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[See table of contents](#)

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# Maud Karpeles, Newfoundland, and the Crisis of the Folksong Revival, 1924-1935

DAVID GREGORY

MAUD KARPELES' COLLECTING TRIPS to Newfoundland in 1929 and 1930 may be seen as the last important activities of the Late Victorian and Edwardian folk music revival, a coda to the work of Cecil Sharp.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, Karpeles made use of no technology more advanced than her typewriter, although she was aware of the experiments with the use of the phonograph made before the war by Grainger, Sharp, Vaughan Williams and Marjorie Kennedy-Fraser.<sup>2</sup> Her work was nonetheless important, being one of three pioneering collections of Newfoundland traditional song that laid a foundation upon which later collectors and researchers could build.<sup>3</sup> Karpeles' experiences in Newfoundland were significant events in her life, and, given her dedication to and prominent role within the English folk music movement, that meant they had a resonance on both sides of the Atlantic. This study has three aims: to explain who Maud Karpeles was and why she came to Newfoundland, to survey what she looked for and what she found there, and to examine the impact that her experience had on her subsequent work and the course of the English folksong revival.

Karpeles was a latecomer to the Edwardian folk revival, yet by her close association with Sharp she was nonetheless part of it. The younger daughter of a Jewish businessman, she had studied piano in Berlin after leaving secondary school in 1906, but the turning point of her life was undoubtedly meeting Cecil Sharp in Stratford-on-Avon in May 1909.<sup>4</sup> She quickly fell under the spell of Sharp's charismatic personality, and soon came to love the style of folk dancing that Sharp was then seeking to revive and promote. A founder member of both the London Folk Dance Club and the English Folk Dance Society, Karpeles was by 1912 one of the EFDS's demonstration dancers and a member of Sharp's teaching staff. The next year she became his secretary, and from then until his death she was his

constant companion and devoted helper.<sup>5</sup> “The faithful Maud” was how Sharp characterized her, and he took to introducing her as his “adopted daughter.”<sup>6</sup> They spent three years together in the USA, with Maud accompanying Cecil on his extended lecture tours, teaching summer schools on folk dancing, and, most important of all, collecting songs in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. On those expeditions Maud was responsible for recording the words while Sharp noted the tunes.<sup>7</sup> She continued to assist Sharp when he resumed collecting traditional song and dance in England after the war.

Why did Maud Karpeles take passage for St. John’s, and why did she do so in early September, 1929? The short answer is that she was fulfilling a promise made to Sharp during the last days of his life: that she would do her best to carry on his work. The two of them had first considered visiting Newfoundland in 1918, and had then planned a trip for 1925. They had hoped that the colony, which they perceived as remote, rural and isolated, would prove as good as the Appalachians as a source of old British folksongs. Why, then, did Maud wait five years before fulfilling her promise? Sharp’s death in 1924 hit her very hard, and she became depressed and disoriented. She wrote in her draft autobiography that “After Cecil Sharp’s death I felt I was left groping in a sunless world.... After the [EFDS Summer School of 1925] was over and every one but me had departed, something seemed to snap. I felt very lonely and helpless and it was difficult to know what immediate step to take.”<sup>8</sup> She threw herself into the routine work of the EFDS: administration, organizing, demonstration dancing, and teaching, doing anything she could to help her sister Helen, the EFDS Honorary Secretary and Helen’s husband, Douglas Kennedy, the new EFDS Director. For a while it seemed uncertain whether the EFDS, minus Sharp, would survive, and Maud took over as Secretary in an effort to keep the ship afloat. By the late twenties that crisis seemed to be over, and in 1928 Maud gladly relinquished her administrative duties.<sup>9</sup> But by then the fund-raising campaign that would eventually result in the construction of Cecil Sharp House was in full swing. It was another draw on her time and energy, and she felt unable to leave England for long until the foundation of Sharp’s memorial had been laid. She was the principal speaker at the stone-laying ceremony on June 24th, 1929.<sup>10</sup>

The formation of the English Folk Dance Society in 1911 had formalized a split within the Edwardian folk revival between those (including George Butterworth and Ralph Vaughan Williams) who agreed with Sharp’s agenda and those (such as Mary Neal and Frank Kidson) with whom Sharp was in public or private dispute. The Folk-Song Society had remained at the heart of the movement and had continued to publish its *Journal* annually, but after World War I it failed to regain the energy and effectiveness that it had exhibited in its Edwardian heyday. Very little new song collecting was being done in England in the 1920s, although one new recruit, the composer E. J. “Jack” Moeran, did discover a few new ‘source’ singers in Norfolk and Suffolk, most notably Harry Cox.<sup>11</sup> Cecil Sharp, for all his faults, was sorely missed, as were Henry Hammond, George Gardiner, George

Butterworth, Frank Kidson and others whose deaths reduced in number the small group of active song-collectors. In consequence the pages of the *Journal* were filled with material noted before the war, or with Gaelic songs collected in Ireland or the Isle of Man. The English folksong revival was running out of steam, and the Folk-Song Society was gradually dying of inertia. It would cease to exist as an independent body at the end of 1931 when it was merged with the English Folk Dance Society.

