

Chapter 2: Methodological framework, sourcing and managing data

The historiographies of oral folk tradition and Cornish identity discussed in the previous chapter invite a cross disciplinary approach to this study. Both oral folk tradition and identity are influenced by discursivity and memory and this chapter draws from these two paradigms to establish an enquiry framework. This chapter will argue that the principles of oral history also have much to offer this study but with the caveat that texts collected reflect the agenda of the collector and the circumstances of collection rather than necessarily a history as seen by the performer.

There were two particular challenges in setting the methodology for this research. In the first place, a significant amount of data was available in contemporary performance of oral folk tradition and therefore observation / participant observation provided useful primary sources, but this approach raises questions about objectivity. In the second, it was intended that, as well as contributing to the understanding of folk tradition and identity in Cornwall, this research would directly promote and inform folk arts practice. It is argued here that action research provides a framework of enquiry that can draw upon other paradigms of study, systematically address the issue of objectivity and provide for an engagement with folk arts practitioners that will both promote and inform folk traditions. This chapter sets out the framework of enquiry used for this thesis and describes how this has been applied to the sourcing, selection and practical management of the data.

Action research, a framework for enquiry

The model of “action research” proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart seeks to provide a scientific approach through a “planning > acting > observing > reflecting > revised planning” process undertaken systematically and rigorously so that relationship between these moments can be understood, providing a source of both improvement and advancement of knowledge.¹ Coombes develops this by advocating the reinforcement of action research with the triangulation of information conversationally across a range of sources, this builds on the quality of information to provide a consistent evidence base and greater illumination of the research subject:

The triangulation of evidence analysis process aims to provide an alternative `experimental` policy. This new paradigm `experimental` approach is to be compared with the more conventional physical science

paradigm, which tends to adopt quantitative analysis methods exclusively as the arbiter of truth and validity. By providing triangulated accounts it is intended that subsequent experimental findings will be illuminated in a systematic (and hence rigorous) way.²

The experimental approach advocated by Coombes is valuable in an interdisciplinary study such as this because it encourages continuous reflection and evaluation of methods. Importantly it allows for a flexibility of approach, which will encourage a variety of perspectives rather than being driven by a specific methodology. A practical outcome of this has been to take a project management approach to some of the research. A project might take the form of a presentation and discussion with peers or the publication of a book with both formal and informal review.³ Space does not allow for all of these projects to be recorded in detail but a summary is provided in Appendix 3, and Appendix 4 provides more detail of examples that have been specifically referred to in the main body of this thesis. Where a project outcome took the form of a publication, recording or broadcast then these are referenced within the endnotes to each chapter and the bibliography.

Coombes' emphasis on qualitative evidence, supported by critical triangulation rather than quantitative data, is useful in enquiry where it will be difficult to obtain some empirical information. For example, it is not possible to establish precisely how often a particular song is performed or how many people ascribe the same set of meanings to a given folk phenomenon. However, one example of performance and meaning can be triangulated with other moments to evidence broad popularity and consistency of context. For example, if a song is:

- included at a number of pub singers sessions perceived as a Cornish event
- included in song sheets for other community singing events in the Cornish calendar
- appears on a number of recorded albums proclaiming Cornishness
- described as a popular Cornish song during interviews or correspondence
- presented as Cornish in a published collection

then there is a high level of triangulation supporting the case for the song to be seen as part of a Cornish canon of selected material.

This model provides a sound scientific base and an over arching conversational style that can draw upon other paradigms of enquiry but Reason and Bradbury expand further to address the issue of outcomes by suggesting that action research can be:

..... a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.⁴

Action research is thus a tool for reflective practice and learning in a social setting, which recognises the value of the insights and knowledge of the people who are involved in the phenomenon that is the subject of the research.

Reason and Bradbury show that this methodology has roots in post modernism in that it demonstrates the fallacy of an empirically “objective” researcher and justifies active participation as a research tool. However, they move on from a post modernist position to recognise that there are shared realities:

A participatory view competes with both the positivism of modern times and with the deconstructive postmodern alternative—and we hold it to be a more adequate and creative paradigm for our times. However, we can also say that it draws on and integrates both paradigms: it follows positivism in arguing that there is a “real” reality . . . and draws on the constructionist perspective in acknowledging that as soon as we attempt to articulate this we enter a world of human language and cultural expression.⁵

Typically, action research is used as a tool to develop skills and practice in Health, Social Care and Educational settings where the issues and the groups of people concerned are clearly defined and outcomes are intended to be emancipatory for both researcher and researched.⁶ Wadsworth, however, argues that action research can go much deeper and be a more dynamic process that critically reflects on the historical, political, cultural economic and geographic contexts, which make sense of it.⁷ As a participative form of research “the mere act of asking questions is an

intervention, and giving and hearing answers and making sense of them inevitably brings about changes in those involved".⁸ The point here is that even if an outcome is not identified there is still a likelihood of change resulting from participatory action research. It can be seen that the simple act of discussing a folk tradition with practitioners will raise the stakes by implying value and encouraging reflectivity. It might be argued that this is moving a tradition from a reflexive state to a reflective one but Chapter 1 shows that both are part of the natural process of oral folk tradition. A useful point to highlight here is that in action research, as applied to oral folk tradition, the roles of researcher, performer, participant and practitioner merge to an extent and they can all be seen as stakeholders.

Reason and McKardle identify different schools of practice within action research ranging from simple co-operative enquiry to the management of organisational change. However, for them, participatory action research has a clear task to challenge preconceptions and seek to achieve social change:

Participative research. This term is usually used to refer to action research strategies, which grew out of the liberationist ideas of Paulo Freire and others in countries of the South. Participatory action research (PAR) is explicitly political, aiming to restore to oppressed peoples the ability to create knowledge and practice in their own interests and as such has a double objective. One aim is to produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people—through research, through adult education, and through socio-political action. The second aim is to empower people at a second and deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge: they "see through" the ways in which the establishment monopolizes the production and use of knowledge for the benefit of its members.⁹

This is particularly interesting when looking at folk tradition in the context of Cornish studies because one of the issues is around the recognition of a distinctive Cornish identity and its expression through folk tradition against the background of a cultural hegemony, which, as O'Connor shows, can be resistant to this.

