For over 50 years Gwilym Davies has shown an extraordinary commitment to research, education and promotion of the folk arts. This includes song collecting throughout the 70s-2020s creating a substantial archive of field recordings and then making this and other archives available to the public in the form of a website (glostrad.com), performing and projects, gaining respect locally, nationally and internationally.

Gwilym was born in Waterlooville in Hampshire. He became interested in folk music in the 60s when he played banjo in a schoolboy skiffle group along with Tony Engle (Topic Records). He met Carol whilst studying languages at Cardiff University where he was a stalwart of the folk song club and even won a competition in the Inter College Eisteddfod singing with Colin Andrews. Initially teaching in Hampshire in 1970 he revived the Odiham mummers and acted with them for a number of years.

Gwilym and Carol then joined the Civil Service for a career that took them to Gloucestershire and Cyprus where they set up the Amazing Headbangers Morris Men, a group of energetic expats whio stunned the locals by showing them that Englishmen could also dance. *(we were in Glos before we went to Cyprus)*

Gwilym started song collecting in his early twenties, recording source singers. His first publication was A Hampshire Collection (1974) which he co-authored with his wife Carol. Since then from his base in Cheltenham Gwilym's song collecting activities have expanded to include Devon, Gloucestershire, Shropshire and the Eastern USA, where he spent some time on secondment in the early 2000s. Over time he created a significant archive of field recordings of source singers, including previously undocumented songs and many other songs formerly only recorded in manuscript.

Throughout the latter part of the C20th Gwilym got to know the traveller community, in particular Wiggy Smith and the Brazil family from whom he recorded songs and tunes. Other notable singers included Charlie Hill and Ray Driscoll. He delved deeper than just the songs, collecting also from step dancers and musicians.

Whilst the collecting was an important part of his life he had a very practical approach to continuing the tradition. His Green Willow band with Alan Berry, Terry Brenchley, Peter Hill and his wife, Carol, played for barn dance and concerts, a tradition continued throughout his life and the latest band was Pitchpole Jack with Carol and fiddler Paul Meager. He also ran a folk club in Cheltenham from 1985 to 1990.

Gwilym was a morris dancer and musician with Gloucestershire Morris Men for more than 50 years, playing melodeon and pipe & tabor and including a term as Squire. He and Carol formed the group PuzzleJug which included several members of the morris side, Geoff Ramshaw, Colin Roffe and Tony Poulter. They focused on performing folk music and song from the county. This theme continued with Carol's folk choir, Shepherd's Crook and the Gloucestershire Wassailers. This latter group was formed after Gwilym and Roy Palmer collaborated on 'Let Us Be Merry', a collection of Gloucestershire folk carols and wassails.

Carol and Gwilym worked very much as a team, engaging, educating and inspiring others with traditional music and song. This partnership was well demonstrated with projects like Really Beautiful Company, a dramatization of Percy Grainger's song collecting in the workhouse at Winchcombe, Glos. They devised the project and collaborated with Tim Laycock on the script, then recruited members of the Winchcombe Community to work with themselves and Puzzlejug to perform the play around the area and on local radio.

After retiring from the Civil Service he and Carol moved to Winchcombe, north of Cheltenham. They were instrumental in the founding of Happenstance, a border morris side. They also became more involved in early music and founded the group Waytes and Measures, members over time being Richard Sermon, Kathryn Wheeler, Geoff Ramshaw, Ian Umbers, Mike Edwards and Mike Boag. Throughout his adult life he was a singer, performing at sessions, folk clubs, pubs and festivals.

In the early C21st he donated his original field recordings of over 1000 songs to the British Sound Library, which will shortly be going online, and he considered how to make the material more widely available. This was given further impetus when a friend asked him where could he find local songs. There were few books and the EFDSS Full English project was still to be thought of. An idea formed to create a geographical archive online which included the field recordings as well as transcripts and manuscripts. A 'proof of concept' pilot was devised based on the Christmas carols and wassails from Let Us Be Merry (www.gloschristmas.com). This was then used as evidence for the Heritage Lottery Fund. A partnership was set up with Gloucestershire Archives and in 2016 the Single Gloucester project was born.

The project delivered the GlosTrad archive (www.glostrad.com) – a large multi-media website containing over 1400 items collected in the county of Gloucestershire. In addition to conceiving the project and their own research contributions, Gwilym tracked down the owners of other archives and negotiated copyright approvals to make the site as comprehensive as possible. Carol was the project manager and also researched the biographies of the singers. He recruited and trained volunteer transcribers to ensure that the recorded material was also available in MIDI, ABC and PDF formats. Once the site was established they toured the county to raise public awareness through talks and performances as well as overseeing education projects taking the material back into the communities.

Gwilym has taken key roles in the folk infrastructure to further promotion, research and education of traditional music and dance. In the 80s and early 90s he was an active member of the EFDSS Gloucestershire District Committee, helping to organize its events. When EFDSS closed the District system he became a founding committee member of its successor GlosFolk.

On an academic front he was a member of the Traditional Song Forum, where he often gave talks. He was also a founding committee member of The Taborers Society (the international society for pipe and tabor players) organizing The Taborers Symposium to establish it as an international institution. He has presented original research furthering our knowledge of the instrument for Cotswold morris dance, as well as researching pipe and tabor traditions in Arizona and Portugal.

