

**GEORGE GARDINER:  
Early Days and Musical Influences**

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I originally submitted this article on Gardiner's life to the E.F.D.S.S. Folk Song Journal. The Editors were reluctant to republish facts that were in Frank Purslow's 1967 Journal article on Gardiner. I thought the new material on its own would be one-sided, and it would make a proper study of Gardiner's biography difficult. I am very grateful that HAMPSHIRE VOICES has given me this opportunity to publish my work on his biography in full.

Bob Askew 2011

## GEORGE GARDINER: EARLY DAYS AND MUSICAL INFLUENCES

George Gardiner is one of the greatest collectors of English folk songs who noted over 1,400 songs in Hampshire and southern England. Only Cecil Sharp collected more songs, but Gardiner remains one of the lesser-known collectors. I feel that he deserves a wider biography, and I will seek in this article to verify and expand on Frank Purslow's biographical sketch in the 1967 Folk Music Journal \*1.

Any writing on Gardiner is indebted to Frank Purslow's huge body of work from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. He indexed and collated Gardiner's song collection at the VWML, researched his biography and published the great 'Marrowbones' series of four books featuring the songs of Gardiner and the Hammond Brothers. He achieved all this before the age of photocopiers, let alone computers and the internet.

I wish to enlarge upon Frank's biography by further investigating Gardiner's background to find why he started noting folk songs. Was he a mere middle class dilettante who dabbled in collecting? This study aims to show him as a rounded character to stand alongside the other great collectors of 1890-1910 whose biographies are better known. Gardiner retired from teaching after only 13 years at the age of 43, and he died of kidney disease at the relatively young age of 57. Could it be that kidney disease led to his retirement and had a debilitating effect on his health for decades?

This article will examine his family background and his activities in the first 50 years of his life, to get an understanding of his situation when he started collecting English Folk songs in 1904. It will then examine his appreciation of music to see the progression which ultimately led to his collecting English folk songs.

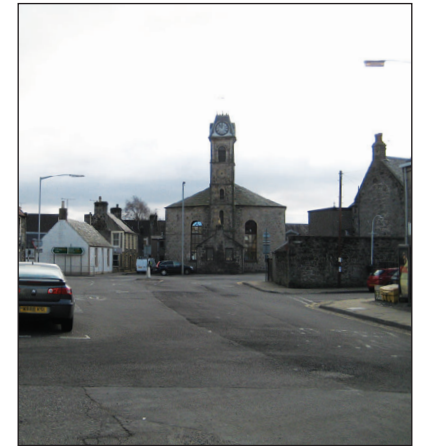


*Dr. George Barnet Gardiner.  
Photo courtesy Edinburgh Academy Archive*

## GEORGE GARDINER'S FIRST 50 YEARS

Gardiner's father was the Reverend Andrew Gardiner, a minister in the United Presbyterian Church, which was a liberal wing of Presbyterianism. He came from Milnathort, Kinross-shire and obtained a BA in Divinity in 1836 at St Andrews University, and a MA in 1839. He was ordained in 1841 and became minister of Talliallan Church, Kincardine, Perthshire, where he served for 20 years. (Talliallan and Kincardine are almost synonymous).

The Revd. Andrew had a 'characteristic cheerfulness', and was 'an incessant reader in various languages'.\*2 He had an open mind, being interested in 'all that was going on in the world and the church'.\*2 He maintained the Presbyterian belief in education and lifelong learning, taking a doctorate at the University of St Andrews after retiring as an active minister in 1878 aged 64. He married Jane Guthrie in May 1842. She was the daughter of the Revd. John Guthrie, one of the founders of the Evangelical Union Church. She was 'a lady of great sagacity and high-toned Christian character.' It can be seen that Gardiner's family had two strong parents. George Barnet Gardiner was born in 1853, the sixth child in a family of six sons and two



*Talliallan United Presbyterian Church,  
Kincardine*



*Gardiner's birthplace: Talliallan Manse, Kincardine*



daughters. He was named after his maternal uncle George Barnet, a bookseller in Milnathort, an appropriate naming for a future academic.

The Revd. Andrew became pastor of Dean Street Church, Stockbridge, Edinburgh on 26th March 1863.

