

SOMERSET FOLK MAP

Somerset has a secret...

...an amazing story of Somerset people who sang. Their songs inspiring great musicians who wrote works performed worldwide. These maps locate the singers and tell the story of Cecil Sharp and Charles Marson who collected songs over one hundred years ago. You can also find out where to go to hear folk songs, see folk traditions, watch folk dances and perhaps join in. There's lots of opportunity here in this most musical of counties. So come all ye!

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The information on this map has been compiled in good faith and Somerset Council will accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions howsoever caused.

2 Charles Marson

Charles Marson was born into a clergyman's family on 16 May 1859 and educated at Clifton College and University College Oxford. In 1889 he went to Australia and met Cecil Sharp in Adelaide. They immediately became friends. In 1892, Marson and his family returned to England where he struggled to find work. After curacies in Soho and Somers Town he was appointed vicar of Hambridge in 1895. Charles was a Christian Socialist and in Hambridge he put his beliefs into practice, symbolically washing the feet of poor village boys on Maundy Thursday and persuading the villagers to make their own Nativity Play and act in it; he also tried to get landlords to improve the cottages in which his poorest parishioners lived. He helped to establish a branch of the Independent Labour Party in Langport in 1908 and was a popular preacher at local celebrations, well known for his ability to make congregations laugh. He and Cecil Sharp collected folk songs together initially, but in 1906 they quarrelled and never saw one another again. On 3 March 1914, Charles Marson died from a heart attack. Cecil Sharp attended the funeral.

Cecil Sharp in Somerset

Cecil Sharp travelled mostly by bicycle on his collecting journeys criss-crossing the county on his quest for its hidden folk songs. In the early 1900s, portable recording equipment was just becoming available but was very cumbersome. It was also most uncomfortable for the singers who were required to bury their heads into what looked like a large bucket for the sounds to be recorded. Cecil Sharp preferred to notate song tunes and record the

words in notebooks, a process which took a little time, but which enabled him to get to know his singers. One of the most remarkable legacies of his collecting journeys is a unique collection of photographs of the singers, dancers and musicians he encountered. These are now held in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House, headquarters of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

1903: HAMBRIDGE

1 John England

John England was born in 1865 at Hambridge. After working as a farm labourer in Dorset he returned to the village, married, and became Charles Marson's gardener and general outdoor servant. His song 'The Seeds of Love' was the first that Cecil Sharp collected, on 22 August 1903. In 1912, he and his family emigrated to Saskatchewan, Canada, where his descendants still live.

John England singer of 'The Seeds of Love' at Hambridge

2 Harry Richards

Harry Richards (1840-1925) spent all his life in Curry Rivel, living in Old Churchay and later near the Bell Hotel. He was a quarryman by trade, but a gardener by choice, as Cecil Sharp's photograph shows. His large and wide repertoire enlarged Cecil's knowledge of folk song and enriched the published *Folk Songs from Somerset*. He is buried at Curry Rivel.



Harry Richards of Curry Rivel

3 Lucy White & Louie Hooper

Lucy White and Louisa ('Louie') Hooper were half-sisters, born in 1848 and 1860 respectively. Their mother, Mrs. England, had been one of the most renowned singers in the district until her death in 1892. Both married, but Louie was widowed within months. By 1901 they were living in adjacent houses



Louie Hooper on the canal bridge outside her home at Westport, Hambridge



Lucy White, Westport, Hambridge

in Westport, and Charles Marson was trying hard to get their living conditions improved. They were among the first singers collected from by Cecil Sharp, and he was immensely fortunate to find them at the very outset of his collecting career, because they were natural musicians with a huge repertoire of songs. Louie Hooper in particular loved instrumental music, and Cecil gave her a concertina. Lucy died in 1923, but Louie lived on to become the Grand Old Lady of Somerset folk song and be visited by the increasing numbers who followed in Cecil's footsteps. In 1942-43 she was visited by Douglas Cleverdon of the BBC, and several of her songs were recorded for posterity. She died on Ash Wednesday 1946. The sisters have an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

A LIVING TRADITION

as he went about his daily work on the farm. George has always enjoyed village life and especially the gatherings that necessitated doing 'a turn' on the village hall stage. He learned many songs from his parents and when he moved to a farm at Isle Abbots he met Harry Adams, a great singer and storyteller, who fuelled George's interest in traditional songs. George has travelled widely in the folk scene, appearing

