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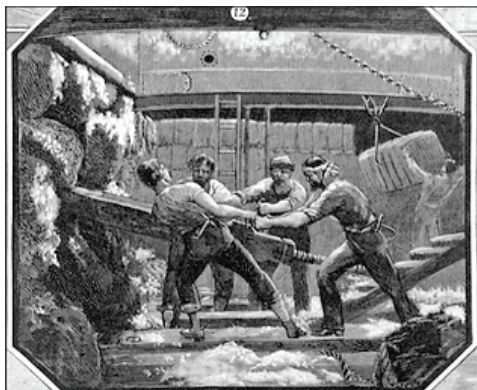


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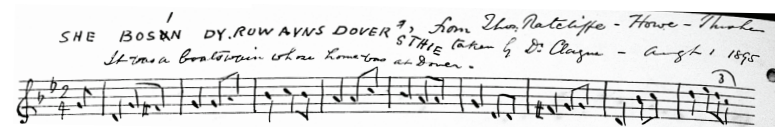


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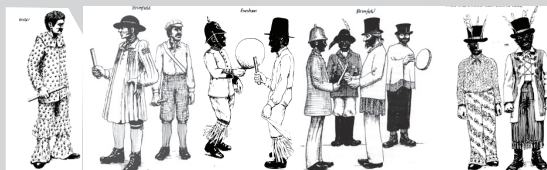
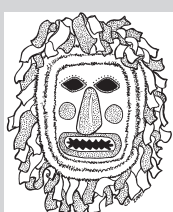
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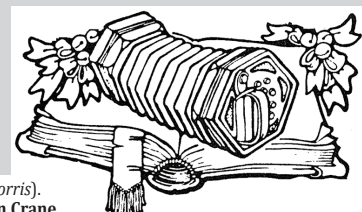


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Morris dancers © Annie Jones (Dave Jones, *The Roots Of Welsh Border Morris*).
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Tunes from the Isle Of Man: Thomas Ratcliffe of the Howe, by Stephen Miller

Thomas Ratcliffe of the Howe in the south of the Isle of Man was the source of at least three tunes collected by Dr John Clague and here reproduced from the copies sent by him to W.H. Gill, who together with his brother, John Frederick Gill, pooled the tunes they collected in the Island in the 1890s. Clague's collecting is dated here as seen from August 1895.

The 1891 census enumerates Ratcliffe as a fisherman, aged 29, on board of the Castletown registered "Shah," bound for the spring mackerel fishery off the coast of south-west Ireland as part of the Port St Mary fishing fleet, the Manx boats basing themselves at Kinsale. In 1901, he is on dry land, 39 years old, living at Ballahow, with his surname spelt as Radcliffe. The household consisted of his widowed mother, Jane (70), his brother, Thomas (27), a widower, and his daughter, Alice, aged 4. Both Jane and Thomas spoke Manx as well as English, his brother and niece, only English. Here the breakdown in the transmission of the Manx language across the generations can be seen, mirrored by other families.

The recording of a title for the three tunes here both in Manx and English is problematic as it is unlikely that the song texts themselves would have been sung in Manx with the words translated from the English originals; rather, we are seeing Clague putting a "Manx gloss" on the tunes.

4 SHE BOSAN DY. ROWAYNS DOVER¹, from Tho. Ratcliffe - Howe - Thos.
STHE taken by Dr. Clague - Augt 1895
It was a boatman who rowed at Dover.

(120) C. VI. 5

TROOD SHIM OUILLEY GETHAN VIE " from
Come all to goodness inclined taken by Dr. Clague Augt 1895.

(122) C. VI. 6

"My Shen my Shaik?" "Is not that my love!" from Tho. Ratcliff - the Howe Thos.
[Dorian - transposed] taken by Dr. Clague Augt 1895.

(123) C. VI. 7

Stephen Miller, RBV © November 2024

A dedicated researcher into Manx folklore, folksong, and folk dance, plus the figures and collectors involved with the Celtic revival, Stephen's extremely impressive work in Manx and Celtic Studies are shared freely online, in print and in person, and freely available to others on his Chiollagh Books website, <http://chiollaghbooks.com>

RBV: winner of the annual Reih Bleeaney Vanannan award 2020, see <https://culturevannin.im>

Comments from musicians on these Manx tunes would be most welcome.

Folklife Traditions Journal, a print Journal, copied free online to www.folklife.uk:
stimulating a wider interest in folk studies & cultural traditions, which includes languages
so we've page headings in Manx for Isle of Man articles, likewise in Cornish for Cornwall articles, etc



St Picrous Night (Piskies in the Cellar), by Lamorna Spry



(An illustration of the Picrous story 'Piskies in the Cellar')

One lesser-known Cornish tradition is St Picrous Night (sometimes spelt Picorous) which stems back to the tanners of the Blackmore Stannary. A Stannary was a tin-mining administrative district, of which there were four in Cornwall, with Blackmore covering the area now known as the St Austell Downs. Working in the harsh and dangerous conditions of the mines, it's not surprising that tin miners were superstitious, believing in the Knockers, the Bucca and the Piskies. These were small sprite-like beings that could be either helpful or mischievous and miners would sometimes leave food for them in the hope that they would be kind. Similarly, Newlyn fishermen were known to leave part of their catch on a stone outside the village to please the Bucca.

St Picrous Night is on the second Thursday before Christmas and the modern-day celebration is held at the King's Arms in Luxulyan, near St Austell. The evening starts with the story of Jan Sturtridge followed by beer and pasties, culminating in a traditional singing session, known as a Cornish "Shout".

The Picrous story begins with the unfortunate tin miner Jan Sturtridge, having drunk much ale, trying to make his way from the Rising Sun to his home in Luxulyan, after celebrating St Picrous night with fellow tanners of Blackmore Stannary. Jan had reached Tregaron Down without mishap when he came upon a merry party of the 'little people'. It was at that point that he realised he couldn't find a gate or stile and no way out of the field. He realised he was 'Pisky-laden' but could do nothing about it when one of the piskies cried "Ho! And away to Par Beach!". Jan found himself repeating the cry and was immediately transported to the sands of Par. After joining in with a dance and

much merriment, the cry was given "Ho! And away to Squire Tremayne's cellar!". This time, the repeat of the pisky's cry found Jan, along with numerous piskies, in the Heligan cellars where they helped themselves to much beer and wine.

Unfortunately for Jan, he was discovered in a drunken stupor on the wine cellar floor and the Squire, who was a magistrate, was not amused. The Squire did not believe Jan's explanation that the piskies had flown him to Par Beach for a fairy revel where they plied him with much drink and finally flown him to Heligan House. He was soon sentenced to death by hanging. The morning of his execution arrived and a large crowd gathered around the gallows tree. But piskies can be kind as well as mischievous and before he could be hung there was a cry from a little person in the crowd, "Ho! And away to France!" which Jan promptly shouted back and to everyone's astonishment he was transported away to live out his days in Brittany.

John Sturtridge and the piskies (Picrous Night)

*Allegretto.
Solo (or Unison)*

1. One Pic-rous night, from the "Ris- ing Sun;" Its sport and dance and crowse, John's house was hard by
ho-ly Church In fam'd Lux-ul - yan town, But now be- twixt his home and him Lay drear Tre-gar-den Down.

The story was told in verses by Rev John Isabell, and then set to music by Ralph Dunstan in 1929; for the song in full see <https://cornishnationalmusicarchive.co.uk/content/st-picrous-night/>
By kind permission of Cornish National Music Archive.

Lamorna Spry © March 2024



Lost Carols Found - Traditional Carols in Bradford on Avon, by Rosie Upton

Growing up in the Derbyshire Dales, I knew about the South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire carolling tradition in village pubs during the months of November and December, though I'd only attended once or twice before heading south as a student. A part of the country that my father, a man of steel (an industry he worked in throughout his life), referred to as the 'soft southwest'. My mother on her visits to me invariably complained about the west country rain, conveniently ignoring the extremes of weather in the Peak District.

Known as the **Sheffield carols**, the tradition of pub carol singing goes back several centuries and has been maintained in villages such as Dungworth, Stanington, Worrall, Grenoside, Oughtibridge, Hathersage, Castleton and many more in and around the border between South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire. There are numerous variants, the same words often sung to different tunes, some specific to one pub or another, and all sung with pleasure, enthusiasm and dare I say without piety or religious stricture. That's probably why they've endured and are so popular! Why this tradition has been maintained in this area and not to any similar extent in other parts of the country is inexplicable, even though traditional carols remain part of the heritage in some parts such as Cornwall.

There has been a revival in many places in recent years including in the small Wiltshire market town of **Bradford on Avon**.

Locally based performers and community choir leaders **Candy Verney, Chris Samuel, Nick Nicholls, Chris Timson and Anne Gregson** started this 'tradition' in 2010 when they encouraged local singers to learn little-known west country carols plus those from the Sheffield tradition with the aim of singing them in the pubs in Bradford on Avon. This initiative was a huge success. The pubs variously packed with customers, carollers and musicians, including on more than one occasion, rapper sword dancers. BBC Radio 4's Farming Today programme joined the carollers in The Dog and Fox for Christmas 2024. The other two participating pubs in 2024 were The Canal Tavern and The Boathouse, other favoured venues like The Bear and The Swan having closed – a symptom of the times.

The carols are many and varied as are the tunes including numerous different versions of *While Shepherds Watched*. Some originated in the 18th century from the time when most Anglican churches had west galleries from which local quires (choirs) and village bands with no formal musical training played to the congregation. The disapproving 19th century Victorians soon put paid to that by dismantling the west galleries, installing organs and establishing choirs that sang the classic hymns and carols we hear in churches today. Village choirs were equally popular in non-conformist chapels but they soon followed the example set by the Anglican church.

Back to Bradford on Avon, where many of the 19 carols sung have been transported from elsewhere such as the ever popular *'Sweet Chiming Christmas Bells'* a variant of *'While Shepherds Watched'*, of which over 400 different forms exist. Words by Nahum Tate from 1703, as sung at the Blue Ball Inn, Worrall, near Sheffield. Another version of this sung to a tune called *'Cranbrook'* writing by Thomas Clark of Canterbury in 1805. That tune was subsequently used to accompany the words to *'On Ilka Moor Baht 'at'*, thus predating the familiar popular song.

They sing carols from across the south-west and more carols closer to home too, including *'Awake and Join the Cheerful Choir'* from Britford, near Salisbury, *'I Hear Along Our Street'* from Dunster, Somerset, and a version of *'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'* discovered in the tune book of Carlingcott Chapel Band. Heather Ash, one of the carollers, told me all about this discovery. When she moved to Carlingcott, Somerset, the villagers were excited about a hand-written manuscript containing this lost carol, found by Bob and Jacqui Patten whilst converting the Methodist chapel. This together with other carols were once sung annually on the village green. A traditional carol from Bradford on Avon has yet to be found!