Maud Karpeles, like E. J. Moeran, swam against the stream. She had resumed collecting in a small way in 1925, obtaining information on Morris Dances at Upton-on-Severn in Worcestershire. 1926 saw her looking for sword dances in Yorkshire and elsewhere in the north of England: she initially found only fragments but later noted a Sword Dance play at Bellerby.<sup>12</sup> The next year she used her vacation to collect mumming and dance tunes in Gloucestershire, and in 1928 did the same in Devon, also returning to Northumberland to collect country dances.<sup>13</sup> All this activity gradually convinced her that she was capable of undertaking solo the major expedition she and Sharp had planned for 1925. What still worried her, though, was her ability to note tunes by ear, a skill that with characteristic doggedness she practised for several years before deciding she was sufficiently expert.<sup>14</sup> By 1929 she felt confident enough to give it a shot, although still with considerable trepidation. And events conspired to give her the opportunity. Invited to direct a folk music summer school at Amherst, Mass., and to participate in an EFDS dance team tour of the USA and Canada in November, Maud found herself with nearly two months to spare in North America.<sup>15</sup> Newfoundland beckoned.

Karpeles' first collecting trip lasted from 9th September to 29th October, 1929. She returned to Newfoundland the next summer, spending the month of July and the first week of August there. Altogether she noted approximately two hundred and thirty items (that is, tunes and/or lyrics), including about one hundred different songs, the remainder being near-duplicates, variants, or fragments.<sup>16</sup> Thirty of these appeared in print in 1934, dressed up in piano arrangements by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Clive Carey, Hubert Foss, and Michael Mullinar, in an Oxford University Press songbook titled *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*.<sup>17</sup> Thirty-six years would pass before more fruits of Maud's labours were published, in the 1971 volume of the same title published by Faber & Faber.<sup>18</sup> That book, which is regrettably now out of print, contained three dance tunes and eighty-nine songs, plus some variant tunes and texts. Karpeles' editorial approach was more scholarly second time around; rather than composite versions intended for performance the songs were now presented as collected, with variants and with some details about the singer and the date and place of collection. One would like more contextual information about the informants and their lives, but Maud did not obtain that in 1929-30 and so it was not available to her when she edited the collection in the sixties.

White middle-class folksong collectors usually receive a bad press these days, even if they are women. Their activities are often viewed as exercises in "cultural

politics" and denounced as classist interventions motivated by hidden or not-so-hidden agendas.<sup>19</sup> Karpeles spent so little time in Newfoundland that it would be difficult to convict her of in any way damaging the local culture. Nor does it seem reasonable to rebuke an English woman for being primarily interested in songs of English origin. Nonetheless, her method of collecting has been criticized as "ethnocentric", extensively influenced by "conservative ideological biases" and, to use Carole Henderson Carpenter's phrase "paternalistic-colonialist."<sup>20</sup> These pejorative labels have a political ring, and they are misleading. They project a picture of Karpeles' world-view that is fundamentally inaccurate.

Maud was far from ethnocentric; on the contrary, cosmopolitan would be a better way of describing her outlook.<sup>21</sup> In one sense, "colonialist" is fair enough, since Maud did think of Newfoundland as a British colony, despite its formal status as a Dominion with representative government.<sup>22</sup> In another sense, however, it is misleading, since Maud in no way opposed Newfoundland's autonomy or supported those English politicians (such as Joseph Chamberlain and Winston Churchill) who advocated an imperial federation centred on the United Kingdom. Nor was she ideologically conservative. She was not much interested in party politics, but her general outlook might be best described as liberal, progressive and internationalist.<sup>23</sup> "Paternalistic" also seems too harsh. It is true that Maud came from an urban, middle-class background and that she embraced wholeheartedly Cecil Sharp's mission of collecting English rural vernacular song before it had vanished entirely.<sup>24</sup> But she was not overbearing or snobbish in her dealings with the singers she located. On the contrary, Maud treated her Newfoundland informants as equals, she was pleased when they showed interest in her project, and she established several enduring friendships while visiting the island. She had no notion of "saving" Newfoundland songs for Newfoundlanders who were unable to do so for themselves. While in Newfoundland in 1929, she became aware that Gerald Doyle was compiling a bigger book of "home-grown" Newfoundland songs and that Elisabeth Greenleaf was also noting local material of this type, and she welcomed those initiatives.<sup>25</sup> But she saw her own task as different.

