

FANDOM CULTURE AND THE ARCHERS

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FANDOM CULTURE AND THE ARCHERS

An Everyday Story of
Academic Folk

EDITED BY

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AND

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCNZ	Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CTS	Conflict Tactics Scale
FOI	Freedom of Information
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
IAPT	Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IVF	In Vitro Fertilisation
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
NAO	National Audit Office
NHS	National Health Service
NZBS	New Zealand Broadcasting Service
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PCT	Primary Care Trust
RNIB	Royal National Institute for the Blind
SAVE	Save the Ambridge Vale Environment
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths
UK	United Kingdom
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US(A)	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation
WI	Women's Institute

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Dr Cara Courage is a placemaking, and arts, activism and museums academic and practitioner, and Executive Director, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit. Cara speaks internationally on topics covering the C21st museum, the civic and activist museum, socially engaged art in community and museum settings and arts and urban design, placemaking and planning and has published widely on these topics. Cara is author of *Arts in Place: The Arts, the Urban and Social Practice* (Routledge, 2017), and the co-editor of *Creative Placemaking and Beyond* (Routledge, 2018), and editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Placemaking* (Routledge, 2021). Cara has been listening to *The Archers* for around 20 years and grew up with the programme ‘always on’ at her grandmother’s farm on Exmoor. She talks about the pleasure and pain of her *Archers* fandom in a talk *My BDSM relationship with The Archers*, and has presented at *Academic Archers* conferences on perceptions of masculinity, Ambridge placemaking and the parenting styles to be found, or not, among the villagers.

Dr Nicola Headlam works as a Chief Economist and Head of Public Sector for data/tech company Red Flag Alert in Manchester, where she applies her skills and experience to solving data problems. She passionately believes that the right data

and evidence base in the hands of economic development policy makers can transform the sub-national economy of the UK. She also directs a Living Lab for Innovation looking at pandemic economic recovery, and how to ensure that this reaches the places beyond ‘the usual’. These social and spatial concerns bleed into her engagement with *The Archers* and she also works as the self-appointed network analyst for Ambridge, with forensic attention paid to the interactions within the clans of the village and the ways in which inter-generational capital is protected and transferred over time. She is often found trying to ensure that the *Academic Archers* Facebook group remains curious, generous and joyful in tone and is working on a new project looking at the 5-day micro-seasons which can be observed in the natural world.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Claire Astbury has been an *Archers* listener since 2002 and was a regular contributor to the former BBC *The Archers* message boards, known as *Mustardland*. More recently, Claire has participated in various online fan groups and is a long time caller to the *DumTeeDum* podcast. Since the start of the coronavirus lockdown(s) in March 2020, Claire has spent more time involved in *Archers* fan activity than actually listening to the programme, being a regular attendee of the Saturday *Academic Archers* group and *DumTeeDum* zoom meetups. Claire's career as a housing professional with 25 years' experience informed her analysis of rural housing issues which was presented to the 2018 *Academic Archers* conference at the British Library and included in *Flapjacks and Feudalism: Social Mobility and Class in The Archers* (Courage & Headlam, 2020). In this book, Claire's research into online fan cultures and subcultures has been expanded from her presentation to the 2020 *Academic Archers* conference in Reading.

Dr Elizabeth Anne Bailey has been an *Archers* listener for more than half a century. By day, Elizabeth has held down a long and varied cross-portfolio career in national and local government policy and communications. Drawing on many of her experiences, she has recently published a book from a

mid-life doctorate. In her chapter in this book, Elizabeth, who in real life is married to an actual Nigel, who spent a lot of the pandemic lockdown entirely safely on the roof of their home building a dormer window, explores some overlaps between an abiding academic interest in how people talk about politics and her *Archers* fandom.

Caroline Birks has been teaching Media and Film for around 20 years. After graduating from Bath Spa with a 2:1 in Sociology and English, Caroline went on to study for a PGCE in Secondary English and later an MA in Media, Culture and Communication. As an *Archers* fan and educator, Caroline has written two published articles on *The Archers* and recorded a YouTube analysis, *5 Things you should know about The Archers*. Caroline has worked as an examiner for Media Studies GCSE and A-level and is one half of *Like Maria*, an online resources company for teachers and students. Caroline writes a personal blog called mrsbirksblogs.blogspot.com and lives in Norfolk with her two children and naughty dog, Robin.

Helen M. Burrows was a Senior Lecturer in Social Work, and worked in the East Midlands both as an independent practice educator and as an Outreach domestic abuse support worker until retirement in 2018. Her professional practice background is in Child Protection and working with adults with complex needs. Helen's research interests have included social work education, gender and sexuality in social care, digital engagement and more recently the role of popular and social media in informal and public education. This has led Helen to look at fandom, and how fan forums can support learning in a variety of disciplines. Helen is also a keen knitter, and her Ambridge cardigan was chosen by the BBC to be part of the *70 items for 70 years of The Archers* collection in 2021. Helen has been listening to *The Archers* since around 1964, is the

same age as Shula, and shares her birthday with Tracy Horrobin. A long-term member of the *Archers Anarchists* ('The Archers is real, there is no cast'), she has been involved with *Academic Archers* since the first conference in 2016 and has presented papers at four of the five conferences to date: on using *The Archers* in social work education, mapping family dysfunction, Morris Dancing and transformative fandom. Helen's chapter in this book is a development of her transformative fandom paper presented at Reading in 2019.

