



Chansons & musiques traditionnelles des îles anglo-normandes / Traditional Music & Songs of the Channel Islands

Yvon Davy, Éva Guillorel, Étienne Lagrange, and Robert Bouthillier. English translation by Roland Scales. Vire (Normandy): Association La Loure, 2018. 128 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Discography. CD. ISBN 978-2-9552420-2-5. €18.00.
<http://laloure.org/spip.php?article663>

This is a slim volume of 128 pages, physically not much bigger than my treasured 1973 copy of the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*. There the similarity ends, however, except for the quality of the contents. This is a truly bilingual volume, the text being in French and English throughout, either on facing pages or in sequential passages, making it easy to follow. Originally written in their native language by three distinguished French folklorists, the text has been knowledgeably and sensitively translated into English by Roly Scales. It does not read like a translation but is very accessible and highly informative. Indeed, it is perhaps unjust to say that the book is in two languages, since the preamble on the first page is in four: standard French, English, Jersey French (Jèrrais), and Guernsey French (Dgèrnésiais), and they are all very distinct. This is a very effective introduction which makes the reader pause and realize that we are dealing with a complex culture.

The book is in colour and lavishly illustrated with photos (many also in colour) of the islands and the informants. It also contains a CD of all the musical material. The contents are in three sections. The first provides an introduction to the islands, a history of folk music research there, and an overview of their music, song, and dance. This provides a context for the material, including its links to that of both mainland Britain and France, especially Normandy. Although some fieldwork was undertaken by the authors and a few others, most of the material in the book is taken from the previous research done by Peter Kennedy (much under the auspices of the BBC) and Claudie Marcel-Dubois on behalf of the French Musée national des arts et traditions populaires. As might be expected of a publication from l'Association La Loure, an important folk organization in Normandy, the reader is referred for further information to the major works on the subject, including Kennedy's *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* and Patrice Coirault's *Le répertoire des chansons françaises de tradition orale*. This may all sound a bit dry, but not a bit of it. For example, details are given of the influence of the church on local festivities, with the banning of dancing and singing at various times over the centuries. Such bans appear to have had little effect on the irrepressible nature of the Channel Islanders as regards their singing, though sadly it seems that any dances of purely local origin have died out. There is also a wonderful pen portrait

of a local singer/informant, John Le Feuvre from the island of Sark, who once he got started singing seems to have been hard to stop.

The second section details the recordings themselves: there are forty of these, all on the accompanying CD. There are thirty-one songs, six dance tunes, and three spoken items. Five of the songs are in English, the rest being in some form of French, with one notable exception. Although only five are in 'pure' Channel Island French, two from Jersey and three from Guernsey, many of the ostensibly mainland French songs are larded with Channel Island dialect words. The notable exception is a song in Breton: a kind of 'garden escape'. All of the songs and tunes come with scores and a full set of words in the case of the songs. Every item has an introductory description in French and English, plus details of the informant, including a photograph where possible. English songs have a summary provided in French, and vice versa. Where the local language has been used summaries are provided in English and French. This is the one area where I think the book is weak: full translations would have been so much better. I can only think that this is the result of budgetary constraints, and it is a shame. Although, as mentioned earlier, the vast majority of the items were first collected by Peter Kennedy, only twenty-nine of the recordings on the CD are from his work, the remainder being from later recordings by French and British collectors.

The final section consists of appendices which include full informant credits for each of the islands, an excellent bibliography of relevant British and French works, a discography of related material, and details of other work done by the publishers, l'Association La Loure. This is very professionally done and should prove a mine of information.

The book has set out with the ambitious target of satisfying two readerships, French and British, who will not necessarily have the same expectations. Much of the song content will, in theory at least, already be familiar to British folk enthusiasts, being based on Peter Kennedy's published work. This may disappoint some readers looking for novelty. However, it is likely that French readers will be less familiar with the material and will find it appealing, especially since the authors have taken the trouble to include several different French dialects of the islands as used in the songs. I find little to criticize and much to praise in this book, and at €18.00 it is a snip. It provides an excellent and enjoyable introduction to the culture of this ancient part of Elizabeth's domains.

Simon Furey

Sant Miquel de Fluvià, Girona, Spain

Billy Purvis: The First Professional Geordie

Dave Harker. Wisecrack Publications, 2018. 140 pp. Illustrations. Index of Names. Sources. ISBN 978-0-9957418-2-9. £15.00. (1 Ouseburn Wharf, St Lawrence Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 1BY)

Dave Harker has been researching the Victorian Tyneside music hall composers and performers such as George Ridley, Ned Corvan, and Joe Wilson, issuing