

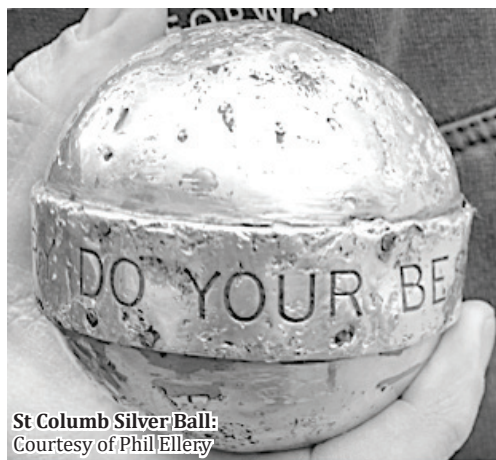


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www.folklife-traditions.uk



St Columb Silver Ball:
Courtesy of Phil Ellery

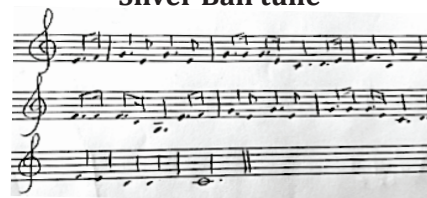
The Tradition of Cornish Hurling, by Lamorna Spry

... Once a team has managed to get the silver ball to their goal, they walk back to the centre singing :

*For we roll, roll the Silver Ball along
And we roll, roll the Silver Ball along
And we roll, roll the Silver Ball along
And we all come marching home*

The tune sounds similar to the shanty 'Roll the old chariot'. Each rendition of the song is followed by the winner "calling-up" the ball, which involves three cheers followed by the declaration "Town Ball" or "Country Ball" as appropriate, followed by further cheers from the winning side. The song and call-up are repeated until the hurlers reach Market Square, where the ball is called-up a final time before the hurlers disperse. Celebrations continue into the evening around the pubs of the town and the ball is ceremoniously 'dunked' in a gallon jug full of beer; the 'Silver Beer' as it is known ... see [pages 2-4](#)

Silver Ball tune



Hussars

*Oh, my name is Hymey Hancock; I'm a man that is very well known
In the city of Carlisle I've a business of my own.*



A trooper lad came home last night With the fighting he was weary



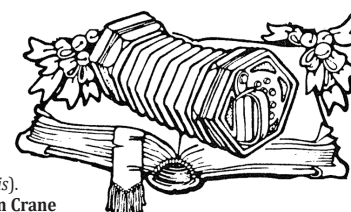
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Morris dancers © Annie Jones (Dave Jones, *The Roots Of Welsh Border Morris*).
Our logos: Minehead Hobby Horse © Chris Beaumont; concertina/book © John Crane

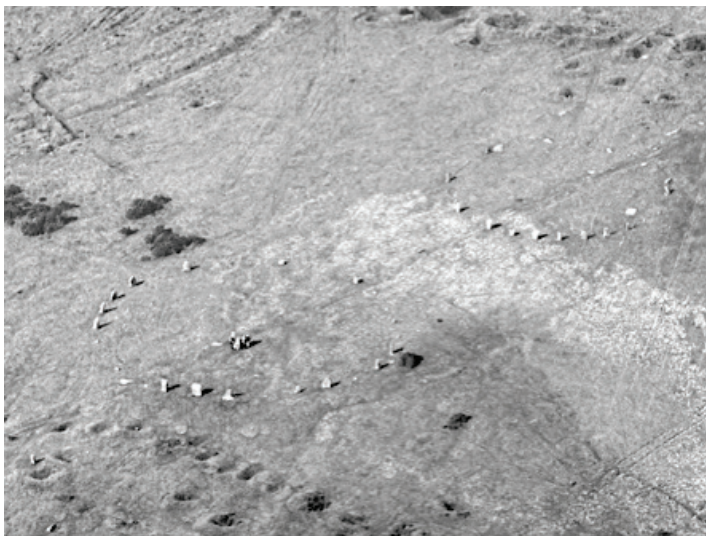


The Tradition of Cornish Hurling, *by* Lamorna Spry

Cornish Hurling is a game that goes back centuries and we know from historical records, as far back as the late 16th century, that it was widely played across Cornwall. An old saying in the Cornish language goes “*hyrlan yw gen gwaré nyi*”, which means “hurling is our sport”.

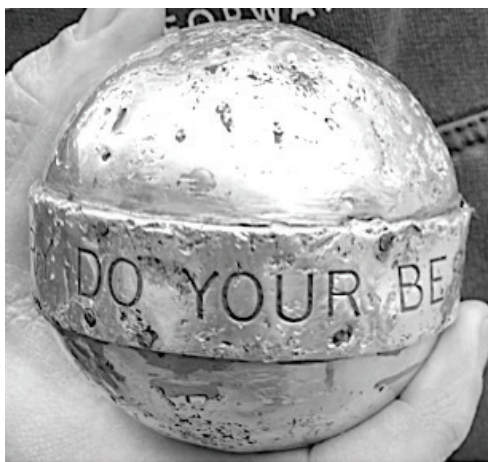
While it shares its name with the Irish sport of hurling, the Cornish version is distinct and has its own unique history and traditions. Any comparisons are best seen in Brittany and Normandy where the traditional ball game ‘Soule’ does bear striking similarities. Some historians believe that Cornish Hurling dates back to pre-Christian times, with origins in Celtic culture.

The game revolves around a ‘silver ball’ and is deeply tied to the landscape of Cornwall, with specific fields, rivers and landmarks playing a role in the tradition. Hurling is steeped in legend and at Minions on Bodmin Moor there is an ancient stone circle called ‘The Hurlers’, said to be men who played the game on the Sabbath; the sacrilege turning them to stone.



Aerial view of
The Hurlers stone circle

Typically, the outer shell of a hurling ball is sterling silver which is hammered into two hemispheres and then bound around a core of applewood, held together with screws or nails through a band of silver. It weighs around 570 grams and is roughly the size of a cricket ball. The ball itself is considered a sacred object, sometimes said to have magical properties and winning it is a great honour, bringing good luck or prosperity to the person who wins it. The ball often has a good luck motto engraved on it and the winner of the game can keep the ball on the condition he provides a new replacement. Whilst there are some silver balls on display in museums, many are proud family possessions and passed down as heirlooms.



St Columb Silver Ball:
Courtesy of Phil Ellery

In around 1590 the poet Michael Drayton wrote:

“According to the law, or when the ball to throw; And drive it to the gole, in squadrons forth they goe; And to avoid the troupes (their forces that forlay); Through dykes and rivers make, in the rubustious play”

Richard Carew in his 1602 Survey of Cornwall recorded that

‘The ball in this game may be compared to an infernal spirit, for whosoever catcheth it fareth straightways like a mad man, struggling and fighting with those that go about to hold him; and no sooner is the ball gone from him, but he resigneth this fury to the next receiver, and himself becometh peaceable as before.’

He commented further on the rules of the game “*that the hurler must deal no foreball, or throw it to any partner standing nearer the goal than himself. In dealing the ball, if any of the adverse party can catch it flying ... the property of it is thereby transferred to the catching party; and so assailants become defendants, and defendant assailants.*” It would be interesting to know whether the forward passing rule in the modern game of rugby and the offside rule in football were influenced by hurling. Carew goes on to describe the dangerous nature of the game: *‘When the hurling is ended, you shall see them retiring home, as from a pitched battle, with bloody pates, bones broken and out of joint and sick bruises as serve to shorten their days.’*



Folklife Traditions Journal, a print Journal, copied to www.folklife-traditions.uk: stimulating a wider interest in **folk studies & cultural traditions**, which includes **languages** so Cornish page headings for articles from Cornwall, likewise Manx, Welsh, etc

In London, Oliver Cromwell attended the 1654 May Day celebrations in Hyde Park and together with the Privy Council, watched a hurling match with fifty Cornish gentlemen against fifty others. It was recorded that *"the ball they played withal was silver, and designed for that party which did win the goal."*

Up until the 19th Century hurling games were common across Cornwall, usually on feast days and festivals. In 1913, the London edition of the Daily News reported that Mrs Morris, a visitor from London, had been injured by the silver ball at the Newquay games. The reporter wrote that "On resuming the game Sir Robert Edgcumbe, President of the Hurling Committee, explained that the game had been played for more than 2000 years. He then threw up the ball stating 'East and West do your best'. The Western side won the game by two goals to one." However, nowadays, there are three places in Cornwall where hurling survives as a living tradition, namely, the 'beating of the bounds' at Bodmin, St Columb and St Ives. Despite this decline, there has been a revival in recent decades as part of efforts to preserve Cornish culture and heritage. The 'beating of the bounds' is itself a tradition that goes back to Anglo-Saxon times and is performed across parts of Britain and even the United States, with people walking the geographical boundaries, sometimes swatting landmarks with branches.

