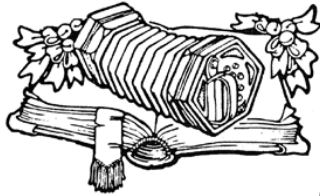




New schedule: **Journal**, Nov., March; **Folklife West**, Jan., May, Sept.



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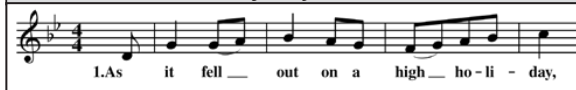
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The guitar: a brief history from the renaissance to the modern day, by Ian Pittaway

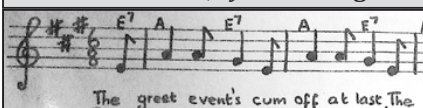
"The Bitter Withy", by Charles Menteith



"Unite and unite and let us all unite ...  
May Days  
past & present,  
by Rosie Upton



Bard of the Boats, by Keith Gregson



"The Fair Flower of Northumberland", by Linn Phipps & Doug Huggins

The Maidens Song.

And passing by, like an Angell bright,  
follow my loue, come over the strand:  
This prisoner had of her a sight,  
and she the faire flower of Northumberland.

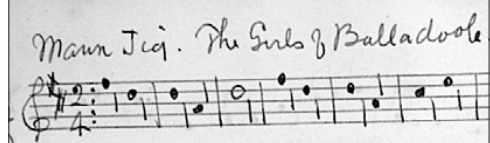
"The Cemetery Song", from Arthur Ellaway, collected by Gwilym Davies; by Verorica Lowe

2. Lackaday me, dear oh lor,  
On the very next tombstone there I saw:  
Here lies I and my two daughters,  
And we died through drinking Chelt'nham waters.  
And if we'd kept to Epsom Salts,  
We should not have been in these here vaults.

Vaughan Williams  
Memorial Library



Manx tunes: Music from the Fairies; and  
"The Girls of Balladoole"; by Stephen Miller



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- to collect, preserve, & provide information on all aspects of folklife
- to stimulate a wider interest in folk studies & folk culture generally
- updating as resources allow • contributions welcome, see page 8

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Guitar, anon, c.1570



## The guitar: a brief history from the renaissance to the modern day by Ian Pittaway

The origins of the guitar are much-discussed and much-disputed. Some wild and unsubstantiated claims are made for its heritage, based on vaguely guitary-looking instruments. This article is an attempt to slice through the fog with a brief history of the instrument, charting its development based only on what can be claimed with evidence.

### The 3 and 4 course renaissance guitar

The first evidence of the guitar is in the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in two sources, one German and one Spanish.

The first is dated 1488, the *Heidelberger Totentanz*. This is a German book of 38 prints from woodcuts, author unknown, printed by Heinrich Knoblochtzter. The striking illustrations depict the dance of death, in what was becoming a major theme in art. The *Heidelberger Totentanz* woodcuts mostly feature the figure of death playing or holding musical instruments of the time. Two woodcuts depict renaissance guitars.



Heidelberger Totentanz guitars



British Library Additional MS 50004. This detail from folio 70v. Book of Hours. Spain (possibly Toledo), 1475-1499. Artist Juan de Carrión

The number of strings and courses on the *Heidelberger Totentanz* guitars is notable. The guitar on the left above shows 3 strings and 5 pegs, and on the right there are 3 strings and 3 pegs. It is possible to interpret this as a guitar with 3 courses (left), a single top course and 2 doubles, and another 3 course guitar (right) with 3 single strings. This would be in keeping with known practice on other instruments: the medieval gittern, for example, could be strung with single or double courses. If the representations above are accurate and this interpretation is correct, this means the guitar started as a 3 course instrument. However, illustrations of stringed instruments up to this period sometimes show a disparity between number of strings and tuning pegs so, with the complication of clearly inaccurate depictions of other instruments in this source, we need corroborating evidence.

Corroboration for the early 3 course guitar is from a Spanish Book of Hours decorated by Juan de Carrión. The book is dated to the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, contemporaneous with the *Heidelberger Totentanz*, now classified as British Library Additional MS 50004. This detail from folio 70v clearly shows a guitar with 3 single strings, if we take it literally, like one of the *Heidelberger Totentanz* guitars, or with 3 courses, like both of the *Heidelberger Totentanz* guitars. It is noteworthy that the outline of each of these three earliest guitars is different. There is no uniformity or strict standardisation of shape, and that goes for all instruments of this period, or indeed of any period.