Karpeles certainly had her own agenda: it was to find in Newfoundland oral tradition as many examples of English ballads and folk lyrics as she could. For Maud to note it down a song had to be old, traditional, and an authentic folksong according to Sharpean criteria. She rejected sentimental songs and drawing room ballads, anything touched by what Peter Van der Merwe has characterized as "the parlour modes,"<sup>26</sup> anything that smacked of the music hall or of commercial pop music, anything composed recently, and anything published (except, of course, by Child, Sharp and the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*). She was not interested in shanties, and she spurned songs about fishing, sealing, tragedies at sea, and historical events, even when such songs met her rigorous criteria for genuine folk music. We will never know exactly what she rejected as "too modern," although the non-British songs included by Elisabeth Greenleaf and Grace Mansfield (eds.)

in their 1933 collection, *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*, give us some clues.<sup>27</sup> It is easy to wish that Maud had been less focused and more eclectic in her collecting. But the other side of the coin is that her time in Newfoundland was limited; she knew what she was looking for, and, to a large degree, she found it. Had she been less single minded, more easily satisfied, she could have stayed closer to St. John's and filled her notebooks with whatever local material came to hand. There would have been no need to find the courage to brave the rough seas of Hermitage Bay in a tiny boat to reach such remote communities as Grole and Pass Island or to bang on the door of "a terrible little shack — the dirtiest and most tumbledown place I have ever seen" — in Stock Cove.<sup>28</sup>

Maud Karpeles needed a lot of courage to travel as an unaccompanied woman in Newfoundland in 1929 and 1930. Only a dedicated, eccentric, and very determined person would have done so. One has to admire her for what she accomplished under extremely difficult circumstances, and accept her collection for what it is: a fairly extensive record of the provenance of British folk ballads and lyrics in oral tradition in eastern Newfoundland at the end of the 1920s, no more, no less. In many ways the 1971 version of *Folk Songs from Newfoundland* is a fine collection, but unfortunately it is not complete. Maud did not include all variants, she omitted songs for which she was unable to obtain good tunes and also some tunes for which she lacked lyrics, and she excluded a number of songs that she may have judged of lesser value. Nine of these are items that, in 1929-30, she had considered worthy of making a fair copy of the tune and typing up the full words. They are "Sailor in the North Countree," "Constant Farmer's Son," "The Poor Irish Girl," "The Merchant's Daughter," "Sailor from Dover," "Betsy," "Sligo Shore," "Loch Erin's Sweet Riverside" and "Scenes of Old Erin."<sup>29</sup> There are others too, such as "Claudy Banks," "The Croppy Boy" and "The Sailor Cut Down in his Prime," but in these instances Maud collected the tune but not the words, or she never translated the words from the idiosyncratic form of Pitman shorthand in which she originally noted them. Ideally, at some time in the future, it may be possible to produce a complete scholarly edition of Karpeles' Newfoundland collecting from the field notebooks and diaries held in the MUN archives, but to do so it will be necessary to crack the code of her shorthand.

A detailed description of Karpeles' two collecting trips would require a book. What follows, then, is a brief outline of where she went, with a few highlights from each region. From St. John's she took the narrow-gauge railway to Trinity and did her first "prospecting" (her term) on the West shore of Trinity Bay, finding West Champneys the most fruitful outpost of those she visited. She was then driven north over bumpy mud and gravel roads to King's Cove on the northern shore of the Bonavista peninsula, which she made her base for visiting the nearby outposts of Stock Cove, Tickle Cove, Broad Cove and Openhall. Of these the poverty-stricken Irish community at Stock Cove proved the most fruitful source of songs, including "The Sea Captain," "Proud Lady Margaret," "The Bonny Labouring Boy" and "The

Outlandish Knight,” while in King’s Cove she noted, among others, “The Maiden’s Lament” and “The Bonny Banks of Virgie-o.” These extracts from Maud’s field-diary give the flavour of the community of Stock Cove and Maud’s reception in it, as she perceived the situation:

Called on Joanie Ryan.... Got her to sing and with utmost difficulty took down tune and words. The room gradually filled with men, women and children, and before I had finished there must have been about a dozen people there — all highly interested and entertained. Then went on to see old Mrs. Mahoney, and from there got passed on from one person to another. Everyone most friendly and delighted to see me. My calling on Joanie Ryan evidently tickled their fancies. They are very puzzled and cannot make out what I want songs for, and are convinced I am going to make a lot of money out of them, or that I want them for the words, or I am on the stage, etc., etc. They are all Irish people and I might be in an Irish village. Evidently a lot of songs about, but they have got covered up by the new songs and most people have to dig into their memories to recall them. I am creating a great impression by the number of songs I ‘know,’ i.e., those I don’t want ... Saw Sets, i.e., Square Dances, Reels and Kissing Dance. Wonderfully vigorous and rhythmic dancing, the characteristic thing being the stepping of the men, but of no use for purposes of revival. I sang and taught them a figure of Running set, much to their delight...If only I had more aptitude for taking down [the tunes]. It is slow work and so I get very few down — the singers, too, are difficult, because they vary so much from verse to verse. Impossible, even for good musicians, to get down all that they sing.... I am amazed at [the] social distinction between Stock Cove and King’s Cove. ‘We (as Stock Cove people say) are just the common people.’ They evidently like my visits. One woman said, ‘she is the best person that has come amongst us. Wherever she goes there is singing and dancing,’ and another, ‘Isn’t she lovely; she’s just like one of us.’ They are all expecting me to find a young man and settle down there, and one young man got to the length of asking me if I had a boy in King’s Cove. I felt that it was time to give some indication of my age.<sup>30</sup>

Maud was actually 43 at the time. At the end of September she reluctantly decided it was time that she move on, further north and west. Another branch line of the railway took her to Lewisporte, and from there she took a boat to Fortune Harbour on Notre Dame Bay. Here she was disconcerted to find that she had been scooped by Greenleaf and Mansfield and also that because her visit coincided with that of some Roman Catholic priests her prospective informants were spending most of their time in church. She nonetheless picked up a few folksongs of the type she was looking for, including “William Taylor,” “The Unquiet Grave,” “The Lover’s Ghost” and “The Simple Ploughboy.”

