

The Lancashire Society

The Noise We Mek! at Parbold Library



The first launch event for the project assisted by the grant provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund was held at Parbold library on Friday 24th September 2010. Although we had extensively advertised the event in the local papers and through the library contacts, there was no way of knowing how many people would turn up – if any! As the start time approached though, it was obvious that we would have an audience as a few people were starting to come into the library and sit on the chairs that we had placed around our performance area and by the time Mark Dowding called everyone to order, the library staff were having to place more chairs for the 30 or more people who had come to see us.

Mark started the proceedings by explaining what the Society was and its origins from the Lancashire Dialect Society and then went on to describe the project in outline explaining that the other members of the group would give more details of the different aspects of the project later in the show.



Alex Fisher gave an excellent demonstration of different styles of clog dancing accompanied by Chris Pollington on his accordion, leaving everybody breathless at the speed of her stepping. The audience was showing interest in the different clogs she had brought with her including a tiny pair that Miners used to put in their Tommy tins (lunch boxes) for good luck!

After a song from the canals by Mark it was time for Barbara Hindley to explain the importance of collecting recordings to demonstrate the way accents and dialect are changing and why we need to collect examples of speech from both older and younger generations to archive for future researchers to be able to study.



Following a break for a cup of tea and a chat with the audience (including one of Mark's teachers from his primary school days over 40 years ago), it was the turn of Chris Pollington to tell us about the technical side of our project with a very good demonstration of the quality of the equipment we have bought with the Heritage Lottery Fund grant.



Mark had provided some recordings that he had in his possession about people talking about the canal in 1992 on cassette recorders. The first recording was very poor in quality with a very pronounced hum throughout which made listening very difficult. The second recording that Mark had made himself was certainly better quality but there was still ambient background noise present and the speaker seemed 'distant'.

The final recording made by Mark recently on the Marantz audio recorder with a Rode shotgun microphone made everybody sit up – the quality was crystal clear with no hum or background noise and the nuances of the speaker's voice could be picked out which is an important fact when people are trying to study the way people talk in a particular accent.

A couple of songs from the cotton industry by Andy Hindley punctuated the proceedings before Mark gave a demonstration of reading dialect verse using a couple of willing volunteers from the audience – an elderly lady who spoke with a recognizable Lancashire accent and a young boy. Whilst both of the volunteers made a very good attempt at the first two verses of Samuel Laycock's classic poem 'Bowton's Yard' it was obvious that the unfamiliarity of the piece was making them read the piece slowly whilst they tried to understand the dialect words as they came across them. Mark read the rest of the poem at a speed that demonstrated that once you have learnt the dialect words and after a bit of practice, it can become second nature to read such works. This aspect of the project is to find speakers familiar with the dialect from where the writer was living (in Samuel Laycock's case then this would be Stalybridge) and record them reciting the work for future generations to listen to.



A request for another poem was taken on by Mark who recited Harvey Kershaw's excellent 'Drawin' t' Rents'.

Mark brought the evening to a close by thanking everybody for turning up and invited people to come and ask questions to anyone of the group. A number of people expressed an interest in recording their memories and there were people from various groups who were interested in us doing the event for them at a later date.

Thanks go to Maggie Bracegirdle and her staff at Parbold Library for providing the excellent facilities and also extensive advertising of the event around the village without which we wouldn't have had so many people turning up.

Mark Dowding
25th September 2010