During the Covid lockdown Gwilym became aware that there had been no detailed and comprehensive study of the provenance of the collected repertoire of Cotswold morris music. At the time of his death in June 2022 he was working on the final draft of an MPhil thesis for Newcastle University on Cotswold Morris Music. This thesis seeks to explore the music of Morris and how the factors of the dance form, outside musical influences and instrumentation have affected that repertoire and to what extent the canon is a cohesive whole. It therefore answers the question: is there a canon of Morris music? And if so, are there coherent musical patterns or characteristics that relate to Morris dancing? He addresses the question of why 'Cotswold Morris' is so significant, as opposed to other genres of Morris and examines perceptions of Morris throughout the ages. By defining Cotswolds and Cotswold Morris he goes on to explore writings on Morris and how the canon of tunes under examination came to be, as well the motivations of the collectors. His MPhil was subsequently awarded posthumously in 2023. In accordance with Gwilym's wish that his work should be made accessible to all it is being made available on the websites of the Morris Ring and

the Morris Federation. Gwilym compiled a detailed spreadsheet of the origins of Cotswold Morris tunes which has been incorporated into the Cotswold Morris Data base which can be viewed at https://morrisdancedatabase.org.uk. He established a system of 'Davies numbers' similar to the 'Roud numbers' used for folk songs which can be used to show connections between various versions of Cotswold dance tunes which will be his legacy. There are also sound files associated with this thesis - modern recordings of source music for Cotswold dance tunes - which can be viewed on the Morris Ring and Morris Federation websites.

Any additional information including relevant social media links:

www.glostrad.com

www.gloschristmas.com

www.gwilymdavies.co.uk/index.htm

Resumé:

Folksong and music collecting:

Sound and video recordings by Gwilym. The original recordings are now in the British Library Sound Archive and copies are held by Gwilym's daughter.

- Devon
- Hampshire (Carol & Gwilym)
- Gloucestershire (including many previously unknown versions of the wassail song)
- Appalachian and Adirondack Mountains
- Gypsy singers and step dancers (including Wiggy Smith and the Brazil family)
- Notable source singers: Charlie Hill, Ray Driscoll

Single Gloucester Project (2012-16)

Heritage Lottery Funded project to establish a comprehensive web-based archive containing folk songs and tunes collected in Gloucestershire (over 1400 items).

Partnership with Gloucestershire Archives.

Volunteers Training.

Outreach work included, folk choirs, concert tours, podcasts, education programme and founding two festivals (West Country Traditional Music Day and Stroud Wassail).

www.glostrad.com

Glos Christmas (2010)

A pilot project for GlosTrad to establish a website resource of Gloucestershire folk carols and wassails. Project led by Carol and Gwilym www.gloschristmas.com

Research

Beyond collecting, Gwilym has been involved with folk song research and regularly contributes papers. In particular he has provided original research presented at Traditional Song Forum, The Mummers Symposium, The Pipe and Tabor Symposium and other Forums nationally and internationally.

Publications:

- A Hampshire Collection – Folksongs – (Carol & Gwilym)
- Catch It, Bottle It and Paint It Green – A life of song collecting
- Let Us Be Merry – Gloucestershire Carols – (Gwilym Davies & Roy Palmer)

Drama

- Really Beautiful Company – (1991) A dramatized account of Percy Grainger's song collecting in the Cotswolds. Project was conceived and directed by Carol and Gwilym. Written by Tim Laycock
- Odiham Mummers Play (1972) Revived by Gwilym

Organisation

EFDSS Gloucestershire District Committee – committee member

Glos Folk – Founding committee member (1995)

The Taborers Society – Founding committee member and officer. Organizer of the Taborers Symposium. (2005)

Customs and Traditions – A trust formed to oversee the transfer of the Peter Kennedy archives after his death. Gwilym played an instrumental role in negotiating the transfer of the PK collection to the British Sound Archive at the British Library. (2006)

Musician and Singer

Green Willow & Pitchpole Jack – Barn Dance and song Bands (led by Carol & Gwilym)

PuzzleJug – A folksong group promoting Gloucestershire folk song. (Led by Carol & Gwilym)

Shepherd's Crook – Winchcombe folk choir (led by Carol)

Gloucestershire Wassailers – Promoting the Gloucestershire Wassail Song tradition (Carol & Gwilym with Richard Sermon)

Waytes and Measures – Early music group (led by Carol and Gwilym)

Morris

Cardiff Morris Men – (1970)

Winchester Morris Men – (1971-72)

Gloucestershire Morris Men –former Squire (1976/7, 99) Bagman (1994/5) & lead musician

Amazing Headbangers Morris Dancers – Cyprus (1981-84)

Spring Bottom Morris Men – (1985/86)

Happenstance Border Morris – (2010 on)

Recordings

Include…

Blossom in Slaughter – PuzzleJug - Cotswold songs

Cotswold Music – Green Willow Band

Let us Be Merry – PuzzleJug - Gloucestershire carols and wassails

From Troubadours to Tudors – Waytes & Measures

Now is Yole Coming – Waytes & Measures

Step It Away – Gypsy step dance traditions

There's A Clear Crystal Fountain – Folk Song (Gwilym)

This Way Up – Pitchpole Jack

Tom Goblin – Folk Song (Gwilym)

Wild, Wild Berry – Field recordings – Ray Driscoll