By now Maud had used up more than half the time she had available, and she had to make a difficult decision: whether to go further west to the Baie Verte peninsula, explore the islands of Twillingate and Fogo to the north-east, or return to the Baccalieu peninsula east of Trinity Bay. She opted for the latter, taking a boat

and train back to the relative civilization of Harbour Grace. The remainder of her collecting that fall was done on the western shore of Conception Bay, with Clarke's Beach as her base. Of the dozen or so outports she visited during the remainder of October, the community that she found the most productive — a "gold mine," in her phrase — was North River, where lived a mix of families descended from both Irish and West of England settlers: the McCabes, Flinns, Boones, Snows, Halls, Fillers and Sinclairs.<sup>31</sup> The many ballads Maud collected in this region included "Little Musgrave," "Lord Bateman," "Riddles Wisely Expounded," "Still Growing," and one of her favourites, "The Bloody Gardener." Then on the 26th of October she returned to St. John's and the obligation of giving a lecture at Memorial College. Sorting through her notebooks to see what songs she might pull out to illustrate her talk, she realized for the first time just how successful her trip had been. As she commented in her diary, "Mr. Emerson is delighted with [my tunes] and I realize more than I did what a high standard they are. They compare very favourably with the English collecting although they fall far short of the Appalachian."<sup>32</sup>

A fastidious, middle-class lady who hated dirt, flies, primitive outhouses and long waits for delayed trains and steamers, Maud had not always found collecting in Newfoundland easy. Her sense of relief at finally returning to hot running water in St. John's was palpable. But she had done what she set out to do, and she had made a lot of friends. The warmth with which she had been welcomed into outport communities, especially those at Stock Cove and North River, meant a great deal to her, as did the close friendship she made with Mr. and Mrs. Emerson in St. John's. She knew that she had only explored one part of Newfoundland, the bays of the north-east coast, and that there was a good chance that the outports of the Southern Shore and the south coast would yield a similar treasury of old songs. But she was also well aware of the logistical difficulties she would encounter travelling in the south of the island. It was therefore with mixed feelings that she returned to Newfoundland in the summer of 1930.

In the event, her fortunes were also mixed. The first region she visited was the western coast of the Avalon peninsula, with Placentia as her base. Here she found more variants of songs collected the previous year, plus a couple of gems: "The Streams of Lovely Nancy" and the song that has become the best-known of all that she collected, "She's Like the Swallow," sung by John Hunt at Dunville on July 8th. Then came a rough and foggy crossing of Placentia Bay: "an awful trip — very rough and impossible to get a cabin.... Sat in the dining saloon for three hours fortifying myself with draughts of brandy and then succumbed and had to go down into the ladies saloon where I was abominably sick."<sup>33</sup> This took her to the Burin peninsula where she spent the best part of a week visiting such communities as Marystown, Beau Bois, Salmonier, Frenchman's Cove and Garnish. Her informants in this area were mainly descendants of English settlers from Dorset and Devon, and so even when the songs she obtained were variants on those collected



the previous year they often differed significantly from the Irish versions. And there were new songs too: "The Rich Merchant's Daughter," "Nancy of Yarmouth," "Floro" and "Hind Horn," among others. Then it was time to endure another sea crossing, this time across Fortune Bay in an open motor boat to Belleoram on the south coast.

Belleoram itself proved too industrial, but the neighbouring outport of St. Jacques yielded some songs, including "Lord Bateman," while another motor-boat ride to the remote and isolated outport of Rencontre East landed Maud at what she described as "one of the most beautiful places" she had ever been and, coincidentally, a good location for collecting versions of such Child ballads as "Hind Horn," "Lamkin" and "Lord Thomas of Winesberry." From Rencontre Maud took a midnight steamer westwards, eventually arriving at Hermitage on July 21st. Her gamble that the remote outports of Hermitage Bay might prove a good source of songs seemed to have come off; as she reported in her diary that very day she got six songs before dinner: "a record!"<sup>34</sup> More motor boat trips took her to Gaultois, Grole, and Pass Island, each of which proved fruitful: a few of the many songs Maud found in the region were "Fair Margaret and Sweet William," "The Green Wedding," "Henry Martin," "The Golden Vanity" and "The False Bride." The following extracts from her diary give the flavour of her experiences in Hermitage Bay, where she found the same warmth as she had the previous year at Stock Cove and North River:

