

Some Adelaide Background to the Rise of Folk Music Studies in England, focussing on the Life of Charles Latimer Marson *

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Charles Latimer Marson, clergyman and author, was born on 16 May 1859 at Woking, as the third child and eldest son of Charles Marson (1822-1895), who served as Vicar of Birmingham 1864-1871, and Vicar of St Andrews, Clevedon, from 1871, and of Ann Woolley's three sons and five daughters. His grandfather, also Charles, was recorded variously as an ironmonger in Dover Road, Southwark and as a gentleman ironmaster in Staffordshire, and his grandmother was a daughter of Dr Gatti, perfumer, of Bond Street, London. His father attended Christ Church College, Oxford (B.A., 1845, M.A. 1847), and on 4 April 1854 as a Clerk in Orders, of 46 Great Ormond Street, London, married Ann Jane Woolley (1827-1888), daughter of Joseph Woolley, gentleman, of 9 Undercliff Street, St Leonards, Sussex.

While attending University College, Oxford, from 1878 (BA 1881, MA 1885) Charles became a close friend of Ronald and Charles Bayne, his future brothers-in-law, and later influential men such as Robert Chalmers (Lord Chalmers), and Alfred Milner (Lord Milner). He joined the Whitechapel Settlement (later Toynbee Hall) in 1881 when Samuel Barnett, Vicar of St Jude's, was Warden. He stayed until 1884, then taking up the curacy at St Michael's in Petersham. During this period he was contributing to many journals including *The Christian Socialist*, of which he was editor 1884-1887. After several short-lived appointments, poor health caused a transfer to Orlestone, Kent, in 1886, where he followed George Sarson, a Christian socialist and a disciple of F.D. Maurice.

* This article is adapted by the editors from Hugh Anderson's longer draft article on C.L. Marson (1859 - 1914), recently prepared for the English *Dictionary of National Biography* and it is followed by some related points from his much earlier published article — 'Virtue in a Wilderness: Cecil Sharp's Australian Sojourn, 1882-19892', in the *Folk Music Journal*, vol. 6, no. 5,(1992), pp. 617-652 — concerned with Cecil Sharp's time in South Australia between 1882 and 1892. Apart from the biographical interest, there would, surely, be Australian experiences that could shed light to some degree Sharp's later career and collecting in England.

Marson wrote a reply to the arguments put forward by E.E. Aveling in *Christianity and Capitalism* (1884), as his first publication in book form. Most of his later texts were published after 1900, but *The Psalms at Work* (1894, 1895, 1898 and 1909), and *The Following of Christ with a Preface by Canon Scott Holland* (two eds. 1895, and [1916]), were well received. Possibly his most popular publication was *Huppín and Muppín* (1903) and with the addition of *And Ard* including a memoir by Scott Holland (2nd impression 1915), *God's Cooperative Society* (1914) was reissued in 1930, with two biographical memoirs.

Of lasting and major importance to the study of English folk songs was *Folksongs from Somerset*, gathered and edited by C.J. Sharp and C.L. Marson, and first published in 1904. In the Preface to the new edition (with Memoir) of *Village Silhouettes* (1930), Marson recalled that

people were once kind enough to applaud the writer for his discovery of a great gold mine of beautiful song in Somerset and he is glad to have discovered this... .

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Clotilda Bayne, when in her third year at Newnham College, Cambridge, took part in the Women's University Association's work in the poorer districts of London, and so met Charles Latimer Marson. At the University of Cambridge from 1885 to 1889, she was Winkworth Scholar in 1885 and completed the Classics Tripos in 1888. Clotilda or Clothilda (but usually Chloe) was born on 12 December 1865, the daughter of Dr Peter Bayne (1830-1896) and Klothilde Dorothy Gerwein, had begun her education in Germany, but then continued it in England.

Meanwhile it was arranged that Charles Latimer Marson would accompany his brother Frank to Australia, but Frank died suddenly and so Charles sailed alone on *SS Austral* in May 1889, to serve as Curate of St Peters, Glenelg, and, later, of St Oswald, Parkside, in Adelaide. Charles was soon in trouble for his 'eccentricities', both in church services and in contributions to the local newspapers. He advocated the confessional and defended barmaids, he preached sermons in favour of Aborigines and addressed striking maritime workers. He also formed the first branch in Australia of the Fabian Society, but was forced out of St Peters in July 1891 for being 'too socialistic'.