What's not to love about singing a joyful song with a pint of ale or a mulled wine in hand? Sorry, did I forget to mention *'The Mistletoe Bough'*! It dates from the early 1830s with words by Nathaniel Thomas Haynes Bayly and music by Sir Henry Bishop. Always sung as a solo, it's the tragic tale of a young bride accidentally locking herself in an old oak chest whilst playing hide and seek on her wedding day, only to be discovered years later withered to a skeleton. But surely, don't most of us enjoy an eerie Yuletide story?

Long may this 'new tradition' of carols in Bradford on Avon be preserved as well as the collection that takes place for local charities. Congratulations to all the local singers and musicians. A special word of thanks must go to Chris and Anne and the other singers, musicians and choir leaders for their commitment and decision to revive interest in traditional carols to bring joy to everyone involved, including the packed crowd all singing along. To quote Hilary Fitch one of the musicians on the Farming Today programme 'Everyone can sing'. Though I'm not exactly 100% with her on that one!

Rosie Upton © November 2025

Rosie has appeared at Chippenham Folk Festival, Trowbridge Festival & the West Somerset Folk Festival, and has led singing workshops at festivals and for trade unions. **Contact rosieupton@icloud.com**





Baring-Gould's People. 2 – William Agus, by Martin Graebe

In the first article in this series, I wrote about the first man that Baring-Gould collected songs from, James Parsons. For the second, I have chosen to write about the last man that we know Baring-Gould heard songs from, a sailor called William Agus, 18 years later. He only provided five songs, but he is of interest because they can be taken as good examples of songs that appealed to a seaman of the Royal Navy at the end of the nineteenth century.

William Agus was born in Norwich on 3 January 1858, the 4th child of William and Hannah Agus. He joined the Royal Navy in December 1873 when he was fifteen years old as a Boy 2nd Class. We know from his naval records that he was 5ft 4in tall with blue eyes and that he had a tattoo of a crown, shield and heart on his left wrist. He served in several different ships and naval establishments during his career, advancing in rank from Boy 2nd class to Chief Petty Officer. He served on *HMS Hecla* as a Leading Seaman and took part in the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882.

He married Sally Marston in 1883, and the first of two daughters was born while he was at sea on *HMS Hecla*. He became a member of the Gardner Gun crew on board *Hecla* as part of the Naval Brigade raised to fight in the Anglo-Sudanese War. This was a field gun which the crew took into action ashore. He took part in battles with the Mahdist forces in Sudan in 1884. He was awarded several medals for his part in the action.

He had a period ashore at *HMS Defiance*, the Naval Torpedo School at Plymouth and his second daughter, Priscilla, was born in 1887. He was appointed a Petty Officer and Captain's Coxswain. He also spent time at *HMS Cambridge*, the Naval Gunnery School. This was in preparation for his next assignment, a three-year tour with the Australian Squadron, which provided naval defence before the formation of the Royal Australian Navy at the beginning of the twentieth century. His ship was the torpedo Gunboat *HMS Karrakatta*, engaged on protecting trade around the Australian coast.



William Agus on *HMS Hecla* c1885

He returned to the UK in 1900 and lived on shore with his family until he decided, in January 1901, to take his naval pension at the age of 43. He remained on the Royal Navy Reserve but the 1901 census shows him living in Stonehouse with his wife and children and working as a general labourer. He remained in the Reserve until 1906 when he moved to Horrabridge where he continued to work as a labourer. Sally Agus died in 1917, and he moved back to live in Stonehouse where his younger daughter, Norah lived with him as well as a Naval Petty Officer and his family who lodged with him. He died there in 1932.

It was in Horrabridge that Baring-Gould found him in 1906. We know very little about the details of their meeting as the original notes have not survived. The text of the five songs that Baring-Gould heard from him have been copied into the Personal Copy manuscript without tunes and it is probable that Baring-Gould did not note them. Each of them has a nautical theme and four of them are variants of well-known songs. You can see the manuscript entries for the five songs using this link to the VWML website - <https://tinyurl.com/Wm-Agus-songs>.

'The Pirate Ship' is the title given to Agus's version of 'Princess Royal' (Roud 528). Agus's song runs to the pattern of the broadside versions except that there is no conversation with the pirate captain – they just make a run for it. And, of course, escape for a glass of grog and to congratulate themselves on how brave they are.

'The Slave Ship' is a song more usually found under the title 'The Slave Chase' (Roud 22376). It was also heard by Anne Gilchrist in a similar form and is found on several broadsides. It tells the story from the point of view of the captain of a slaving vessel who is chased by a naval vessel.

The faster and still faster came down the freshening breeze
And faster and still faster sped the good ship o'er the seas
And gaining on the slaver at each successive tack
And bearing high in heaven aloft the British Union Jack.

The Royal Navy captures the slaver and frees the slaves, but the language used does not allow of the song being performed today.

Stan Hugill describes 'Rolling Home' (Roud 4766) as 'the most famous homeward-bound song of them all' and says that all the versions he has heard had Australia as the place the singer is leaving. He also avers that Naval versions can be identified by the use of the term 'pipe' as in the line that starts most versions 'Pipe all hands to man the capstan', since the pipe was only used in Naval vessels.⁽¹⁾

Continues over page

⁽¹⁾ Stan Hugill, *Shanties of the Seven Seas* (London, Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1961), p. 182. Hugill says that versions from merchant ships would have run 'Call all hands, etc'



Baring-Gould's People. 2 – William Agus, *by Martin Graebe, continued*

Another characteristic is in the inclusion of 'Swifters' in the equipment mentioned, as in 'Man the bars and swifters well boys'.⁽²⁾ Both of these words appear in Agus's version. The song would have had an obvious appeal to Agus as he made the journey home to his wife and daughters.

Cheer up Jack, bright eyes await you
Fond caresses from the fair
Honest hands and hearts will greet you
With a welcome everywhere
And the lass that loves you dearest
If she's constant been, and true
She will clasp you to her bosom
And each tender vow renew
Rolling home, rolling home
Rolling home across the sea
Rolling home to merry England
Rolling home, dear land, to thee

Stan Hugill covers this song in some detail and gives examples of several verses taken from different sources. Most of Agus's verses are in Hugill's selection but this verse (Agus's verse 3) is not. Agus's song, with its four 8-line verses, is a satisfyingly complete version.

The sentiment ladled out in 'Rolling Home' is very moderate compared to the buckets-full to be heard in 'The Sea-Queen'. This melodrama in verse is the story of a sailor named Bill Rogers who befriends the four year-old daughter of passengers on a troop ship.

She sat on Bill's knee, time & often
And prattled so sweetly to we
Or danced round the deck like a sunbeam
A glad little queen of the sea.

The little girl falls overboard in a storm and Bill leaps into the sea after her with a lifebelt. When a ship's boat finally reaches the child, she is on her own.

How we wept when the little one told us
As she cried till her heart seemed to break
He said, It won't hold us both, darling
I'll give up my life for your sake.
When a general or king wins a battle
He's a hero, the papers all sing
Up aloft, when they pipe hands to muster
Bill will stand before General & King.

One wonders if Will Agus's interest in this song was prompted by thoughts of his own little girls at home. The song has been assigned Roud Number 23089 but there are no other examples to be found on broadsides or that have been heard from traditional singers.

The fifth song heard from Will Agus was a simple tale of a sea battle, 'The Sea-Lark' (Roud 690). The more usual title of this is 'The London Man of War' and the earliest known printed version is from the mid-eighteenth century.

While it has been collected several times Agus is the only singer who has given the name of the ship as Sealark. It likely that this was his own idea as he served on the 8 gun brig, HMB Sea Lark for nine months in 1876-77. She was a pretty little vessel, and he might well have held her in affection.



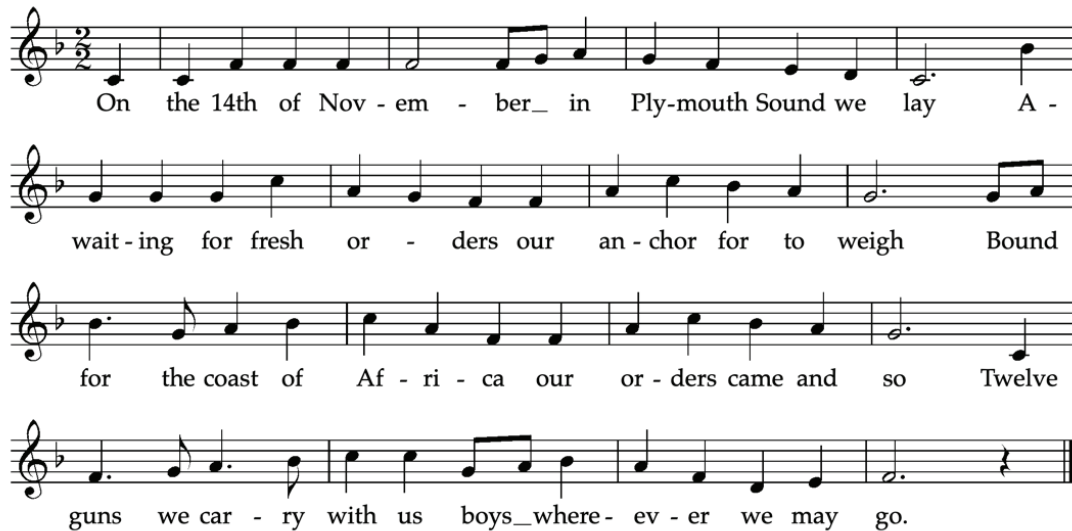
H.M. Brig Sea Lark,
launched 1843 (Wikipedia)

⁽²⁾ *Ibid*, p. 186. Hugill says 'Swifter's were only used in the Royal Navy, and maybe in the Blackwallers and East Indiamen. They were tightly-hove wires at the outboard ends of capstan bars, used to prevent the bars coming out from their sockets or 'pigeon-holes'.



The Sea-Lark

Taken down from William Agus, Horrabridge, Devon, 6 January 1906 (words only). The tune given is that sung by the Copper Family to 'Warlike Seamen'. See Bob Copper, *A Song for Every Season* (London: Wm Heinemann, 1971), p. 284.



On the fourteenth of November in Plymouth Sound we lay
A-waiting for fresh orders our anchor for to weigh
Bound for the coast of Africa, our orders came, and so
Twelve guns we carry with us, boys, wherever we may go.

We had not been a-sailing but twenty knots or more
Before we spied a large ship and down on us she bore
She hailed us with French colours, and asked us whence we came
We're just come out of Plymouth Sound, the Sealark is our name.

Are you a man of war, sir, or pray what may you be
We are no man of war, Sir, but a privateer you see
Then brace around your mainyard and let your ship heave to
With tackle taught and boats a lowered, or else I will sink you.