Arrived at Grole about 1 pm and was warmly welcomed by Mr. Henry Burton.... Mr. B. quite thrilled at my visit and work I am doing, and busied himself getting singers to come to the house. In due course Mr. George Taylor arrived after having changed his clothes and gave me some good songs...In the evening there was company and I got more songs from Mr. Jakeman. This is certainly collecting made easy, to have singers brought to one's door, an organ on which to play over the tunes after they have been noted, and I even typed the words out direct from dictation.... [The next morning I] wandered round and talked to people and sang songs to a crowd that collected around me outside the store and took their photographs. Got a few more songs, and then after dinner made my departure. Very sorry to leave & I think the population of Grole is sorry to have me go.... [On the way to Pass Island] we tossed about and got pretty wet but to my surprise I did not feel sea sick but rather enjoyed it...Met Mrs. Sims on the door step and she came in and sang me a couple of beautiful songs. After tea accompanied by a little contingent of interested admirers I walked to Muning [Mooring?] Cove and called on Mrs. Sims' father, old Mr. Pearcey. News of my coming had spread around and there must have been 40 people or more in the room. I got only one song, the rest no good. I sang a lot to them and altogether we spent a delightful evening. They were quite upset at the idea of my leaving them so some pressed me to stay. I felt very inclined to do so ... but decided that on the whole my time would be more profitably spent by going to St. Mary's.<sup>35</sup>

St. Mary's was back on the Avalon peninsula south of St. John's, so Maud's decision to take the weekly steamer back east meant that she would travel no further west along the south coast but would spend the remainder of her trip on the Southern Shore. It was a choice she probably came to regret. She did find some good songs at Riverhead, Point La Haye and Gaskiers on St. Mary's Bay (they included "The Greenland Fishery," "The Cruel Mother" and "Sir James the Ross") but the pickings were slimmer and required a great deal of hard walking from outport to outport. Moreover, there was no road south of Gaskiers, so that to get to Trepassey (which was only 50 km away as the crow flies) Maud had to go by car to St. John's and then take a train down the coast. It was August before she got there, and she found few songs: "A disappointing day of house-to-house visitations and nothing for my pains. The songs have all gone from Trepassey."<sup>36</sup> This was actually an exaggeration since she did collect four songs there, but they were all variants. While on the South Shore Maud visited St. Shotts, Portugal Cove South, Admiral's Cove, Fermeuse and Ferryland, and in each place she picked up one or two good items, including "The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green," "The Press Gang" and "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship." But most were inferior variants on songs she already had, and it was clearly a case of diminishing returns. Disappointed, she returned to St. John's feeling a little frustrated and somewhat relieved that the hardships of collecting were over. As before, it was only when she systematically reviewed what she had found that she came to the conclusion that the trip had been, on the whole, very successful. As she wrote laconically in her draft autobiography, "Tramped many miles, usually in the evening, to visit people with reputations as singers, but more often than not the results were disappointing. Nevertheless, I eventually managed to get quite a number of good folk songs, and in retrospect I can say that my visits to Newfoundland were worth while."<sup>37</sup>

Maud would not return to St. John's until 1970 when she was given an honorary doctorate by MUN. But her experience in Newfoundland had a significant impact on her life, and on the role she would play in the second revival. To those who encountered her late in life, she seemed totally sure of her self and her views, even arrogant and doctrinaire. But beneath that armoured shell there was an introspective loner who had never found a partner to replace Cecil Sharp. As we have seen, the Maud Karpeles of the mid to late 1920s was far from self-assured. At times moody and depressed, she lacked confidence in herself and her abilities, and she felt unequal to the task of carrying out Sharp's Newfoundland project, filling her life with other tasks for five years before buckling down to carry out her promise.<sup>38</sup> Collecting in Newfoundland was therefore something of a baptism of fire. She trained herself for the task, forced herself to do it, and she succeeded, if not beyond her wildest hopes, at least well beyond her sober expectations. Success meant a lot to her. It gave her the confidence that she had the ability, after all, to shoulder Sharp's mantle, and that she, not Douglas Kennedy or Frank Howes (the conser-

vative editor of the *Journal of the Folk Song Society*), knew the correct path to be followed.

Moreover, during her time in Newfoundland Maud experienced a warmth of human friendship that always meant a great deal to her. The first thing she did on her 1930 trip was to drive to North River to revisit the friends she had made there, and in 1970 she was again determined to find the Snow, Hall and McCabe families.<sup>39</sup> The close bond she established with St. John's lawyer and musician Frederick Emerson and his wife endured for many decades, and she later visited the couple in Canada after they moved to Nova Scotia.<sup>40</sup> Newfoundland reinforced what Maud had learned in the Southern Appalachians with Cecil Sharp: that traditional music was an international bond that could overcome differences of nationality, class, politics and religion. It was, she came to believe, an important force for world understanding and peace that could transcend national rivalries and international politics.<sup>41</sup>