It was a substantial move to go to the capital city from a small declining port-town on the north bank of the Forth. It could have had a traumatic effect on 10-year-old George, and it certainly must have impressed him. The fact that his large family moved with him probably cushioned the shock. He may also have been prepared for change by the family's regular reception of visiting clergy, and his father's visits to other parishes around the country. It was the custom of the church to have weeklong Communion services with visiting clergy. The Revd. Andrew was notably staying miles away with clergyman colleagues in West Lothian in the census of 1851 and in 1881. The family seems to have maintained the Presbyterian ideal of exhibiting faith by actions as well as words through generosity, hospitality, and the pursuit of social justice and reform. This is illustrated by their kindness toward their old family servant and in benefactions to educational institutions. Their old domestic servant Elizabeth Meiklejohn went on to set up a boarding house, but returned to live with the family upon retirement, and she was buried with them in the family grave. Three of Gardiner's brothers came to run a very successful shipping firm, and their social conscience resulted in their leaving a large proportion of their huge wealth to found scientific, medical and music establishments at Glasgow University. \*3



*Dean Street U. P. Church, Stockbridge, Edinburgh*



*Gardiner's family homes, Scotland St., Edinburgh: first No 24, and then the larger corner house, No 26.*



*Edinburgh New Town: Dundas Street, looking south*

The family moved into Edinburgh New Town, which has classical Georgian buildings in beautiful wide streets. There were statues at the crossroads and long views down the hill to Leith and the Forth Estuary

In 1864, at the age of 11, Gardiner went to school at the Edinburgh Institution. He did very well, and achieved 'attainments in languages' by his leaving in 1869.

Gardiner seems to have rapidly absorbed the culture of the big city. The street bands, in particular, impressed his instinct for music. His happy memories of this time are recorded in his article 'The Home of the German Band', published in Blackwood's Magazine in 1902. \*4

Gardiner's father had a great interest in languages, and this appears to have rubbed off onto his children. Gardiner and his elder brother Andrew studied Classical languages at Edinburgh University, and they both went on to obtain an MA. Andrew took his degree later in life after first doing clerical and insurance work.



*Where Gardiner went to school: Edinburgh Institution, 27 Queen Street*



Gardiner did exceptionally well, winning the Greek Travelling Scholarship in May 1876.\*5 This may have been the start of a pattern of tours abroad. Gardiner was also a good linguist in modern European languages: he was fluent in Swedish, German and French, and, on top of all this: he was an expert in Sanskrit, the classical Indian language. \*6



*Edinburgh University*

Gardiner stayed on at the University to become assistant to Dr James Blackie, Professor of Greek. This was a big achievement because the university had very few permanent staff. Gardiner's great abilities at languages and love of the classics must have put him in good stead. There is a memorial plaque to Blackie in the nave of St Giles Cathedral. He was well known in Scottish literary circles as a scholar, poet and philosopher and promoter of all things Scottish. Gardiner's love of folk song may also have helped in this relationship, for Blackie was a champion of 'Good Scots songs' reacting against the 'French and German ditties' that were popular at this time.

It would seem natural to assume that Gardiner remained committed to his father's Presbyterian church, but there seems to be no surviving evidence of his religious commitment. It could be possible that Gardiner became a freethinker, taking up the post-enlightenment ethos of the New Town area. It is difficult to know about this, but there is no hint of religion in Gardiner's writings. He certainly loved to drink, and his article on the German Band betrays a wide knowledge of wines and their prices!\*4 Gardiner's church attendance may have lapsed if he became a free

thinker; but, if this was so, it is most likely that he kept a foot in both camps. A severance from the church would have had a devastating effect on a family of such strong religious connections. His eldest brother, Andrew, seems to have been cut off by his father, possibly for this reason. Andrew received the bare legal minimum 'pay off' in his father's will. He was then ignored in each of his sibling's wills. Gardiner's brother-in-law, George Troup, was a church minister, and he was present at Gardiner's death to sign the certificate, so it does seem that Gardiner stayed within his father's church.

In 1881 the census shows Gardiner, aged 28, still sharing the family home with his father and several brothers and sisters. His mother had died in 1877. Eldest brother Andrew is no longer traceable in the census. He eventually died in Sydney, Australia in 1921, but he seems to have remained in Scotland because of his co-writing Latin textbooks with Gardiner 1896-1904. Brother John had married and left to set up a drapery firm in Brechin, Angus; and elder sister Eliza Jane had married the Revd. George Troup, and moved away to Monifieth, also in Angus. Gardiner's youngest brother Frederick had returned from New Zealand where he trained in shipping. He joined with his brothers William and James to set up the shipping company James Gardiner and Co. in 1880.\*3 It became very successful, and the brothers soon moved to Glasgow, which was flourishing as the 'second city of the British Empire' at this time.

The Revd. Andrew became physically worn out, and he retired as a minister in 1882. He moved to Glasgow to live with his son, James. His youngest daughter Isabella went with him, and their old domestic servant Elizabeth Meiklejohn joined them. The shipping company's success enabled each of the three brothers to buy a house in the fashionable Kelvinside and Hillhead areas of Glasgow.

Their success also enabled them to become patrons of their cousin James Guthrie, a major member of the 'Glasgow Boys' group of artists. They came to own a number of pictures by Sir James Guthrie, including several portraits of Gardiner's family. Two of these are in major galleries: the Revd. Dr Andrew Gardiner has a noted portrait in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh; George's youngest brother, knighted to become Sir Frederick Gardiner, also has a major portrait in the Kelvinside Gallery, Glasgow.