In Bodmin, the beating of the bounds finishes with a game of hurling, when the Mayor throws a silver ball into a body of water called the 'Salting Pool'. Unlike many hurling traditions, here there are no teams or goals and the aim is to throw and carry the ball from the Salting Pool through a set route with the winner being the participant carrying the ball when it reaches the Turret Clock in Fore Street. The beating of the bounds in Bodmin happens roughly every 5 years but as a result of the pandemic, the last one was in 2015. However, there are plans to resume the tradition this year.

The St Columb game takes place on Shrove Tuesday every year and is repeated on the second Saturday in March, drawing a large crowd of participants and onlookers. Two teams compete for the silver ball, namely 'Town' and 'Country'. The 'Town' team must live within the boundary of the town, whilst the 'Country' team can live within the parish in villages such as Talskiddy. At around 4:15pm, a step ladder is placed in the Town Square and the previous year's winner climbs onto the step-ladder and 'calls up' (holds aloft) the ball to 'declare it'. Then at 4:30pm exactly, a nominated person, normally a relative or a former winner, will start the game by shouting the traditional couplet *'Town and Country do your best. For in this Parish I must rest'*. They then call for three cheers followed by the 'throw up' of the ball towards the waiting hurlers. There are goals for Town and Country approximately two miles apart and the winner is the first person to get the silver ball in their goal. One goal is an old cross base and the other is a granite slab hollowed out in the centre.



St Columb 'Country' goal

Placing the ball into the hollow centre perhaps once symbolised a return to nature or an offering to the spirits. The game is played through the streets and fields of the town with competition between the two teams being intense and shop windows are often boarded up to prevent serious damage. Often, the game is paused to pass the ball to the watching crowd. Occasionally it is handled by babies in their prams or even into houses to be handled by some elderly person who cannot get out of their bed or chair.

Once a team has managed to get the silver ball to their goal, they walk back to the centre singing :

*For we roll, roll the Silver Ball along
And we roll, roll the Silver Ball along
And we roll, roll the Silver Ball along
And we all come marching home*

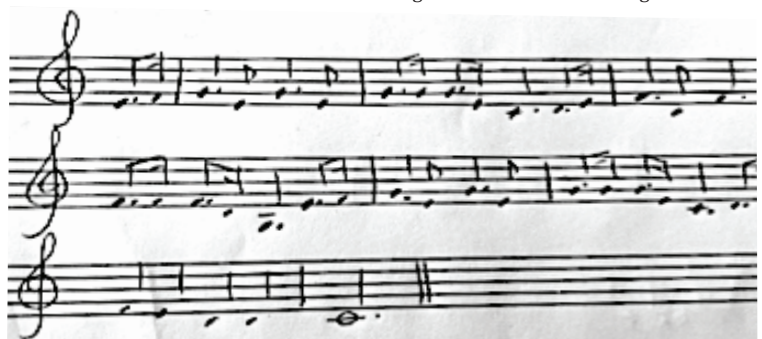
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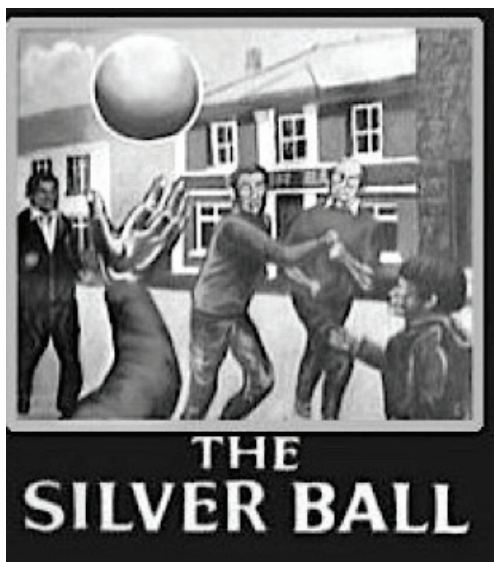
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Silver Ball tune

Tune transcribed from YouTube footage of the 2024 St Columb game



The Tradition of Cornish Hurling, by Lamorna Spry, continued



Former pub sign in St Columb Major

Continued from previous page:

The silver beer is then passed around to share the good luck and health for the drinkers. The most famous of the St Columb hurlers is Michael Weldhen, who won the ball 17 times for the Country team between 1953 and 1982.

The modern hurling celebration at St Ives is a much more gentle affair than St Columb and is held on the Monday of the week of the St Ives Feast. A civic procession including musicians and schoolchildren make their way through the town to the well of St Eia, the patron saint of St Ives, wearing pieces of ivy in remembrance of St Eia, who legend has it, crossed the sea from Ireland on a boat made of ivy. The parish priest then blesses the ball and the procession returns to the Parish Church for the main event, the Hurling of the Silver Ball. The Mayor of St Ives hurls the ball into the crowd whilst shouting *guare wheg ya guare teg*, which is Cornish for fair play is good play. Although in former times the St Ives hurling was similar to St Columb with two teams competing, the modern game is played by children and teenagers, who run around the town and try to keep possession of the ball. The procession slowly returns to the Guildhall where the Councillors drop pennies to the children from the balcony and wait for the clock to strike noon, at which point, the child with the ball wins a reward from the Mayor.

Phil Ellery of the St Columb Hurlers reflects that

"Cornish hurling is a fascinating blend of sport, folklore, and community tradition. It reflects the deep connection between the people of Cornwall and their land, history, and culture. The game is a communal event that strengthens local identity and pride, bringing together people of all ages and backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging. While the game itself is simple in its rules, its symbolic and spiritual significance makes it a unique and enduring part of Cornish heritage. Hurling is often seen as a symbolic battle between two sides, representing the struggle between light and darkness, summer and winter, or life and death. The game's chaotic and energetic nature reflects the unpredictability of life and the importance of community cohesion."

Lamorna Spry © March 2024

Lamorna is a fiddle player, singer, and Kesskrifer ~ Kernow, Bewnans Gwerin / Correspondent ~ Cornwall for Folklife West magazine.

We welcome information on Seasonal Local Traditions - listed every issue. This is mainly a list and photos, kindly provided by Doc Rowe.

Example: Hurling the Silver Ball, St Columb, Cornwall Shrove Tue, repeat on 2nd Sat. following

Further info for a listing, or as a separate article in the Journal, is most welcome, as below from the late Chris Ridley:

✪ Unique in being a Shrovetide football where the ball is hurled, not thrown. Hundreds of hurlers turn up, the two teams being the Townsman 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'. Based on information from ‡ Chris Ridley. Ref: *Hurling at St Columb*, Ivan Rabey (Lodenek Press, Padstow: 1972).

Note: all entries subject to consent of event's organisers - smaller ones may not want publicity.

Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; publications

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  Kernow/Cornwall: Kesskrifer/Correspondent for Folklife West

publications & recordings announced

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



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Gef Lucena 

SAYDISC



Hymey Hancock - anatomy of a song, by Keith Gregson

As I was brought up in Carlisle, I was fascinated by this song which was sung at the Stumble Inn, Sunderland on 27 January 2024 and credited to the Watsonsons – suggesting that the first two verses were ‘traditional’ and other verses added. These are the first two verses

Oh, my name is Hymey Hancock; I'm a man that is very well known

In the city of Carlisle I've a business of my own.

It's at the end of Castle Street, and my name it is over the top,

And I am doin' a rattlin' business in the old clothes shop.

I sell corduroy, likewise the best of tweed,

I guarantee every article is free o' the gallopin' [breed?].

I scarcely sell a bolt of cloth without any reprise or [coup?]

And I'm doin' a rattlin' business in the old clothes shop.

According to the *Mainly Norfolk* research site, ‘MichaelAnnJillo’ (Mike Waterson, Ann Waterson and Jill Pidd) sang Hymey Hancock, which was included in 2023 on their CD *I'll Give You One More As You Go*, from 1990's recordings made by Jill Pidd in Mike and Anne's kitchen (1). This is all that a ‘Googling’ revealed. No Hymey (or different spellings) Hancock turns up in the *Genealogist* web site or the *British Newspaper Archive* site. However a clever little tool on the *Genealogist* site enabled me to discover an impossibly strong candidate - a Carlisle man named Owen Hancock.

Owen Hancock was born in 1837 and died in 1894. In 1871 he was described as a clothier living at 20, Annetwell Street which is the next street to Castle Street referenced in the song. His wife was called Isabella and they had four children between eight months and nine years of age. All the family were said to be Carlisle born. In 1881 he said he was born in Ireland and a widower and living at 1 and 3 Annetwell Street with five children aged from eight to 19. He was a clothes dealer and two of the children were clothes dealer assistants. All the children were born in Carlisle. He was at the same address in 1891 – a clothier with three children described as clothier's assistants. The next house to theirs was number 2, Castle Street. There is no sign yet of a marriage certificate although Isabella's death is recorded in Carlisle in 1876.