Isobel Duxfield completed an MPhil in Multi-Disciplinary Gender Studies at Cambridge University, where she researched the role of cycling and the gendered body. She has worked as a journalist, writing about gender equality in sports, employment and the media. Isobel now works for a Brussels-based sustainable mobility think tank, working on gender equality in urban transport. And, well it goes without saying... she is a lifelong *Archers* fan.

Katharine Hoskyn spent her childhood and part of her adult life in Britain and now lives in rural New Zealand. Katharine is currently working with the Auckland University of Technology managing a research project in the Faculty of Health and Environmental Science. She has an undergraduate degree in social sciences, a Graduate Diploma in Business and an MPhil on the use of sports events to encourage sport participation. Katharine's doctoral research investigated the membership of community sports clubs, and she continues to undertake research in this field. Her research tends to be multi-disciplinary embracing her background in social science and business, with a focus on community issues. She has been listening to *The Archers* on and off since 1968.

Carenza Lewis MA, ScD, FSA, FHEA, FRSA, is an archaeologist and Professor of Public Understanding of Research at the University of Lincoln. Her research includes historic rural

settlements, childhood, community heritage and well-being. Carenza has directed archaeological fieldwork on scores of sites, mostly medieval, presented a number of TV programmes including 12 series of Channel 4's iconic *Time Team* and taught medieval archaeology. Since moving to Lincoln in 2015, Carenza has led *Middlefield's Utopias* (2016–2017), *Heritage at Risk and Wellbeing* (2020–2021) and *Community Archaeology in Rural Environments* (2019–2023), the latter extending her publicly engaged approach to archaeological research into the Netherlands, Czech Republic and Poland. Carenza is currently President of the Medieval Settlement Research Group and Vice Chair of Trustees for the Council for British Archaeology and mother to three almost grown-up children who do not want to go into archaeology.

Felicity MacDonald-Smith originally studied French Language and Literature at University College London; she also holds an MSc in Teaching English from Aston University; and an MA in European Language and Intercultural Studies from Anglia Ruskin University. Felicity's professional experience includes teaching English as a foreign language both in the UK and abroad, and international youth work (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, and Council of Europe). After 16 years in university administration, first at UCL and then at Newnham College Cambridge, Felicity is now happily retired. She is a volunteer house guide at the David Parr House, Cambridge, and her interest in material culture was inspired by helping to catalogue the 5,000+ objects in the house. Felicity started listening to *The Archers* in the 1970s and after a few breaks while living abroad has been a regular listener for over 25 years.

Dr Sarah Kate Merry is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Postdigital Cultures at Coventry University. Sarah's PhD is in the field of Information Studies, and her research is primarily

concerned with the impact of the internet on friendship and the nature of community, including the value of non-participatory membership of online communities. Sarah was exposed to *The Archers* at a distressingly young age and has finally accepted that she will never fully break free from her indoctrination.

Karen Pollock is a psychotherapist and clinical supervisor in private practice specialising in Gender, Sexuality and Relationship Diversity. They have published chapters in *Non-binary lives, an anthology of intersecting identities* (2020) and the upcoming *Queer Counselling Anthology* (2022). They have written about *The Archers* a number of times for their blog and can often be found wandering rural Northumberland or attempting to capture the landscape in oils and canvas.

The Academic Archers Saturday Group aka The Saturday Group meets on Saturday mornings to discuss *The Archers* and other topics of interest. It is a sub-set of *Academic Archers* and began meeting online in 2020. Collectively the members of the group have been listening to *The Archers* for well in excess of 1,000 years, including one member who heard the first episode and one member who has just come of age having listened for a mere 18 years. The *Saturday Academic Archers Group* authoring this chapter are George Askwith, Claire Astbury, Allison Ball, Janet Beck, Stephen Bowden, Pat Brown, Helen Burrows, Meg Burton, Sally Cadle, Pam Davies, Christine Freeman, Louise Gillies, Dale Godfrey, Victoria Grattidge, Vanessa Hall-Smith, Ruth Heilbronn, Katharine Hoskyn, Rosalind Janssen, Helen Jubb, Susie Lloyd, Lilian Goldberg, Nic Maxfield, Felicity Macdonald-Smith, Jill Manasseh, Sarah Kate Merry, Deborah Miller, Christine Narramore, Sarah Parish, Sarah Playfair, Karen Pollock, Sarah Spilsbury, Roberta Wedge and Vanessa Wilde.

Laura Smith has a BA in Sociology from Newcastle University, is a qualified primary teacher and classically trained singer. At present, Laura works as a researcher and writer. Her research interests cover a wide range of topics and Laura has written academically, as well as for fun, on the subjects of disability, identity, parenting and popular music. Laura lives in Newcastle with her partner, two young children and guide dog. As well as her writing, Laura loves to sing and provides the vocals to the folk ensemble, *The Shining Levels*.

Dr Timothy Vercellotti is a Professor of Political Science at Western New England University in Springfield, Massachusetts, and director of the university's London summer programme. Tim teaches courses on political behaviour, media and politics, and public opinion polling. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and has completed extensive post-doctoral work in all things Ambridge.

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