<http://tinyurl.com/c9jelbd>

The brothers originally owned Guthrie's famous picture, 'The Highland Funeral', and also 'The Wash' which is now in the Tate Gallery in London.



*James Gardiner and Co. Office:  
24 St Vincent Place  
(just off St George's Square: Glasgow's  
principal open space).  
It was shared with other ship owners.*





*Dundas Street, looking north towards  
Forth estuary*

Gardiner wished to stay in Edinburgh, and he moved into a flat, which was run as a boarding house by two elderly ladies: Elizabeth Ross and her sister. It was in Dundas Street, one of the main streets running north from the centre of town. Gardiner shared with three other boarders: another single man, and a woman and her daughter. Gardiner never married, but he was used to living in a full family house, and it seems that he wished to continue shared living with a number of residents. He was a naturally sociable man who entertained Cecil Sharp with 'endless stories' when he they met later on.

Gardiner took up a teaching post at Edinburgh Academy in 1883, at the age of 30. This was, and still is, a fee-paying school, which specialised in classics and aimed to send pupils on to Oxford and Cambridge rather than to Scottish Universities



*Gardiner's digs in 1891:  
27, Dundas Street, Edinburgh*



*Edinburgh Academy playground and main entrance.*



*Edinburgh Academy main entrance inscription in both Greek and Latin*

Gardiner moved from assisting an ardent Scottish nationalist professor to teaching in a school that looked to England and the British Empire. Gardiner's own sympathies may have favoured this outlook. He had a wide appreciation of other countries and cultures, and his brothers looked towards the British Empire with their shipping company. Gardiner sometimes seems almost to be writing as an Englishman, rather than a Scot, in some of his writings on folk songs.

Gardiner had moved from the rarefied academic atmosphere of Edinburgh University, to a job teaching exuberant young children. He had some trouble adjusting at first\*7, but he made such a success of it that he was offered the headmastership of Aberdeen Grammar School in 1893.\*8



*Edinburgh Academy staff c.1890. Gardiner on extreme right, holding a curious key.  
Photo courtesy Edinburgh Academy Archive*



Gardiner was known as a kindly man, always there to help struggling pupils or fellow teachers in need of assistance\*7. He was well liked by his ex-pupils and a popular guest at his class reunion meetings.

Gardiner had a wide artistic knowledge beyond languages and the classics. When a big donation was made to the school, he was engaged to buy materials for a collection focusing on medieval German and Dutch architecture.\*9 He had also amassed his own personal collection of pictures and objects which he loaned to the school for teaching aids. The collection included expensive prints from Germany and elsewhere, which were valued at £300, almost enough to buy a house in 1893.



*Gardiner "Club". George Gardiner with a class of his pupils.  
Photo montage by Paul Marsh. Photos courtesy Edinburgh Academy Archive*

The collection was felt to be very useful and important, and a subscription fund was set up so that the school could own the material when Gardiner eventually left.\*9

In 1889 Gardiner felt himself to be of sufficient social prominence to pay for a two-line entry in the Edinburgh Directory. Most people had a single short line, but George had: 'Gardiner, George B. MA, classical master, Edinburgh Academy, 27 Dundas St'. He continued with this entry every year until 1895, when the entry is reduced to a mere mention as 'George B Gardiner MA', along with 8 other residents at 27 Dundas Street. His entry disappears from the Directory after 1896. He then seems to have taken up a peripatetic existence: living at hotels, and with friends and relations. He may also have made longer trips abroad at this time. Upon his death, he had personal furniture at both brother Frederick's house and at Waverley Hydropathic.\*10 Gardiner boarded in Hydropathic centres as an alternative to hotels in his homeland. These were fashionable healthy living centres. He probably liked working in the peace of their rural settings, and he must have enjoyed socialising with fellow residents. He was at Craiglockart Hydropathic in 1901, and

several times at Waverley Hydropathic, Melrose, during his collecting period 1905-10.\*Appendix 2 There were regular advertisements for Hydropathics in the newspapers, and they seem to have been closer to holiday resorts than medical health centres. Golf, Fishing and scenic grounds are advertised, with special rates for weekends, winter booking etc. They attracted couples and whole families as well as single people of all ages.

Gardiner resigned from the school in December 1896,\*11 the year in which his entries in the Directories ceased. Any thought that it might have been because of failing health is dispersed by the vigour of his activity during this period. He seems to have decided that teaching was constraining him from the studying, writing and translating which was close to his heart. He had the means to maintain himself,



*Waverley Hydropathic, Melrose*

owning many company shares, which would have yielded a good regular income. His shipbroker brothers probably advised him in buying them. He left nearly £10,000 in shares in his will: a fortune in 1910.\*10

The school magazine, The Edinburgh Academy Chronicle, notes Gardiner's many achievements around this time. In April 1894 he was appointed Examiner in French for the MA degree at the University of St Andrews. He 'continued to hold' the office of examiner in Sanskrit at Edinburgh University, which he must have taken up earlier. In April he obtained his doctorate, a D.Sc at the University of Edinburgh for Sanskrit. October saw the publication of the textbook 'A Latin Translation Primer' which Gardiner co-wrote with his brother Andrew. In August 1896 he was given the post of examiner for French at St Andrews University, Dundee College.