There can be little doubt that this is the man from the song. He may well have been Irish born and let it slip. In the 19th century it was better to be born locally as a decline into poverty could still end up with the Irish being sent back across the Irish Sea by the English Poor Law authorities.

Returning to the *British Newspaper Archive*, the search for ‘Owen Hancock’ and ‘Carlisle’ proved immensely fruitful. A number of local newspapers record a trial in 1873 of a man being charged with stealing a dress from Hancock. Delightfully too as a teenager Owen and his brother John had been rag and bone men and were charged in 1854 with theft of iron from a local railway. They were discharged when able to prove that they had got it from a lady in a local village and, unbeknown to them at the time, she had been the original thief! Shortly after his wife's death in 1876 he placed a ‘business as usual’ advertisement in a local paper. The clincher perhaps is that in 1865 Hancock was charged by the inland revenue for running a ‘dolly shop’ – that is an illegal pawnbroker's. A superb account of the case appears in the *Carlisle Journal* of 03 October 1865. Hancock was obviously a character, well known locally and guilty as charged. The case was brought up by a policeman's wife who had been duped. In 1871 both he and his wife were in trouble for assaulting a neighbour. Hancock was fined 5 shillings. In 1874 he was fined £2 for being drunk and insulting lady passengers in the 3rd class carriage of a train passing from Hexham to Haltwhistle.

So why is the song about Hymey and not Owen? From all the above it is highly likely that he was what was known as a ‘credit draper’ where the sale and resale of clothes formed the basis for forms of loans. In this case the nickname Hymey may well have been an age-old form of slur often used against members of Jewish communities who engaged in finance.

Owen Hancock was exactly the kind of character about whom a local songwriter would write a ditty. It is lovely to have a couple of original verses and the completed song which deals with the exchange/theft of clothing is totally credible. How wonderful it would be if the complete original turned up one day!

Keith Gregson, Ashbrooke, Sunderland (and Carlisle 1957 – 67) © March 2025

Footnote (1) With thanks to Doc Rowe for confirmation of 1990's recording details (personal communication to editors).

From *Folklife West folk news magazine*, Jan. 2024: CD: *'I'll Give You One More As You Go'*, MichaelAnnJillo on ReZound 005

Mike Waterson, Ann Waterson and Jill Pidd were MichaelAnnJillo This CD offers an exceptional chance to experience and enjoy the singing of a group well known in their time but, because of other commitments, never found occasion to record in a studio. The CD has been glass mastered - not a domestic duplication - and comprises thirteen tracks with fully detailed sleeve notes. Stage performances at Beverley Festival 1992 plus exciting and close-up recordings of rehearsals, feature their distinctive quality of performance and superb choice of material, plus the magnificent characteristic and vernacular voice of Mike Waterson. Mike died of cancer in 2011 and he, along with family and many other friends on the folk scene, have been aided by Macmillan Cancer Support. Although we fundraised in Mike's name before, the discovery of these recordings seemed an opportunity to do more and all proceeds from the CD sales will be given to the charity, and we have already paid nearly £2,500 to MacMillan. The CD sells at £11 [£10 + £1 p & p]. Email cdmajo1@gmail.com in the first instance with your full postal address.

Doc Rowe

Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; publications



The Stumble Inn Folk & Acoustic Afternoon [F], Chester Road, Sunderland, SR2 7PR, meets on 4th Tuesdays, 1pm to 4pm; singers (unaccompanied or accompanied), musicians and listeners welcome! Further information:

www.facebook.com/stumbleinnfolk, contact Eileen Richardson on Messenger, or email eileenrich@hotmail.com

2025 to June 2026 with 500 promised events. **The Stumble Inn monthly meet** (which advertises in *Folklife West*) has already spoken for 12 of these, with 11 regular meetings and a concert in a local theatre.

All who might be interested in this venture (including especially those with Wearside links) should look at the relevant sites and link in if appropriate.

See [musiccityuk](https://musiccityuk.com) musiccitiesnetwork.com, or contact Keith @ keith.gregson@talk21.com, or Eileen at eileenrich@hotmail.com

The City of Sunderland awarded Music City Status: Folk Music involvement

The City of Sunderland has just been awarded Music City Status and has thus become only the second city in the UK (alongside Manchester) to have been thus honoured. This is a big deal for the North East city, as there are only 15 cities worldwide currently in the network, and a great deal of hard work went into the successful bid. Keith Gregson and Eileen Richardson, both of whom contribute to *Folklife* on a regular basis, have taken on the mantle of **Folk Music**, and hope to ensure that both its heritage and current practice are known to all involved. It has already become clear that one of the main outcomes of membership is communication at local, national and international level. So much has gone on and still goes on in the city, but in the past different ‘genres’ were unaware of each other's activities. Meetings held so far have been well attended, interactive and fruitful, with the first task laid out as a year of music from June



Hussars, by Charles Menteith

Charles Menteith's article in FTJ 76, our previous issue, was 'Gallant Hussar: Song, Tune and Dance.' "Gallant Hussar" is best known now as a morris dance and tune from Bledington, Glos. But in the 19th century a song of that name was published quite often in broadsides, for instance by Barr, of Leeds, Such of London, and in song-books." In this article, Charles tells us more about the Hussars.

Hussars were light cavalry, the first of which were recruited by the Hungarian army, mainly in the reign of king Matthias Corvinus, (1458-1490). Initially most of the recruits were Serbs, who left Serbia after it was conquered by the Turks. They were lightly armed and highly mobile, deployed for sudden attacks on enemy positions. They never formed part of a regular battle plan, though they might be used to harry the enemy, particularly on its flank. The regular Hungarian army were somewhat contemptuous of the Hussars, since the aristocracy formed a more heavily armoured cavalry.

After the Turkish victory at Mohacs (1526) and the death of king Louis II, central Hungary fell to the Ottomans. The crown passed to the Hapsburg Emperor at Vienna, who controlled mainly "Upper Hungary", now Slovakia, the regions bordering on Austria and Croatia. The armaments of Hungarian hussars became heavier and more varied. They adopted firearms, more armour (if they could afford to buy it) and lances.



1. Polish Winged Hussar, painting by Aleksander Orłowski (reference 1)

In Poland, hussars were first recruited in 1503, initially from exiled Serbian mercenaries. After the extinction of the male line of the Jagellonian dynasty in 1572, the first effective elected king of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania (1576-86) was Stefan Batory, prince of Transylvania, then the easternmost part of Hungary, now in Romania. He incorporated hussars into the regular Polish army, reorganising them as heavier cavalry. An unusual feature was two wings made of feathers, attached to the hussar's back, the purpose of which may have been to cause panic among the enemy horses.

The new unit took part successfully in a number of battles. In particular as part of a Polish-Lithuanian (P-L) force commanded by Hetman Jan Sobieski. Chocim/Khotyn was a strongly defended Turkish fort on the bank of the river Dniestr. In 1673, after a short siege, the P-L army attacked on 11 November in cold weather for which the Turks were not equipped. After the infantry breached the Turkish walls, the Hussars charged in. The Turks launched their own cavalry, but they were unable to resist. The battle was regarded as a rare major Christian victory against the Turks and greatly increased the reputation of the P-L army and its commander. (2)

Sobieski returned to Warsaw. King Michael I had died the day before the battle, enabling Sobieski to be elected the next king of Poland-Lithuania. He concluded a treaty with Leopold I, the Austrian emperor, according to which, if the Turks attacked either Vienna or Kraków, the other party would send reinforcements.

In 1683 the Ottomans advanced rapidly on Vienna, which they reached on 14 July. (3) The Emperor and 50,000 Viennese fled to Passau, while Charles V Duke of Lorraine withdrew his 20,000 troops to Linz. The 15,000 troops under Count von Starhemberg heroically defended the city. They demolished all buildings around the city walls to allow free fire. The Turks countered by digging tunnels intending to blow up the walls, but the Viennese dug their own tunnels and neutralised the Turkish explosives. Food supply to the city was largely cut off; the health of the defenders suffered badly. On the other side, the Turks lost 48,544, many due to disease, not including deserters.

Meanwhile Sobieski and his army left Kraków on 15 Aug. They crossed the Danube on 6 September. Sobieski, well known for his experience against the Turks, took command of the Allied troops, by now including many from various parts of the Empire. These occupied the central part of the allied lines, with the Austrians on the left flank on the Kahlenberg and Leopoldberg hills. The Poles on the right flank advanced through the Vienna woods, actually a large forest. At 4h00 the Turks unsuccessfully attacked the Imperial forces, who made steady progress through the morning. About 16h00 the Polish Hussars reached the edge of the Woods, and made a probing charge, following with the main attack at 18h00. 18,000 horsemen, led by Sobieski, charged down the hills: the largest cavalry charge in history. They swept through to the Former Turkish HQ, which the General Staff had already left. They were joined by the defenders of Vienna, who came out at last, and joined in the attack.