Opposition to newly identified Cornish material was fostered by a few vociferous speakers, some well respected. Some were conservative:

reflecting Bodmin Folk Club's old extra-Cornish agenda they mistrusted anyone outside the EFDSS [English Folk Song and Dance Society] or not subject to academic overview. Some believed that nothing more could possibly remain to be discovered, so anything new must be false. Some saw the overt celebration of Cornish culture as an invention to promote Cornish political consciousness. Some showed a tacit acceptance of simplistic and unsupported views of the processes of evolution and transmission of vernacular culture, and a politicized view of how they may have applied to Cornwall. There was conflict of generations and personalities which also reflected the cultural and political aspirations of the participants. Today some still retain a cynical view of material identifiably Cornish or those promoting it¹⁰

Outside of the protest song genre, socio – political action may not be the first image that springs to mind in connection with folk tradition and a case history is useful in illustrating why an action research approach is relevant for this study. Padstow Mummers Day is a custom that takes place in the village on Boxing Day and New Years Day. In essence, it comprises of a carnivalesque procession of musicians who black their faces and adopt a variety of brightly coloured dress within a general theme of “mock posh”.¹¹ In common with similar traditions in Cornwall, it seems to have been associated with a Mummers Play earlier in its history,¹² but later become focussed around a procession. Except for a song / step dance called *Tom Bowling*¹³ not much is known about the music associated with the play in the 19th century but in the 1940s, songs like the *Padstow (Derby) Ram*, *Old Mrs Flipper Flopper* and *Old Daddy Fox* were sung during the procession.¹⁴ These songs are also associated with Guizing elsewhere in Cornwall.

The Padstow Mummers currently draw on a variety of well-known tunes, including some compositions by Foster, a popular 19th Century American songwriter.¹⁵ Foster's work is strongly associated with the Minstrel shows now portrayed as demeaning Black American culture but there are some writers, such as Cockrell, who challenge that this was ever the original intention of these songs.¹⁶ Whatever their origins, these songs have become part of vernacular culture and at Padstow were merged into a medley of tunes that included *Trelawny*, *Scotland the Brave* and *She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain*.

Between 2004 and 2006 the Padstow Mummers attracted media criticism, scrutiny by the police and ultimately parliamentary censure in the form of an Early Day Motion for alleged racist activity.¹⁷ The author was familiar with the tradition and used participatory action research to explore the issues concerned. In this case, triangulation involved research into the origins of the tradition, examination of the legal position, participant observation, external co-worker observation, interviews and correspondence with a wide range of stakeholders and monitoring of the media.

Participatory action research is a particularly effective tool in exploring the multiple viewpoints and competing readings of customs such as the Padstow Mummers, not least because it encourages the researcher to examine and reflect upon their own views and experience of the event. In this case, the views and experiences of the author which were recorded immediately after the event:

.....I had previously decided that, notwithstanding the blackening of faces, I would accept the invitation to join the musicians provided there was no evidence of racism in either dress or behaviour.

..... My foremost and clearest reaction to the event is that I felt I was being drawn into an expression of community identity and the desire to belong.

..... The feeling of identity was strongly augmented by the scattered Cornish symbolism of rugby shirts, flags and tartan [The Cornish Rugby colours are black and yellow stripes, the flag of Cornwall is widely recognised as a white cross on a black background and a Cornish Tartan was designed in the 1950s as a symbol of Cornwall's Celtic connections].¹⁸

Triangulation increased the insights gained from participation to show that both the experience of the event and the interpretation of meaning varied enormously for those participating either as performers or audience. It showed that there was little evidence to support accusations of racism and that the information that Diane Abbot MP used to back her Early Day Motion was inaccurate.

The outcomes included correspondence with Members of Parliament, both informal and more structured feedback to participants, and the publication of a peer-reviewed paper.¹⁹ This paper examined the origins of the traditions involved in the Padstow Mummings Day and its contemporary form together with the views and meanings associated with it. It also considered the custom in relation to contemporary social policy and legislation concerned with discrimination and anti racist practice. It supported the case against accusations of racism and drew attention to inaccuracies in the Early Day Motion. This piece of work thus achieved one of the aims participatory action research and that is to empower people with information.

Discursivity and speech communities

Reason and Bradbury show that participatory action research is a “world of human language and cultural expression”,²⁰ i.e. a territory of texts and discursive meaning. The artefacts of oral folk tradition, i.e. the performance of music, dance and associated customs, can thus be understood and analysed as discursive text. Fairclough proposes that discourse should be recognised as both a social interaction in “real situations” and as a “social construction of reality” which constituted a form of knowledge”.²¹ He suggests a framework where text can be analysed in terms of representations, identities and relations. As important as the content of the text are how a text is represented, who does the representing and what the relationship is between those involved. Thus, the meaning of a performance as a text is governed by how it is represented, who undertakes this and what his or her relationship is with the audience or other stakeholders.

In the example given above of the Padstow Mummings Day, there were a variety of narratives found to be associated with the event. One example was that it was a “fertility rite for midwinter” another that “a slave ship was wrecked off Padstow and the villagers blacked up to confuse the slavers and help the slaves escape”.²² These explanations may have little foundation in history but they reflect the mindset of the narrator. The first has echoes of the attitudes of the Edwardian folklorist and the second might be the response of someone conscious of Cornwall’s history of a vociferous anti slavery movement.

There are three contestants for a “common sense” position in the narratives provided for the Padstow Mummings. Both the local and national press pursued themes of political “correctness gone mad” and the misuse of police time to investigate an

innocent event.²³ Malcolm McCarthy spoke for the Padstow community when he commented that it was simply an excuse to have a good time at Christmas, without meaning anyone any harm.²⁴ Diane Abbot MP, however, saw it as white people dressing up and behaving in such a way as to demean black people. McCarthy and Abbot can be understood as representing two different speech communities here, each constructing a narrative of events that reflects their speech community's worldview.

Fairclough describes worldviews such as this as "ideological-discursive formations" and warns that they can become unfounded common sense:

There is usually one IDF [ideological-discursive formation] which is clearly dominant. Each IDF is a sort of 'speech community' with its own discourse norms but also embedded within and symbolised by the latter, its own 'ideological norms'. Institutional subjects are constructed in accordance of the norms of an IDF, in subject positions whose ideological underpinnings they may be unaware of. A characteristic of a dominant IDF is the capacity to 'naturalize' ideologies, i.e. to win acceptance for them as non-ideological 'common sense'.²⁵

He advocates critical analysis of discourses in order to deconstruct these formations and the meanings they create. Deacon and Williams debate the use of Critical Discourse Analysis as a fundamental methodology for Cornish studies.²⁶ Deacon shows how socially disadvantageous constructions of Cornwall can be deconstructed using this paradigm.²⁷ Whilst Williams agrees in principle he expresses concern that one relativistic position is being replaced with another and makes the case for methodological pluralism.²⁸ Critical discourse analysis is a persuasive model and applies well to this study as it encourages recognition that beliefs and presumptions about Cornwall and its traditions can be critically examined as social constructions. At the same time the broad based approach and triangulation of action research addresses Williams concerns that this should be supported by methodological pluralism. Fairclough has shown that discourse and ideology are intrinsically linked and, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, ideology is a major player in the interpretation, mediation and performance of material from folk tradition.