The strings of the guitar were made of gut – the small intestines of sheep – as were the frets, which were tied on. The tuning of the renaissance guitar in all the sources was 4 courses tuned single a', double e', double c, then the fourth course was a split octave with a lower g and an upper g', the lower g positioned so it is played first on the downstroke. In other words, it was tuned in the same way as a modern guitar if you only play the top 4 strings and capo it at the fifth fret, and of course the modern 6 string guitar doesn't have the upper octave on the



fourth course. Or, put another way, it was tuned the same as a modern ukulele, except that the ukulele has all single strings and has only the *upper* octave of the fourth course. So the 4 course guitar was essentially a smallish treble instrument with a short pitch range.

Most of the surviving music for the 4 course renaissance guitar comes from 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain and France, where it therefore seems to have been most popular. Surviving music for the 4 course guitar is perfectly lovely but stylistically indistinct from lute music. It would take the changes present in the 5 course baroque guitar to give the instrument a distinctive voice of its own.

## The 5 course baroque guitar



Painting attributed to Italian artist Pietro Paolini, 1603–1681.

There is evidence for the addition of a fifth course in France, Spain and Portugal in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century – and, indeed, the earliest surviving guitar is a small 5 course made by Belchior Dias of Lisbon in 1581 – but that fifth course did not begin to gain wide acceptance until the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and into the first decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, by now the beginning of the baroque period, when many guitars radically increased in size and therefore lowered their overall pitch. Through the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a few players still preferred the small 4 course guitar, or a 5 course guitar made in the old, small size; but the new size became the popular choice, and it is this larger-bodied instrument that we now call the baroque guitar for the period roughly 1600–1750.

There was a huge variation in shape – thin bodies, wide bodies, tapered bodies, flat backs, fluted backs, bowl backs, various lengths of necks – and some variation in tuning. The first three courses were all tuned in unisons (sometimes with a single first string) – e' b g. The fourth course was either strung in octaves with the

modern guitar, at the same pitch as the upper octave positioned so it is played first on the downstroke – d d' – or both strings were an octave above the third fret of the second course – d' d'. Likewise, the fifth course could also be a mix of the two octaves with the upper octave played first on the downstroke – A a – or two strings of the upper octave, playing the same note as the second fret of the third course – a a. These combinations gave the possibility of three different tunings (fourth and fifth course both in octave pairs; fourth and fifth course both at the upper octave; fourth course in an octave pair and fifth course both at the upper octave), according to the preference of the composer or player, so if a guitar player today wants to have a really accurate baroque guitar repertoire, then either three baroque guitars or a lot of restringing is needed.

The larger size, extra course and new tuning marked a fundamental shift in the way the guitar was played. Alongside melodic and harmonic playing, a new simplified style was created – the strum or *rasgueado* – consisting entirely of chords played rhythmically using various combinations of fingers or fingers and thumb. Thus we see the very beginning of modern guitar style, for four key reasons:

- (1) Guitarists, in common with lutenists, were now using a 'thumb outside' right hand position (assuming a right handed player), much more like the hand position we'd recognise today. No longer was the hand parallel to the strings with the thumb placed inside the hand for a smooth, full sound; now the hand was at an angle to the strings, with the thumb completely outside of the hand, to enable the strumming style and give a sharper, more trebly tone.
- (2) This is the first evidence of a style we'd most associate today with rhythmic flamenco dance music and song.
- (3) The *rasgueado* style was also used regularly to accompany song in a way that was completely different to the renaissance but not too far removed from the strummed guitar-led pop music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- (4) The instrument was now more the size of the modern guitar, with nominally the same pitch as today's guitars.

The new style made the guitar popular among dancers in the theatre and the street; and with singers, no doubt because it was now an instrument with a style that could be mastered relatively easily, compared to the lute. For this reason the guitar had a terrible reputation among many lovers of the lute, who thought the guitar crude and easy; and among commentators on religion and morality, who were horrified at the lewd and suggestive dances the guitar was now used to accompany.