The Austrians went on to capture Buda in 1686 and Belgrade in 1688, thus ending Turkish rule in Hungary.

While hussars were successful for a century, their enemies eventually devised various means of defence. (4) The first, known as "Pigs' Feathers (Swinskie Pióry)" consisted of stakes, which had to be driven into the ground at the correct angle if they were to wound the horses' feet. The infantry then withdrew a few paces, until they were out of range of the hussars' lances. More practical were "Spanish Goats (Kozły Hiszpańskie)", a metal bar with four rows of blades at 90° to each other. They were held by stakes at either end, which were driven into the ground. (See illustration 2). Another solution was iron pieces with four triangular faces, and four points. However they fell, there was always one point facing upwards.



2. A Section of "Spanish Goat", detail from a painting by Juliusz Kossak



3. A Danish Guard Hussar in mounted parade uniform, including the red pelisse (the loose jacket)

Photo: Comrade Foot, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/56380734@N05/6727760049/in/set-72157628905257123/>

By the end of the 18th century most European armies had hussar regiments. They were also adopted by some countries in Latin America. By the 19th century the hussar had acquired a certain romantic reputation, being considered the dashing, if unruly, adventurers of the army. The traditional image of the hussar was of a reckless, hard-drinking, womanising, moustachioed swashbuckler.

Just outside the spa town of Krynica in SE Poland there is a hill called Huzary. The name commemorates a detachment of Hungarian hussars who, in 1770 according to local tradition, repelled a force of invading Russians. (5) Sounds familiar?

Charles Menteith © March 2025

References

- (1) <http://www.pinakoteka.zaschianek.pl/> [illustration 1]
- (2) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Khotyn_\(1673\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Khotyn_(1673))
- (3) Information in Wikipedia.
Polish (https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bitwa_pod_Wiedniem) and English (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Vienna) articles are informative. Surprisingly, since it's the language of Vienna, the German article is quite brief.
- (4) <https://wielkiahistoria.pl/metody-walki-z-husaria-takich-sposobow-chwymano-sie-aby-powstrzymac-szarze-skrzydlatej-kawalerii/>
- (5) Sign at the foot of the hill.
Most other information from Wikipedia.

We Shepherds are the Best of Men, sung by Richard Chidlaw; by Veronica Lowe

We Shepherds Are The Best Of Men, GlosTrad. Recorded from Richard Chidlaw in 1975, by Gwilym Davies. **Song & tune over page.**

Collected only 50 years ago by Gwilym Davies, this song might be thought quite modern. It has a bouncy skipping, dance like, 6/8 tune with half of each verse repeated as the chorus. It is a distinctly jolly 'drinking after work well done' song.

Richard Chidlaw's version is within a couple of words of The Shepherds' Song in English County Songs, collected and compiled by Lucy Broadwood and published in 1893. Miss Broadwood noted the first verse it from a lady born in Stoke (now probably Stoke Gifford or Bradley Stoke). In 1793. The rest she got from a shepherd, Thomas Condicote, of Ebrington (locally pronounced Yubberton), which is quite near Blockley, mentioned in this version of the song. Singers frequently localise their songs, but Richard Chidlaw's location is Tresham, actually closer to Stoke.

GlosTrad has another version noted by Cecil Sharp, collected in Stroud workhouse in 1912 from Peter Gill, then 83, from Sheepscombe. Sharp only noted the verse that includes a place name, Salisbury in this case. And this tune is annotated 4/4, but still clearly a version of the same tune.

It is fitting that both the Gloucestershire songs Broadwood included are connected with shepherds. This county has long prospered from the production of wool. Painswick Church, the Queen of the Cotswolds, is just one of the beautiful wool churches around the county, including Cirencester, Farford and Winchcombe, that were endowed by rich medieval wool merchants. Wool was the most important English trade most of the time from Roman days to the Reformation. Fine Cotswold wool was said to be used in Rome to dress popes. Even in recent years, before the closure of Bentley's piano factory in Woodchester, Cotswold wool was used for the hammer and damper felts, and this felt has been exported to China for their pianos.

Sitting here in the middle of winter in two wool jumpers, I realise that, as the granddaughter of a taylor of Gloucester, I was brought up to appreciate the real thing. I might even be considered a bit of a wool obsessive, with not only carpets but also duvet and cushion filling of wool. We know plenty of industrial protest folk songs about coal and machines, but in what may in the future be reasonably known as the Plastic Age, it has been scandalous that sheep farmers have had to burn their wool for lack of demand.

The folk process is wonderful. I consulted Gwilym's widow Carol to see which version is sung by their folk choir, Shepherd's Crook. She tells me that they use the one she and Gwilym heard in Oxfordshire from Bob Arnold, once well known as Tom Forrest in the Archers. Blockley is not so far from the county border, and Blockley church is becoming familiar to viewers of Father Brown as his Roman Catholic parish church, which of course it once was.

So let's celebrate not only the history of shepherds and wool, but make a noise for the future of this most sustainable of materials and its workers.

Veronica Lowe © March 2025

Gloucestershire Traditions - GlosTrad - is the one-stop website for songs and tunes collected in Gloucestershire. See <http://glostrad.com/> See https://glostrad.com/we-shepherds-be-the-best-of-men/?fwp_title=we%2Bshepherds&fwp_performer=1044&fwp_collector=1565 to hear this song and tune as collected and hear a version to sing, in various formats. Or search 'Richard Chidlaw' on glostrad.com

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

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



We Shepherds are the Best of Men, sung by Richard Chidlaw; by Veronica Lowe

We shep - herds be the best of men that e'er trod Eng - lish ground, _____

When we come to an ale-house we val - ue not a crown, _____

We spends our mo - ney free - ly and pays be - fore we go, _____

With no ale in the vale where the cold win - try winds do blow.

We spends our mo - ney free - ly and pays be - fore we go, _____

With no ale in the vale where the cold win - try winds do blow.

2. A man that is a shepherd doth need a valiant heart,
He must not be faint-hearted but boldly do his part,
He must not be faint-hearted be it rain or frost or snow,
With no ale in the vale where the cold wintry winds do blow.
(Repeat last two lines)
3. When I kept sheep on Tresham Hill it made me heart to ache
To see the ewes hang out their tongues and hear the lambs to bleat,
Then I set out with courage and o'er the hills did go
And penned them there in the fold while the cold wintry winds do blow.
(Repeat last two lines)
4. As soon as I had penned them there I turned me back in haste
Unto some jovial company some liquor for to taste,
For drink and jovial company they are me heart's delight
While me sheep lie asleep all the forepart of the night.
(Repeat last two lines)

Source: Richard Chidlaw, collected by Gwilym Davies October 1980.

Notes: "sheep" pronounced "ship"; "asleep" pronounced "aslip"; "fold" pronounced "vold"

© Gloucestershire Traditions

Please see detailed notes on this song by Veronica Lowe on the previous page.

The Glostrad website is free to all to explore songs and tunes collected in Gloucestershire, 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

Next issue: November 1st, deadline October 1st, contact sam@folklife.uk



New songs for old, or how the tradition informs songs today, by Rosie Upton



Trooper Thomas Rayney Jackson of the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry lies buried in the St Charles de Percy War Cemetery in Royal Armoured Corps

Before my husband Pete MacGregor died in January 2024, he wrote a touching tribute to his uncle Tom Jackson. A song called *The Desert Rat* which is based on the words and tunes of two traditional ballads. He was intending to record it along with other songs he had recently written, but sadly died before that could happen. Though Pete spent most of his life living in the Bath area after leaving Edinburgh University, he remained proud of his Scottish heritage. This included a love of the great Scottish ballads and this was reflected in the traditional songs he sang as well as the many songs he wrote. I now hold the copyright to Pete's words, and I am happy that others will feel encouraged to sing *The Desert Rat*.

Trooper Thomas Rayney Jackson (BA Oxon) of the Royal Armoured Corps 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry lies buried in the St Charles de Percy War Cemetery near Vire in Calvados, Northern France. He died on 30 July 1944 at the age of 30 on a Normandy beach. Tom was a radio operator/gun loader in tanks during the North Africa campaign and invasion of Sicily. His regiment then returned to UK in readiness for the D-Day landings. He was shot and killed by a German sniper whilst he was allegedly carrying out a repair to the tank's wireless aerial. A brilliant scholar, teacher and historian by all accounts, but equally a man of great intellect and integrity. He could as an Oxford Graduate have been an Officer, instead he enlisted in the lowest rank as a Trooper, the equivalent of a Private.

We visited the burial ground a few years ago and found the grave. We were surprised by the small size of the cemetery, about 800 graves, compared to the vast size of other war cemeteries. It was well kept in the manner of such places but there was a bleak austerity about the place. We were overcome with a feeling of desolation and melancholy.