Gardiner and his brother Andrew co-wrote a number of textbooks over the next decade, Gardiner always being the principal author. The books came to form a major part of the Latin section of Edward Arnold's school textbook sales. 'A First Latin Course' was published in October 1897. In 1898 they published 'Key to a First Latin Course'. The textbooks were based on the most up-to-date teaching techniques from Germany. Gardiner stayed in contact with Edinburgh Academy, standing in to cover illness by taking Latin teaching. 1899 saw the publication of Gardiner's translation of 'Cicero Officilis', which won great acclaim. In 1900 the brothers published 'A Second Latin Reader' and in March of that year Gardiner also covered teaching in Edinburgh Academy again.\*12 He was appointed Examiner in German at Edinburgh University, also in 1900. In 1904 the brothers published their final school textbook, 'A Latin Anthology for Beginners'. Gardiner remained in some contact with the staff of the Academy, advising them about useful classical prints in 1909. \*13

Gardiner is shown in full vigour of life during the decade following his resignation from teaching. His sharp academic brain is in full use with several high status posts of examiner for languages. He also followed up his experience as a teacher with a series of popular Latin textbooks, and his acclaimed translation of Cicero. He had always planned his holidays to coincide with continental music performances, and he could do this with more freedom, once he gave up his school teaching.

### GEORGE GARDINER'S MUSICAL INFLUENCES

George Gardiner's musical background reveals the progression that resulted in his becoming absorbed in folk music and song at this time.

Gardiner's academic and teaching careers were based on his exceptional abilities with languages, but he was personally interested in a broad range of arts. His greatest artistic love was music. He loved to sing to friends and family, and even to his Classics students as he taught them at school. His music collection includes singing exercises and part songs. He also had a large collection of piano scores, and it is likely that he played the piano as did most musically inclined Victorians. Gardiner's sister Isabella is shown playing the piano in her portrait. He remarked to his German hosts that he was 'no musician'\*4, but this was probably characteristic modesty. He certainly could read music well, but, in common with most formally educated musicians, he did not learn to note tunes down by ear. He had a great aural memory, however, and he was able to whistle or sing the whole repertoire of his favourite German band, 23 years after last hearing them!\*4 It would seem that singing was his main interest as a performer, and that he honed his musical memory by learning aurally from the street bands and any other music that interested him. If he could sing whole band pieces without a score, he must have learned to sing songs without the score in front of him. This would have brought him closer to traditional singers than most Victorian and Edwardians with a musical inclination.

Gardiner maintained that he had been a lover of folk song all his life\*14, and so it is difficult to know how he first came to like folk music. It could have come from

hearing traditional songs in the town of Kincardine, or from an influential person in his childhood, such as a family member, a domestic servant, or a teacher. It might have been through any or all of these influences, but I believe he would have credited the person if it had come later in life from an influential acquaintance, such as Dr James Blackie.

As a lover of music, Gardiner must have thought he had 'landed in heaven' when he settled into Edinburgh at the age of 10. There were no radios or recording devices in those days, but Edinburgh had a thriving street music culture. A wide range of performers could be heard, from semi-musical soloists on crude instruments to sublimely professional bands playing carefully arranged music on eight or more instruments. Gardiner later told of his youthful delight in this music, which was to be had by all '*for free, or for a few coppers*'.\*4

Gardiner became particularly attached to the band of Herr Gilcher, an 8-piece band of highly accomplished performance. They played overtures, operatic selections, waltzes and polkas 'As a boy I used to follow these players for hours.' 'I got to know their pitches' and 'I could track them at any hour of the day'. They had a remarkably wide repertoire. Years later Gardiner was able to remind the band of a visit they made to his family home, '*where they were invited into a house, and talked German with the people*'. He was disconsolate when, after 5 years of enjoyment, the band moved to Boston, U.S.A. in 1872. Gardiner's musical appreciation and ability is attested by the fact that he 'knew by heart their entire repertoire'.\*4 He could not rest until he had discovered the titles (and obtained the scores) of the pieces that they played. He presumably wanted scores so that he could listen to others playing the pieces for him, or to play the pieces himself on the piano.\*4 His search is a testament of his academic desire for accuracy. He knew the pieces by heart, but perhaps he was aware that subtle variations could creep in from a purely aural memory. Perhaps his academic insistence on accuracy led to a worry that he might have missed a subtle note!