George Withers was born in 1924, the year that Cecil Sharp died, into a Somerset farming family. He has sung all his life and remembers his father singing and whistling congregations, well known for his ability to make congregations laugh. He and Cecil Sharp collected folk songs together initially, but in 1906 they quarrelled and never saw one another again. On 3 March 1914, Charles Marson died from a heart attack. Cecil Sharp attended the funeral.

at the National Folk Festival and at festivals from Wadebridge to Whitty and in the west of Ireland. 'I have met some lovely people, I don't know much about them, they could be criminals, but we are all brothers in song'. To hear George sing, and perhaps recite some of his poetry inspired by rural life, visit the monthly song session at Eli's in Huish Episcopi.



George Withers. Photo: Veteran Records

- 1 Cecil Sharp was born in London on St Cecilia's Day, 22 November 1859. Educated at Uppingham School and Clare College Cambridge, he went to seek his fortune in Australia.
- 2 He made music his profession while living in Adelaide, and met a young clergyman named Charles Marson.
- 3 Cecil returned to England in 1892 and married his childhood sweetheart Constance Birch in 1893, the same year Charles Marson became vicar of Hambridge, Somerset.
- 4 Cecil became interested in folk music through teaching and the problem of finding songs which young boys liked to sing.

- 5 He published his first collection, *A Book of British Song for Home and School* in 1902.
- 6 Cecil had not yet done any folk song collecting of his own, but in 1903 Charles wrote to tell him that his gardener, John England, knew some folk songs. Cecil went down to Hambridge and collected 'The Seeds of Love' on 22 August 1903.
- 7 Cecil had two music teaching jobs and so the only leisure time he had for collecting was the school holidays.
- 8 For more than five years Cecil spent nearly every day of his spare time in Somerset travelling hundreds of miles by train and bicycle, meeting more than 300 singers and collecting more than 2,000 tunes.

- 9 Between 1904 and 1909 he published the five volumes of *Folk Songs from Somerset* and his theoretical book *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*, which revolutionised knowledge of folk songs in England.
- 10 Cecil made 21 collecting trips to Somerset between 1903 and 1909.
- 11 After that he did most of his work in other counties, collecting morris and country dances as well as songs.
- 12 He made a further five collecting visits to Somerset between 1913 and 1916.

- 13 During the First World War, he collected songs in the Appalachian Mountains of the USA, helping to develop the folk music movement there, and his work made him the leading international authority.
- 14 He continued to collect, organise and publish until less than a month before his death from cancer on 22 June 1924.
- 15 In 1911 Cecil founded the English Folk Dance Society (EFDS).
- 16 In 1932 the Folk Song Society merged with the EFDS to form the present English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFSSS). Its headquarters in north London is Cecil Sharp House.

Follow the Singers Trail

IN AUGUST 1903, London music teacher Cecil Sharp visited his friend Reverend Charles Marson at Hambridge and heard John England, the vicarage gardener sing 'The Seeds of Love'. Thus began one of the most remarkable adventures in English music. In Somerset, over the next thirteen years or so, Sharp visited 122 locations, collected songs and tunes from 358 named individuals, and gathered children's games from twenty schools. Perhaps one of these singers or children was your ancestor? Maybe Cecil collected in your town or village?

Singers photographed listed in date order as visited by Cecil Sharp

1904: LANGPORT

4 Emma Overd

Emma Overd was born in 1838 at Port Field, Curry Rivel, but spent most of her life in Langport 'Westover'. She was married to an agricultural labourer and supplemented the family income through wool peeling or 'whity-stripping'. She was fond of a drink, unusually preferring beer to cider, and she was outside a pub when Cecil Sharp first met her. She asked what he wanted, and on being told it was songs, danced him round and round 'with the utmost vigour', shouting to her friends that her 'beau' had come at last. Cecil was fascinated by her large, wide, and unusual repertoire of songs. It is possible that these came from her paternal grandmother, Rebecca Weaver, born in the 1770s, who cared for the family after her mother's death in 1846. Emma's husband died in 1914, but she lived on in good health until 1927, then went into a decline which ended in her death the following year. She is buried at Curry Rivel, and has an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.