Up spoke our gallant Captain, proudly he did say
Cheer up! Cheer up, my bonny boys! we're bound to win the day
If this had been my brother, the battle I'd have tried,
Let every man stand to his guns and give the first broadside.

The broadside it was given, and caused us all to wonder
To see the toptopgallomast come rolling down like thunder
We peppered them from their quarters, they could no longer stay
With red-hot shot we pepper'd 'em hot and showed 'em Plymouth play.

Now the big ship was taken, and to Plymouth Sound we bore,
And we rolled up and drank success to all the girls ashore,
And hauling down French colours, and up red, white and blue,
We drank success to the Sealark and all her saucy crew.

From Sabine Baring-Gould's 'Personal Copy Manuscript', Volume 3, p. 397.

Martin Graebe © November 2025

We are very grateful that Martin has offered us a series of articles on Baring-Gould's People.

Martin is an independent researcher, writer, and singer, who has studied and written about various aspects of traditional song. In particular, he has extensively researched Sabine Baring-Gould, and more recently Alfred Williams. He gives talks on traditional folk song, performs traditional songs together in harmony with his wife Shan, has written "Jack in the Green" and other fine songs, runs a monthly singing session, and is Secretary of the Traditional Song Forum, <https://tradsong.org/>



Bold Bonny Boy (Mrs. Wixey); My Bonny, Bonny Boy (Elizabeth Smitherd); by Veronica Lowe

Bold Bonny Boy, sung by **Mrs. Wixey** (93), Buckland. Collected by Percy Grainger 31 July 1908, and **My Bonny, Bonny Boy**, sung by **Elizabeth Smitherd** (62), of Tewkesbury, collected by Cecil Sharp, April 10th 2008. Available on Glostrad.com, Roud No. 293

The eternal theme of a lover's betrayal is the subject of all the many versions of this song. It dates back to the mid 17th century, as The Grey Hawk, and though the theme is the same, the variation in the order of lines and verses says much about the folk process: Trying to remember the song you have heard and making it your own. We have two versions in Glostrad.

I first heard My Bonny Boy from Anne Briggs, with her clear floating voice. Her version has only 4 verses, and Shirley Collins followed that one. Lucy Broadwood has 6 verses, as the lover goes to sea. A couple of recordings, including the most recent I can find, from the Furrow Collective, (singer, Emily Portman), turns the song around, with three line verses, and called Many A Night's Rest, which is part of the last verse of our version. I think this 'bold' bonny boy fits the subject better than some of the others.

When Percy Grainger collected this from Mrs Wixey, she was 93, and was yet another Gloucestershire singer born around the time of the Battle of Waterloo, 1815, like William Daddy Shepherd, who was recorded in Winchcombe Workhouse in February 2008. Grainger returned to the county that July, to Buckland, just South West of Broadway, where he heard Mrs Wixey. Percy Grainger's manuscripts were notoriously hard to read, so we were fortunate to have renowned violinist Michael Boehmann to copy these.

Sharp collected a number of songs from Mrs Smitherd, and the words of her version here are similar to the Broadwood and Briggs versions, with the tune rather simplified.

Text continues after 2nd song

Bold Bonny Boy

Once court - ed I was by a bold bon - - ny boy I loved him, I

vow and pro - - test, I loved him so well and so ver - y well I could

build him a bower on my breast I could build him a bower on my breast

2. I searched up the alley and down the green valley
Like one that were troubled in mind
I 'ooped and I 'ollered and blowed on my bugle,
But no bonny boy could I find. (twice)
3. I set myself down on a primmy-rose bank,
The sun it shone wonderful warm
And who should come by but my bold bonny boy
With another girl onto his arm. (twice)
4. Then he pull-ed me on his assembled knee
I looked 'im full in the face,
Then the girl that you go with, my bold bonny boy,
I'm sure she is much to be blamed. (twice)
- 5 For many a long night you have robbed me of my rest,
But you never shall do it again,
So I passed him by, cast never an eye,
I 'ope you will never return,
And I 'ope you will never return (twice)



My Bonny Bonny Boy

Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, England

1. O once I was court - ed by a bonn - y bon - ny bo - y I
 loved him I'll vow and pro - - test I loved him so well and
 so ve - - ry well that I could build him a nest in my
 breast _____ That I could build him a nest in my breast

2. Its up the green meadows and down the steep valleys
 Like one that was troubled in mind
 I hollered and hooped and I played on my flute
 But no bonny bonny boy could I find
3. I set myself down on the green mossy bank
 Where the sun it shone wonderful warm
 and who did I spy but my own bonny boy
 Fast locked in some other girl's arms
4. Some say my bonny boy he has gone oer the main
 God send hom good luck to return
 But if he has another girl better than me
 Let him love her and why should I mourn

Source: Mrs Elizabeth Smitherd at Tewkesbury April 10 1908. Collected by Cecil J. Sharp.

Notes: Cecil Sharp Manuscript Collection (at Clare College, Cambridge) (CJS2/10/1628).

Cecil Sharp Manuscript Collection (at Clare College, Cambridge) (CJS2/9/1482).

Roud No. 293

Word and Tune <http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1628>

Words <http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1482>

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There were about ten of us volunteers transcribing the songs and tunes for the Gloucestershire Traditions project, which was, at first, called The Single Gloucester, as the maker of the famous cheese of the same name, Charles Martell, was one of our sponsors. He brought a whole cheese and plenty of Gloucestershire apples, on which subject he is an expert, to our memorable showcase event, as required by National Lottery grant regulations, the Harvest Supper at Stanton Guildhouse.

Ten years on we are trying to keep this valuable resource freely available, so please explore the 600 songs and even more tunes, all part of our intangible heritage, and if you possibly can, put a little donation in through the **PayPal button on Glostrad.com**, so we can afford to stay online. And keep singing!

Veronica Lowe © March 2025

Gloucestershire Traditions - GlosTrad - is the one-stop website for songs and tunes collected in Gloucestershire.

See <http://glostrad.com/> The website is free to all to explore, but it needs upkeep (hosting, IT support). You can help by donating via Paypal - there is a link on the Home page glostrad.com if you scroll down.

Gloucestershire Traditions was set up by Carol Davies, the late Gwilym Davies, Stephen Gale, Charles Menteith, & Veronica Lowe.

πThanks to Veronica, who has kindly volunteered to send us contributions from the The GlosTrad archives.

Next issue: March 1st, deadline February 1st, contact sam@folklife.uk



The Black Origins of Sea Shanties, by Jim Mageean



Recent years have seen a huge renewed interest in sea songs worldwide, largely due to a traditional New Zealand forebitter 'Wellerman' becoming a number one chart success on both sides of the Atlantic.

Recent years have also seen the publication of several new books on sea shanties. These include Gibb Schreffler's *'Boxing the Compass'*, Gerry Smyth's *'Sailor Song'* and my own trilogy *'Haul Away'*, *'Heave Away'*, *'Sail Away'*.

Research is beginning to show that what we have always thought about the history of sea shanties (being predominantly of white British origin) is not true, and that many (possibly most) of them have their origins in black work songs, plantation songs and even slave songs from the American South and the West Indies.

I think a look into the origins of these wonderful songs is long overdue.

Sea shanties, as we know them today, are very much a 19th Century phenomenon. They were sung by sailors aboard merchant vessels (not Navy ships where they were discouraged) and had their heyday from the 1830's to the 1880's. However they were still being collected from oral sources well into the 20th Century.

They must have existed since ancient times and in fact are mentioned in print from ancient Greek manuscripts to texts from the 15th and 16th Century. There is little mention of them in the 17th Century and none at all in the 18th Century. The reason for this is almost certainly warfare.

From 1700 to 1815, Britain was almost constantly at war and hence singing aboard ship would not be encouraged for fear of alerting any enemy ships. British merchant ships were also overmanned at this time for protection from piracy. During the same period, however, America was only at war for about 10 years (1775-1783 and 1812-1814), so shanties may have continued to develop on that side of the Atlantic.

What we know about shanties we have learned from written sources giving 'eye-witness' and 'ear-witness' accounts of their being sung at sea. These were published in books or magazine articles in the UK and USA. Apart from the ancient texts mentioned above, the earliest reference to shanty singing is in 1811 in Robert Hay's memoirs *'Landsman Hay'*. On a voyage to Jamaica in the merchant vessel *'Edward'* he heard negroes singing the shanties: **'OH, HURO, ME BOYS'** and **'GROG TIME OF DAY'** (both now sadly lost).

In 1815 Captain James Carr described 'cotton-screwing' whilst loading a ship from Charleston to Liverpool: **"...for five days I had four pair of jackscrews and four gangs of five men at each at work on board ship stowing cotton - I was in the midst of them - it often happened that they all had their throats open at the same**

time as loud as they could bawl..."

Carr gives specimens of the 'African work-songs' he heard in Charleston with choruses of **'HIGHLAND A'**, **'HOORA, HOORA, SING TALIO'**, **'CAESAR BOY, CAESAR'** (later collected in Newcastle, Nevis by Roger Abrahams) and **'HUZZA MY JOLLY BOYS, TIS GROG TIME A DAY'** (this last probably as heard by Robert Hay four years earlier). Charleston, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia were the main cotton ports at this time but in the 1820's Mobile, Alabama and New Orleans, Louisiana superseded them.

Captain J.E. Alexander reported on a trip to British Guiana in 1831 (*'Transatlantic Sketches'*) that he heard negroes at the paddles of canoes singing **'VELLY WELL YANKEE, VELLY WELL OH!'** (**BEAR AWAY YANKEE?**) and **'DE BOTTLEY OH! DE BOTTLEY OH!'** (**SO EARLY IN THE MORNING THE SAILOR LIKES HIS BOTTLE-O**).

Other travellers witnessed such scenes and reported them in their 'journals'. In *'The West India Sketch Book'* in 1834, Trelawney Wentworth described negro rowers let by an 'improvisatore' as follows: **'The subject matter of the song was as discursive and lengthy as Chevy Chase; and it showed an aptitude at invention on the part of the leader'**; he gives the song **'FINE TIME O'DAY'** perhaps related to **'GROG TIME OF DAY'**.

In *'Two Years Before the Mast'* Richard Dana heard shanties sung aboard the American ships *'Pilgrim'* and *'Alert'* between 1834 and 1836 where he says: **'the crew was a mixture of English, Scotch, German, French, African, South Sea Islands plus a few Boston and Cape Cod boys'** (a very multi-ethnic crew!). He mentions the singing of 10 shanties, all now seemingly lost apart from **'CHEERILY MEN'**, **'CHEER UP SAM, ROLL THE OLD CHARIOT'** and **'ROUND THE CORNER (SALLY?)'** the last three of these being of negro extraction.