Fairclough's suggestion that an ideological-discursive formation can be understood as "speech community" is a particularly useful concept for the study of oral folk tradition where dialect and local indigenous languages are important. Porter uses this term to describe the Doric folk community in North East Scotland where there is a strong linguistic element of dialect terms around the "Bothy Ballads" that are neither Scottish Gaelic nor Scots but a merger of a number of different historical traditions from this area.²⁹ O'Neill applies this concept to a study of Native American languages to show that when expressions cross from one language to another, meanings are not always universal in the new language but will be shared by the "speech community" from which they derive.³⁰ This touches on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis about the determinate relationship between language and thinking, that the vocabulary, language and its meaning within a speech community defines that community's worldview and self-view.³¹ In terms of folk tradition, this is illustrated by the example given in the previous chapter of the very specific meanings ascribed to Morris dancing in terms of gender and nationalism by the speech community of the English Folk Dance movement, which were not necessarily the same as that universally recognised elsewhere.

For the purposes of understanding oral folk tradition and identity in Cornwall, the term "speech community" needs to be refined still further. It can represent communities within, or overlapping other communities in the sense that an individual might be a member of a number of different groups with their own systems of meaning. For example, folk music as a genre forms as a speech community where terms like "folk club", "ceilidh" and "ballad" represent a package of meanings and experiences not shared by the wider population. For some folk enthusiasts meaning will go little further than sharing an interest in a particular style of music and dance. For others, there may be a deeper value system relating to cultural identity, for example the counter-culture of the sixties folk club scene.

Chapter 1 discusses the importance of language with respect to Cornish identity and this is played out in the "speech communities" that have evolved around this in Cornwall. It can be seen that the existence of a Celtic language and a distinctive Anglo-Cornish dialect will have a major impact upon the evolution of speech communities in Cornwall.³² It is a wider issue than just language, however, it is about the statements that are being made and identity expressed in using this language. When a group of young people came together from different dance display and music groups in Cornwall

to take part in the Festival Interceltique in , 2010, they decided upon the name Kemysk. This means mixture and apart from being an apt description, the use of Cornish proclaimed their ideological subscription to the notion of a Celtic Cornwall. The issue for Fairclough, and an important one in examining oral folk tradition and identity in Cornwall, is that of power and unfounded “common sense” derived from dominant ideologies.

Oral history and oral testimony

Folk song collectors from Baring Gould to Kennedy clearly operated within the domain of orality. They travelled and worked among communities collecting material “From the mouths of the people”³³ and recording what they found with the technology available to them. This, however, represents oral text and testimony rather than a history. Portelli defines oral history as “an art dealing with the individual in social and historical context.... to know, and to classify, - to connect them with ‘history’ and in turn force history to listen to them.”³⁴ In the case of the folk song collectors, what they asked their informants to provide was determined by their own discursivity and what they recorded and subsequently published was mediated by this discursivity. Graebe, for example shows that Baring Gould misrepresented the social background of some of his “old singing men” and certainly did not seek to elicit their view of historical context nor their understanding of the songs that they sung.³⁵ This is not to devalue what was collected but to recognise it as a snapshot of oral folk tradition through the lens of the collector’s discursivity and their relationship with informants.

Indeed this researcher / researched relationship, which is transformed into a co-stakeholder relationship within the methodology of participatory action research, is also identified by Portelli as a key issue for oral history. He describes oral history as a “.... a dialogic discourse, created not only by what the interviewees say, but also by what we as historians do - by the historians presence in the field, and by the historian's presentation of the material.”³⁶ An example of the way in which participatory action research and oral history dovetails as a research methodology is provided by a case example from the Rescorla Project.³⁷ This was an oral history project which included the geographic area where the author lived and some of the people involved in information giving were friends, neighbours and musical contemporaries although separated by the better part of a generation. Whilst the author was in the role of neighbour and musical contemporary information and reminiscence flowed freely and was information rich. When the author asked if people would like to be interviewed as

part of the project the reaction was mixed. Some people were attracted by the idea but others were not. To an extent, this reflects the natural discomfort of some people to the prospect of being recorded. However, it was also clear that the change in role of the author from peer to university researcher, represented by the introduction of a recording machine and the interview consent form,³⁸ also created a communication barrier. It is interesting to note that where the interview worked well, the interviewee retained a position of authority and expertise in the interview situation.

Reflecting on this within the action research paradigm it was decided to focus formal interviews on situations where parity was established between interviewer and interviewee and elsewhere to rely on a mixture of participant observation and sound recording in the public domain for triangulation. The outcome was a number of situations where the interview became the recording of peer discussion or peer views.³⁹ Conversely, reliance on recording was waived in situations where this would have interfered with the flow of information and damaged the relationship between action researcher and information givers.⁴⁰ Similarly, there were occasions as a participant observer, or just observer, when events taking place in a public domain could be recorded without reference to relationships or risk to ethical principles.⁴¹

In addition to issues around the interviewer / interviewee relationship, Portelli's model of oral history raises other questions that apply equally to the information gathering tools within participatory action research. He raises ethical questions about how the research will be used and considers the moral, academic and professional responsibility of the oral historian to provide effective archiving of the public history recorded. With respect to the politics of power and empowerment, he also questions how the narrator / information giver and the community represented will be portrayed by the mediation of the text.⁴² The narrator may be concerned about how the information is used and desire to influence this, or be vulnerable by having no concept of what might happen to this information.⁴³ Not only do these questions help to guide the ethics of research, they also emphasize the impact of the research upon the researched and the importance of understanding the reflexive / reflective process within oral folk tradition. The case history above of the Padstow Mummers shows that participatory action research as a method of enquiry is well placed to address these questions and concerns.