The new tuning made good use of the stringing on the fourth and fifth courses to create an effect known as *campanelas*, or *little bells*. This involves playing consecutive notes on different strings so that the sound of each note continues to ring as the next one starts, like a peel of bells. The baroque guitar's re-entrant tuning – where strings are out of the usual linear pitch sequence of high to low and so have to re-enter the sequence – makes *campanelas* much less effort on the left hand and so technically much easier to achieve.

The popularity of the guitar spread across western Europe and to all levels of society, from rural dancers and singers right up to royalty. Though, for reasons given above, it was not universally celebrated, the fact that serious composers with good connections were writing music for it certainly helped its status. Chief among these were Francesco Corbetta (c. 1615–1681), an Italian attached to the Court of Carlo II, Duke of Mantua; Gaspar Sanz (1640–1710), Aragonese composer, Professor of Music at the University of Salamanca, Spain; and Robert de Visé (c. 1655–1732/1733), lutenist, guitarist, theorbo and viol player at the court of French Kings Louis XIV and Louis XV, and singer and composer for lute, theorbo and guitar.

CONTINUES OVER PAGE



## The guitar: a brief history from the renaissance to the modern day by Ian Pittaway

FROM PAGE 3

### The 6 string guitar



The first surviving 6 string guitar was built in 1791 by Giovanni Battista Fabricatore in Naples. This is one of Fabricatore's 6 string guitars from 1795 or 1798.

The first-known guitar to have single strings rather than double courses was a 5 string guitar built in 1774 by Ferdinando Gagliano in Naples, which had the innovation of brass frets rather than tied gut frets. The first 6 string guitar to have survived was built in 1791 by Giovanni Battista Fabricatore, also in Naples. Guitars with 6 single strings, first made in Italy in the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, were copied in Vienna and other European cities in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 1850s, Spanish luthier Antonio de Torres Jurado started building guitars with an enlarged overall size and thinner soundboard, arched and supported by fan bracing, thus changing the way the soundboard vibrates and projects sound. Torres' new design innovation for the 6 string, fixed-fret guitar became the prototype on which all subsequent classical or Spanish guitars were and are made, strung today with synthetic nylon rather than gut strings.

### The steel string guitar

The steel strings of the modern folk guitar are also a recent development. In the renaissance and baroque periods, instruments such as the cittern, bandora and orpharion were strung with wire – that's iron for the upper pitches and brass for the lower – but guitars were always gut-strung, with the localised exception of the chitarra battente of southern Italy which, in the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, had strings of brass. A small but ground-breaking change in the chemical composition of iron string material enabled the creation of steel strings, developed in the U.S.A. in the 1880s. A new build of guitar was developed for the new strings, to cope with the extra tension on the body created by using steel.



Bill Broonzy and Martin Carthy, two great innovators of the steel string guitar.

This new guitar grew rapidly in popularity in the United States and throughout Europe during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, becoming the instrument of choice for a great many performers of blues, jazz and folk music. A convergence of musical styles gave rise to innovations in guitar technique, as blues and jazz influenced folk music. Then the temporary popularity of skiffle, with its simple chordal playing style, made the guitar accessible to almost anyone, rather like the *rasgueado* style did in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and into the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 1960s and '70s, ground-breaking English folk guitarists distilled the influences of blues and jazz on their technique, influenced in particular by the black American blues players who visited England, such as Bill Broonzy. They experimented with non-standard tunings to create, in effect, a different sort of instrument. Foremost in this new folk guitar movement were Martin Carthy, Davey Graham and Nic Jones, whose huge influence is still felt today by steel string guitarists.



## The electric guitar



Les Paul plays the solid-body electric guitar he created, while his wife Mary Ford sings and plays another.

Even before the invention of steel guitar strings, the technology that would lead to the electric guitar was discovered: electrical induction. This was in 1830, but it was to be another century before it was applied to the guitar, using up to three pickups – coiled copper wire around a magnet – to produce an electromagnetic signal when steel strings vibrate near to them, the signal then fed through a cable to an amplifier. The first move towards thus electrifying the guitar was seen by the public on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1928 in an article in *The Music Trades*. The Stromberg Electro was “an electronically operated device that produces an increased volume of tone for any stringed instrument.” In 1929 this was developed into the first specific electric guitar. The *Chicago Musical Instrument Catalog* featured an advertisement for an electric guitar with its amplifier: “Every tone is brought out distinctly and evenly, with a volume that will fill even a large hall.”