Gardiner's quest for the music of Herr Gilcher's band continued over the next 23 years, pursued even on journeys on the continent. He was nothing if not a tenacious researcher! He mentioned with humour, however, that the 'Petvot Waltz', was finally identified as the 'Bedford Waltz' written by an Englishman! Part of the band's repertoire was Hungarian music, which Gardiner grew to greatly love. This led to a visit to Budapest where he obtained a rare revolutionary march in their repertoire. Gardiner eventually heard that Herr Gilcher had retired, and in 1895, he made a visit to the obscure German valley where the band originated. He was able to meet the bandmeister and some of the musicians in their home village 23 years after they ceased performing in Edinburgh. He finally obtained the scores for the last missing pieces of their repertoire. Gardiner astounded them with his musical memory, '*singing or whistling*' the whole of their massive repertoire of music. "But the bandmeister was more than gratified with the enthusiasm of his devotee, and when I said '*Don't you see the accursed Englishman knows the old pieces better than the bandmeister himself?*' the good man shook his great sides with laughter."\*4

Gardiner's appreciation of the band and his tenacious search for their music was published in Blackwood's Magazine in October 1902 in an article 'The Home of the German Band'. It is a delightful article showing Gardiner's appreciation of a skilful



band and a youthful interest. Gardiner's decision to publish it at this time, however, could also be seen as a political act, stemming from his essential humanity. This was a time when anti-German sentiment in Britain escalated to a crescendo, with the Kaiser supporting the Boers in South Africa, and the start of the naval arms race. Gardiner knew Germany well through his command of the language and his visits to the country. I think that he also wrote this article in order to show Germans (Britain's potential enemies) as friendly, skilful and interesting people, and not a nation of military bogeymen as depicted in the popular press of the time.

Gardiner made many continental trips, and he timed his visits to allow attendance at musical concerts. He was there to hear the last concert of Johann Strauss at Leipzig.\*4 He soaked up any music that he came across, including the national music of many countries, and also their folk music and song. He had a broad musical appreciation, and was even said to be an expert in Swedish pop songs!\*5 But his sensitive ear could produce strong criticism for music of poor quality. Despite his kindly nature, he criticised English comic operas severely as '*a dissipation of energy for 30 grown men to spend their breath in producing sound which yields so little sense.*'\*4

Henry Hammond joined the Academy staff in 1890 as Classics master, and he and Gardiner became great friends, sharing their interest in folk songs. Gardiner stayed at the Hammond family home at Clevedon in Somerset. They were later to start collecting folk songs together in Southern England. Gardiner also probably met one of his Hampshire collecting colleagues, John Guyer, in Edinburgh in the 1890s. Guyer was said to be '*known to us*' in an Academy Chronicle article\*15, and he is recorded living in Edinburgh between 1891 and 1901 when he advertised as a teacher and performed in concerts on violin or viola.

It might be wondered why Gardiner did not think to collect songs in his native Scotland. It would seem that he felt, like many Scotsmen of his time, that most Scottish folk songs had already been noted. In a letter to the Hampshire Chronicle in 1906, he stated '*The beautiful old Scotch songs which are sung throughout the English-speaking world were all collected, words and music, more than a century ago. Walter Scott noted the Border Ballads about the same time.*'\*14 In a lecture at Hartley College, Southampton in 1909, he is reported as saying '*that it is now extremely difficult to discover in the Lowlands of Scotland any unrecorded songs of real value, though such are still to be found in plenty in the Highlands.*'\*16 Gardiner was aware of the contemporary collecting of James Duncan and Gavin Grieg in the Aberdeen area. He was even invited to give a joint lecture with Gavin Grieg on folk song by the president of the Aberdeen Wagner Society.\*17

In 1903 Gardiner's love of music, continental languages and travel resulted in his taking up a new academic project. He began a systematic study of folksong in all of the countries of Europe. The evidence for his commitment to this study lies in the Gardiner collection of 800 music books and scores, including over 200 relating to folksong in England and Europe. This is now housed in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.\*19

*'Throughout my life I have been a lover of folk songs, in the first instance of course, of the songs of Scotland. In the course of many visits to the Continent I gradually*

*extended my range, and three years ago I entered upon the systematic study of the folk-songs of Europe, learning typical examples of ancient French, German, Russian, Swedish, Finnish, Hungarian, and even Bohemian and Slovenian songs.'*\*14

This is not a dry academic amassing a knowledge of words or music on the page. Gardiner had to **learn the songs** to experience them fully!

