatre of Action	born New York	
1937			National Physical Lab
1938	Theatre Union		
1940	joins and leaves Army		joins Navy
1945	Theatre Workshop, Uranium 235		Cambridge University
1949	marries Jean Newlove		joins BBC
1953	Ballads and Blues	Ratcliffe College	
1954			BBC Midlands
1956	Ewan and Peggy meet – Ramblers		
1957	Ballads and Blues club		
1958	<hr/> <b>First Radio Ballad</b> <hr/>		
1961	Singers Club		
1962			Centre 42 plays
1964	<hr/> <b>Final Radio Ballad</b> <hr/>		
1965	Critics Group starts, first Festival of Fools, Song Carriers		
1967			Grey Cock folk club
1968		first New City Songster	
1972	Critics Group ends, final Festival of Fools		leaves BBC
1974			Banner Theatre
1976	Blackthorne Records		
1977	Ewan and Peggy marry		
1980			dies
1989	dies		
1992		No Spring Chickens with Irene Pyper-Scott	
1994		returns to USA	
2007		teaching songwriting in Boston	

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