Armed with new self-confidence and a vision of traditional music as a force for good in a world that was suffering from the Great Depression and the rise of Nazism, Maud set out energetically to do what she could. She assigned highest priority to producing a comprehensive edition of the fruits of her American labours with Sharp, the two volume *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, published in 1932.<sup>42</sup> Collaboration with Vaughan Williams, Clive Carey and other musical friends on the first version of *Folk Songs from Newfoundland* was another task. A third was persuading A.H. Fox Strangways to write a biography of Cecil Sharp, and, when he proved dilatory, supplying him with a first draft to work from. That resulted in the 1933 publication of the first version of the collaborative work that Maud would rewrite in the 1950s and then replace with a third edition published under her own name in 1967.<sup>43</sup> Finally there was the question of how to save the dying Folk Song Society. Maud campaigned strongly in favour of merging it with the EFDS at Cecil Sharp House, and she was successful. By 1932 the old Society had ceased to exist, replaced by the new English Folk Dance and Song Society.

Maud contributed occasionally to the *Journal of the EFDS* in the thirties — for example, she reviewed favourably Greenleaf and Mansfield's *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*<sup>44</sup> — but she turned most of her energies elsewhere. She threw herself into organizing the first International Folk Dance Conference and Festival in 1935, later founding the International Folk Music Council and serving as its Secretary for many decades. The resounding success of the 1935 festival created a new enthusiasm for folk music that would help fuel the post-war revival. Meanwhile, Maud kept on collecting in England and Wales. In 1936 she noted songs from Gower traditional singer Phil Tanner, and the next year arranged for him to make three 78 rpm records for The Gramophone Company, another important event in the pre-history of the second revival.

Maud never accepted the broader definition of folk music championed by A. L. Lloyd and Ewan MacColl in the forties and fifties, although she did move with

the times to some extent, working with a tape-recorder for the first time in 1952. It was, of course, the impetus of the post-war revival that gave her the opportunity to publish her revised biography of Cecil Sharp and belatedly to edit the larger and more scholarly second version of *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*. Although neither she nor any other survivors from the heyday of the first revival ever found the ways and means to attract substantial numbers of disciples, there were a couple of important exceptions to this generalization: Patrick Shuldham-Shaw<sup>45</sup> and Peter Kennedy<sup>46</sup> both learned a lot from Maud. Karpeles' spirit lives on through their work, but, by and large, the next generation of folksong enthusiasts would find its inspiration elsewhere. Nonetheless, we have reason to be grateful to her for *Folk Songs from Newfoundland* and, indirectly, for the later studies of Newfoundland traditional music that her pioneering work helped to inspire.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Late Victorian/Edwardian folksong revival has yet to find its historian, although Georgina Boyes has written a post-modernist critique titled *The Imagined Village* in which she interprets it as an ideological construct of middle-class English nationalists who allegedly invented "the folk" and "folksong." See Boyes, Georgina. *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993. Fred Wood's *Folk Revival: The Rediscovery of a National Music*. (Poole, Dorset: Blandford, 1979) focuses on the post-war movement and has little information on the Edwardian revival. Dave Harker, in *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British 'Folksong', 1700 to the Present Day*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985), devotes three chapters to the Edwardian revival but dismisses it as a continuation of the bourgeois expropriation of workers' music begun by such early 18th century editors as Thomas D'Urfey and Ambrose Phillips. With the exception of Percy Grainger, none of the major Edwardian collectors has yet found a sufficiently scholarly biographer. The standard work on Sharp remains Fox Strangways, A. H., with Maud Karpeles. *Cecil Sharp*. (London: Oxford U.P., [1933]). This was reworked and expanded by Karpeles as Karpeles, Maud. *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967). On Grainger, see: Bird, John. *Percy Grainger*. (London: Paul Elek, 1976). There are a number of useful articles on aspects of the Late Victorian/Edwardian revival. They include: Bearman, Christopher J. "Kate Lee and the Foundation of the Folk-Song Society." *Folk Music Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (1999), pp. 627-43. Francmanis, John. "The Roving Artist: Frank Kidson, Pioneer Song Collector." *Folk Music Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2001), pp. 41-66. Gammon, Vic. "Folk Song Collecting in Sussex and Surrey, 1843-1914." *History Workshop Journal*, No. 10 (1980), pp. 61-89. Onderdonk, Julian. "Vaughan Williams and the Modes." *Folk Music Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (1999), pp. 609-26. Palmer, Roy. "Kidson's Collecting." *Folk Music Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1986), pp. 150-75. Most of the several thousand songs collected during the Edwardian phase of the English revival remain unpublished. Some sense of the magnitude of the Edwardian collectors' efforts can be obtained from the huge two-volume selection from Sharp's collecting edited by Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*. 2 Vols. (London: Oxford

University Press, 1974). For a smaller selection from Vaughan Williams' collecting, see Roy Palmer (ed.), *Folk Songs Collected by Ralph Vaughan Williams*. (London: Dent, 1983).