Portelli addresses the ethical concerns about research outcomes by identifying a Gramscian dimension to oral history in that it can provide an alternative view to the hegemonic grand narrative. An antidote to what Fairclough describes as the “power of the social agents whose strategy it is ‘to get their messages across’, e.g. their access to and control over mass media and other channels and networks for diffusion”.⁴⁴ Portelli used oral history as a methodology to elicit an alternative history of the fascist wartime regime in Italy to the carefully edited establishment version of the immediate post war period. There is a sense in which this thesis uses the tools within participatory action research to challenge the external grand narratives of oral folk tradition and identity on Cornwall.

Portelli is not without his critics who point to the subjective influence of his own political standpoint upon the interpretation of his research and the recordings he published.⁴⁵ Portelli naturally defends his position, partly by showing the limited effect of his personal ideology and partly by arguing that folk song recordings were universally mediated in this way elsewhere.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, for all that each interview or episode of participant observation is a dialogic experience before becomes a text, interpretation and mediation begins at the point of selecting the narrator or event to be observed and continues in every subsequent representation of the text. The concern for the social researcher lies in the lack of objectivity within this process. In terms of folk tradition, information, already tempered by the vagaries of memory, is now subject to a range of interpretation and mediation. Yow accepts these criticisms of oral history as a methodology but suggests that any text record can be subject to similar criticism.⁴⁷ She demonstrates this by asking questions of the written document such as; “for whom was the document intended?”; “how close was the witness to the event in time and space and how informed when writing the document?”; and “What prior assumptions did the witness have at the point of writing the document?”. Yow suggests that this critique can be addressed by using grounded theory – the examination of a large sample of and a multiplicity of incidents. It may not have been possible to practice grounded theory in the sense suggested by Yow within this research project but the extensive triangulation recommended by Coombs as part of participatory action research methodology comes some way in meeting this.⁴⁸

Memory

A certain pragmatism is needed when considering the relationship between memory and change in folk traditions. There are clear examples to show that some

changes that take place are simply accidental or result from reconstruction required because memory was incomplete.⁴⁹ What is interesting to the researcher here is the selectivity and creativity that then accompanies this. With this caveat, memory is nevertheless a phenomenon that dovetails into the methodologies discussed above and provides another strand of insight into the complexities of both oral folk tradition and identity.

Le Goff emphasises the importance of understanding personal memory as an experience rather than the simple recovery of stored data. That it is a process of actualizing and re-experiencing information to form an “internal model of the external universe”.⁵⁰ Bolland and Atherton point out the subjective nature of this experience and suggest that: “processing capacity and mental effort are reduced by using heuristics (subjective operational knowledge of the world).”⁵¹ This “subjective operational knowledge of the world”, is in part, determined by the discursivity of the speech communities to which the individual belongs. Smith sees memory as a “set of stored fragments / incomplete bundles of features “which are retrieved and assembled in a jigsaw like way leading to the creation of a “current memory”.⁵² Brockmeier contrasts two views of memory; what he describes as a traditional “Newtonian” view where events and experience are mapped along a linear time scale; and a more recently introduced “narrative” view where memory is a symbolic cultural construction combining different times, time orders and possibilities.⁵³

These models of memory accord well with the notion of oral folk tradition as a process and it can be seen that the symbolic cultural construction of memory described by Brockmeier is something that will broadly support continuity as well as fuelling change and reflectivity. Likewise Smith’s notion of “fragments” that are pieced together to create current memories offer a further perspective on the process of change in folk tradition. Elements within oral folk tradition such as story lines, verses and sets of lyrics together with musical phrases and tune structures can be understood as “fragments” within Smith’s model. These “fragments” are then pieced together to make contemporary cultural and artistic sense within a performance. Ideas about meaning significance and the provenance of folk material might also be seen as fragments of memory that add to the melting pot from which sense is made. A prosaic example of this is the Cherry Tree Carol, which belongs to a family of songs which have verses recounting Joseph’s reaction to Mary’s pregnancy with Christ.⁵⁴ In a religious context, sense is made by emphasis on the verses related to the Immaculate Conception,

whereas in a secular situation Joseph's indignation that he is not the father of Mary's child that comes to the fore.

Some aspects of oral folk tradition are more difficult to accommodate within a model of interpretive memory. Take for example the apparent consistency of some performers' memory within this tradition. Baring Gould described one of his informants, James Parsons, as a "Singing Machine" because of his "remarkable memory and seemingly inexhaustible repertoire on which he would continue to draw night after night without ever repeating himself, provided that his tankard was regularly refilled."⁵⁵ James Parsons clearly had a talent for remembering songs or a convincing ability to improvise, perhaps a combination of both. A singer's consistency might be due to the lyrics having been memorised by rote in the first place, reinforced through repetition, and supported by the mnemonics of melody, rhythm, rhyme and story line. It is clear from Baring Gould's description that James Parsons was experiencing a new role and significance for himself and his songs in acting as a source of information and a teacher. This was a role and an importance quite different to that of an itinerant pub entertainer and likely to have affected the way he saw himself and structured his memories. His practiced verses may have remained the same over the years but what did he communicate to Baring Gould about their origins and did his thinking around this change. Did he supply all the verses he knew, or did some seem less significant or less worthy of recall in the light of his newfound importance?

Another dimension of memory is the collective one and Kansteiner develops this to suggest that: "Collective memory is not history, though it is sometimes made from similar material. It is a collective phenomenon but it only manifests itself in the actions and statements of individuals".⁵⁶ Green identifies two contemporary models of collective memory. One sees the past as negotiated collectively by large numbers of people actively participating in public remembering.⁵⁷ The other identifies collective memory with the sharing of cultural knowledge between successive generations using "vehicles of memory" such as books, films and museums.⁵⁸ What both of these models have in common is the notion that there are sites of memory. Kansteiner refers to Nora in associating sites of memory with "elites" who monopolise them to legitimise and reinforce hegemony.⁵⁹ This has resonance with Hobsbawm's "invention of traditions" as a device to ascribe legitimacy to a powerful elite.⁶⁰ Biener, however, shows how folk memory associated with particular sites can also act against the hegemony to provide alternative constructions of history, which are all the more empowering in their lack of

requirement for evidence.⁶¹ Irrespective of whether manipulation is being undertaken by one group or another, the concept of a “site of memory” can be applied to the understanding of oral folk tradition and why importance and significance is attributed to a phenomenon. Lavolette suggests that folk phenomena such as the Midsummer Bonfire and Padstow May Day customs can be seen as manifestations of collective memory.⁶² This notion that a song, tune, dance or custom can be a vehicle, or site, of memory configures well with the model of oral folk tradition discussed in Chapter 1 and helps to show why some phenomena seem to take on a particular significance.