A sad and tragic incident for his Uncle Tom. The tragedy of war, and no less the II World War, is the loss of life and both the physical and emotional injuries and suffering on all sides in a battle for power. All too often the impact is hardest for the powerless victims and for those who witness or are displaced by the atrocities it is disproportionate.

Pete was determined to write a tribute to his uncle and based the song on a traditional Scottish version of 'The Trooper and the Maid' (Child 299, Roud 162) which he remembered hearing Jimmy McBeath sing. He used the traditional tunes making changes to the words and the chorus. The coda - 'To Normandy...' is derived from a verse in 'Sir Patrick Spens' (Child 58, Roud 41).

Wars throughout the ages have left a broad legacy of song. Songs of patriotism and commemoration, as well as tributes to the valiant and those wanting to celebrate victories or castigate the victors. Equally, they are laments for the senseless loss of life and perhaps provide comfort to those who survived. By far the best, to my mind, are those of protest that challenge dogma and dictatorship whilst inspiring changes to mindsets for the better. Some of the greatest of these written by such luminaries as Pete Seeger, Phil Ochs, Tom Paxton, Bob Dylan, Eric Bogle, Mick Ryan and Robb Johnson. A favourite is surely 'Foyars the Brave' which Ewan MacColl based on a traditional broadside ballad Jamie Foyars. Ewan's inspired rewrite, which includes the words "He died so that freedom and justice might reign", becomes a bitter lamentation for the death of a young man and patriot who joined the International Brigade to fight Franco's fascist regime during the Spanish Civil War.

The Desert Rat, by Pete MacGregor and Traditional

A trooper lad came home last night
With the fighting he was weary
A trooper lad came home last night
When the moon shone bright and clearly
Bonny lassie I'll lie near ye yet
Bonny lassie I'll lie near ye
And I'll gar a' your ribbons reel
In the morning ere I leave ye

I'm 'seven nine one nine two, two, two'
To the Brass I'm Trooper Jackson
My mates they call me 'Lucky Tom'
Been missing twice in action
Bonny lassie I'll lie near ye yet...

I've worked the wireless, loaded guns
From Egypt to Messina
Matildas, Churchills, Valentines
They've brought me back to see you
Bonny lassie I'll lie near ye yet...

Well they hadn't been in bed an hour
An hour but half a quarter
When a drum came sounding down the street
And ilka beat grew shorter
Bonny lassie I must leave ye now...

Bonnie lassie I must leave ye now
I hear my marching order
Just think on me when I'm away
In the morning o'er the border
Bonny lassie I must leave ye now...

We're going back across the sea
This time they'll give us Shermans
And if with luck we don't brew-up
We'll chase away the Germans

Bonnie lassie don't you weep for me
For when this war is over
The pipes & drums will march me home
No more I'll be a soldier
No more I'll be a soldier
No more I'll be a soldier

To Normandy, to Normandy, to Normandy o'er the foam
Wi' the 'Fife and Forfar Yeomanry' and never coming home
Tom's not coming home

Rosie Upton © March 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](mailto:rosieupton@icloud.com)



Baring-Gould's People. 1 – James Parsons, *by* Martin Graebe

This is the first in a series of articles about the people who Sabine Baring-Gould met during his quest for the folk song of Devon and Cornwall, which began in 1888. The most important of these people are the singers, without whom there would have been no songs for him to collect. However, I also want to talk about some of the people who cooperated with him by sending him songs or giving him advice. I will start with the man from whom Baring-Gould collected his first songs, a local farm worker named James Parsons. (1)

James Parsons was born in June 1833 to John and Ann Parsons who lived at Black Torrington in North Devon. When James was born, John was labouring at Fraunch Farm, a couple of miles southwest of that village. By 1851 the family had moved ten miles south to Gratners Farm in Thrushelton. The census for that year showed James, aged 24; there as a visitor and described him as an agricultural labourer like his father. He was working in Bridestowe parish at the time and, while he was there, he met Jane Walter, who he married in 1855. They lived in Bridestowe for the birth of their first two children but their daughter, Grace, was born in 1860 at Gratners where they were now living alongside James's parents, then in their late 60s. The rest of their 11 children were all born at Gratners. James's parents died in 1871 and when Baring-Gould met him, he and Jane moved to live on Lew Down, not far from Baring-Gould's home at Lew Trenchard.

James Parsons first sang to Baring-Gould around September 1888, when he was invited to Baring-Gould's home. Baring-Gould wrote: 'He told me that when first invited to Lew House, he trembled with fright, but he soon got over that, and came to relish his musical evenings with me.' (2) Baring-Gould describes how, when he arrived, Parsons was led into the hall and placed on the settle, by the fire and given some hot mulled wine to drink while the collector sat opposite him. Parsons would sing his songs, turning up his eyes and crossing his hands on his chest. Baring-Gould would take down the words and tune, sometimes getting up to play them over on the piano, sometimes singing them back to make sure that he had them right. As Parsons grew in confidence he would take charge. Baring-Gould wrote: "He is most particular that I should have all the turns right. 'You mun give thickey (that) a bit stronger,' he says - and by stronger he means take a tone or a semitone higher. He will not allow the smallest deviation from what he has to impart." (3)

Parsons' father and grandfather had been singers before him, each succeeding to the title 'The Singing Machine', because of the number of songs that they knew. James said that he only knew a fraction of the songs that his father did and yet he inherited his title. That he was a worthy heir is demonstrated by the wealth of songs that he has left in the Baring-Gould collection. In a letter to Lucy Broadwood written shortly after Parsons' death Baring-Gould said: 'I am told by a labourer here that when he was a boy, Parsons, his wife, his father and mother, or at other times his grandfather would come on Saturday night to the crossroads and sing in parts by the hour. The four were always sent for to all harvest homes, sheep-shearings, and revel feasts.' (4)

An indication of Parsons' ability is given by another of Baring-Gould's anecdotes. At one time his master sent him to Lydford on the edge of Dartmoor to look after a farm he had bought. Whilst there Parsons went every pay-day to a little moorland tavern, where the miners met to drink, and there he invariably got his 'entertainment' for his singing. "I'd been singing there" said he "one evening till I got a bit fresh, and I thought 'twere time for me to be off. So I stood up to go, and then one chap he said to me, 'Got to the end o' your songs old man?' 'Not I,' said I, 'not by a long ways; but I reckon it be time for me to be going.' 'Looky here, Jim,' said he. 'I'll give you a quart of ale for every fresh song you sing us tonight.' Well, your honour, I sat down again, and I zinged on - I zinged sixteen fresh songs, and that chap had to pay for sixteen quarts."

"Pints, surely", I said.

"No, zur!" bridling up. "No zur - not pints, good English quarts. And then - I hadn't come to the end o' my songs, only I were that fuddled I couldn't remember no more."

"Sixteen quarts between feeling fresh and getting fuddled!"

"Sixteen. Ask Voysey; he paid for'n'."

Now this Voysey is a man working for me, so I did ask him. He laughed and said, "sure enough, I had to pay for sixteen quarts that evening." (5)

Baring-Gould's manuscripts contain about 90 songs from James Parsons, though Baring-Gould says that Parsons told him that "in the old days when he sang in taverns he knew over a hundred songs, and his father could tell the titles of two hundred, which he could sing". While many of his songs were similar to those heard generally from the old singers, some were much older, probably reflecting the fact that they had been learned from his father and grandfather.

(1) The evidence that Parsons was the first singer from whom Baring-Gould collected is in the Preface to the first edition of Part 1 of Songs and Ballads of the West, published in February 1889.

(2) Sabine Baring-Gould, *Further Reminiscences, 1864-1894* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1925), p197

(3) Sabine Baring-Gould, 'Among the Western Song-Men', *English Illustrated Magazine*, March 1892, pp.468-477.

(4) Letter of Sabine Baring-Gould to Lucy Broadwood, 21 January, 1900, Surrey Heritage Centre, 2185/LEB/1/299a.

(5) Sabine Baring-Gould, *Old Country Life* (1889), Chapter 11 'The Village Bard', p270-71.



In his later years Parsons' health gave increasing cause for concern. Asthma and bronchitis limited his singing. An accident with an axe, when he cut into his knee while sharpening 'spears' for attaching thatch, was expected to prove his end and Baring-Gould went to see him and 'to collect a few last songs'. As it turned out, his fears were unjustified, and Parsons lived for another three years. The spell in bed eased his asthma and enabled him to sing those 'few last songs', for which Baring-Gould gave him money to support him while he was out of work. He died on Old Christmas Day 1900 and was buried in Marystowe churchyard, in the heart of the countryside where he spent his life.

Baring-Gould recorded a fragment of comment from his first and favourite singer.