Captain Frederick Marryat, author of the semi-autobiographical novel *'Mr. Midshipman Easy'* (1836) heard black crew members singing shanties aboard a 'packet' he sailed in from England to America including **'SALLY BROWN'**. Also, the naval historian Leonard G. Carr Laughton in *'Shantying and Shanties'* wrote: 'In the 1830's: **"loading of cotton on to ships gave seamen the opportunity to listen to slave songs and take them to sea as shanties"**. He cites **'WESTERN OCEAN' (AMELIA WHERE YER BOUND TO)** and **'KNOCK A MAN DOWN' (BLOW THE MAN DOWN?)'** as examples.

In 1838 in Mobile, Englishman P.H. Gosse observed screwmen singing: **"The men keep the most perfect time by means of their songs. These ditties, though nearly meaningless, have much music in them and as all join in the perpetually recurring chorus, a rough harmony is produced, by no means displeasing"**.

Gosse gives a version of **'FIRE MARENGO'** with lyrics that evoke the War of 1812 and a chorus line of **'Fire the Ringo, Fire away!'** and mentions General Jackson and **'black cocks flying away to Canada'** to escape slavery.

A Boston sailor, F. Stanhope Hill saw cotton-screwing in Mobile in 1844 observing: **"In the process of stowing by the stevedores, with very powerful jackscrews, each operated by a gang of four men, one of them the 'shantier', as he was called. This man's sole duty was to lead in the rude songs, largely improvised, to the music of which his companions screwed the bales into their places. A really good shantier received larger pay than the other men in the gang, although his work was much less laborious"**.

Another American sailor, Charles Low, on his ship's arrival in London in 1845 observed: **'the crew was made up of the hardest kind of men, they were called 'hoosiers', working in New Orleans or Mobile during the winter at stowing ships with cotton, and in the summer sailing in the packet ships. They were all good chanty men, that is, they could all sing at their work'**. This skill transferred to efficient shipboard labour practice: **"We could reef and hoist all three topsails at once, with a different song for each one"**. So, Low concluded, it was the seamen who had experienced the work of cotton-screwing ashore who adapted the



practice to shipboard tasks. The 'hoosiers' were, in effect, white men incorporated into doing black men's work and singing black men's songs.

The American journalist Charles Nordhoff in 1848 observed in Mobile: *"Screw gangs consisted of a song-leader or 'chanty man' and four men who timed their exertions in turning the jackcrews to songs called 'chants'. Singing or 'chanting' as it is called, is an invariable accompaniment to working in cotton, and many of the screw gangs have an endless collection of songs, rough and uncouth, both in words and melody"*.

Nordhoff continues: *"The foreman is the 'chantey-man' who sings the song, the gang only joining in the chorus. The chants have more of a rhyme than a reason to them"*. Giving some examples he explains that: *"these samples will give the reader an idea of what capstan and cotton songs, or 'chants' are"*. The implication here being that sailor's capstan shanties and black cotton-screwing songs were more or less the same or, at least, greatly overlapping.

In 1886 James Taft Hatfield was a passenger on the three-masted barque 'Ahkera' from Pensacola, Florida to Nice, France. He recounted that the crew consisted entirely of: *'Black men from Jamaica among which several acted as shantyman'*. He requested the shanty-singers to begin the songs again and again until he could note the exact timing and melody. From them he obtained *'RIO GRANDE', 'BLOW THE MAN DOWN', 'RANZO', 'WHISKEY JOHNNY', 'SHAKE HER UP' and 'WE'RE ALL BOUND TO GO'* as well as three previously unknown shanties *'SHINY-O', 'NANCY RHEE' and 'WAY DOWN LOW'*. These were given to the *'Journal of American Folklore'* by his daughter in 1946.

Captain Frank Shaw in *'The Splendour of the Seas'* says: *'Many songs are undoubtedly of American origin and some of plantation origin, down to a fine point'* giving as an example *'ROLL THE COTTON DOWN'*. He continues: *'After harvest ... slaves were most costly to support in the winter months. The owners found a solution to this recurring problem. They hired them out as crews for America's growing mercantile marine'*.

William Livingstone Alden in *'Sailors' Songs'* also concluded that: *'many chanties had their origins in black music'*.

Of course, many of our shanties are European in origin particularly from the British Isles. However, it must be acknowledged that a very large portion, possibly the majority, hail from black African-American and West Indian sources. These were predominantly slave songs, plantation songs and songs of black stevedores and hoosiers loading ships manned by white sailors who copied and developed them: *'Since the blacks used their own jabber ... the borrowers fitted their own words to the catchy tunes ... often ribald and obscene'* (Frank Shaw). It seems increasingly obvious that shanties have arisen from and devolved from black work songs. Indeed, the American folklorist Stuart Frank remarked that: *'The practice of shantying on shipboard is descended from West African work songs'*.

Many 20th Century collectors including the folklorist Alan Lomax have 'discovered' pulling shanties from black sources in Florida, Georgia Sea Islands and the Bahamas including such favourites as *'SAILBOAT MALARKEY'* and *'LONG SUMMERS DAY'* (both collected from Frederick McQueen on Andros, Bahamas). Also, the shanties of the black menhaden fishermen from the USA's East Coast (mainly Virginia and North Carolina) have yielded such gems as *'JOHNSON GIRLS', 'DRINKING THAT WINE' and 'WON'T YOU HELP ME TO RAISE 'EM'*.

There have also been several studies of 'Caribbean' shanties, the best known being the collection of essays *'Deep the Water, Shallow the Shore'* by Roger David Abrahams in the early 1960's. He noted that the use of shanties was 'everywhere' in the Caribbean and not just limited to ship-board work. Such shanties as *'JOHN DEAD'* and *'BLACKBIRD GET UP'* have become very popular with modern shanty singers from this collection. Abrahams recorded *'Foc'sle Songs and Shanties'* with Paul Clayton and Dave Van Ronk for Folkways in 1959 and collected shanties with Lomax on St. Kitts in 1962.

Our greatest shanty collector Stan Hugill ascribed about 120 of the shanties from his 'bible' *'Shanties from the Seven Seas'* (1961) to Black American and Caribbean origins. These were mostly collected from his West Indian informants Harding the Barbadian, Tobago Smith and 'Harry Lauder' from the Island of St. Lucia. He even tried to imitate the yelps and 'hitches' these black shantymen put into their singing of the shanties. Many of these had never appeared in a shanty collection before including *'ESSEQUIBO RIVER', 'ROLL, BOYS, ROLL'* and *'WHERE AM I TO GO'*. He also collected the great favourite South Sea Island shanty *'JOHN KANAKA'* which he claimed was: *'one of a body of Poynesian shanties'*. Stan also made frequent reference to his experience of 'chequerboard crews' (one watch black and one watch white) where shanty-swapping must have occurred. One shanty he particularly attributed to 'chequerboard crews' was the tops'l halyard shanty *'HAUL 'ER AWAY'* or *'SALLY RACKETT'* learnt from Harding.

Many of Stan's shanties had previously been put in print by British collectors without any mention of their negro origin. These include *'BULLY IN THE ALLEY'* (Cecil Sharp), *'COME ROLL ME OVER'* (John Masefield), *'HILO, BOYS, HILO'* (Richard Runciman Terry) and *'PAY ME THE MONEY DOWN'* (Laura Alexandrine Smith). Of course, Hugill was a shantyman himself and shipped as a common sailor in the fo'c'sle. Most of the other collectors did not have this experience.

The only other major British collector who worked as a common seaman and shantyman was the author Frank Thomas Bullen who along with his friend W.F. Arnold wrote *'Songs of Sea Labour'* in 1914 just six months before his death. He writes of his first sea voyage in 1869 at the age of 11 and hearing his first shanty *'MUDDER DINAH'* when discharging cargo in the Demerara River, Georgetown (Guyana).

'All the wonder I could spare was given to the amazing negroes who, not content with flinging their bodies about as they hove at the winch, sang as if their lives depended upon maintaining the volume of sound at the same time ... I have never seen any men working harder or more gaily than negroes when they were allowed to sing'. 'Being extremely fond of singing I became most anxious to learn it, so I asked one of our two boat-boys to teach me. Had I offered him a sovereign he could not have been more delighted. He set about his pleasant task at once but was very soon pulled up by his mate who demanded in indignant tones what he meant by teaching 'dat buckra chile (white boy) dem rude words'. I concentrated my attention upon learning the songs I heard (every day for about a month). Bullen places 'MUDDER DINAH' as number one in his collection followed by other negro shanties he learnt: 'SISTER SEUSAN', 'TEN STONE', 'SHENANDOAH', 'SALLY BROWN', 'WALK ALONG ROSEY', 'LIZA LEE', 'LOWLANDS AWAY' and 'POOR LUCY ANNA'

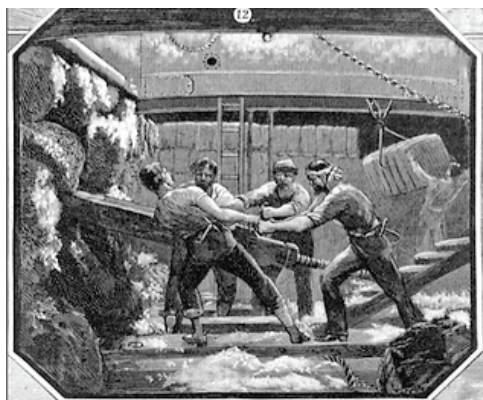
As for the rest of the 40 shanties in his collection Bullen states 'the great majority of these tunes undoubtedly emanated from the negroes of the Antilles (West Indies) and the Southern states: *"a most tuneful race if ever there was one, men moreover who seemed unable to pick up a ropeyarn without a song"*. Unfortunately, the well respected poet and shanty collector Cicely Fox Smith dismissed Bullen saying he 'had n****r on the brain'. Her American contemporary Joanna Colcord (both were born in 1882) had a different opinion commenting in 'Roll and Go' (1924) that: *'the American Negroes were the best singers that ever lifted a shanty aboard ship'*.

The only other major American collector to credit African-American work-songs as a major contributor to shanties was James Madison Carpenter who did most of his collecting in the British Isles in 1928 and 1929 using a wax cylinder recording machine. He wrote in The New York Times: *'These working choruses, frequently taken from the Negro labourers of different countries, especially the Southern States, existed in large numbers, for the Negro required a song to lighten his work'. 'Indeed, it is not surprising to find a fairly large proportion of the chanteys coming from the American South. Chanteymen were naturally quick to press into service aboard ship the Negro gang-work songs with their droll fun, languorous cadences, and well-worn rhythm'*.

Carpenter's huge collection of 98 different shanties from nearly 400 recordings gave us black shanties such as *'DOWN TRINIDAD'*,



The Black Origins of Sea Shanties, by Jim Mageean, continued



'LONDON JULIE', 'PULL DOWN BELOW' and 'NOTHIN' BUT A HUMBUG'. The first of these was collected from Richard Warner in Cardiff in 1928. Warner had first shipped in 1877 and learned this song on S.S. Bananzo in a sugarlog station in Barbados. The last two were among fifteen collected in 1928 in South Wales from Rees Baldwin who told Carpenter he had learned shanties from 'Negro singers in Savannah and New Orleans'. Carpenter describes many of the shanties he collected as 'of negro origin'.