Sourcing, selecting and managing the data

Oral folk tradition is a process that can be charted and understood through the performances it produces and the dialogues that take place about meaning and significance. For example, to understand an event such as the Padstow Mummers it is necessary to obtain the views of participants as well as observe the event itself. Indeed the notion of a “stakeholder” within action research goes beyond the immediate participant to include those who have some form of stake in the folk phenomena in question. It is interesting and informative to apply this retrospectively to the work of people such as Baring Gould whose stake was they sought to preserve and revive oral folk tradition as a national heritage. He included notes with his views on the provenance and significance of the songs in his published collections and there is a sense in which this is a dialogue with his expected audience and tells us about what he feels would engage them. Records of performances and dialogues provide a snapshot in time, location and context, which are triangulated in this study with other snapshots to provide information about, and insights into, the phenomena. The form which these snapshots have taken over the approximate 200 year period covered by this study vary according to the technology and skills available to and used by the recorder together with their mindset and the purpose of the recording.

Primary sources in relation to performance will therefore comprise of original recordings in a variety of formats from handwritten and printed documents and music script to analogue and digital sound recordings, photographs and video footage. Publications might be seen as once removed, mediated versions of the original performance but sometimes they are all that is available and if they contain any notes or commentary then they can be considered primary sources in terms of dialogue. This is a research environment in which the distinction between primary and secondary sources is not always clear but Cornwall is rich in both antiquarian commentary and

fictional narratives inspired by and based on local community customs, which do give an alternative perspective from a secondary source view.⁶³ Oral folk tradition is a living phenomenon. In addition to historical records, primary sources therefore include observation and recording of phenomena as it has taken place during the course of this research. Primary sources also include dialogue and correspondence with stakeholders recorded as part of participatory action research.

The model of oral folk tradition as the product of community creativity rather than an individual, or defined group of individuals, guides the selection of material for this study. A key issue is that the performance should be subject to a broad process of reflexivity and reflectivity within the community rather than a composition for artistic or commercial purposes. In practice, however, there is a continuum between these two poles rather than a clear demarcation line. This is especially so when dimensions of context and meaning are added to the structure and content of the performance. For example, the lyrics of Trelawny have changed little since Hawker wrote them but two different melodies have been used and the meaning of the song for participants has acquired significance beyond that of the religious politics of the historical figure referred to in the title.⁶⁴ For some people it is a delightful Cornish idiosyncrasy but for others it will invoke a primitive sense of belonging as ancient as the human psyche itself. The qualitative approach and reflective triangulation of action research provides a clear method here. A Judgement is made at the point of identification as to whether material has been subject to the process of oral folk tradition and selected accordingly. Evaluation takes place as and when further information is realised enabling discussion as to where within the continuum of oral folk tradition the performance in question lies. This in turn provides insights and information about the process of oral folk tradition.

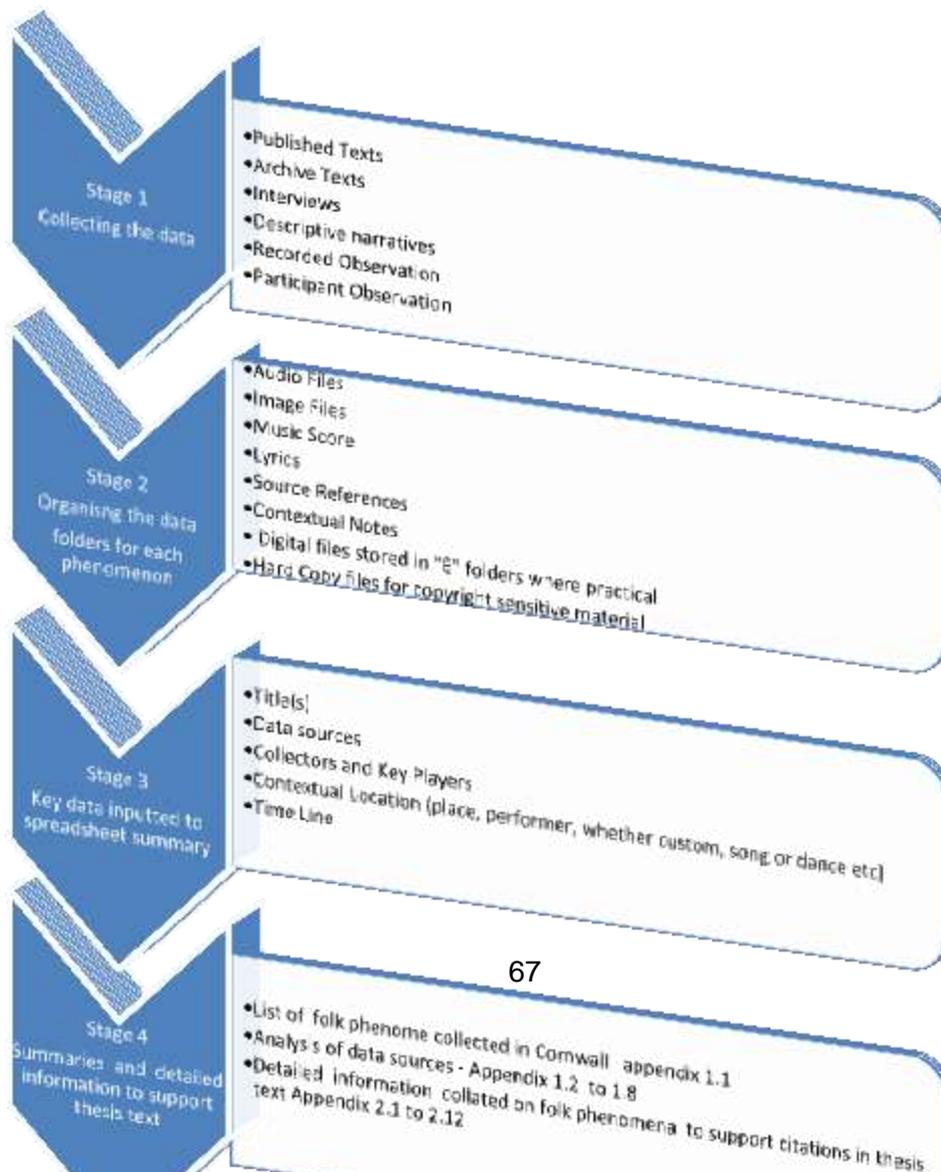
Key data about folk phenomenon collected in Cornwall such as sources, collector, dates and frequency of reference were entered into an excel spreadsheet to facilitate quantitative analysis. There are 1103 entries in the spreadsheet relating to 639 individual phenomena and Appendix 1 provides a summary of this analysis. More detailed information, such as, lyrics, music, and audiovisual material, were collated in to individual folders and where practicality and copyright permitted these were transferred to digital format. This digital format enabled ease of reference and the opportunity to use search engine software it also laid the foundations for a web site where this information can be made more widely available. Appendix 2 provides more

detail of folk phenomenon where this is needed in order to provide evidence and support statements made elsewhere in this thesis.