In January 1890, 'distracted in mind' Chloe telegraphed Charles- 'coming May, Marson, Glenelg, Adelaide' — and by early April was on her way to Italy. At Naples she joined the *Orizaba*, arriving in Adelaide on 3 June 1890. Two days later they were married, with Cecil Sharp

'playing father' in giving away the bride. During their time in Adelaide, Chloe tutored and was active in campaigning for women's suffrage. Their only daughter, Mary, was born in 1891, and a son, John, born in 1896, was later killed at Gallipoli in 1915.

Marson left for England after a few years, hoping to pursue an academic career, departing Adelaide 20 April 1892. Between 1892 and June 1895, when he was appointed perpetual Vicar at St James the Less, Hambridge, Marson occupied positions in Clapham, Somers Town, and St Marys, Soho, where he upset the establishment by writing in support of the cab strike and inviting socialist figures to his pulpit. At Hambridge, Marson drew the attention of Cecil Sharp to the singing of 'The Seeds of Love' by John England and provided the initial stimulus for Sharp's career as a song collector. On 3 March 1914, the 'much esteemed Vicar of Hambridge' succumbed to *angina pectoris*. He had appeared bright and cheery earlier said one obituary, as

with a kind word for all, he passed through the village, making many calls among his people, by whom he was always welcomed'.....His Christianity was essentially of a practical type, as exemplified by many a kind and generous act that spoke louder than words'. Apart from his striking personality he was an eminent scholar, and the author of many well-known works of literary excellence on religious, social, economic and piscatorial subjects.

At his funeral on 14 March, attended by more than 500 people, the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, George Wyndham Kennion who led the service indicated that he had known Marson longer than most, since he had been Marson's bishop also in Adelaide (1882-1894). Kennion spoke extravagantly about his earlier troublesome priest, maintaining that

he had watched all along with admiration the consistency of his character, the devotion of his life and the fearlessness with which he spoke out to people who might disagree with him.

Yet Kennion had admitted to the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline in 1905 that 'Mr Marson and I are unable to see things from the same point of view'.

Clothilda died on 20 December 1952 after living in Hendon, North London for several decades. Mrs Marson supported herself after her husband's death by writing and lecturing for many years, and did historical research in the 1930s on James Scott, the natural son of Charles II and Lucy Walter.

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Marson, Cecil Sharp and Adelaide

Editors

[For some background to this interesting link with conscience, the church, and the voices or music of the people, readers are referred to the same author's already mentioned long article of 1994. For a measure of completeness for the article above, there is now given our summary of some of the salient points made by H. Anderson in his detailed and scrupulously fair account of Sharp's time in Australia.]

The existing scholarship of the life of Cecil Sharp (1859-1924), including the biography, *Cecil Sharp (1933)*, by A.H. Fox Strangeways, is shown by Anderson to have been cursory in the details of the musician's experiences over the decade, 1882-1892, which he had spent in Adelaide, and these writings were much lacking in any close

assessment as to how this portion of his life may have shaped his views and influenced his later career. (p.617)

Accordingly, the article sets out to clarify this in this short resume and in a closely analytical piece, one supported by nearly 140 sourced footnotes, Anderson explored the official version of events, noting how both Sharp himself and his private secretary Maud Karples, perhaps tailored the published record for assisting the projection of a somewhat different image. For the years in Australia immediately followed the young Sharp's time in Cambridge studying mathematics and only achieving an ordinary degree in that discipline, and so would seem to be much more important than was the case in their somewhat cursory treatment.