Emma Overd at her home in Knapp's Lane, Westover, Langport

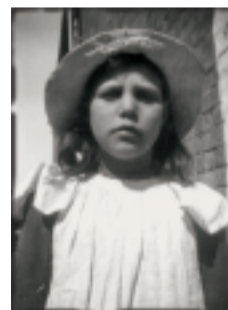
1905: HARPTREE & BRIDGWATER

6 Jack Barnard

'Jack Barnard's' real name was John Barnett, and he was born in Bridgwater around 1861. His father James was also a singer, and they lived in the West Street/Halswell Lane area of the town, amid a number of other singers. They worked at brickmaking and later as scavengers and stone-breakers, work probably given them in return for poor relief. Cecil Sharp met them through the agency of Revd. W.K. Warren, who was curate of St. Mary's church and the Workhouse chaplain. 'Jack Barnard' had no use of his legs, at a time when disabled children did not usually attend school, so he was illiterate, but he had a store of more than 150 songs and helped Cecil Sharp get contact with other singers, most notably Elizabeth Porter and her daughter Lily, who lived next door.



Jack Barnard



Lily Porter, Jack Barnard's neighbour in Bridgwater

1906: HAZELBURY PLUCKNETT

8 Susan Williams

Susan Williams was born in 1832, and was among several singers in Hazlebury Plucknett who made their living from weaving. She came from North Perrott, but had been living in Hazlebury since the 1860s. Her husband died between 1881 and 1891 and she later lived with her son Robert. She died in March 1915.



Susan Williams, Hazlebury Plucknett

1907: MINEHEAD AND EXMOOR

9 William Sparks

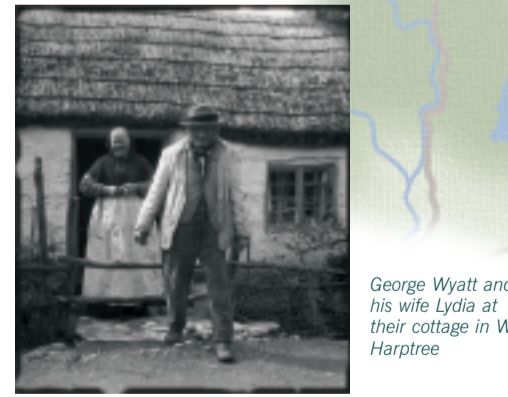
William Sparks (1854-1916) was born and spent all his life in Minehead, at 1 Middle Street, Higher Town. His father John was a blacksmith and William followed in the trade, though he is also said to have rented properties to holiday-makers. His song 'The Two Magicians' was the only item Cecil Sharp collected from him, but it was unique in Somerset and rare elsewhere. William became ill in 1916 and died in Taunton Hospital.



William Sparks at his forge in Minehead

7 George Wyatt

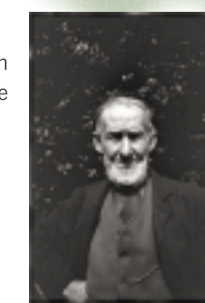
George (1822-1907) and Lydia (1828-1916) Wyatt were among several singers in West Harptree from whom Cecil Sharp collected in 1904-5, with the aid of the Kettlewell family. He was an agricultural labourer who spent all his life in the village, and it is interesting that they gave their sons Biblical names – Absalom, Mark, and Matthew. After George's death Lydia entered Clutton Workhouse (workhouses were the old peoples' homes of the day) where she died.



George Wyatt and his wife Lydia at their cottage in West Harptree

10 Robert Parish

Robert Parish (1822-1909) was among several singers whom Cecil Sharp met in Exford. He was born in the village and spent all his life in the village, working as a gardener and living in Glebe Cottage, next to the church. His son Robert was a tailor, and that may be one of the reasons for his smart appearance in Cecil's photograph. Among the songs collected from him was 'The Beggarman', descended from 'Back and Side Go Bare' which was first printed in 1557. Robert Parish remained in good health until the end of his life, and had taken his usual walk, inspected his vegetable garden, and eaten his dinner when he collapsed and died suddenly, while his daughter was making him a cup of tea.