Information acquired through participatory action research was recorded either; as observation logs in the form of written text supported by images, audio recordings; or as a project file containing details of activities, correspondence, outcomes and memorabilia such as programmes and flyers. Much of this information has been included within the database and individual files discussed above. Appendix 3 summarises participatory action research undertaken in the form of a table identifying the folk phenomenon concerned, methods, record type and outcomes. Appendix 4 provides information on action research projects or events referred to in the main text of this thesis in more detail.

There were thus four stages in the management of data for this thesis, which are summarised in diagram 1 below:

Diagram 1: management of folk phenomena data



Conclusion and key concepts

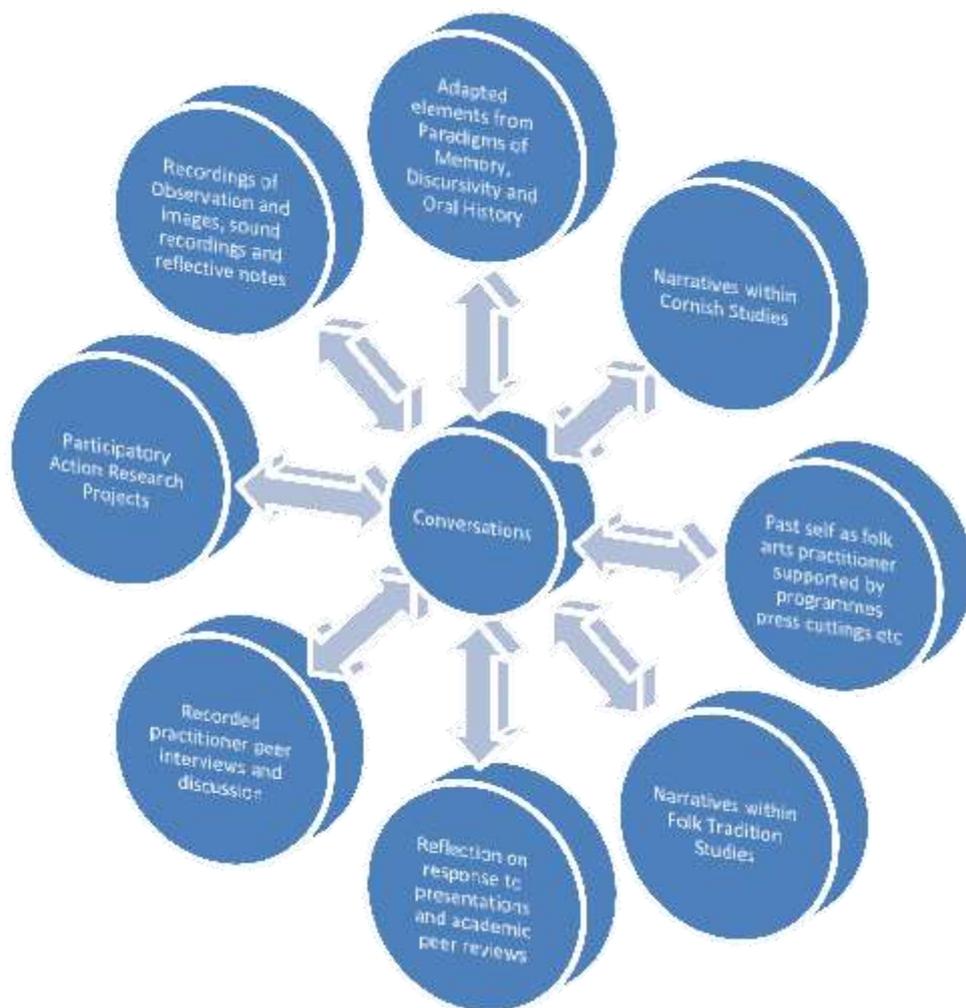
Action research not only provides a methodology for participant observation it also shows how outcomes can be achieved through research practice such as project work and dialogue. It encourages a flexible but systematic approach to research practice so that methods are evaluated and modified accordingly. It can be applied as well to the methods by which extant historic collections of folk material are collated and analysed as it can to contemporary fieldwork sources. Whilst it has roots in post modernism, it is not deconstructionist and accepts that there are shared realities between people that can be understood and worked with.

The paradigms of discursivity, oral history and memory discussed in this chapter encourage us to recognise them as dynamic and complex processes. It can be seen that discursivity and memory will each provide strands to Bolland's model of identity as a "complex web of being" and that this sense of being will determine relationships and further affect how oral history / testimony is mediated.⁶⁵ Furthermore, all three processes will have an impact upon reflexivity and reflectivity in Nahachewsky's model of oral folk tradition.⁶⁶

In addition to this broad cohesiveness each of the paradigms of action research, discursivity, oral history and memory formulate key concepts for this thesis. Action research shows that performers, audience, researchers and supporters / detractors can all be seen as "stakeholders" with a vested interest in oral folk tradition. Discursivity introduces the notion of "speech communities" which is important in understanding the significance of language, not only in the sense of Cornish and Anglo-Cornish dialect but also in terms of shared understandings of English expressions which contribute to a sense of identity. Oral history shows the significance of recognising the "hegemonic power structure" and the significance of voicing individual and minority group understandings of tradition that may not concur with that of the establishment. Memory theory encourages folk traditions to be seen as a "sites of memory" which shows why some songs or customs can take on a special meaning for those concerned.