Sadly, apart from Hugill and Bullen, no other major British collector seems to acknowledge the black origins of some of the shanties they collected. Perhaps these collectors were products of their class and social upbringing but most seemed keen to promote the shanties as part of an English folklore heritage. Consequently the revivals in shanty singing and folk singing that occurred in the 1920's and 1960's assumed this to be the case. With the new worldwide revival in interest in shanties that has begun it is important that we portray them as 'world music' with a multi-ethnic background with particular emphasis on the black origins of many of them.

Jim Mageean © Oct 23, 2021, and updated Jun 24, 2022

Taken from a series of articles on Jim's website www.jimmageean.co.uk



Jim Mageean is a folk singer from the North East of England specialising in Sea Songs and Shanties from the Great Days of Sail. He is internationally renowned for his powerful singing and has performed all over the world.

Jim is the author of three books (each with a CD) written during lockdown in 2020: **Heave Away** 'heaving' (i.e. pushing) shanties; **Haul Away**, 'hauling' (i.e. pulling) shanties; and **Sail Away** 'forebitters' (i.e. leisure songs) sailors sang.

The books are £10 each + £2 UK postage (so £32 for the set), email shanty_jim@hotmail.com for details.



Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; publications



Cecil Sharp collecting. © EFDSS

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS MEMORIAL LIBRARY [F]

VWML Conference: Traditional Tunes and Popular Airs, Saturday 8 - Sunday 9 November, Cecil Sharp House, London.

Organised jointly by the VWML, Julia Bishop (University of Sheffield) and Alice Little (Oxford University), this conference brings together researchers working on 'traditional' and 'popular' tunes as transmitted and transformed in all manner of musical styles and genres, performance contexts, levels of society, historical periods, and geographical locations. For more information and to book, visit:

<https://www.efdss.org/whats-on/61-conferences/15362-traditional-tunes-and-popular-airs-conference-2025>

Tiffany Hore, Library and Archives Director vwml.org

Four new online library lectures are now on sale.

Details on: <https://www.efdss.org/about-us/what-we-do/news/15491-library-lectures-2026> All on Zoom, on Tuesdays at 7.30pm. The recording will be available to watch to ticket-buyers for a month after the event. Tickets £5 per lecture or all four for £15.

- ★ 13 January: Elizabeth Bennett - Dorothy Marshall and the Women of West Sussex.
- ★ 10 February. Sue Allan - Merry neets, morris and more: social and display dancing in the Lake District and Cumbria.
- ★ 10 March. Lucy Wright - Folk is a Feminist Issue! Uncovering the hidden women in British seasonal customs.
- ★ 14 April. Vic Gammon, with Sheila Gammon (Reader) and Bridget Enever (Fiddler) - 'The Catterwauling Scrapes of Threshing Fiddlers': Explorations in the history of English Vernacular Fiddle Players, 1600-1900.

Traditional Tunes and Popular Airs Conference 2025:

Sat 8 & Sun 9 November, 9am - 5pm. Full details and booking here: <https://www.efdss.org/whats-on/61-conferences/15362-traditional-tunes-and-popular-airs-conference-2025>

TSF

THE TRADITIONAL SONG FORUM (TSF) [F]

A national organisation dedicated to the promotion, performance and publication of traditional folk song in the UK.

TSF organises successful talks on Zoom, these are very popular, attracting international visitors, limited to 100 places; so if interested, see www.tradsong.org sooner rather than later. These typically have 3 speakers, plus occasional single-speaker sessions. Next, on 16 November: Paul Mansfield on the Blind Beggar's Daughter; Vic Gammon; Steve Thompson on disability in Welsh ballads. We're very keen to hear from people who would like to share their knowledge and interests by presenting at our online meetings, in particular people who have not done so before. We have 2 slots at our meeting on 7 December (Christmas themed or otherwise). After that, no-one has yet offered a talk for next year. The provisional dates for the first meetings are 11th Jan, 8th Feb and 8th March. We would love to hear from you!

Videos of all the TSF Online meetings are available on the TSF YouTube channel - <https://youtu.be/tv-Or2wGhkQ>

TSF Spring conference, 18 April, on Women and Folk Song: the contribution of women to traditional folk song in Britain, Ireland, and elsewhere. At the Portico Library, Mosley Street, Manchester (<https://www.theportico.org.uk/>). The contribution of women to the world of traditional folk song is often overlooked but has always been substantial. In the early days, the Folk Song Society would not have survived without Kate Lee and Lucy Broadwood; Cecil Sharp's famous Appalachian trips would have failed without Maud Karpeles by his side, and while there they collected twice as many songs from female singers as from men. The morris dance revival would have been impossible without the women involved. The deadline for submissions is 1st December. Please send title, brief abstract, and brief (up to 100 words) biography to Richard Spencer at towerofsark@gmail.com, or contact him for further information.

Richard Spencer (TSF Assistant Secretary)

The TSF website is a gateway to a number of useful resources for those interested in researching or performing traditional folk songs. There is a newsletter to sign up to. Latest details on www.tradsong.org All enquiries to **Martin Graebe** [F] (TSF Secretary), tsf.secretary2020@gmail.com



Publications & recordings

- Publicity for appropriate books/publications and for recordings of collected songs: up to 200 words + cover ~ please see www.folklife.uk/ftj-contribute
- We don't review 'Folk' CDs ~ Folklife Members can send news (up to 160 words +pic) for *Folklife West*.

STEPPING IT OUT



Volume 1/Issue 1
December 2025
Subscribers Only

New Magazine for Traditional Music

Veteran: the traditional music label has announced a new publication for those with an interest in traditional music, song and dance. Stepping It Out magazine will be published quarterly starting in December 2025. Each issue will be available as a physical or digital publication and will contain articles on different aspects of traditional music.

The magazine will be edited by Megan Wisdom, folk musician, performer, and researcher. Subscriptions are now being

taken for the first volume (one year, four issues) with the first edition due out in December.

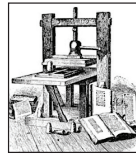
Subscribe by 10th November to receive a full year of physical issues.

For enquiries relating to subscriptions, submissions and advertising, please contact info@veteran.co.uk.

Subscribe at: veteran.co.uk/magazine

Join our Facebook group!

Search "Stepping It Out - Traditional Music Magazine" on Facebook.



'The Ballad Partners'

The not-for-profit folk publishing company was founded in 2018. Books published include:

- Collectomania! Revisiting the Song Collectors
- Outlandish Knights
- Father Christmas and the Deck of Cards: Further Adventures in Cheap Print

- 'Jinny the Witch' and other Song Folk
- Cecil Sharp and the Quest for Folk Song and Dance: a New Biography
- Vaughan Williams and Folk: 150th Anniversary Essays
- Thirsty Work and Other Legacies of Folk Song
- A Notorious Chaunter in B Flat • Old Songs, New Discoveries
- The Forgotten Songs of the Upper Thames
- Printers, Pedlars, Sailors, Nuns: Aspects of Street Literature
- Street Literature and the Circulation of Songs

The Ballad Partners is a cooperative venture, founded with investment from interested individuals and utilising the invaluable professional expertise of experienced editors David Atkinson and Steve Roud. Under their guidance conference proceedings and other material on folk song, music, dance, custom and related subjects are published, always with the aims of helping raise awareness and encouraging the study of the folk arts through books that are both very readable and affordable.

Watch this space – or keep an eye on The Ballad Partners website for more news and book sales: <https://www.theballadpartners.co.uk>

Sue Allan



Saydisc [F] Matchbox Bluesmaster Series ROOTS OF THE BLUES

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"To say that the Matchbox Bluesmaster series is special would not even come close in describing their importance" (Pete Clack, Blues In Britain).

"I am running out of superlatives to use" (Ian Lomax, Jazz Journal).

"Utterly fascinating" (Blues Matters).

All 12 sets are now available and can be viewed on www.saydisc.com/index.php?id=blues-1

Gef Lucena [F]



Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; publications. ★ More news on p19.



THE FOLKLORE SOCIETY [F] 50 Fitzroy Street, London W1T 5BT, 0203 915 3034. *A learned society devoted to the study of traditional culture in all its forms.*

Our Library and Archives are at University College London Library and Special Collections, and publicly available for consultation. Many of our books can be loaned by FLS members.

Forthcoming Folklore Society Events: The Katharine Briggs Lecture and Book Award 2025, 11 November, 18:30 - 20:30. Swedenborg Hall, 20/21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2TH. Professor Terry Gunnell, Professor Emeritus in Folkloristics at the University of Iceland, will talk about 'Returning the Legends to the Landscape and the Storytellers: The ever-increasing benefits of digitalising the North Atlantic Folk Legend Archive'.

★ **FOLKLORE SOCIETY ONLINE TALKS.** All on **Tuesdays**, 7pm-8.30pm unless otherwise stated

- 1 December, **On Social Life and Stories: Traditional Tale-Telling in 1970s Rural Iceland**, by Rosemary Power
- 16 December, **The Hooden Horse of Kent**, by James Frost

★ **IN-PERSON CONFERENCE.** Call For Papers – 'Folklore on the Move' **The Folklore Society's Annual Conference 2026**, in collaboration with the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen. 5 - 7 June 2026. King's College, University of Aberdeen Online conference day: Wednesday, 10 June. Highlighting the movement of folklore and the interconnectedness of people. We welcome academic and non-academic presentations of 20 minutes from tradition bearers, archivists, activists, museum workers, artists, event co-ordinators, folklorists and others interested in speaking on contemporary or historical aspects of 'folklore on the move'. Deadline for proposals: Sunday, 14 December. For details, please see website.

For more details, & for details of tickets, see www.folklore-society.com

"Un/Common People: Folk Culture in Wessex:" Touring Exhibition Nov 2024 – May 2026



Ooser at Cerne Abbas,
Corn dolly (Museum of British Folklore).

"Un/Common People: Folk Culture in Wessex:" Touring Exhibition Nov 2024 – May 2026 Exhibition celebrating Wessex folk culture tours to Poole [F]

Wessex Museums' first-of-its kind exhibition showcasing folk art and the seasonal customs of the Wessex region is touring to Poole Museum.

Un/Common People: Folk Culture in Wessex brings together over 100 objects, films, songs and stories to celebrate the folk art and seasonal customs of the Wessex region.

For details, see article in *Folklife Traditions Journal* 76, Nov. 2024, p17, in print or online on www.folklife.uk/ftj-76

The exhibition will be on display in the newly redeveloped Poole Museum when it reopens this autumn (please check @poolemuseum on social media for the confirmed reopening date). It will stay at Poole until 18th January 2026, and then tour to The Salisbury Museum from 7th February – 10th May 2026.