Robert Parish, Exford

11 Betsy Holland

Betsy Holland was born at Kentisbeare, Devon, in 1890. Her family were travellers, but did not travel widely, circulating around mid and north Devon and western Somerset, though her grandmother had been more adventurous and came from Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. It is not known when she married, but by 1907 she was travelling with her husband and several small children. Cecil Sharp met her near Simonsbath in August that year, and was so impressed that he called her performance of the *Execution Song* 'the finest and most characteristic bit of singing I had ever heard.' He caught up with the family a few days later, on the road to Bidford, and then in January 1908 tracked down the grandmother, Rebecca Holland, from whom Betsy said she learned the song.



Betsy Holland

1908: QUANTOCKS

12 John Short

John Short (1838-1933) was born at Watchet, but became a deep-sea sailor, spending his time on windjammers because he did not consider that steamships produced 'real sailors'. After he retired from the sea he returned to Watchet, became the

yet flexible voice, and retained his singing ability into his nineties. It was only in the last few months of his life that illness confined him to his house. He shares with Cecil Sharp the distinction of having an obituary published in *The Times*.



John Short, Watchet

13 Elizabeth Mogg

Elizabeth Mogg was born in Over Stowey in 1830. She was living in Nether Stowey in 1881 and working as a dressmaker, and although unmarried had a son born at Holford. By 1891 she had migrated to Dodington, where she lived in the household of her brother-in-law Henry Chilcott, with James Squires, another singer. Cecil Sharp collected from her in Holford and she was buried from Hilton Cottages, in that village, in March 1921.



Elizabeth Mogg, Dodington and Holford

West Harptree

A Victorian passion

Cecil Sharp was not the first or the only Somerset folk song collector. Other collectors busy in Somerset include, Kate Lee (1859-1904), a concert and opera singer who was the first Secretary of the Folk Song Society. She collected sea songs in Minehead in the 1890s. Henry Hammond (1866-1910) and George Gardiner (1852-1910) were teachers and educationalists. They began collecting in 1905-6, Gardiner in Bath Workhouse and Hammond in the Taunton area, until they moved on to Hampshire and Dorset respectively. Priscilla Wyatt-Edgell (1872-1934) lived at Cowley Place, near Exeter, and besides work in Devon collected in Minehead and mid-Somerset, sending the results to Cecil Sharp. E.T.W. Wedgwood was a Folk Song Society member who collected in Minehead. Cecil Sharp also had a number of collaborators, chiefly clergy and their families like D.M. Ross, vicar of Langport, Gerald Peppin at Marston Magna, and the Sorby family at Enmore, but perhaps the most remarkable was Alice Snow in Somerton. The daughter and grand-daughter of folk singers, she had risen from a poor background to become a musically-literate elementary school teacher who collected from her grandmother Betsy Pike and others.



Mrs Lock, singer of Muchelney Ham photographed by Cecil Sharp probably in April 1904



Gerald Peppin

IS YOUR ANCESTOR HERE?

Can you spot your family name amongst Cecil Sharp's singers? How can you find out if you are related to them or not? A good way to start is with the Somerset & Dorset Family History Society. They have an excellent website full of tips, links and news, and they publish a regular magazine for members. Visit www.sdfhs.org for more information. To find out about their songs and music, visit www.efsss.org