Coombes' model of enquiry as conversational triangulation is a systems approach and lends itself well to a diagrammatic summary of the methodological framework for this thesis:

Diagram 2: Coombes' conversational enquiry model applied to the study of oral folk tradition



Notes

- ¹ Stephen Kemmis, and Robin McTaggart, *The action research Planner*, (Waurm Ponds, Victoria, Deakin University Press, 1988).
- ² Steve Coombes, 'Action research and project management (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Brunel University 1995), p. 185.
- ³ Example 1, presenting ideas in a seminar situation and having feedback from peers e.g. a presentation during Lowender Peran Celtic Festival Oct 2009 entitled "Celticity and Cornish Dance". Example 2, writing the historical section for a book on Cornish dance: Merv Davey, "Locating Cornish Dance Culturally", in Merv Davey, Alison, and Jowdy Davey. *Scout Dances, Troyls, Furrys and Tea Treats: The Cornish Dance Tradition*, (London: Francis Boutle & Co, 2009), pp. 17 -56.
- ⁴ Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, *Handbook of action research*. (London, Sage Publications. 2008), p. 2.
- ⁵ Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, *Handbook of action research* , p. 7.
- ⁶ See for example: Alan Bleakley and Ken Gale, *Education Research in the Postmodern*, Peninsula Medical School, University of Plymouth, 2004 : <http://www.faeexmdev.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/postmodernism/pmhome.htm> accessed 18th August 2006. Merv Davey, "Perceptions of disability and real needs"(Unpublished Dissertation for Master of Arts, Plymouth University, 2000) Caterina Arcidiacono, "Distinctiveness And Sense Of Community In The Historical Center Of Naples: A Piece Of Participatory Action Research " *Journal Of Community Psychology*, Vol. 33, No. 6, 631–638 (2005) Wiley Periodicals, Inc.
- ⁷ Yoland Wadsworth, "What is Participatory Action Research ?", *action research International*, 1998, Paper 2. <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/sawd/ari/ari-wadsworth.html> accessed 18th August 2006.
- ⁸ Yoland Wadsworth, "What is Participatory Action Research ?", p. 3.
- ⁹ Peter Reason and Kate Louise McArdle , "Brief Notes on the Theory and Practice of Action Research " in Saul Becker and Alan Bryman Editors, *Understanding research for social policy and practice : themes, methods and approaches*. (Bristol, Policy Press, 2004).
- ¹⁰ Mike O'Connor, *Ilow Kernow 4 : Cornish instrumental tradition : the resource*. (Wadebridge, Lyngham House, 2009), p. 127. Discusses the resistance of "English" folk club in accepting the notion of a Cornish tradition and their use of a criteria for "Cornish tradition" which much of their own material from "English tradition" would not have met. For example it was acceptable for Cecil Sharp and contemporaries to

change song titles to fit with their own view of what English tradition should be but not acceptable to change titles collected in Cornwall to fit with a Cornish mindset.

¹¹ See appendix 4.1.

¹² James Madison Carpenter Manuscript, American Folk Life Centre, Library of Congress, reference codes 1972/001, MS. p.p. 10562 , 10565 -10582. Carpenter noted the mummers play from Captain Magor of Padstow circa 1933 but one of his informants was Robert Morton Nance whose father recalled the play being performed in the 1880s.

¹³ James Madison Carpenter Manuscript.

¹⁴ John Buckingham, interviewed 20/03/06.

¹⁵ Stephen Collins Foster (1826 – 1864), wrote “Swanee River”, “Oh Susannah”, “Camptown Races” and a number of other songs that have become part of the vernacular music repertoire.

¹⁶ Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder- Early Black faced Minstrels And Their World* , (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997). This book explores in detail, the European and African American influences on the development of the black faced minstrel music hall genre and its social context.

¹⁷ Early Day Motion 1317 Cornish Festival of Darkie Day, 9th Jan 2006.

¹⁸ This quote is taken from contemporaneous notes and summary of audio recording., see appendix 4.1

¹⁹ Merv Davey, "Guizing: Ancient Traditions And Modern Sensitivities." In *Cornish Studies Fourteen*, ed Philip Payton (Exeter, University of Exeter press, 2006), pp. 229 - 244.

²⁰ Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury *Handbook of action research*, *ibid*

²¹ Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse*. (London; New York: E. Arnold, 1995), p18.

²² Appendix 4.1 page 405, summary of reflective discussion with other researchers.

²³ Alastair Wreford, Cornish Guardian 3rd March 2005: Western Morning News 15/03/05; Simon De Bruxelles, The Times 25/02/05; Richard Savill, The Telgraph 25/02/05; Peter Allen, The Daily Mail 25/02/05.

²⁶ Story also local press: Cornish Guardian 30/12/04, 3/3/05, Western Morning News 15/03/05

²⁴ Malcolm McCarthy, correspondence with 06/04/06, see appendix 4.1

²⁵ Norman Fairclough, *The Critical Study of Language*, (London and New York, London, 1995), p. 27.

²⁶ Bernard Deacon, "From Cornish Studies to Critical Cornish Studies: Reflections On Methodology", in *Cornish Studies Twelve*, ed. Philip Payton (Exeter, Exeter University Press, 2004) pp. 13 – 29. Malcolm Williams, "Discourse and Social Science in Cornish Studies", in *Cornish Studies Thirteen*, ed. Philip Payton (Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2005), pp.14 -22.

²⁷ Bernard Deacon, "From Cornish Studies to Critical Cornish Studies: Reflections On Methodology" *ibid*.

²⁸ Malcolm Williams, "Discourse and Social Science in Cornish Studies", *ibid*

²⁹ James Porter, " The Folklore of Northern Scotland: Five Discourses on Cultural Representation", *Folklore*, Vol. 109 (1998), p. 5.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1260565> Accessed: 12th July 2010

³⁰ Sean O'Neill, "Mythic and Poetic Dimensions of Speech in Northwestern California: From Cultural Vocabulary to Linguistic Relativity", *Anthropological Linguistics*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Winter, 2006), p. 312.

URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25132401> Accessed: 22nd Jan 2010

³¹ Paul Kay and Willett Kempton, "What Is the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis?", *American Anthropologist, New Series*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (Mar., 1984), 65-79 .

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/679389> Accessed: 13th April 2010. With reference to: Edward Sapir, *Language*. (New York,: Harcourt and Brace, 1921) , and Benmjamin Lee Whorf, "Science and Linguistics", in *Language, Thought and Reality*, ed John B. Carroll, *Technology Review* 42:229-231, 247-248.

³² See chapter 6 for further development of this discussion, also the examples provided in appendix 5: Glossary of terms.

³³ The title of Baring Goulds first published collection: Sabine Baring and Rev. H. Fleetwood Shepherd. *Songs and Ballads of the West: A Collection Made from the Mouths of the People* (London: Methuen & Co, 1891).

³⁴ Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia, Oral history and the Art of Dialogue* (Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. viii.

³⁵ Martin Graebe, "Sabine Baring Gould and his Old Singing Men" in *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation*. Eds. Ian Russel and David Atkinson, (Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2004), p. 178.