For more information visit:

<https://wessexmuseums.org.uk/our-work/exhibitions-events/un-common-people/>



Highland Mary, Tune and Song, by Charles Menteith

A tune called *Highland Mary* has been collected from a number of places in the more westerly range of the Cotswold Morris dances, (1) Here is the version from Bampton as an example.

Highland Mary, Bampton, Oxfordshire

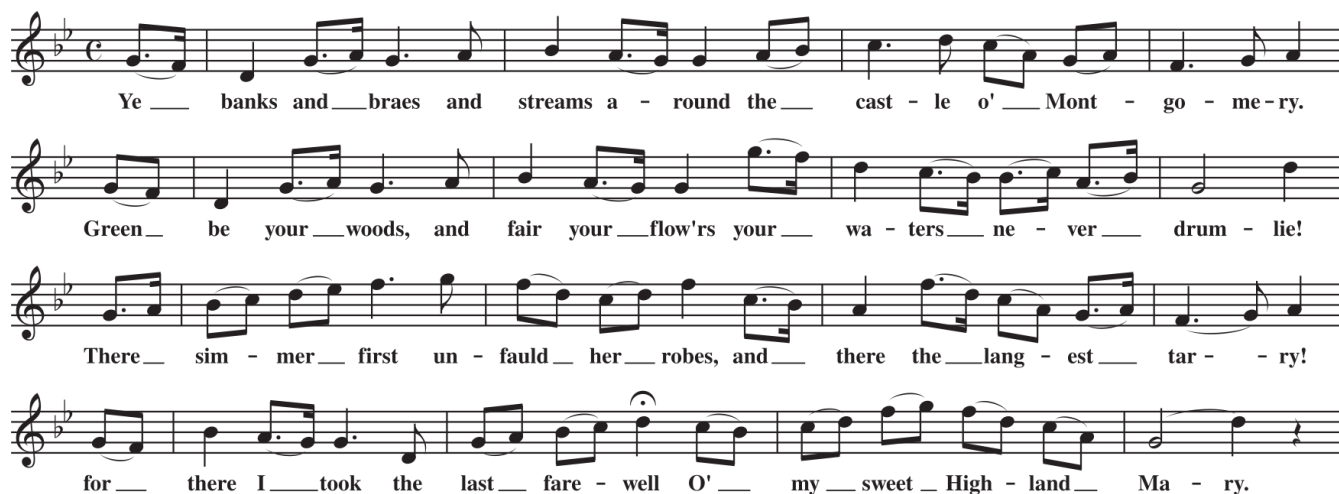


Highland Mary with Robert Burns (3)

"Highland" Mary Campbell (1763-86) (2) was born at Dunoon and spent her childhood at Campbeltown. She moved to Ayrshire to work, acquiring the nickname "Highland" from her Gaelic speaker's accent when she spoke English. Her last post was as a dairy-maid at Coilsfield House, later named Montgomery Castle. While there she met and courted Robert Burns. Details are, of course, obscure but they are known to have exchanged bibles, a symbol of engagement. Burns' song *Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary, And leave auld Scotia's shore?* suggests that they may have planned to move to Jamaica, no doubt to make a living, or even a fortune, from the labour of enslaved people. The Campbells were powerful there, and their name is still the most widespread on the island, Naomi Campbell being a well known modern representative.(4) Mary went home to the Highlands to arrange her affairs before her change of state. But on her return to Greenock, "she had scarce landed when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to the grave in a few days, before I could even hear of her illness." (5)

Burns kept his feelings for Mary after her death. On the third anniversary he went outdoors in the evening in a state of agitation, and could not be persuaded to come indoors. He stayed out all night walking around. In the morning he came indoors, and wrote the words of *Mary in Heaven*. However, we are now concerned with another poem of Burns', written in 1792, called simply *Highland Mary*. Burns set the words to the tune of the old song, Katherine Ogie.

Highland Mary, Robert Burns (6)



Drumly = Turbid, not clear (7)

The tune is essentially in G minor (or G aeolian), but with a curious leap up to the dominant D at the ends of bars 8 and 16.



1. Ye banks and braes and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery.
Green be your woods, and fair your flow'rs
Your waters never drumlie.
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the longest tarry!
For there I took the last farewell
O' my sweet Highland Mary.
2. How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade,
I clasp'd her to my bosom,
The golden hours, on angel wings.
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary.
3. Wi' monie a vow, and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender ;
And pledging aft to meet again.
We tore ourselves asunder :
But, oh! fell death's untimely frost,
That nipp'd my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!
4. Pale, pale now those rosy lips
I aft ha'e kiss'd sae fondly!
And closed for aye the sparkling glance
That dwelt on me sae kindly ;
And mouldering now in silent dust,
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

The Morris tune is not very similar to Burns' tune. In particular, the minor key of Katherine Ogie has been completely lost. All the versions which I have mentioned in Ref 1 are firmly in major keys. I find the greatest resemblance in bars 9 to 12, especially the upward run in bar 9. However, in several Gloucestershire versions, the run is downwards. During the 19th century the words appeared on broadsides published from London and Bristol to Falkirk and Stirling. They don't help with the tune. However, Frank Kidson of Leeds, in 1891, (8) published two versions of the song, one noted by himself, the other by Mr Lolley, from the East Riding. Both men noted the song from their own mothers. Of his mother's version, Kidson noted that it "was sung early in the present (ie the nineteenth) century in the streets of Leeds to Burns' verses". His mother, and another "elderly lady" sang two verses, not from Burns, on the theme of Mary's grave. Here is the tune:

Highland Mary, Mrs Kidson



Like the original, this tune is still in a minor, or aeolian key (F minor). but it is much more like a typical English song in the minor mode.

Mrs Lolley's tune is almost in the major, though it has a peculiarity. If the 7th note is accentuated, at the beginning of a bar or half-bar, it is flattened. If it falls on an unstressed note, it remains in key. I would describe this as semi-myxolydian.

Highland Mary, Mrs Lolley



Lucy Broadwood noted another version, with Burns' words, from Brigit & Michael Geary, (9) at Dungarvan, Co Waterford in 1906 Their version was in a major key, A flat, but also in 3/4 (waltz time), which makes it somewhat of an anomaly compared to other tunes for Highland Mary.

Charles Menteith © November 2025

References: text continues on page 17



The Worm That Turned, by Keith Gregson

Sunderland singer writer and historian Keith Gregson sheds a new light on an old and much-loved northeast song.

The song *The Lambton Worm* is very much part of northeast life. As a 'folk singer' of some over years standing, I would certainly put it in the top five of all time northeast greats alongside the nineteenth century *Blaydon Races* and the twentieth century *Fog on the Tyne*. As an entertainer, you know straight away whether you audience is familiar with a song or not and it is only on rare occasions that audiences don't join in lustily with the well-known chorus

Whisht! lads – Haad yor gobs
Aa'll tell yer aall and aaful story
Whisht! lads – Haad yor gobs
An' Aa'll tell yer 'bout the woorm ¹

The story behind the song is an ancient one and one known to most people in the region - (if often in sketchy detail). In brief, during the time of the crusades, Sir John Lambton fished a strange creature out of the River Wear and flung it out of the way into a well before going off to fight in Palestine. While he was away, the creature – worm like or dragon like- wreaked havoc around the Durham countryside, destroying people and animals alike. ² Eventually Sir John returned and saw the creature off.

Here the song ends but the ancient tale goes into more detail. The story goes that Sir John made a pact with the 'dark side' that, in return for a magic suit of armour, he would sacrifice the first living thing he saw after killing the beast. The armour proved helpful in his quest and the knight had arranged for the family dog to be sent out as that first living thing; however,

overjoyed with his son's success, Sir John's father had been the first on the scene. Lambton decide to sacrifice the dog anyway and his failure to uphold his side of the bargain is said to have brought down a curse on the family. This was that no senior male holder of the Lambton title would die in his bed. According to various pundits, until the 20th century at least, this held true.

So much for the story but what about the song? Many years ago, I noted rather haughtily in introducing the song at a local folk club that people mistakenly thought that this was a Durham folk song. I was put in my place by a member of the audience who suggested that whatever I thought the ditty used to be it was a Durham folk song now. *Touché!*

The reason for my pedantry was the knowledge that the song *The Lambton Worm* started life in the late 1860s as part of a Tyneside pantomime. It was composed a few years after the *Blaydon Races* and first performed at Newcastle's Tyne Theatre in a pantomime entitled *Ye Lambton Worme*. Many years later, the author of the song was asked to provide the words and music for a collection of Tyneside songs. By then living abroad, he sent the version that we know today. It is a version which differs in several ways from the pantomime original. I came across the original by sheer accident in the late 1970s while scouring local newspapers for songs about Tyneside boat racing. The following appeared on a letters' page under the heading 'Ye Lambton Worme' ³ –

At the request of several correspondents, we print the popular song sung with much success by Mr Ratcliffe in the highly successful pantomime of 'Ye Lambton Worme'

The Lambton Worme

At the request of several correspondents, we print the popular song sung with much success by Mr Ratcliffe in the highly successful pantomime of 'Ye Lambton Worme'; Air ~ Who's For The Bank

One Sunday mornin' Lambton went
A fishin' in the Wear
And caught a fish upon his heuk
He thout leuked varry queer
Bu whatun kind o' fish it waas
Young Lambton cuddent tell
And he wadn't fash to carry it hyem
So he hoyed it in a well

*Oh, lads, had yer gobs,
And aw'll tell ye all this awful story;
Oh, lads, had yer gobs,
And aw'll tell you about the Warm*

Noo Lambton felt inclined ti gan
And fight in foreign wars
So joined a troop of trusty knights
That cared nowt for wounds and scars
And aw said if he wad let me gan
Aw wad fight and nivvor tire
He said, 'Why, Bob, aw'll tell ye what
Aw'll myek ye maw esquire"

Now the worm got fat and growed and growed
And growed an awful size
Gat greet big teeth and greet big gob
And greet big goggly eyes
Til a stormy neet it felt inclined

Ti gaan and hear the news
But feeling dry upon the road
It milked a dozen coos

Noo the worm got warse and use ti feed
On calves and lambs and sheep
And swallow little bairns alive
When they lay doon ti sleep
And when he'd eaten all he could
And he had had his fill
He crawled away and lapped his tail
Three times round Penshaw Hill

Noo the news of this most awful worm
And its queer gannins on
Soon crossed the seas, got ti the ears
Of Cranky and Sir John
So we're gannin tiv his cave the neet
To cut off his tail and claws
And if that dissent stop his game
Wye, then we'll 'dad his jaws'

*Oh, lads, had yer gobs
And see us kill this awful monster
Oh, lads, haad yer gobs
And see us kill the warm*

Newcastle Daily Chronicle



Although many of the words were the same as those in the version sung today (see p18 for this), there were several significant differences. The biggest one concerns the song's timing. The current version takes place after the death of the worm while the pantomime version was prior to the monster's demise. Equally interestingly, the pantomime text involves two people rather than the one in the 'more recent' version. Sir John remains the main character. The other is his squire – Bob Cranky – who sang the song in the pantomime. Bob Cranky was a kind of 'Jack the Lad' character who appeared in number of early nineteenth century Tyneside songs and it is not surprising to find him turning up in a pantomime role. Historian Bob Colls has written at length about Cranky and his perceived place in developing attitudes to nineteenth century Tyneside society – both past and present. The original song explains Bob Cranky's role in the venture. After Lambton is invited to join 'a troop of trusty knights who cared nought for wounds nor scars' Bob takes up the tale

And aw said if he wad let me gan
Aw wad fight and nivvor tire
He said, 'Why, Bob, aw'll tell ye what
Aw'll myek ye maw esquire.