"I reckon that's the beautifulest tune as ever were sung anywhere," says my master of some specially archaic air. And I notice that he appreciates the old minor tunes much more than those in majors. Then he heaves a sigh. "I ha'n't sung *he*" – by "he" he means the song – "I reckon for five and twenty years till to-night. Lor' bless y', the world be going that wicked the young chaps don't care for my songs. I reckon the end o' the world can't be over far off according –ly." (6)

I have appended one of James Parsons' songs which Baring-Gould called 'The Forsaken Maiden' (Roud 170). This is one of the first songs that Shan and I sang together, and it has a very pretty tune. We have never recorded it, but you can hear a version sung by John Kirkpatrick with Brass Monkey on their 2006 CD, *Going and Staying* under the title 'Maiden Sat A'weeping'. It is also known as 'I Once had a sweetheart' and the earliest known version is on a broadside 'A Bunch of Green Ribbons' from 1776 which is in the British Library.

The Forsaken Maiden

Taken down from James Parsons, Thrushelton, Devon, October 1888



A maiden sat a weeping,
Down by the sea shore,
What ails my pretty Sally?
What ails my pretty Sally?
And makes her heart sore!

Because I am aweary,
Aweary in my mind,
No comfort, & no pleasure
No comfort, & no pleasure,
Henceforth can I find.

I'll spread my sail of silver
I'll loose my rope of silk,
My mast is of the cypress-tree
My mast is of the cypress-tree
My track is white as milk.

I'll spread my sail of silver
I'll steer toward the sun,
And thou, false love, wilt weep for me,
And thou, false love, wilt weep for me,
For me, when I'm gone .

Martin Graebe © March 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/>



Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; ‡ publications
‡ for appropriate publications & recordings announced, up to 200 words per publication welcome



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The folk development organisation for Wales, which works to promote our traditional music, dance and song at home and beyond. It is funded by the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh Government.

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Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in English or Welsh.

☒ *trac*, Music Traditions Wales. trac@trac-cymru.org, 07467 184143. <https://trac.cymru/>



Cecil Sharp collecting, from EFDSS ©

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Best wishes, Tiffany

Tiffany Hore Library & Archives Director
The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, English Folk Dance & Song Society, Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London NW1 7AY.
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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.

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- **6 May, Scandinavian Changelings**, by Tommy Kuusela.
- **20 May, Seafarers and Sea-Fearing: Nineteenth-Century Maritime Folklore**, by Dr Karl Bell.
- **3 June, The Mountain Who Stumbled, the Lake Who Eats Girls, and The Beast Who Guards the Plantation:** Some Notes on the Other-than-Human Beings who Inhabit Guatemala's Verapaz, by Eric Hoenes del Pinal.
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☛ **Sat. 29 Mar. Folklore and the Digital: one-day Online Conference, 9.30am - 5.30pm.** Looking at the digitisation of folklore collections, large language models, digital tools in preserving folk traditions and creating new ones, social media and digital communities.

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More new Folklore Society events coming soon!

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

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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>



Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; ‡ publications
‡ for appropriate publications & recordings announced, up to 200 words per publication welcome

TSF

THE TRADITIONAL SONG FORUM (TSF) [F]

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

The Traditional Song Forum has organised successful talks on Zoom, more are planned. These talks are very popular, now attracting international visitors, currently 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.

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

Coming up: 6 Apr, TSF Online 72; 26 Apr, TSF Spring Conference, Sheffield (in person, details see column on right); **1 Jun, TSF Online 73.** Online details tbc.

This 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), martin.graebe@btinternet.com



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@groups.io Steve Roud



The Roots of Welsh Border Morris
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Conference: SONG AND A SENSE OF PLACE

Saturday 26th April (9.30am – 5.00pm) in the Council Room, Firth Court, University of Sheffield, Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN

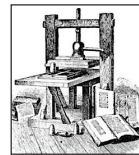
Organised by the **Traditional Song Forum** in association with the **Contemporary Folklore Research Centre**, Sheffield University.

Place features strongly in traditional song in a variety of ways. Where a song was sung matters, but that 'where' might not refer to a point on the map but to 'in the pub', 'at work', or at home. There are also local songs, composed by a member of a community about that community, and there are songs about a particular place that are written by outsiders – 'Galway Bay' or 'I Belong to Glasgow' – which might be adopted by insiders. Other songs are localised – not all poachers come from Lincolnshire, not all fairs are at Widecombe. Location is not always positive, and a place might appear in a song for its negative connotations – 'Up to the rigs of London'. Or place may be somewhere protagonists are forced to leave, banished from, excluded from, or somewhere they long to return to. Some places are generic settings – 'Hills and dales and flowery vales', or 'Heathery mountains' – others are imaginary. One way or another, place is everywhere. How does a sense of place affect the way song is perceived, or performed, or believed.

This is an in-person event and will not be streamed, but we hope that the proceedings will be recorded. Admission is free, but prior booking is essential. The provisional programme is on <https://tradsong.org/tsf-autumn-conference>

If you have any questions please contact Steve Roud (steveroud@gmail.com).

To book your place(s), please see link on the above webpage.



'The Ballad Partners'

The not-for-profit folk publishing company was founded in 2018. Books published include 'Jinny The Witch' And Other Song Folk, ed. Steve Roud & David Atkinson, the fourth in our series of new papers on aspects of traditional song research, published in association with the Traditional Song Forum (details in our previous Journal); *Thirsty Work and Other Legacies of Folk Song* and, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of his birth, *Ralph Vaughan Williams and Folk: 150th Birthday Essays*. And the imprint's first full-length biography – *Cecil Sharp and the Quest for Folk Song and Dance: A New Biography*, by David Sutcliffe. The book represents the first full treatment for over 50 years of the life and work of Sharp, the most prolific and outspoken of Victorian and Edwardian folk collectors.

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/publications>

Sue Allan

"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 Devizes [J]

A first-of-its kind exhibition showcasing folk art and the seasonal customs of the Wessex region is touring to Devizes.

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 more details, see article in our last issue, **Folklife Traditions Journal** 76, p17. Nov. 2024, in print or online on <https://www.folklife-traditions.uk/FTJ-76>

The exhibition will be open at the **Wiltshire Museum in Devizes from 5 April - 7 September 2025**; when the exhibition ends, it will tour two more of the Wessex Museums Poole Museum and The Salisbury Museum throughout 2025 and 2026.

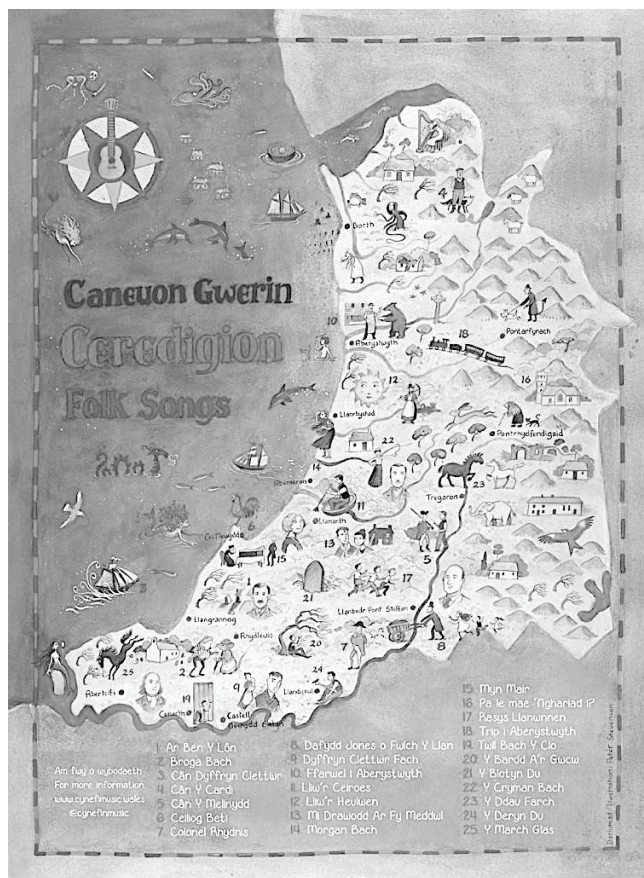
For more information visit:

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



Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; ‡ publications
‡ for appropriate publications & recordings announced, up to 200 words per publication welcome

MAP CANEUON CEREDIGION - CEREDIGION FOLK SONG MAP



From Owen Shiers' 'Cynefin' project

Some years ago when I was in Senegal, West Africa immersing myself in the culture of the 'Griot' (musicians with a role similar to the 'cyfarwyddwyr' of old), I came across a musical map of the region with melodies for the Kora (a kind of harp with two rows of strings) with the village of origin noted alongside. This was the first time that it had struck me that music could be something which belonged to a place, not just to an individual.

This image remained seared in my mind and when I started the process of mapping the musical topography of Ceredigion as part of the Cynefin project, I asked the very talented Aberystwyth artist Peter Stevenson to create a song map of Ceredigion, featuring 25 notable folk songs from the county, each illustrated and located in the towns and villages where they were originally sourced. The result (see website) is a colourful and eye-catching smorgasboard of the collective musical imagination of West Wales.