The South Australian years constituted a colonial experience wished on Sharp by his father who seems to have desired or preferred for his son a career other than music, and perhaps to take 'holy orders on my return', his mother too deeming that a musical career must cause a musician to 'lose caste'. However, the decade would seem to have turned the young Cecil Sharp from an amateur into a professional musician, and it is fascinating how Anderson charts this course, from time spent in temporary positions that came up to contacts with various figures in musical circles, such as

- Walter D. Reed, Honorary Secretary to/ Director of the Adelaide String Quartet, who commented that Sharp was a wonderful accompanist as well as playing on the xylophone;

- his later career as their pianist and musical director from May 1883 (p.639);
- his progressive conviction that his forte was music, this resulting finally in his resignation in 1889 from his (clerical) duties as an Associate to the Chief Justice;
- this last soon followed by his inspirational part in the work of the Adelaide College of Music (which would be finally absorbed into the University of Adelaide as the Elder Conservatorium in 1898); and
- his association with the Adelaide Philharmonic Society, something deemed by Anderson to have been over-inflated in the biographic records.

There are also confused stories as to his time spent as an organist, organ teacher, etc., not least because of Sharp's involvement with and slowly being assimilated to the lower levels of the expanding (colonial) ruling class — a situation which would — in a sort of parallel — be repeated on his return to England, where he apparently used certain Adelaide-period associations with some titled Governors of Australian states to get the teaching post at Ludgrove, the preparatory school for Eton, and then the position of music teacher to the Royal Family (p.625).

There were for Cecil several return trips to England during the ten Adelaide years — in 1885-1886, and again in 1891, when he failed to get compositions published. In 1893 he moved permanently to England, although as late as 1911 Sharp was still talking of returning to Australia. And Anderson concludes this section thus:

There are many mysteries relating to the reasons why he came to Australia, how he obtained his position in the public service, and why he gave it up, but it is clear that he never had the material and professional success he desired above all else as a musician. (p.626)

Anderson sees the Sharp career as part of the progress, much more possible in Adelaide as the centre of the Wakefield colony than in the other Australian states, of such an individual moving into the mode and manner of a gentleman, illustrating this by reference to the friends made there by Sharp, particularly those educated at the older English universities. Yet by far the most important friend Sharp would make in Adelaide, and an association of the greatest significance for the future, would be Charles Latimer Marson whom he met at a dinner held at the University in July, 1889, liking the other immensely on first encounter.

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Towards the middle of his scholarly investigation, Anderson focuses in on Sharp the man in a section entitled 'Surviving in the Wilderness', where he argues very persuasively that the social dimension of that Wakefield settlement and state, South Australia, are of crucial significance in understanding the emerging personality of Sharp, and so omission of that surely formative influence in earlier biographical work was a serious omission indeed. And so he argues that Sharp's biographers

did not understand how Adelaide was founded upon a Utopian dream of civil and religious liberty [being] practically a dissenter's colony,

with the transplanting there of the better and more traditional English society and of the pursuing by many of the groups of settlers of 'a desire for respectability without hierarchy' (p.634). However, the economic collapse of the same state while Sharp was there also had the result that he did not have the professional or the material success that he expected.

A linked strand to these years of personal search is that Sharp would be come engaged to an English girl he had long known, and met again during his 1885 visit to 'home', to finally become engaged in January 1893, and married later that year, on 22 August, after various consultations with his friend, the Rev. Charles Marson.

'Questions without Answers' — this is the title of Anderson's last section (p.647) which may now be quoted:

As I understand the genre, biography is saturated by subjectivity, and is so much more than the documentation that has been attempted in this article. The bulk of the material used [by Anderson], it should be emphasised, was available to both Fox Strangeways and Maud Karples in the 1930s, but it has surprised me that it would differ to such a degree about what was significant information. With a large degree of optimism in the beginning, I was first thinking of calling this article 'Cecil Sharp in Australia: Some Conclusions', but this is beyond my grasp. I must therefore admit I can reach few firm conclusions, but I hope to have at least raised some basic questions about Cecil Sharp's Australian sojourn.

It will be clear from all of this research by Hugh Anderson that there is more to be said about the impact of the society of Adelaide on both Sharp and Marson as very young men, and so on their role in the mental climate of their circle and its possible impact on the collecting and recording of English folk music.

We would hope that these contacts can be teased out in further research, perhaps by scholars in England.