Stromberg, however, did not reap the financial benefits of this technological advance, as their products disappeared without trace. Other companies developed pickups and electric guitars in the following months and years, and the advantage of their volume for ensemble playing was immediately recognised by such jazz and blues players as Sister Rosetta Tharpe, T-Bone Walker, and Lonnie Johnson. In the 1940s, guitarist, luthier and inventor Les Paul designed a ground-breaking solid-body electric guitar – which took his name – and experimented with recording techniques such as multi-tracking (over-dubbing) and sound effects such as phasing, revolutionising both the electric guitar and record-making.

In the mid 1940s, guitarist Lester “Junior” Barnard discovered that a simple pickup combined with a small amplifier in overdrive gave a distorted sound he liked and utilised, and it was soon emulated by other players of blues, rock and pop music. In the next decade, the electric guitar became the instrument of popular music *par excellence*, leading to a new designation among rockers: the guitar god, axe man or guitar hero. Though fashions and styles have changed many times since, the steel string acoustic guitar and electric guitar remain integral to popular music and are its pre-eminent visual icon.

A fuller version of this article with illustrative videos is available at <https://earlymusicmuse.com/guitarhistory/>

**Ian Pittaway © November 2022**

Early Music Muse: musings on medieval, renaissance and traditional music, <https://earlymusicmuse.com>, is a site written by Ian Pittaway, singer and player of medieval, renaissance and early baroque music on period instruments – harp, lute, bray harp, cittern, gittern, citole, etc. – and traditional/folk music on modern guitars in various tunings.

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Gef Lucena [F]

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## The Bitter Withy by Charles Menteith

Readers may remember the Withy Tree Carol from Evesham and Snowhill, published in FWJ 2 (2008). Unfortunately it was not included in the online version, but it can be seen on Glostrad (1). See the “version to sing” which gives the verses noted by Mr Gibbs of Bengeworth, Evesham. The following similar version was noted from William Payne at Gloucester in 1952 by Maud Karpeles and Patrick Shuldham-Shaw. It’s worth going to the Glostrad site just to hear the recording of WP singing it (2).

### The Withy Tree Carol, William Payne, Gloucester, 1952

1. As I walked out on a bright ho-li - day Small rains from the skies did fall, did fall  
And our Sav-iour ask-ing leave of his own dear moth-er If he should go play at the ball.

Variant, verse 8  
Now Ma-ry mild took a hand - ful of small wi - - thy, And laid our dear  
Sa - viour on her knee

1. As I walked out on a bright holiday  
Small rains from the skies did fall, did fall  
And our Saviour asking leave of his own dear mother  
If he should go play at the ball.
2. Go play at the ball, my own dear Son,  
It's time that you were gone, were gone,  
And don't let me hear of any ill-doings  
At night when you come home.
3. Our Saviour walked down unto yonder town  
As far as the holy, holy well,  
And there he met three of the finest children  
That ever any tongue could tell.
4. "Good morn, good morn, good morn" said they  
"Good morning" then said he, said he  
"Now which of you three fine children  
Will play at ball with me?"
5. "Now, we are lords' and ladies' sons  
Born in a bowery hall,  
And you are but a maiden's child  
Born in an oxen's stall."
6. Now our Saviour built a bridge with the beams of the sun  
And over 'e walked he, walked he,  
And the three jolly children they followed him  
And drowned they were all three.
7. Then up word-bawl and down word-bawl  
Their mothers they did a-wall and squall  
Saying "Mary mild, fetch home your child,  
For ours they are drowned all"
8. Now Mary mild take a handful of small withy  
And laid our dear Saviour across her knee  
And with that handful of small withy  
She gave him slashes three.
9. "Oh curses be to the bitter withy  
That causeth me to smart, to smart,  
And that shall be the very first tree  
That shall perish right at the heart."