Size 42 × 29.7 × 0.1 cm

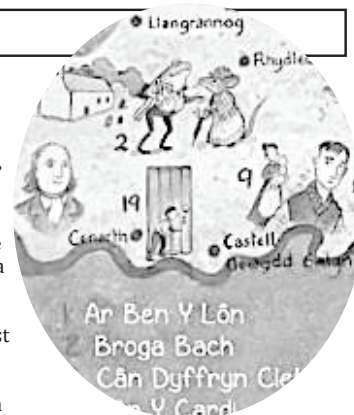
£5, order from

<https://cynefinmusic.wales>

The 'Cynefin' project is discussed below.

Shimli (released 30/1) is the follow up to 2020's *Dilyn Afon* album. Details of Cynefin songs and albums are on

<https://cynefinmusic.wales>



On right: Owen Shiers

UPDATES

We publish free Updates emails, now fortnightly on a Sunday, covering this Journal (organisations and researchers' news) and also our free-entry online Directory updates (venues, performers, services), and folk news updates from Folklife members.

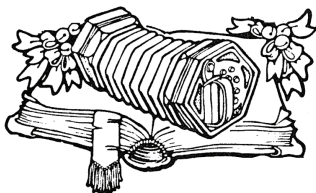
These are taken from our Updates webpage, at folklife.uk/updates

To join the email list: simply email sam@folklife.uk, with Subject: Opt-in, and your name, folk organisation if any, and UK/Ireland county or metro borough etc, for non-UK, country and state/region. Data Protection Policy: www.folklife.uk/data-page Emails sent out by MailerLite.

This is from the 23/2/2025 Updates: Folklife Traditions: folk studies and cultural traditions.

I've been talking to Owen Shiers, Welsh folk singer, researcher, grain grower and cultural historian, about his Cynefin project: we hope to have an article by Owen in the November Journal. Cynefin (pr. 'kuh-neh-vin') is a word with no direct translation into English. This project is Owen's musical brainchild, grounded in years of research, collecting and absorbing the culture and traditions of his native Ceredigion, it aims to provide a window into the past, and in addition bringing present day issues into sharp focus. A personal dispatch from the struggle to maintain a language, culture and way of life – Cynefin is a unique musical project with a timely message.

I recommend a visit to Owen's website, <https://cynefinmusic.wales>; on the About page, he talks about the forgotten folk songs of Ceredigion, the video starts with singing from Iwan Evans, Talgarreg, an 80-year farmer who still farms in the traditional ways, and was featured on TV's *Cefn Gwlad* (CountrySide) - currently on www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p0k57nxt/cefn-gwlad-cyfres-2024-iwan-evans available until ? end of March (English subtitles available, from bottom right menu).



FOLKLIFE, publishers

We publish this **Folklife Traditions Journal** of folklife studies and cultural traditions, in print and online at www.folklife-traditions.uk, with free PDF downloads of this issues and all previous issues.

We also publish www.folklife.uk/directory, free-entry online Folk Directory (venues, performers, services), and **Folklife West**, folk news from Folklife members, in print and online at www.folklife.uk/info

Brief details are given on the next page for subscriptions, adverts, etc; more details www.folklife.uk/info

We publish the Journal twice yearly, we'd like to make it 3 per year. We've a great team of Journal contributors and Folklife West correspondents!, but I (Sam) handle all admin for Folklife, so don't have the time. Ideally, I'd like to print-edit, and someone else as webmaster, for the Journal website, thus giving me enough time for a 3rd issue per year. And/or other admin help would be great, too! And web-advice too; Journal website info is in simple lists (eg list of authors and articles) but would better as an Excel spreadsheet? or ideally as an online-database. I do have Excel, and a complex database called Filemaker, but how to get them online is beyond my limited web-knowledge ...

www.folklife-traditions.uk needs a new webhost, as 'Weebly' may close in July! In any case, it's not working well eg unwanted text-size changes, so we want to move anyway. Hoping to move in May, so if site temporarily unavailable then, check www.folklife.uk for an update. Again, if someone more web-knowledgeable can assist or suggest, please get in touch, as we'd really like to maintain a Journal website & archive Sam



CONTRIBUTE:

we welcome appropriate* articles from researchers, folklife societies, institutions - *please contact editor before submitting

(1) Researched articles about collected song(s), tune(s), dance(s).

Word limits: no minimum - we get articles which are anything from just a song and a few lines or up to 500 words; other articles are often 1000 to 1500, **our maximum is 2500 words.**

(2) To introduce society, institution, etc, up to 1000 words.

Thereafter, short news items/dates from society, institutions welcome; for longer items, please consult editor first.

Photo(s) welcome, can be sent in colour, and we will convert to mono (unless colour adverts). **Contact sam@folklife.uk**

❖ Researchers, folklife societies, institutions:

please send in details for our **FOLKLIFE TRADITIONS DIRECTORY**, www.folklife-traditions.uk

JOURNAL post (not incl. *Folklife West*): 1, £3.50, Europe £5.20, world £6.15. **Subs** 2 issues, £7/ Europe £10/ world £12. 4 issues £13/£19/£22
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❖ **Journal Adverts:** colour / mono; A4, £65/£32.50. 1/2, £35/£17.50. 1/4, £20/£10.

❖ **Your contributions welcome**, please see www.folklife-traditions.uk/contact-contribute ❖ **contact editors at sam@folklife.uk**

❖ **Our website is www.folklife-traditions.uk**, which includes an archive of past issues - all free to download as PDFs.

our Folklife Traditions Directory is on www.folklife-traditions.uk



The Burry Man South Queensferry, Lothian
2nd Friday in August

Football in the river

Bourton-on-the-Water, Glos
Bank Holiday Mon

A note from the late Bill Pullen:

For over 100 years, on [what is now] August Bank Holiday Monday, Bourton-on-the-Water, Glos., had "Football In The River (Windrush)" - not mass participation but organised by Bourton Rovers Football Club (1st play 2nds or 2 mixed teams), to benefit themselves and local charities; it is run alongside a Fete on the Green and draws huge crowds. ~ **Bill Pullen**
See:

www.soglos.com/sport-outdoor/28383/Bourton-Football-in-the-River

Next deadline: 1 Oct., for Nov. Journal

Padstow May Day



ALL LISTINGS & PHOTOS © DOC ROWE, unless stated otherwise.

MARCH

Dydd Gŵyl Dewi (dathliadau, digwyddiadau ysgol)

/ *St David's Day (celebrations, school events)*

Kiplingcotes Derby

Market Weighton

Tichborne Dole

Tichborne

Cymru

1 Mawrth /

*Gol.

Wales

1 March

*Ed.

Yorks

3rd Thursday in March

Hants

25th March

APRIL, and MAUNDY THURSDAY, PALM SUNDAY, GOOD FRIDAY, EASTER

Sir John Stow Quill Pen

St Andrew Undershaft

London

5th April or near

Palm Sunday Cakes

various (esp. Herefordshire)

Herefordshire

Palm Sunday

Henry Trave Charity

Leigh

Manchester

Maundy Thur

Skipping

Alciston

Sussex

Good Friday

Uppies And Doonies

Workington

Cumbria

GF/Tues & following Sat

Midgley Pace Egg Play

Calder Valley

Yorks

Good Friday

Heptonstall Pace Egg

Heptonstall

West Yorks

Good Friday

* Gary H-E

Widow's Bun Ceremony

Bow

London

Good Friday

Britannia Coconut Dancers

Bacup

Lancs

Easter Saturday

Brighouse Pace Egg Play

Brighouse

W. Yorks

Easter Saturday

Easter Parade

Battersea Park

London

Easter Sunday

Church Clippingyng

Radley

Oxon

Easter Sunday

Maypole Lowering

Barwick-in-Elmet

W Yorks

Easter every 3 years

Harness Horse Parade

Regents Park

London

Easter Monday

Egg Rolling

Preston

Lancs

Easter Monday

Orange Rolling

Dunstable Down

Beds

Easter Monday

Chulkhurst Charity Dole

Biddenden

Kent

Easter Monday

Hare Pie Scramble & Bottle Kicking

Hallaton

Leics

Easter Mon

Tupenny Starvers

St Michaels

Bristol

Tuesday after Easter

Maidservants Charity

St Mary's Church House

Reading

Thursday after Easter

Hungerford Hocktide

Hungerford

Berks

2nd Tuesday after Easter

St Georges Court

Lichfield

Staffs

23rd April

MAY, & WHIT & ASCENSIONTIDE [A/tide is 40 days after Easter]

