

## Recording of the week: Amy Johnson and the race to Australia

*This week's selection comes from Cheryl Tipp, Curator of Wildlife and Environmental Sounds.*

On 24th May 1930, a worn and weathered de Havilland Gipsy Moth named *Jason* crashlanded into the dusty red soil of Australia's Northern Territory. On board was the English aviator Amy Johnson who had just made history by becoming the first female pilot to fly solo from England to Australia. The 11,000 mile journey had been a gruelling one; desert sandstorms, monsoons, strong winds and extreme heat had tested both the plane and its 26 year old pilot. Johnson's original goal had been to break the record of Bert Hinkler, a pioneer Australian pilot who made the same journey 2 years earlier in just 15 1/2 days. While the odds were definitely in Johnson's favour for the first leg of the journey, bad weather and mechanical failures over Asia scuppered any chances of her breaking Hinkler's record.



Amy Johnson photographed in 1930

Though she failed by only 4 days to best Hinkler's record, Johnson's achievement was hailed around the world as an overwhelming success. A few weeks after arriving in Australia, Johnson recorded this [short memoir](#) of her perilous journey which was published by Columbia Records.

[The Story of my Flight\\_Amy Johnson \(1CS0028898\)](#)

Johnson would go on to break many more records before her untimely death in 1941. It was this heroic journey however that secured her position in the aviation hall of fame.

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## Recording of the Week: a musical family

*This week's selection comes from Jonathan Summers, Curator of Classical Music Recordings.*

[Jacob Collier](#) has been creating a stir in the musical world recently, [winning two Grammys](#) in February at the age of twenty-two. His grandfather Derek made his first broadcasts for the BBC at the same age, in 1949. Here he is in a [work](#) by Handel arranged for solo violin by the great Hungarian violinist and teacher Jenő Hubay.

[Handel Larghetto from Op. 1 arranged by Hubay](#)



Derek Collier (courtesy of Suzie Collier)

Over 100 recordings from the Derek Collier collection can be found on [British Library Sounds](#).

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## Recording of the week: Parental warning

This week's selection comes from Andrea Zarza, Curator of World and Traditional Music.

*Ethnomusicologist Bryony Harris (née Pearson) spent 2002 doing field work in Uganda to record the drumming styles of the Busoga and Buganda as part of research for her dissertation "Towards a notation for African dance drumming, focusing on the Baganda and Basoga of Uganda". The recording featured this week [collection [C1079](#)] was part of that research and in a recent e-mail exchange, she gave us some more insight into its making –*

"This is such a rich layering of instruments and textures. It was a very humbling experience to attempt to learn something of the history, tradition and drumming technique in a snapshot of time. I arrived with my western preconceptions, a 20 year old English girl trained in western music, but completely out of my depth with the complexities of this traditional music.



This recording is of the Kalalu village 'Balongo' group of musicians. Kalalu is a very rural village, a bumpy bicycle ride from Jinja in Busoga, where some of the children were fascinated / scared of my white skin. They were very welcoming but keen to be paid for their expertise – and rightly so, in hindsight. As it was something I hadn't really budgeted for however, we got the group to play together for my recording by arranging to produce a cassette for them. The market for cassettes was still going strong in 2002 Uganda as they were cheap to produce and buy. We took photographs of them in their blue t-shirt uniform and they decided on their best songs."

*According to the catalogue entry, based on the recordist's notes, the song warns parents of the dangers of cursing their children stating they will be affected and face trouble in the future. For such a serious warning, it is a joyful song featuring the following instruments: endere (flutes), ndingidi (string fiddle), nkwanzi (panpipes), embaire (small xylophone), ensaasi (flat metal shaker), endumi (small drum), engabe (long drum), tameraibuga / irongo drum.*

[Abazaire Abatukolima – 'Parents Cursing their Children'](#)

*Upon re-listening to the recording, Bryony reflected –*

"The quality of the song is judged by the lyrics and the singer – the competence of the musicians is taken for granted. I think I did move around with my microphone a little during the recording, as you can hear different instruments stronger at different points. Thoughts that return to me on listening to it again: Firstly – where is the beat? The need to focus on the shaker to hear it – but then the drums always put me off when they enter! I was trying to focus my learning on the drums, but they were so different to any West African rhythms I'd played previously. Seeing the drums signal the dancers to change their amazing rapid hip movements. Where does the cycle of notes start? How do they know where to come in? The phenomenal speed of the interlocking xylophone, where different patterns spring out at you the more you listen. The cyclical nature of the melody and the variety in texture and colour. This music, which is made of fairly simple, repetitive parts is elusive. The more you listen the more there is to hear."

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## [Recording of the week: the Woodlark](#)

*This week's selection comes from Richard Ranft, Head of Sound and Vision.*

Between February to June on southern and south-eastern English heathlands you may be lucky enough to hear a Woodlark singing. The bird emits a cascade of sweet liquid warbles, often in a large circular display flight some 50-100 metres up in the air above its territory. On windy sunny days in early

spring, as we have now, its beautiful notes come and go out of hearing range when heard from a distance, giving the heathland habitat an ethereal quality.

Song of a Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), recorded by Lawrence Shove in 1960s



Many more recordings of British wildlife can be found on [British Library Sounds](#). To learn more about how and why birds communicate, visit our recently revamped [Language of Birds](#) online resource.

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## Recording of the week: when is a word not a word?

*This week's selection comes from Jonnie Robinson, Lead Curator of Spoken English.*

The [Evolving English: WordBank](#) is extremely positive evidence of the robust nature of our native dialects, as demonstrated by this speaker's use of the verb puggle [= 'to prod, poke about in e.g. a hole to clear obstruction']. As a young, female, middle-class speaker she doesn't conform to the usual dialect stereotype and she also comes from the south of England, where the apparent demise of local speech forms is most frequently asserted. Nonetheless she expertly describes and defines a word recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'English regional (chiefly south-east)'. Puggle also features in the 6-volume English Dialect Dictionary, the most comprehensive record of 18th and 19th century English regional vocabulary, where it's attested in Hertfordshire and Essex.



Puggle – as defined in Vol. 4 of the English Dialect Dictionary (1898)

### To have a puggle

As a dialectologist I'm also particularly interested by her observation that 'I always thought it was a real word and it turns out it's not'. This, sadly, is frequently the fate of dialect vocabulary, but I hope she and other users of perfectly valid local forms are reassured to know that the validity of puggle is acknowledged by authoritative dictionaries and that it has been



around in the Home Counties for at least 150 years and clearly still survives in the 21st century – no doubt alongside other supposedly 'long-lost' southern dialect words.

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