

trends

7/4/77

RIGHT: Christine and David Bland cataloguing some of the old books in which they deal. The business is run from their home in Booth, Luddenden. Ambition is publishing and their first production is now available.

See below.

DAVID BLAND is a Halifax man, but moved away about 15 years ago eventually to London when he worked as librarian for the English Folk Dance and Song Society at Cecil Sharp House. That was where he met his wife, Christine, as a professional colleague; and it is as professional colleagues that in their home at 37, Booth, Luddenden, they are now in business as dealers in second-hand books, particularly books concerned with folk lore and folk music.



7 APRIL 1977

Signpost in folk lore

Mr Bland's return to his native heath (Mrs Bland is from North Wales) was influenced by his joining Bill Leader's folk music record company. When Bill Leader moved his company from London to Greetland, David and Christine came too. The "Evening Courier" has already reported on Leader's objective of getting the area's old songs on to tape.

The move north was three years ago. The Blands set up as book dealers just over a year ago.

"We specialise entirely," says Mr Bland, in folk music and folklore, touching nothing else. We work postally, issuing regular catalogues to customers on a mailing list. As yet we have no shop premises—this may or may not come later. With a business as specialised as ours a shop would probably be a handicap rather than an advantage, at least at this early stage.

"Our customers tend to be academics involved in full-time research and teaching, or people seriously involved with the subject in their spare time ('hobby' would be the wrong word in this context, since many of them are engaged in writing articles and books). We mail overseas as well as in the British Isles, to universities and other academic institutions in Canada, USA, Australia, Germany, Rumania.

"So far we have concentrated exclusively on second hand stock, but one of our ultimate aims is to establish ourselves as specialist publishers of folklore and folk music material, the sort of stuff the larger publishers shun because of its restricted appeal."

The Blands hope that they may be able to assess their publishing prospects with a reprint of the Midgley Pace Egg monograph written and produced in the Thirties by Midgley born journalist Henry Harwood and Sowerby Bridge Secondary (Grammar) School master, F. H. Marsden.

It was the work of Harwood and Marsden which revived the annual Easter performances at that time by boys of what was then Midgley Council School. It is the County Primary School now, but looks back this year to a Board School foundation just 100 years ago.

The Blands are reprinting the Pace Egg commentary and script by permission of Mr Harwood's daughter, Mrs Constance Drake of Norton Tower, Halifax: "We wanted to reprint," says Mr Bland, "not only because we have to start somewhere as publishers, but also because it ties

in with the centenary celebrations of the village school.

"Harwood and Marsden were responsible for reviving the Pace Egg play in Midgley following a break in the tradition going back to the first world war. Midgley School kept the tradition going for several years until it passed on to the boys of Calder High School who perform it now.

"The third reason for our wanting to reprint the monograph is that even after 40 years, it stands as an important contribution to the sparse literature of folk drama."

The reprint, which keeps as closely as possible to the presentation of the original, but in a slightly larger octavo size with considerably heavier paper and substantial buff-coloured cover, goes out at 75p and should be available at most local bookshops and the Hebden Bridge South Pennine Information Centre.

"There has still not been enough detailed study of this aspect of folklore; in fact, the monograph is one of the very few studies that have ever been made of a single play and text. In that respect it was a signpost to the way we should have been studying the plays now," says Mr Bland. "The monograph has, however, been completely unobtainable on the second-hand market for years (it was privately printed by the authors and soon went out of print) so that a second edition is long overdue. We are hoping that the reprint will therefore be welcomed in the folklore world (we have had several advanced orders already, some from the U.S.A. and Canada).

"Local people in Halifax and the Calder Valley are perhaps little 'immune' to the p

since it happens every year as a matter of course and can therefore be taken for granted. But the Midgley play is one of the very few traditional examples of folk drama still to be seen anywhere in the country. There are only about six other examples, and it thus assumes an importance for people living far outside our area—witness the number of visitors who come to see performances each Good Friday."