It would seem that Gardiner was probably aiming to write a synthesis of the folksong of all Europe in English. Any such aim was selflessly put aside, however, when upon studying the Manx collection edited by Mr Gill, he realised that 'there might be folk songs to collect in England.' In characteristic way, he acquired and absorbed all of the available publications on the subject:

*'It was at this stage that I joined the Folk Song Society and obtained six numbers of its Journal. I also provided myself with Sussex Songs, English County songs, Songs of the West, A Garland of Country Song, Folk Songs from Somerset, English Folk Songs and Traditional Tunes, the collections in which are contained the songs still sung in country places and recently rescued from oblivion.'*\*14

Gardiner is giving due credit to all of the collectors of English folk song who preceded him. He, like all of the early collectors, was aware that folk song collecting was a team effort, and he certainly was not one to 'blow his own trumpet' and ignore the work of others. The works of Lucy Broadwood, Sabine Baring Gould, William Barrett, Frank Kidson and Cecil Sharp are all acknowledged. Gardiner is also using his letter to inform the public that these works are available. He goes on to say: '*In these volumes I at last found what I wanted- a body of nameless, hereditary, English songs of the people corresponding to the songs published in the Swedish collection of Geijer and Afzelius, the Manx collection, the Balmoral collection of Scotch Songs, and the Hungarian collection of Matrai Gabriel.*'\*14

I do not believe that Gardiner was trumpeting his learning here in an elitist manner. He was publicising folk songs by pointing out to English people that other countries had done this work, and it was time for English people to do it as well, before it was too late.

*'In the English songbooks I have named are to be found dozens of songs of surpassing beauty, the existence of which was only then revealed to me, and is, I fear, practically unknown to the mass of educated Englishmen.'*

*'Yet we possess collections that in quantity and quality will compare favourably with any Continental country. I would even venture to assert that from the songs of the English peasantry a hundred could be selected equal to the hundred best songs of Europe contained in the International Folk Song Album of Dr. Reimann'. He then quotes Ralph Vaughan Williams, saying the collector 'has the ever-present chance of picking up some rare old ballad or an exquisitely beautiful melody, worthy, in its smaller compass, of a place beside the finest compositions of the greatest composers.'*\*14

Gardiner had an extraordinary broad musical knowledge, so it can be seen that he valued the tunes of English folk songs very highly. In contrast, he was capable of strong criticism of the music currently fashionable among the richer levels of society: '*If anyone wants a lovely song, let him go to Twyford (in Hampshire) and learn "The sweet primroses" instead of buying the treacly drawing room ballads*



that are so unblushingly thrust upon us from day to day. These constitute the tinned meat department of musical literature.\*14

He characteristically made a generous donation upon joining the Folk Song Society, and this was used to buy their first phonograph recording machine.

After much research, Gardiner started collecting in 1904 in Somerset with his friend, Henry Hammond. Hammond had become a semi-invalid after contracting a disease in Africa. It must have galled the two friends to realise that Cecil Sharp had started collecting in Hammond's own back yard, just one year before them. But they moved on in good humour. They separated at Lucy Broadwood's suggestion, and Henry collected in Dorset with his brother Robert noting the words. Gardiner started collecting in Hampshire, employing Lucy's friend, the composer Henry Balfour Gardiner, to follow up and make professional tune transcriptions for him. Gardiner initiated his collecting in Hampshire in June 1905, in the full vigour of life. He later told many tales of long walks to search out singers, and enduring extremes of wet weather and hot sun. He even spent some time with rural workers as they worked, joining a shepherd in his hut, and a farmer milking his cows.\*18 He continued searching for five years systematically working around the whole county, and noting every song he could. He did not use a network of middle-class acquaintances to ferret out local singers. He based himself in hotels, and made use of the extensive railway system to get to the localities where he could do all of the ferreting personally. He used the winter months to study the songs and to collate them with other collected versions. The seriousness with which he pursued this aspect of his collecting is highlighted by the fact that he spent almost half of his time at it. He stated that he had done '8 months continuous collecting and 6 months study' in a letter to Lucy Broadwood.\*20 His song manuscripts show profuse comparisons with songs in other collections. These were unfortunately left out in the Journal of 1909, which was devoted to his collection. Gardiner's tireless research of the songs is attested in a note by Lucy Broadwood on 'My Johnny was a shoemaker' in Journal 10 of 1907. Gardiner had even corresponded with the secretary of a dying music hall comedian Mr J Toole, to clarify the source for one of his songs.

Gardiner's sociability resulted in a natural ability to meet and gain the confidence of the singers of the songs. His respect for them is shown by the fact that he gave them prominent thanks in his publications before that of his musical colleagues. In his introduction in the Folk Song Journal of 1909, he says 'In conclusion I offer my best thanks to my singers, but for whose kindness my collection could not have been formed, and to my musical colleagues...'\*21

In his letter to the Hampshire Chronicle of 1908 he says, 'In conclusion, I have to offer my best thanks to all my singers for their patience and forbearance...'\*18

In a letter of 1906 to the Hampshire Chronicle, he says: 'Besides, a singer is always a jolly fellow!'\*14

Gardiner was active in promoting awareness of folk song in public talks, concerts and letters to the press. He had a letter published in the Bath Chronicle to publicise Cecil Sharp's presentation at Bath Pump House in 1906\*22, and he was instrumental in getting Cecil Sharp to come to Southampton to give a similar recital in 1908.\*23 He presented a lecture with professional singers singing songs

from his own collection at Hartley College in Southampton in 1909.\*16 He also sent a number of well written letter-articles about his collecting to Hampshire newspapers which were reprinted in other publications.