- Hambridge**
 - 1903 Mary Bunston, Hambridge; John England, Hambridge; Job Gillard, Hambridge; Harriet Goodland, Hambridge; Revd. Hamlet, Barrington; Louisa Hooper, Hambridge; 'Mayle', Barrington; Charles Parsons, Long Sulton; Miss Quick, Drayton; Tom Spracklan, Hambridge; George Templeman, Hambridge; Lucy White, Hambridge; James Woodland, Stocklinch
 - 1904 Mrs. Bond, Barrington; John Coles, Hambridge; Joseph Cornelius, Shepton Beauchamp; Sarah Gummer, Hambridge; Alfred Harris, Shepton Beauchamp; Caroline Hill, Hush on the Moor; Elizabeth Lock, Muchelney; Anna Pond, Shepton Beauchamp; Mrs. William Ree, Hambridge; Ann Welch, Shepton Beauchamp; Lizzie Welch, Hambridge; Alfred Willy, Hambridge
 - 1905 Mrs. Dabbenett, Barrington; Anne Dyke, Kingsbury Episcopi; Ann Lacey, Drayton; George Lawrence, Kingsbury Episcopi; Mrs. Joseph Ree, Hambridge; Mabel Sandford, Drayton
 - 1906 Walter Lockock, Martock
 - 1907 T. Buckley, Castle Cary; William Cornelius, South Petherton; John Gartell, Castle Cary; Mrs. Millard, Castle Cary
 - 1908 Mr. Rawle, Barrington
- Langport area**
 - 1903 Henry Payne, Curry Rivel; Thomas Symes, Isle Brewers
 - 1904 Giles Adams, Isle Brewers; Mrs. Bray, Langport; Frederick Crossman, Huish Episcopi; Emma Glover, Huish Episcopi; Mr. Hartland, Curry Rivel; Mrs. Hull, Langport; Eliza Hutchings, Langport; John Jeffrey, Isle Brewers; Mrs. Kettle, Langport; Mrs. Maisie, Langport; Emma Overd, Langport; Mrs. Palmer, Langport; Mrs. Perry, Langport; Harry Richards, Curry Rivel; Christopher Shire, Langport; William Spears, Langport; William Mantel, Bridgwater; William Mead, Bridgwater; Jonathan Pearce, Draycott; Mrs. Porter, Bridgwater; Lily Porter, Bridgwater; Mrs. Simmonds, Ubley; James Southward, Bridgwater; John Stafford, Bishop's Sutton; Benjamin Watts, Farrington Gurney; Charles Gifford, Meare; Mr. Coridge, Bridgwater; Tom Harty, Bridgwater; Joseph Laver, Bridgwater; William Mantel, Bridgwater; William Mead, Bridgwater; Jonathan Pearce, Draycott; Mrs. Porter, Bridgwater; Lily Porter, Bridgwater; Mrs. Simmonds, Ubley; James Southward, Bridgwater; John Stafford, Bishop's Sutton; Benjamin Watts, Farrington Gurney; Charles Webb, Puriton; Charlotte Webb, Puriton; George Whitcombe, Meare; Susan Wilson, Shipham; Charles Young, Puriton
 - 1907 Elizabeth Barnard, Bridgwater; Mary Brewer, Huntspill; Henry Cave, Nettlebridge; Alfred Chard, Chew Stoke; William Chorley, Bridgwater; Susan Clark, Bridgwater; Samuel Laver, Meare; Albert Dowden, Huntspill; Eliza Dunsan, Marston; Alfred Edgell, Chew Magna; Walter Edgell, Chew Magna; John Fackrell, Bridgwater; Revd. Hargreaves, East Harptree; James Higgins, Shepton Mallet; Ivy Hill, Shepton Mallet; Maggie Hill, Shepton Mallet; Mrs. Hill, Bridgwater; Ernest King, East Harptree; John King, Chew Stoke; Ben Leader, Badgworth; Florence Lockett, East Harptree; Mrs. Marchant, Bridgwater; Samuel Norris, Wedmore; Richard Oding, Bridgwater; Fred Patch, Wedmore; Isaac Perkins, Nettlebridge; Lavinia Rendall, Chew Magna; Friendship Roynan, Chew Magna
- Bridgwater and Harptree**
 - 1904 Miss Doveaton Brown, Clevedon; George Currel, West Harptree; John Durbin, East Harptree; Mr. Hole, Clevedon; Benjamin Horler, East Harptree; F.B. Kettlewell, East Harptree; William King, East Harptree; Elizabeth Price, Compton Martin; John Purnell, East Harptree; James Woodland, Stocklinch; Compton Martin; John Voke, East Harptree; George Wyatt, West Harptree; Lydia Wyatt, West Harptree