<sup>2</sup>Grainger was the most committed exponent of this method of song collecting. Grainger, Percy. "Collecting with the Phonograph," *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, III, 12 (1908), pp. 147-62. Some songs collected with a phonograph by Vaughan Williams were included in the *Journal* in 1909. See George Gardiner and Ralph Vaughan Williams, et. al. "Songs from Hampshire," *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, III, 13 (1909), pp. 247-317. For the information that Cecil Sharp experimented with collecting by phonograph I am indebted to Malcolm Taylor, Librarian at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House; and to Peter Kennedy, Heritage House Archives, Gloucester, England, for information on Marjorie Kennedy-Fraser.

<sup>3</sup>The other two pioneers were Gerald S. Doyle and Elizabeth Greenleaf. See Greenleaf, Elisabeth B. and Grace Yarrow Mansfield (eds). *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1933). Doyle, Gerald S. *Old-Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland*. (St. John's: Gerald S. Doyle Ltd., 1927, 1940, 1955, 1966, 1978). The most important later collections were: Peacock, Kenneth (ed.). *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*. Three Vols. (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1965). Leach, MacEdward (ed). *Folk Ballads and Songs of the Lower Labrador Coast*. (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1965). Lehr, Genevieve (ed). *Come and I Will Sing You: A Newfoundland Songbook*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and St. John's: Breakwater, 1985). For a critical survey of the work of these collectors of Newfoundland songs, see Peter Narváez, "Newfoundland Vernacular Song." In Will Straw, et al. (eds). *Popular Music: Style and Identity*. (Montreal: Centre for Research on Canadian Cultural Industries and Institutions, 1995), pp. 215-19. On Gerald S. Doyle, see Neil V. Rosenberg, "The Gerald S. Doyle Songsters and the Politics of Newfoundland Folksong." *Canadian Folklore canadien*, 13: 1 (1991), pp. 45-57.

<sup>4</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Draft Autobiography," pp. 1-25. A photocopy of this typed manuscript is held at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House, London, England.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 29-37, 45-6.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 79

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 117-18.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 142-3.

<sup>11</sup>Moeran, E. J. (ed.). *Six Folk Songs from Norfolk*. (London: Augener, 1924). Moeran, E. J. "Songs Collected in Norfolk and Suffolk by E.J. Moeran," *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, VIII, 35 (1931), pp. 257-79. Moeran, E.J. (ed.). *Six Suffolk Folk-Songs*. (London: Curwen, 1932).

<sup>12</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Some Fragments of Sword Dance Plays," *Journal of the English Folk Dance Society*, II, 2 (1928), pp. 35-48.

<sup>13</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Draft Autobiography," pp. 145-8.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 137a, 157-8.

<sup>16</sup>Carole Henderson Carpenter has stated that Maud collected 191 songs in Newfoundland (90 different songs, plus 101 variants). See "Forty Years Later: Maud Karpeles in

Newfoundland,” in *Folklore Studies in Honour of Herbert Halpert: A Festschrift*, edited by Kenneth Goldstein and Neil V. Rosenberg, p. 117. (St. John’s: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980). This is definitely an underestimate. In her lecture at Memorial University in May 1970 when she received her honorary doctorate, Maud herself put the total at “just on 200 songs...obtained from 104 singers.” My count includes not only those songs, tunes and variants published in the 1971 edition of *Folk Songs from Newfoundland* but also additional items listed in one or more of three sets of manuscript materials in the Karpeles Collection in the Folklore Archives at Memorial University of Newfoundland. These are Field Notebooks III-IX (Tune Transcriptions), Shorthand Notebooks 1-7 (Song Texts), and Mss. Tune Transcriptions, Vols I-IV (Folders 3, 4, 5). Admittedly, many of the additional items are brief fragments. MUNFLA 78-003 Maud Karpeles Collection.

<sup>17</sup>Karpeles, Maud (coll. and ed.). *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*. Two Volumes. (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

<sup>18</sup>Karpeles, Maud (coll. and ed.). *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*. (London: Faber & Faber, 1971). Also Hamden, Connecticut: Archon, n.d. This American edition, although apparently a reprint of the Faber & Faber edition, states that the book was first published in the United States in 1970.

<sup>19</sup>See, for example, McKay, Ian. *The Quest for the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), on Helen Creighton. Whisnant, David E. *All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), on Olive Dame Campbell. Whisnant is less critical of Sharp’s and Karpeles’ collecting in the Southern Appalachians, but he nonetheless views them as romantics who contributed to what he regards as a misguided attempt to save the traditional culture of the region. Georgina Boyes’ *The Imagined Village* and Dave Harker’s *Fakesong* are other examples of this reductionist approach. See note 1.

<sup>20</sup>Carpenter, *loc. cit.* pp. 115, 117. Carpenter characterises Maud’s approach to collecting as “rather paternalistic-colonialist” because “her definition of folksong was narrow” and she “rejected native material in favour of British-derived songs.” For a trenchant critique of Karpeles’ alleged “conservative” ideological bias and “ethnocentricity,” see Narváez, *loc. cit.*, pp. 215-16.