Well Dressing

various

Derbyshire

Ascensiontide - Sept

May-Pole Raising

Barwick In Elmet

Yorks

Whit/May

Padstow May Day

Padstow

Cornwall

1st May

Minehead Hobby Horse

Minehead

Somerset

1st-3rd May

Jack In The Green

Hastings

Sussex

May Bank Holiday wk'end

Cadi Ha' [Summer Kate] street dance

Holywell

Flintshire

Early May *Eds

Well Dressing

Malvern

Worcs

May BH weekend *Eds

Randwick Cheese-Rolling

Randwick

Glos

1st Sun in May

Randwick Wap

Randwick

Glos

Sat after Cheese-rolling *Audrey Smith †

Knutsford Royal May Day

Knutsford

Cheshire

1st Saturday in May

Ickwell Green May Day

Ickwell

Beds

Saturday / Monday

Helston Flora Dance

Helston

Cornwall

8th May

Abbotsbury Garland Day

Abbotsbury

Dorset

13th May

Etwell Well Dressing

Etwell

Derbys

2nd week in May

May Festival

Hayes Common

Kent

2nd Saturday in May

Dunting The Freeholder

Newbiggin by the Sea

Northumberland

Wed near 18th May

Cyclists Memorial Service

Meriden

West Midlands

Sun near to 21st May

Mayoring Day/Hot Pennies

Rye

E. Sussex

23rd May

Blessing The Sea

Hastings

E. Sussex

End of May

Castleton Gala Day

Castleton

Derbys

29th May

Grovelly Rights

Wishford Magna

Wilts

29th May

Founders Day

Chelsea Royal Hospital

London

29th May

Arbor Tree

Aston on Clun

Salops

29th May

CONTINUES OVER PAGE





All listings & photos © Doc Rowe, unless stated otherwise.

We are very grateful to Doc, for generously providing detailed listings and photos.

Additional info from ‡Chris Ridley, ‡Bill Pullen, Tom‡ & Barbara Brown ®, ‡Audrey Smith, Gary Heywood-Everett, and the Editors.

We welcome more listings, also further details, contact details, photos, **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.

Gŵyl Ifan: Raising the Summer Pole. June

© Cwmni Dawns Werin Caerdydd

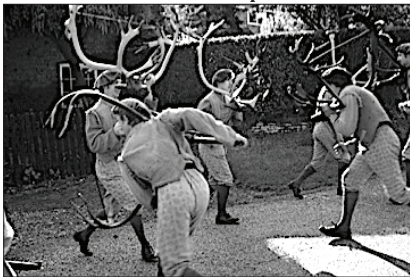


The Burry Man, South Queensferry, Lothian
2nd Fri. in Aug.



Abbots Bromley Horn Dance, Staffs.

Mon after 1st Sun after 4th Sept



Pearlies Harvest Festival, 2nd Sun in Oct., ©
2012 Carole Jolly (Pearly Queen of Crystal
Palace), & Secretary of the LPKQ Society ‡‡



The Doc Rowe Collection

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

See: www.docrowe.org.uk

MAY, & WHIT & ASCENSIONTIDE, continued [A/tide is 40 days after Easter]

Bampton Morris Dancing	Bampton	Oxon	Spring Bank Holiday
Headington Quarry Morris	Headington	Oxon	Spring Bank Holiday
Hunting The Earl Of Rone	Combe Martin	N Devon	Spring Bank Holiday
Cheese Rolling	Cooper's Hill, Birdlip	Glos	Spring Bank Holiday
Maypole Raising	Barwick-in-Elmet	W. Yorks	Spring BH every 3 yrs: next 2025
Dicing For Maids Money	Guildford	Surrey	Mid-May [was late Jan]
Dovers Games	Chipping Campden	Glos	Friday after Bank Holiday
Scuttlebrook Wake	Chipping Campden	Glos	Sat. after Bank Holiday
Planting the Penny Hedge	Whitby	Yorks	Ascension Eve
Beating The Bounds	Tower Of London	London	Ascension Day every 3yrs: 2023
Bisley Well Dressing	Bisley	Glos	Ascens. Day * Audrey Smith ‡
Wicken Love Feast	Wicken	Northants	Ascension Day
Well Dressing	Tissington	Derbys	Ascension Day
St Mary Redcliffe Rush Sunday	St Mary Redcliffe	Bristol	Whit Sunday
Bread & Cheese Throwing	St Briavels	Glos	Whit Sunday
Dicing For Bibles	St Ives	Cambs	Whit Monday

JUNE

Thaxted Morris Festival	Thaxted	Essex	June / July
Blessing the Boats	Whitby	N. Yorks	June
Appleby Fair	Appleby	Cumbria	2nd week June
Border Riding	Hawick	Borders	Fri after 2nd Mon in June
Gŵyl Ifan: Codi'r Pawl Haf		Caerdydd	Mehefin / *Gol.
/St John's Day Festival: Raising the Summer Pole		Cardiff	June *Ed
Election of Mayor of Ock Street Abingdon		Berks	Saturday near 19th June
Selkirk Ridings	Selkirk	Borders	3rd week in month
Midsummer Fires	various	Cornwall	23rd June
Youlgreave Well Dressing	Youlgreave	Derbys	Saturday near 24th June
Tideswell Well Dressing	Tideswell	Derbys	Saturday near 24th June
Winsters Wakes	Winsters	Derbys	Sat following Sun after 24 Jun
Cakes And Ale Ceremony	Bury St Edmunds	Suffolk	Last Thursday in June
Rushbearing	Warcup	Cumbria	28th June
Walking Day	Warrington	Cheshire	Friday near 30th June

JULY

Horse Fair	Seamer	Yorks	July
Kilburn Feast - Mock Mayor & Mayoress	Kilburn	Yorks	July
Rushbearing	Gt. Musgrave & Ambleside	Cumbria	1st Saturday in July
Grand Wardmote of Woodmen of Arden	Meridan	Warks	July/August
Orange Parades	various	N. Ireland	12th July
Vintners Street Sweeping to St James Garlickhythe church	London		2nd Wed July
Holsworthy Pretty Maids	Holsworthy	Devon	2nd Wednesday in July
John Knill Ceremony	St Ives	Cornwall	25 July (every 5 yrs). Next 2026
Honiton Fair	Honiton	Devon	Tu. before Wed. after 19th Jul
Italian Festival	Clerkenwell	London	3rd Sunday in July
Swan Upping	The Thames	various	Usually 3rd week in July
Doggets Coat and Badge Race	London Bridge to Chelsea	London	Late July
Eisteddfod Genedlaethol / National Eisteddfod		Pontypridd	3-10 Aug 2024 [®] [®] varies every year

AUGUST

Gooseberry Contest	Egton Bridge	N. Yorks	1st Tuesday in August
Rose Queen Ceremony	Little Beck	N. Yorks	1st Tuesday in August
Feast of St Wilfrid	Ripon	N. Yorks	1st Saturday in August
Knighthood of Old Green	Southampton	Hants	1st full week in August
Rushbearing	Grasmere	Cumbria	Saturday near 5th August
The Burry Man	South Queensferry	Lothian	2nd Friday in August
Burning The Bartle	West Witton	Yorks	Saturday near 24th August
Coracle Race	Cilgerran	Pembs	Mid-Aug, date tba * Eds
Notting Hill Carnival	Notting Hill	London	Bank Holiday Sat to Mon
Football in the river	Bourton-on-the-Water	Glos	Bank Holiday Mon * Bill Pullen ‡
Eyam Plague Sunday	Eyam	Derbys	Last Sunday in August

SEPTEMBER

St Giles Fair	Oxford	Oxford	Mon+Tue of 1st full week in Sept
Abbots Bromley Horn Dance	Abbots Bromley	Staffs	Mon after 1st Sun after 4th Sept
Sheriff's Ride	Lichfield	Staffs	Saturday nr 8th Sept.
Widcombe Fair	Widcombe	Devon	2nd Tuesday in September
Church Clipping	Painswick	Glos	Sunday nearest 19th Sept
Bluecoat March	City of London	London	21st September or near
LPQS ‡‡ Costermongers Harvest Festival Parade Service	London		Last Sun Sept

OCTOBER ‡‡ London Pearly Kings & Queens Society [S] Original Pearly Kings & Queens Association

Nottingham Goose Fair	Nottingham	Notts	Last 3 days of 1st week in Oct
Billingsgate Harvest Festival	Billingsgate	London	1st Sunday in October
Pearlies Harvest Festival [S]	St Martins in the Field	London	1st Sunday in October
Bellringers' Feast	Twyford, nr Winchester	Hants	7th October
Pearlies Harvest Festival ‡‡	St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, London		2nd Sun in Oct [LPKG]
Goozey Vair	Tavistock	Devon	2nd Wednesday in Oct
Court Leet	Clifton, York	N. York	October
Bampton Pony Fair	Bampton	Exmoor	Last Thursday in October
Punkie Night	Hinton St George	Somerset	Last Thursday in October
Quit Rents Ceremony	Royal Courts of Justice	London	Late October
Antrobus Soulcakers	Antrobus	Cheshire	31st October and on
Trick Or Treat	various	UK	31st October