News of 'the awful beast' crossed the seas and got to the ears of both 'Cranky and Sir John' in the original. Back they travelled home and prepared for battle with the beast -

So, we're ganning to his cave the neet
To cut off his tail and claws
And if that dissent stop his game
Wye then we'll 'dad his jaws'.

And the song ends not with 'Having one for brave sir John' but with the pair striding off stage to do battle -

Oh, lads, had yer gobs
And see us kill this awful monster
Oh, lads, haad yer gobs
And see us kill the warm

Not a 'whisht' in sight and significantly different from today's well-known chorus.

The tune used for both the pantomime song and the modern version is equally interesting. The newspaper correspondent responding to the letter gave it as 'Whae's for The Bank'. Such a tune had already been called upon on at least two occasions by Tyneside songwriter Joe Wilson. He used it for a stirring ballad devoted to boat race champion Bob Chambers and entitled *Chambers and Sadler – The Championship Browt back Te the Tyne, November 22nd, 1866*. Here the chorus ran -

Then oh, lads, join I' the sang,
An' sing I' praise o' brave Bob Chambers.
Oh, lads, join I' the sang,
The championship he's wun!

He also adapted it to a song called *What Will the Neighbours Say?*



For, oh dear! What will they say,
What will the neybour say when they hear not?
For, oh dear! What will they say,
Ay, what will the neybour Say? ⁴

As for the tune itself, it comes as no surprise that it emerged from the London Music Halls of the 1860s as did *Brighton for The Blaydon Races* and *Pretty Polly Perkins for Cushie Butterfield* – (with the former probably an in-comer from the United States). A copy of the original words and music for *Who's for the Bank* can be found in the archives of the London Transport Museum. The song's full title is *Who's for The Bank or the Deluded Widow of the Apple Stall*. It was published in 1865 and credited to a young songwriter named G W Hunt. Some 20 years later, he was to write a song which brought the term 'jingoism' firmly into the English language. The first verse and chorus give a flavour of the song's nature -

I'll tell a tale about a man
Whose name was Charley Crank
He used to drive an omnibus
From Highgate to the Bank
He wink'd at all the pretty girls
As he drove along the road
Till on a buxom widow, he
The seeds of true love sowed

Heigh ho! Who's for the Bank
Fenchurch Street and Blackwall Railway
Heigh ho! Who's for the Bank
It's fourpence all the way ⁵

Text continues over page.

Highland Mary, Tune and Song, by Charles Menteith, continued from page 15

References

- (1) For versions from Ascott-under-Wychwood, Bampton, Bledington, Longborough, Oddington, see Bacon, *Handbook of Morris Dances*. For John Mason's (Icomb) and Wm. Hathaway's (Lower Swell) versions see www.Glostrad.com
- (2) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Campbell_\(Highland_Mary\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Campbell_(Highland_Mary))
- (3) Painting by RA Bell & HM Paget, 1892
- (4) Leask D, 11/10/2015, *Jamaica: the country with more Campbells per head of population than Scotland*, The Herald, Glasgow. Accessed 05/08/2025 <https://www.heraldsotland.com/opinion/13839601.jamaica-country-campbells-per-head-population-scotland/>
- (5) Cromeck, Robert Hartley (1813). *Reliques of Robert Burns*, p. 237. T. Cadell & W. Davies, London.
- (6) Graham, GF (1848) *Songs of Scotland* Vol 2, pp 38-39, Wood & Co., Edinburgh & Glasgow.
- (7) Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Vol 1 p. 612
- (8) Kidson, Frank (1891), *Traditional Tunes*, pp 84-86, Taphouse, Oxford. Reprinted 1970, SR Publishers, Wakefield.
- (9) VWML (Library), catalogue: LEB/7/36/2



The Worm That Turned, by Keith Gregson, continued

A Final Reflection

The article above was compiled after some 50 years connection with the recognised version of the Lambton Worm song. I first heard it sung in the early 1970s. The singer was Brian Pollard from Chester le Street who will be known to many in the Morris Dance world. It is still his go to song today. Brian got it from his father-in-law – a Tynesider who moved to the South Midlands after the Second World War. Toward the end of the 1970s Roy Palmer asked me to provide a version of the song to go into his *Everyman's Book of British Ballads*.⁶ My fellow teacher at the time, Eddie Gratton, was known for participating in so-called 'Geordie Nights' across the north east. He gave me his version which, like Brian's, is very close to the one published in the late nineteenth century.⁷ It must have been when Roy's book was at the publishers (or beyond) that I discovered the pantomime words. Articles by me on the discovery appeared in the Northern Echo in 1979 and later, when the *Sunderland Echo* had put on sale tankards with the song words, in that publication.⁸ However it was not until more recent times that I delved in detail into the origins of the tune.

Keith Gregson © November 2025

Endnotes

- 1 The version which is sung today is published at the end of the article.
- 2 In the song, the worm wraps its tail numerous times around a hill. Worm Hill can still be seen beside the Wear at Fatfield and just within the modern boundaries of the city of Sunderland.
- 3 Where it may be now is uncertain as institutions and buildings come and go. In the late 1970s, it was a cutting pasted into a collection in South Shields Public Library *Local Songs* L821.8 and credited to a *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* of February 1868. Many local newspaper articles from the period reference the pantomime taking place between December 1867 and March 1868 (see British Newspaper Archive for examples). The pantomime version of the song is also printed in the main body of the article, on p.16.
- 4 These songs can be found in Wilson, Joe *Tyneside Songs and Drolleries, Readings and Temperance Songs* (Collected edition reprint Wakefield 1970) pp 123 and 212.
- 5 See Music sheet; with illustrated cover 'Who's For The Bank?', by G W Hunt, 1865, London Transport Museum, and 'Who's for the Bank or The Deluded Widow of the Apple Stall', London Transport Museum.
- 6 Palmer, Roy (ed) *Everyman's Book of British Ballads* (London, 1982) pp102 -4.
- 7 Eddie's version is the one printed at the end of the article.
- 8 Northern Echo 14 March 1979; Sunderland Echo 10 January 1994.

The Lambton Worm.

One Sunday morn young Lambton
Went a-fishin' in the Wear;
An' caught a fish upon his huek,
He thowt leuk't varry queer,

But whatt'n a kind a fish it was
Young Lambton couldn't tell.
He couldn't be boshed for to carry it hyem,
So he hoyed it in a well.

Chorus: *Whisht! lads, haad yor gobs,
Aa'll tell yer aal and aaful story,
Whisht! lads, haad yor gobs,
An' Aal tell yer 'bout the woorm.*

Noo Lambton felt inclined to gan
For ta fight in foreign wars.
So he joined a troop o' Knights that cared
For neither wounds nor scars,

An' off he went to Palestine
Where queer things him befel,
An' varry seun forgot aboot
The funny worm i' the well.

(Chorus)

But the woorm it growed an' growed an' growed,
An' growed an aaful size;
He'd geet big heed, a geet big gob,
An' geet big goggley eyes.

An' when at neets he craaled aboot
For ta' pick up bits o'news,
If he felt thoorsty upon the road,
He milked a dozen coos.

(Chorus)

This feorful woorm wad often feed
On calves an' lambs an' sheep,
An' swally little bairns alive
When they laid doon to sleep.

An' when he'd eaten aal he cud
An' he had has he's fill,
Away he went an' lapped his tail
Ten times roond Pensher Hill.

(Chorus)

The news of this geet funny woorm
An' his queer gannins on
Seun crossed the seas, and reached the lugs
Of brave an' bowld Sir John.

So hyem he cam an' caught the beast
An' cut 'im in three halves,
An' stopped it eatin' aal bairns,
An' sheep an' lambs and calves.

(Chorus)

So noo ye knaa hoo aal the folks
On byeth sides of the Wear
Lost lots o' sheep an' lots o' sleep
An' lived in mortal feor.

So let's hev one to brave Sir John
That kept the bairns frae harm
Saved coos an' calves by myekin' haalves
O' the famis Lambton Woorm

Chorus: *Noo lads, Aa'll haad me gob,
That's aal Aa knaa aboot the story
Of Sir John's clivvor job
Wi' the aaful Lambton Woorm!*



"The True and Unembellished Tale of the Great Serpent of Silver Lake"

song written and sung by Sue Hengelsberg

We're always glad to hear of local celebrations - from time to time, the locals of Perry in New York State celebrate the serpent with a boat parades and festivals. The serpent is a mascot, in logos, and in sculptures around town. Sue tells the tale of the origins of this local story:

Composed and copyright by Sue Hengelsberg, 1974.
To the tune of 'Greenland Whale Fisheries', in D.

In eighteen hundred and fifty-five,
July the thirteenth night
A small fishing boat with four men and two sons
On Silver Lake set out, brave boys,
On Silver Lake set out.

They'd not been long when Joe McKnight
Said, "Boys there's a giant log near shore."
But the log began to move, headed straight t'ward the boat
Each man bore down on an oar, brave boys,
Each man bore down on an oar.

As the thing neared their vessel they could see it plain,
A reptile 'bout 80 feet, all tolled,
"It's a serpent, it's a monster, it's the devil!" they all cried,
With eyes as red as coals, brave boys,
eyes as red as coals.

Well, the serpent lashed its tail and shot water from its mouth
Four feet into the sky
"Let's row, boys, row, let's get out of here!" they cried,
"Before we all capsize, brave boys,
Before we all capsize."

Well, their story spread like wildfire 'round the countryside,
More people saw the serpent ev'ry night,
"It's a demon from the deep!" an old Indian warned
"My fathers knew, and would not fish that site, brave boys,
My fathers knew and would not fish that site."

Their story spread like wildfire all around the world,
Tourists packed hotels and people's homes;
From a watchtower they spied, and to shoot the beast they tried,
But it always escaped into the foam, brave boys,
It always escaped into the foam.

A whaling party couldn't capture the beast,
Nor could an iron hook and line;
Then as quickly as it came, the monster disappeared,
Never more upon the lake was seen, brave boys,
Never more on Silver Lake was seen.