 - 1905 James Bale, Bridgwater; Richard Barnard, Priddy; James Bishopp, Priddy; John Briffett, Bridgwater; William Briffett, Bridgwater; Thomas Brunt, Blagdon; Wilson Champ, East Harptree; Robert Dibley, Bridgwater; Thomas Griffiths, Bridgwater; Samuel Horley, Ubley; Jessie Jeffreys, Cheddar; Harriet Moger, East Harptree; Mrs. Pavey, Cheddar; Theophilus Pritchard, Compton Martin; George Radford, Bridgwater; Mr. Rapsey, Bridgwater; Henry Reed, Abzridge; Charles Turner, Bridgwater; John Vincent, Priddy; Mr. Watts, Worele; George Weeks, Priddy; Samuel Weeks, Priddy
 - 1906 Richard Adams, East Harptree; Mrs. Balsh, Ubley; Jack Barnard, Bridgwater; James Barnett, Bridgwater; William Barnett, Bridgwater; Elizabeth Betty, Bridgwater; James Brooks, Bridgwater; Julia Burroughs, Puriton; Ellen Carter, Cheddar; Mrs. Chapman, Ubley; Jane Chapman, West Harptree; Mrs. Chesdoy, Puriton; James Clardy, Bridgwater; John Cullen, Priddy; Farrington Gurney; Mrs. Franks, Nempnett Thruwell; Jacob Gilbert, Meare; Mr. Coridge, Bridgwater; Tom Harty, Bridgwater; Joseph Laver, Bridgwater; William Mantel, Bridgwater; William Mead, Bridgwater; Jonathan Pearce, Draycott; Mrs. Porter, Bridgwater; Lily Porter, Bridgwater; Mrs. Simmonds, Ubley; James Southward, Bridgwater; John Stafford, Bishop's Sutton; Benjamin Watts, Farrington Gurney; Charles Webb, Puriton; Charlotte Webb, Puriton; George Whitcombe, Meare; Susan Wilson, Shipham; Charles Young, Puriton
 - 1907 Edward Harrison, Langport; Charlotte Hector, Burrowbridge; James Lockyer, Middlezoy; Mary Ann Lawrence, Somerton; Betsy Pike, Somerton; Oliver Shuttler, Compton Dundon; Betsy Smith, Creech St. Michael; Eliza Sweet, Somerton
 - 1907 Mr. Dommett, Pitminster; Miss Gooding, Somerton; Mrs. Selway, Westonzozyland; Thomas Cave, Evercreach
 - 1908 Mr. Barman, Dunston; Alfred Emery, Othery; George Emery, Othery; Caroline Passmore, Pitminster; Mrs. Passmore, Pitminster; Charles Spiller, Pitminster
 - 1909 Mrs. Tucker, Huish Episcopi
- South Somerset**
 - 1904 Mr. Bollen, Ilchester; John Swain, Doryatt
 - 1905 William Brister, Ilminster; William Durkin, Ilminster; Thomas Hendy, Ilminster; John Hoyt, Hazlebury Plucknett; Henry Larcobee, Hazlebury Plucknett; Caroline Lawrence, Merriott; Abraham Lawrence, Ilminster; Selina Lawrence, Merriott; Mrs. Mescham, Merriott; Thomas Mitchell, Merriott; Mr. Morris, Marston Magna; Mrs. Parsons, Marston Magna; John Patch, Hazlebury Plucknett; Betsy Pinch, Hazlebury Plucknett; Mrs. Sherring, Marston Magna; Mr. Warren, Hazlebury Plucknett; Susan Williams, Hazlebury Plucknett; Harriet Young, West Chinnock
 - 1906 Lucy Carter, Tintinhull
 - 1908 Anna Abbott, East Coker; Mrs. Francis, Rimplon; Priscilla Light, West Coker; Alfred John Neville, East Coker; Charles Neville, East Coker; John Matravers, Yeovil
- Minehead and Exmoor**
 - 1904 Caroline Lewis, Minehead; Maria Slade, Minehead; Mrs. Slade, Minehead; William Sparks, Minehead; Captain Vickery, Minehead
 - 1905 William Gard, Williton
 - 1906 Mary Ann Burnett, Minehead; Mr. Chapman, Old Cleeve; John Chapman, Dunster; William Crockford, Bratton; Henry Cudland, Old Cleeve; William Davis, Bratton; Bessie Huxtable, Minehead; John Knott, Dulverton; Joe Milton, Withypool; Mary Ann Milton, Washford
- Location not known**
 - John Meeth or Weath, 1914; Walter Raymond, no date given

Sunday Folk Club Hallsway Manor
 First Sunday in the month (except August). A friendly group that meets in the Hallsway Manor at 8pm. We welcome singers, players, writers, readers and listeners. Informal and relaxed atmosphere. Bar open.
 Contact: Deryck Deane
www.hallswaymanor.org.uk