William Payne stated that he had learnt the song from his father who had died 15 years previously at the age of 73. He used to live at Bromsash, Herefordshire. Versions have been noted from as far as Rotherham, Birkenhead and Sussex, but a the largest number are known from Herefordshire, thanks to Ella M. Leather (3), who recorded them on a phonograph. Ralph Vaughan-Williams later transcribed the tunes. Frank Sidgwick sent a request for versions to the Hereford Times. Some of the replies can be seen at the EFDSS library eg (4). The following examples show the influence of the legend:

Mr. R. Ll. George of Kingsland, Herefordshire wrote to Frank Sidgwick: "None of the old breed of Herefordshire people would use a withy (or sally) stick to beat an animal or child; and, if asked why, they would tell you that it was unlucky, because Christ was beaten with one by His mother." (5)

J Humphreys, of Birmingham University, described in 1908 how, when a boy of 10 (1860), near Upton Warren in NE Worcs, he had cut a withy twig and struck a horse with it. The farmer's son said "You must not do that. The horse will probably die." JH enquired why, and the song was quoted to him.(6)

*The Bitter Withy* has sometimes been confused with *The Holy Well*, the beginning of which is the same as the *Bitter Withy*, but it diverges later. The story line of *The Bitter Withy* is remarkably constant, although the details of the wording may vary considerably. In particular, in verse 3, there are variations both in where Christ went, and in the children whom he met. In our example, both the terms make sense, the "Holy Well" being a case of influence from the other song. A sizeable group of versions have Christ running up and down "Ling cal", "Ling com", "Lincull" and other names similar to Lincoln. This seems to show influence from the *Little Hugh of Lincoln* ballad.

The number of children, three, is remarkably constant. The names, by which they are referred, include prosaically "three fine children". Sometimes "rich" is added, as in "rich lords' sons", from Evesham, thus emphasising that Jesus is seen, in contrast, as working class. More mysteriously we frequently find them referred to by terms such as "jolly jerdins/jordans, jolyon sons". Explanations include deriving jerdins from jolly dons, in a curious confusion between Jews and Spaniards. In one version from Sussex the three are called "jolly dons"(7).The Holy Family's neighbours were referred to as "Jews", ignoring the fact that the Family were themselves also Jewish. A jordan at one time meant a large pot or vessel, such as used by pharmacists. (3 p39) The name might have originally been "jordan bottle" used by pilgrims to bring back water from the Jordan. The name then would have been transferred from the jars they carried to the children themselves. Indeed Mrs Jones, from King's Pylon near Weobley, in the one same verse named the river as the Jordan, and applied the same name to the children. She also combined the stories of the Withies and the Holy Well in one performance, with a confusing result.(3 pp 29, 31-34)

The verses fall into a pattern of 4:3:4:3 stresses in each line. The song has been sung to a number of tunes usually in major keys. But this is not always so, as shown by this aeolian (or minor) version from James Layton also from King's Pylon.(8) Although he called the song *the Sally Twigs*, he left out the last three verses, in which Christ is punished.



## The Sally Twigs, James Layton, King's Pyon, 1908



1. As it fell out on a high holiday,  
When drops of rain did fall  
Jesus asked his mother Mary  
If He should go and play at the ball.
2. To play at the ball, my own dear son,  
It's time you were going or gone  
But let me hear of no complaints  
At night when you come home.
3. Verse forgotten (Our Lord meets three children who revile  
and despise Him)
4. And we are lords' and ladies' sons,  
And born in bowers all,  
But thou art but a poor maid's child,  
Born in an oxen stall.
5. If you are lords' and ladies' sons  
And born in bowers all,  
I'll let you know at the latter end  
That I am above you all.
6. And Jesus made a bridge of the beams of the sun,  
And over the sea went He.  
And there followed after the three jolly jardins,  
And He drowned the three all three.

A query was sent to *Notes and Queries*, 1868, giving an outline of the song, and asking for a complete version.(9) There was no reply until 1888 after a copy of the text was sent to Frank Sidgwick.(10) As Edith Rickert noted (11), "*The Bitter Wither or The Withies*, [a] version of ... *The Holy Well* was sung in Herefordshire as late as 1888 (cf., *Notes and Queries*, tenth series, iv, pp. 84-85) by an old man who had learned it from his grandmother. Nonetheless it remained unknown to folk-song collectors until 1905, when Frank Sidgwick published a version" (12). The newly described carol aroused particular interest, as it was seen as the first popular ballad to be discovered which was not included in "Professor Child's monumental collection". Various versions were published in the 1900's.(13)(3 p 34) GH Gerould (14) went to some length to argue for the song's status as a genuine ballad. He followed that with an extensive discussion of its origins in the apocryphal gospels as well as in later, mediaeval, texts. He lived at a time when an ability to read Latin could be assumed in an educated readership, so he quotes the gospels in that language. I have made use of Google translate, if I didn't have a translation available.