In 1909, after 5 years collecting, Gardiner seems full of life, expounding the beauties of folk song with great enthusiasm in a lecture in Southampton in February, and to a reporter on the Hants and Sussex News in May.\*16\*24 But an article published in the Hampshire Observer in the Autumn of that year shows a sudden change. There are no direct quotes from Gardiner, and the article is entirely derivative of the notes in Gardiner's FSS Journal published that summer. This newspaper article noted that Gardiner was indisposed with an eye infection, but fully intent upon returning to the area next spring.\*25

Gardiner died at Waverley Hydropath a few months later in January 1910. The death certificate says the cause was 'Bright's Disease one year'. He was 57. His death from kidney disease seems to have been unexpected and sudden. There was no final ordering of his collection, although he did leave a will in which he directed that his folk song collection should be made publicly available in a suitable institution. Seventeen years later, in 1928, his family donated his notebooks and song collection to the Folk Song Society, thinking it 'appropriate'. A letter to the society from Gardiner's brother stated that Gardiner 'loved to sing these songs'.\*26



Gardiner family grave in Warriston Road Cemetery, Edinburgh.  
Bob Askew, author, also pictured



We cannot know whether Gardiner intended to do anything with his collection beyond depositing it in an accessible archive. His previous activities, however, can give a pointer. He was a tenacious researcher with great academic skill and publishing experience. His expertise in languages progressed to University work, and then to teaching schoolchildren at a prestigious school. His teaching experience, combined with his knowledge of language and his gleanings from continental travel, led him to publish acclaimed school textbooks. His continental travel and love of music led to his systematic study of the folk songs of all Europe and then his musical interest and academic skill led him to collect English folk songs for posterity. He arranged for fifty of his best songs to be published in the Folk Song Society Journal and 16 of them in Cecil Sharp's 'Folk Songs of England' series. Gardiner may well have intended to combine his knowledge of continental song with his English collecting to produce a great work on English folksong like the Scottish Musical Museum. But we shall perhaps never know. His last years were spent selflessly collecting the songs of Hampshire and the south of England which would have been lost forever without his effort. (Appendix 3) He left posterity a wonderful legacy of noted songs. \*27 He was certainly no dilettante collector, but a widely knowledgeable and respected academic who combined tenacious research skills with immense analytical and organisational skills. He publicised folk songs with articles in newspapers and lectures. He also had the sociability to meet and gain the confidence of the singers of the songs. I believe that, had he been blessed with a longer life, he could have written works on folk song that would have equalled, and may have even outshone, those of his better-known contemporary collectors.

Cecil Sharp gave a rather depreciating pen-picture of Gardiner in a private letter to Lucy Broadwood? Sharp wrote, *'I see no harm whatever in 'a sang hoose' etc, But it seems that you may have been a Professor of Sanscrit, Latin and many other things in a Scotch University without having acquired any store of common sense worth talking about! He is a kind-hearted old man and means well but he is very irritating at times. Yet be thankful that you have no [personal acquaintance] and are not called upon to listen to the pointless stories by the dozen'*\*28

I think I prefer the image of Gardiner's sense of humour presented in a published letter where he criticises a journalist whose carelessness was doing a disservice to folk song. With benign academic criticism, Gardiner says:

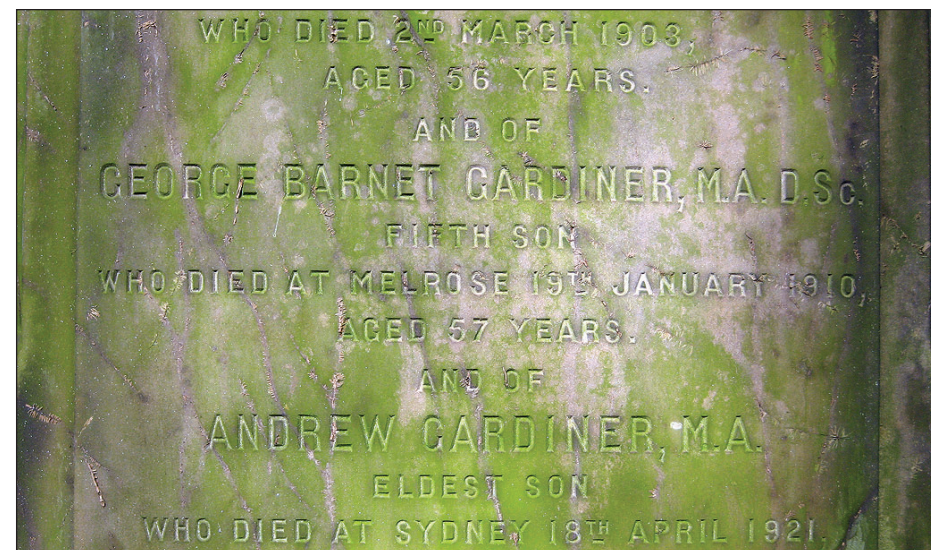
*'In reviewing Cecil Sharp's notable work on English folk-song, an enterprising critic states that Mr Sharp heard a particular song "at an inn at Brennan on the Moor". This must be the gentleman who, when asked if he had ever been in Algebra, replied that he once drove through it on a coach. Apparently he is not at home in English folk-song; in geographical research he may yet achieve distinction!'*\*18