<sup>21</sup>By 1935 Karpeles had become a staunch advocate of multi-culturalism, an outlook reflected in the international folk festival she organised in London that year. Her views had not developed so strongly in this direction in 1929-30, but at that time she was certainly not narrowly nationalist in either the political or cultural sense of the word.

<sup>22</sup>Newfoundland would temporarily revert back to the status of a British Crown Colony in 1934.

<sup>23</sup>Cecil Sharp, whom Narváez also accuses of “conservative ideological bias,” was a socialist, influenced by both Fabianism and the ideas of William Morris. He was conservative only in the sense of recognising the negative effects of industrialization on English (and Appalachian) society and in wishing to “conserve” some elements of pre-industrial culture.

<sup>24</sup>It is fashionable to decry the Edwardian collectors’ oft-repeated fear that rural folksong was disappearing rapidly in the face of the undoubted crisis afflicting British agriculture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Narváez, for example, mockingly quotes Charles Marson’s statement to this effect (Narváez, *loc. cit.*, p. 215). In the event, this fear turned out to be somewhat exaggerated, since in the 1950s Peter Kennedy

and Seamus Ennis still found a considerable number of vernacular songs to record for the BBC. Nonetheless, had it not been for the field-work of Sharp, Lucy Broadwood, Frank Kidson, Henry Hammond, George Gardiner, Percy Grainger, George Butterworth, Ella Leather, Ralph Vaughan Williams and others, many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of beautiful tunes and interesting lyrics would have been lost. Moreover, the single most important English collector in the 1950s, Peter Kennedy, was inspired to begin his work by none other than his aunt, Maud Karpeles.

<sup>25</sup>The elderly Maud Karpeles showed (in 1970) little interest in local songs about Newfoundland events, but it would be unfair to assume that was her attitude in 1929/30. On the contrary, in 1933, reviewing Elisabeth Greenleaf's *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*, she noted that the collection contained "many songs written to commemorate some local event, usually an exploit or disaster at sea," commented that the "texts of these songs have an interest in that they show what subjects appeal to the popular imagination" and regretted that Greenleaf had failed to separate such "native compositions" from imported songs. Karpeles, Maud. "Review of *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*, collected and edited by Elisabeth Bristol Greenleaf," *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, I: 2 (1933), pp. 105-6.

<sup>26</sup>Van der Merwe, Peter. *Origins of the Popular Style*, pp. 223-76. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>27</sup>Greenleaf, Elisabeth B. & Grace Y. Mansfield (eds.). *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933).

<sup>28</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929)" and "Field Diary # 2 (June 30th – August 6th, 1930)." MUNFLA 78-003 Maud Karpeles Collection.

<sup>29</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Typed transcriptions of song texts from shorthand ms. Folder # 2." & "Mss. Tune Transcriptions, Vol I-IV (Folders #3-5)". MUNFLA 78-003 Maud Karpeles Collection.

<sup>30</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929)." Entries for 18th September and 20th September.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.* Entry for 15th October.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.* Entry for 26th October.

<sup>33</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Field Diary # 2 (June 30th – August 6th, 1930)." Entry for 9th July.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.* Entry for 21st July.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.* Entries for 23rd and 24th July.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.* Entry for 2nd August.

<sup>37</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Draft Autobiography," p. 173.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 117-20.

<sup>39</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Field Diary # 2 (June 30th – August 6th, 1930)." Entry for July 1st. Carpenter, *loc. cit.* pp. 112-14.

<sup>40</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Draft Autobiography," pp. 164-5.

<sup>41</sup>Dean-Smith, Margaret. "Dr. Maud Karpeles, O.B.E.: 12 November 1885-1 October 1976," *Folklore*, Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 1 (1977), pp. 110-11.

<sup>42</sup>Karpeles, Maud (ed). *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, 2 Vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1932).

<sup>43</sup>Fox Strangways, A.H., in collaboration with Maud Karpeles. *Cecil Sharp*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1933). Fox Strangways, A.H. and Maud Karpeles. *Cecil Sharp*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1955). Karpeles, Maud. *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).

<sup>44</sup>Karpeles, Maud. "Review of *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*, collected and edited by Elisabeth Bristol Greenleaf," *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, I: 2 (1933), pp. 105-6.

<sup>45</sup>Patrick Shuldham-Shaw was a leading folksinger and folk dance musician in the post-war English revival. He also collected traditional dance and song in the British Isles, most notably in the Orkney Islands. He was co-editor of the Greig-Duncan collection. Shuldham-Shaw, Patrick & Emily B. Lyle (eds.). *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, 3 Vols. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1981-87).

<sup>46</sup>Peter Kennedy pioneered collecting with a tape-recorder in England and Ireland during the 1950s. He was also a folksinger and folk dance musician. He co-edited, with Alan Lomax, an important series of LP records of British traditional song, *The Folk Songs of Britain* (Caedmon TC 1142-1146, 1162-1164 and 1224-1225), and he edited a major print collection of traditional songs collected by himself, Lomax and Seamus Ennis. Kennedy, Peter (ed). *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*. (London: Cassell, 1975).