Two years later at the Walker House Hotel
A fire raged inside;
When the firemen reached the attic, they had quite a surprise,
There lay that canvas serpent's hide, brave boys,
There lay that canvas serpent's hide.

The truth was then revealed by Mr. Walker himself, (1)
He'd built the monster serpent, with his friends,
To pick up the business at the Walker House Hotel,
And it's been a darn good story ever since, brave boys,
It's been a darn good story ever since.

(1) Walker was possibly inspired to build his sea serpent hoax based on a Seneca Nation story about a monster that once inhabited the waters of Silver Lake.

Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; publications *(continued from p13)*



PEDLARS PACK [F]

A discussion list for people interested in street literature and cheap print of the past (broadside, chapbooks, songsters, prints, etc) in Britain and beyond.

The whole point of the group is to facilitate communication, so don't be shy about telling us of books, articles, projects, events, that you are involved in - we won't think you're showing off. And if people would like to introduce themselves with a brief (yes, brief) statement of their interests, it would be a good way to start the ball rolling.

One thing to mention at the start is that it is clear that we will be coming at our core interest (cheap print) from different angles. The impetus for the group comes from those of interested in song (broadside ballads) and related content, but many who have joined through the SHARP list, in particular, will be from book history, printing history, bibliography, literacy, and various other fields.. This is exactly what we want because we need each other to get to grips with a fascinating, but often slippery subject. Please be patient and tolerant of other peoples' obsessions.

To join, email pedlars-pack+subscribe@at>groups.io **Steve Roud**

ACCESS FOLK

Access Folk is a University of Sheffield-based project led by folk singer and scholar Prof. Fay Hield that explores ways of increasing and diversifying participation in folk singing in England.

For more information, visit our website <https://accessfolk.sites.sheffield.ac.uk/activities/action-research>

THE CORNISH NATIONAL MUSIC ARCHIVE is a fantastic resource for anyone wanting to hear and play traditional tunes and songs from Cornwall. It can be accessed on YouTube [www.youtube.com/channel/UC-FQd0apFJSPoE6AAwt2vaw], although a new website is currently being built (<https://cornishnationalmusicarchive.co.uk>). There is a vast library of performances from Tea Treats to pipe music, including music that goes back to medieval days such as the Rescorla Snail Creep. Snail Creeps were popular in the clay country and involved a procession of people walking behind a variety of instruments, eventually forming a close spiral. One is still performed every year in July at the Rescorla Festival. **Lamorna Spry** [F]

Kernow/Cornwall: Kesskrifer/Correspondent for Folklife West

TRAC CYMRU [F] - the folk development organisation for Wales.

Trac works to promote our traditional music, dance and song at home and beyond, funded by the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh Government.

Free online resources on <https://www.trac.cymru/resources> : Tunes, Instruments, Dance, Songs, History and Folklore, Formal Education, Welsh Language, and Directory. Songs include **A Collection of Welsh Folk Songs** with the help of **Arfon Gwilym**, one of our major tradition bearers: videos, soundfiles, dots, & words.

To keep up to date with our work and all things Welsh folk arts: connect with us on social media and subscribe to our newsletter, see <https://www.trac.cymru/whatson>

Trac Cymru, Music Traditions Wales. trac@trac-cymru.org
<https://www.trac.cymru>

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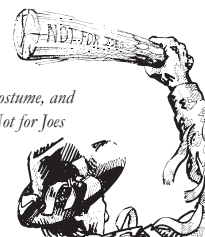
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our Folklife Traditions Directory is on www.folklife.uk/ft-directory

All events subject to change, please check first.

TAR BARREL ROLLING 5 Nov

photo: © Colin Davies



UP-HELLY-AA

Last Tue in Jan



GOATHLAND PLOUGH STOTS

1st Sat after Plough Mon

MARI LWYD from before Christmas to New Year's Day



The Doc Rowe Collection

Support Group has been set up to support the Archive of Doc's unique collection.

See: www.docrowe.org.uk

All listings & photos © Doc Rowe, unless stated otherwise. We are very grateful to Doc, for generously providing detailed listings and photos. In italics; additional info from ‡Chris Ridley, ‡Bill Pullen ©, Barbara & ‡Tom Brown ©, ‡Audrey Smith, Gary Heywood-Everett, and the Editors ©.

More entries welcome (& further details &/or contact details), subject to consent of the event's organisers - some may not want publicity.

For links to websites, see Doc's website: www.docrowe.org.uk

Dates believed to be correct, but some weekday dates seem to be changing towards weekends. Detailed reports - and photos - are welcomed.

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NOVEMBER

Kaking Neet	South and West of Sheffield	1st November or near
Guy Fawkes	various UK	Up to & inc. 5th Nov.
Lewes Bonfire	Lewes Sussex	5th November
Hatherleigh Fire Carnival	Hatherleigh Devon	2nd Saturday in Nov. **
Bridgwater Carnival	Bridgwater Somerset	1st Saturday in Nov. **
Tar Barrel Rolling, <i>photo on left</i>	Ottery St Mary Devon	5th November
Wroth Silver Ceremony	Knightlow Cross Warks	11th November
Firing The Fenny Poppers	Fenny Stratford Bucks	11th November
Armistice Day	various UK	11th November
Yorkshire Carols	various Yorks	From 11th November
The Lords Mayor's Show	City of London London	2nd Saturday in November
Laxton Jury Day	Laxton Notts	Late November
Wall Game	Eton Berks	Late November
Court Leet	Fylingthorpe N. Yorks	December

DECEMBER including CHRISTMAS, BOXING DAY, NEW YEAR'S EVE

Tin Can Band	Broughton Northants	Sunday after 12th Dec
<i>Plygain singing</i>	<i>Montgomeryshire & nearby; now also elsewhere</i>	<i>Mostly pre-Christmas [Eds]</i>
Tup Plays	Sheffield and Chesterfield area	Christmas
Burning Ashen Faggot	Dunster Somerset	Christmas Eve
Tolling The Devils Knell	Dewsbury W Yorks	Christmas Eve
Mummers	Bampton Oxon	Christmas Eve
Feather Guisers	Uttoxeter Staffs	Christmas Eve and Day
Crookham Mummers	Crookham Hants	Boxing Day
Flamborough Sword Dance	Flamborough Yorkshire	Boxing Day
Greatham Sword Dance Play	Greatham Co. Durham	Boxing Day
Barrel Rolling competition	Fermanagh Ireland	Christmas
Wren Boys	Denbigh Denbs	Boxing Day [Eds]
Mummer's Day	Dingle Ireland	Boxing Day
Handsworth Sword Dancers	Padstow Cornwall	Boxing Day & New Year's Day
Grenoside Sword Dancers	S. Yorkshire S. Yorkshire	Boxing Day
Monkseaton Dancers	Monkseaton Tyne-Tees	Boxing Day
Marshfield Mummers	Marshfield Glos	Boxing Day
Ripon Sword Dancers	Ripon N. Yorks	Boxing Day
Annual Dip	Whitby N. Yorks	Boxing Day
<i>Tewkesbury Medieval Play [Mummers]</i>	<i>Tewkesbury Glos</i>	<i>Boxing Day [Simon Hopkins]</i>
Symondsbury Mummers	Symondsbury Dorset	Christmas
Fylingthorpe Guisers	Fylingthorpe N. Yorks	Christmas
Flambeaux Procession	Comrie Tayside	New Year's Eve
Swinging The Fireballs	Stonehaven Grampian	New Year's Eve
<i>Mari Lwyd, photo</i>	<i>different places - different days</i>	<i>S.E. Wales Before Christmas to New Year's Day</i>

JANUARY Wassailing: in many places in England West & Mid-West, some listed here

<i>Mari Lwyd, photo</i>	<i>different places - different days</i>	<i>S.E. Wales Before Christmas to New Year's Day</i>
Wassailing	Combe in Teignhead Devon	January
Wassailing	Churchstanton Somerset	January
Mummer's Day	Padstow Cornwall	1st January
Haxey Hood Game	Haxey Lincs	6th Jan [Twelfth Night]
Bodmin Wassailing	Bodmin Cornwall	6th January [Twelfth N.]
Twelfth Night Revels	Southwark London	near 6th January
Goathland Plough Stots, <i>photo</i>	Goathland North Yorks	1st Sat after Plough Mon
Straw Bear Day	Whittlesea Cambs	Sat nr 6 Jan.
<i>Hen Galan [old New Year], Calennig [New Yr gifts]</i>	<i>Cwm Gwaun Sir Benfro / Pembro</i>	<i>13 Ion/Jan</i>
Longtown Wassail	Longtown Herefs	a Sat in January
Apple Tree Wassailing	Whimple Devon	17th Jan [Old Twelv Night]
Wassailing	Carhampton Somerset	17th Jan [Old 12th Night]
<i>Dydd Santes Dwywnwen / St Dwywnwen's Day</i>	<i>Cymru/Wales</i>	<i>25 Ion/Jan.</i>
<i>Up-Helly-Aa, photo on left</i>	<i>Lerwick Shetland</i>	<i>Last Tuesday in January</i>

FEBRUARY, incl. Shrove Tuesday (13 Feb 2023), Ash Wed. (day after)

Carlows Charity	Woodbridge Suffolk	2nd February
Cradle Rocking	Blidworth Notts	Sunday near 2nd February
Chinese New Year	various	2026: 17 February; public celebrations dates may vary
Quit Rents Ceremony	Royal Courts of Justice London	February
Trial Of Pyx	Goldsmiths Hall London	February (and May)
Red Feather Day: Sir John Cass Service	Aldgate London	Friday near 20th February
Westminster Greaze	Westminster School London	Shrove Tuesday
Sedgefield Ball Game	Sedgefield Co. Durham	Shrove Tuesday
Football	Alnwick Northumberland	Shrove Tuesday
Football	Atherstone Warks	Shrove Tuesday
Ashbourne Royal Football	Ashbourne Derbys	Shrove Tuesday & Wednesday
Hurling the Silver Ball	St Columb Major Cornwall	Shrove Tuesday & Sat. after
• Unique in being a Shrovetide football where the ball is hurled, not thrown. Hundreds of hurlers turn up, the two teams being the Townsmen and the Countrymen. Goals are about two miles apart, but a goal can also be scored by being carried over the parish boundary. There is an afternoon and an evening game. Youngsters get 'silver cocoa' and the silver ball goes round the pubs being submerged in beer to provide 'silver beer'. ~ from ‡Chris Ridley ©. Ref: Hurling at St Columb, Ivan Rabey (Lodene Press, Padstow: 1972). See also FTJ, Mar 2025, article by Lamorna Spry ©.		
Cakes And Ale Ceremony	St Pauls London	Ash Wednesday
Dame Elizabeth Marvyn Charity	Ufton Nervet Berks	Mid Lent