A final serious quote from Gardiner on English folk song:

*'The conclusion is obvious. We are gathering not the songs of one county, but the songs of England; and out of that rough material that is being gradually accumulated we may hope one day to see prepared a monumental national collection of English songs similar to the Scots Musical Museum, which James Johnson, with the help of the immortal Burns, gave to Scotland in the end of the 18th century.'*\*18

To see the songs of the English folk song collectors on the VWML Internet site would have given George Gardiner great joy. \*27.

Bob Askew 2011



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## Appendix 1

### GARDINER FAMILY DATES:

#### PARENTS

The Revd. Andrew Gardiner c1814–17/2/1892 [married Jane Guthrie 8/5/1842]

Jane Gardiner (Guthrie) 1815–5/8/1877

#### SIBLINGS

Andrew Gardiner 1843–18/4/1921 (died Sydney, Australia)

William Guthrie Gardiner 1844–7/11/1935 [married Agnes Hay 1889]

John Guthrie Gardiner 1845–1927 [married Emily 1878] (two children)

James Gardiner 1847–2/3/1903

Eliza Jane Troup (nee Gardiner) 1851–1938 [married George Emslie Troup 1880] (5 children) G E Troup d.1935

George Barnet Gardiner 1853–19/1/1910

Frederick Crombie Gardiner 10/2/1855–7/8/1937 [married Elizabeth Ritchie 1881-91]

Isabella Helen Gardiner 1862–3/11/1900



## Appendix 2

### GARDINER AT WAVERLEY HYDROPATHIC

Gardiner was at Melrose Hydropathic in October 1905, January 1907, May 1908 and January 1910. Gardiner collection letters VWML.

## Appendix 3

### OTHER HAMPSHIRE COLLECTORS

Hampshire songs collected by Lucy Broadwood, Alice Gillington, Bob Copper and others add up to less than 100, compared to Gardiner's 1,200.

## NOTES

- \*1 Folk Music Journal 1967 The George Gardiner Folk Song Collection. Frank Purslow p.129.
- \*2 Obituary: The Scotsman 18/2/1892
- \*3 See University of Glasgow website on the Gardiner bequest:  
<http://tinyurl.com/c9jelbd>
- \*4 'The Home of the German Band' Blackwood's Magazine Vol 172 October, 1902
- \*5 Daily Record 2/5/1876
- \*6 Obituary: Edinburgh Academy Chronicle May 1910 p112
- \*7 Edinburgh Academy Chronicle Oct 1897 p13
- \*8 Edinburgh Academy Chronicle July 1893 p32
- \*9 Edinburgh Academy Chronicle June 1895 p92
- \*10 Will of Dr George Barnet Gardiner 19/1/1910.
- \*11 Edinburgh Academy Chronicle December 1896 p34
- \*12 Edinburgh Academy Chronicle March 1900.
- \*13 Edinburgh Academy Chronicle 1893-1910.
- \*14 Letter to the Hampshire Chronicle 1/9/1906.
- \*15 Edinburgh Academy Chronicle November 1906 p23
- \*16 Hampshire Chronicle 20/2/1909,
- \*17 Letter from H Wright to Gardiner 5/6/1906. Gardiner Collection VWML.
- \*18 Hampshire Chronicle: 4/1/1908
- \*19 Mitchell Library: Accession numbers: 394251-395267.
- \*20 Letter to Lucy Broadwood 25/5/1908. Gardiner Collection VWML.
- \*21 Folk Song Journal 1909.
- \*22 Bath Daily Chronicle 30/1/1906.
- \*23 Hampshire Observer 20/6/1908
- \*24 Hants and Sussex News 5/5/1909.
- \*25 Hampshire Observer 23/10/1909.
- \*26 VWML Gardiner Collection: Letter from Sir Frederick Gardiner 5/5/1932.

- \*27 Gardiner's song collection is freely available on the EFDSS' "The Full English" website: <https://www.vwml.org/vwml-projects/vwml-the-full-english>
- \*28 Letter from Cecil Sharp to Lucy Broadwood. 25/6/1909. Lucy Broadwood Collection VWML

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The account of my search for George Gardiner's last resting place can be read on:  
<http://www.forest-tracks.co.uk/hampshirevoices/pages/theseearchforgeorge.html>