³⁶ Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*. (Madison, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 3.

³⁷ Merv Davey, Alison Davey, *Clay Country Customs*. (St Austell, Rescorla Festival Project, 2008).

³⁸ Under Exeter University's Ethical Review procedures covering human subjects, interviewees were asked to complete an interview consent form. See Appendix 3.3

³⁹ For example when recording Mike O'Connor (PAR audio file 280106-1) and Trev Lawrence (PAR audio file 200106-1) there was a clear peer parity in the interview relationship.

⁴⁰ For example when providing a talk / entertainment for St Dennis Women's Institute (04/06/07) and taking part in Golowan at Castle An Dinas (23/06/08) useful information and insights were provided through informal conversation and it would have been inappropriate and impractical to stop this and set up a recorded interview.

⁴¹ For example the explanation provided for the John Knill Ceremony at St Ives (PAR audio file 250706-1) and the introduction to the Padstow Obby Oss (PAR audio file 010506 – 2)

⁴² Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different", Perks R, Thompson A Eds, *The Oral history Reader*, (London, Routledge, 1998), p. 63.

⁴³ The author had direct experience of this when researching the Padstow Mummers Day tradition when one informant stated that he was only interested in "pro Padstow Mummers" articles. See Merv Davey "Ancient Traditions and Modern Sensitivities", in *Cornish Studies 14*, ed. Philip Payton, (Exeter, Exeter University Press, 2006), pp. 229 - 244.

⁴⁴ Norman Fairclough, "Critical discourse analysis in transdisciplinary research", University of Lancaster: www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/norman/paper4.doc accessed 23rd April 2008.

⁴⁵ Steve Siporin "Review: Italian-American Records", *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 98, No. 389 (Jul. - Sep., 1985), pp. 371- Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/539963> Accessed 28th March 2007

⁴⁶ Alessandro Portelli, "Which Party?: Reply to Siporin" *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 99, No. 393. (Jul. - Sep., 1986), pp. 320-321. Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0021-8715%28198607%2F09%2999%3A393%3C320%3A%22PRTS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-F> accessed 28th March 2007.

⁴⁷ Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral history A practical guide for Social Scientists*, (London, Sage Publications, 1994), pp.18 -19.

⁴⁸ Steve Coombes, "Action Research and Project Management", *ibid.*

⁴⁹ The melody line in the Lark in the Morning published by Hitchcock has some difference from the original in Baring Gould's manuscript. This is presumably a

transcription error as he provides no explanation for this. Hitchcock makes clear from the outset, however, that the lyrics and music he gives are arranged and altered. This publication seems to have resulted in the song / tune re-entering oral tradition but with a further change in the tune to make musical sense of Hitchcock's transcription. The result of this was that a significantly different tune was collected for the Racca project in 1997 than the original 1890 version from St Mawgan (See Appendix 2.2). There are certainly published versions of songs and tunes reconstructed from fragments and individual examples of this taking place. Similarity of sounds can result in ambiguity for example in "Little Eyes" and "Little Lize" with the result that two different titles are used for this song despite a relatively recent original source.

⁵⁰ Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1992) (translation by Rendall and Claman unrevised from 1978), p. 51.

⁵¹ Katherine Bolland and Charles Atherton, "Chaos theory: An alternative approach to social work practice and research", *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 80(4) (1999), 367-373.

⁵² Philip T Smith, "A jigsaw puzzle theory of memory", in *Memory*, 8: 4, (2000) p245 — 264 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/096582100406801>, accessed 25th February 2011

⁵³ Jens Brockmeier, "Stories to Remember Narrative and the Time of Memory", in *Story Worlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*, Volume 1, 2009, University of Nebraska Press, p118. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/stw/summary/v001/1.brockmeier.html> accessed 25th February 2011.

⁵⁴ J E Thomas - The Cherry Tree Carol:

4/ When Joseph and Mary Was in the garden green

They saw cherries and berries, That was fitted to be seen.

5/ And Mary said to Joseph In words meek and mild:

Pick me some cherries, Joseph, For I am with child.

6/Then Joseph spoke to Mary ,In words so unkind:

Let him pluck thee cherries, Mary, who brought thee with child

See Appendix 2.4 The Cherry Tree Carol

⁵⁵ Bickford, H C Dickinson, *Sabine Baring-Gould: Squarson, Writer and Folklorist 1834 – 1924*, (Newton Abbot, David Charles, 1970), p. 127.

⁵⁶ Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: a methodological critique of Collective Memory Studies", *History and Theory*, 41 (May 2002), p. 181.

⁵⁷ Anna Green, "Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory', ': *Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates: Oral History*, Vol. 32, No. 2, Memory and

Society (Autumn, 2004), p. 36. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179797>. Accessed 25th February 2011. Cites Paula Hamilton, 'Memory Studies and Cultural History', in *Cultural History in Australia*, ed. Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 83.

⁵⁸ Anna Green, *ibid.* Citing: Alon Confino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method', *American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 5, (1997), p. 1386.

⁵⁹ Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory", p.183. With reference to Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, ed. Lawrence Kritzman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Pierre Nora, "The Era of Commemoration," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 3, ed. Lawrence Kritzman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

⁶⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, and Terence. O. Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁶¹ Guy Beiner, "Recycling the Dustbin of Irish History: The Radical Challenge of 'Folk Memory'", *History Ireland*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb., 2006), pp. 42-47. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27725395> Accessed: 28th March 2010.

⁶² Patrick Laviolette, "Landscaping Death", *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol 8(2) p 224.

⁶³ Examples of fictional authors basing their stories on real life experience and observation are: Arthur Quiller – Couch, Charles Lee and Salome Hosking.

⁶⁴ Robert S Hawkers "Song of the Western Men" is now known as "Trelawny". Hawker originally portrayed this as Cornish traditional song of some antiquity but later acknowledged authorship and it is now thought his composition was inspired by the phrase "twenty thousand Cornishmen will know the reason why" as well as the story of Bishop Jonathon Trelawny. As a national anthem for Cornwall, it probably conjures images of more dramatic Cornish rebellions for most people than that associated with Bishop Trelawny. See Appendix 2.3.

⁶⁵ Katherine Bolland and Charles A. Atherton, "Chaos Theory: An Alternative Approach to Social Work Practice and Research. ." *Families in Society, The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*. 80.(4), (1999): 367-73.

⁶⁶ Nahachewsky, Andriy. "Once Again: On the Concept Of 'Second Existence Folk Dance'." *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 33 (2001): 17-28.