Unlike the *Cherry Tree Carol*, the *Bitter Wither* cannot be traced to one particular original passage in the gospels. Various passages exist concerning Christ's relations with other children. The first two occur in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas (15), the earliest versions of which date to the 2nd half of the 2nd century. They are repeated in Pseudo-Matthew (16), probably compiled in the 8th or 9th centuries, which drew heavily on the earlier Gospels of Thomas and James. Thomas was condemned in the West for mentioning Joseph's sons from a previous marriage, conflicting with the doctrine that Joseph, as well as Mary, remained a virgin. Pseudo-Matthew was written in Latin, and became the source of these legends in Western Europe. The first two texts below are taken from Pseudo-Matthew, which remained influential in the West until the late middle ages.



Zenon falls from the roof

1. Chap. 32. After these things, Joseph and Mary departed thence with Jesus into the city of Nazareth; and He remained there with His parents. And on the first of the week, when Jesus was playing with the children on the roof of a certain house, it happened that one of the children pushed another down from the roof to the ground, and he was killed. And the parents of the dead boy, who had not seen this, cried out against Joseph and Mary, saying: "Your son has thrown our son down to the ground, and he is dead". But Jesus was silent, and answered them nothing. And Joseph and Mary came in haste to Jesus; and His mother asked Him, saying: "My Lord, tell me if thou didst throw him down". And immediately Jesus went down from the roof to the ground, and called the boy by his name, "Zeno". And he answered Him: "My Lord". And Jesus said to him: "Was it I that threw thee down from the roof to the ground?" And he said: "No, my Lord". And the parents of the boy who had been dead wondered, and honoured Jesus for the miracle that had been wrought. And Joseph and Mary departed thence with Jesus to Jericho.



Christ revives Zenon

2. Chap. 33. Now Jesus was six years old, and His mother sent Him with a pitcher to the fountain to draw water with the children. And it came to pass, after He had drawn the water, that one of the children came against Him, and struck the pitcher, and broke it. But Jesus stretched out the cloak which He had on, and took up in His cloak as much water as there had been in the pitcher, and carried it to His mother. And when she saw it she wondered, and reflected within herself, and laid up all these things in her heart.



Christ carrying water

3. In the next example, the section marked (iv) comes from the Laurentian Codex of Pseudo-Matthew (later than 11<sup>th</sup> century)

(iii) One day in the winter season, when the sun was shining brightly in its power, a ray of sunlight reached from the window to the wall in Joseph's house. When the neighbours' children were playing with Jesus, running through the house, Jesus Christ climbed up the sun's ray and placing Himself on it, He sat in his clothes as if on a firm beam.

(iv) And when Jesus and other children climbed and sat on the sun's rays, others did the same. But they were thrown down and broke their legs and arms. But the Lord Jesus healed them all.



Christ brings Mary the water



## The Bitter Withy by Charles Menteith

continued from previous page

(The following comments do not apply to two documents with the same name from Arundel and Hereford.) *De Infantia Salvatoris* is found in several manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It contains story 1 and an expanded version of 3, (see above, section iii). It also has two further stories (4 & 5).

4. A certain boy, whose father had tried unsuccessfully to keep him out of the company of Jesus, was one of a group that went to the Field of Sihar. The father followed, and being angry, he seized a club to strike Jesus, and pursued Him as far as the hill, below which lie the plains of Fabe Collateralis, where he gave up. Jesus Christ, in a fit of rage, made a leap from the brow of the hill to a place which is as far from the hill as a bow shoots an arrow. The other boys, wanting to follow with a similar leap, rushed headlong and broke their legs, arms, and necks. When a serious complaint was made about this before Mary and Joseph, Jesus Christ healed them all and restored them to strength.



Christ mends the broken pitchers

5. Jesus went with his comrades to a fountain to get water. While returning, he struck his jar against a rock by the wayside. Pleased with the sound produced, the others did the same with theirs, and each broke his water-pot ... And rising above this tumult and complaint, Jesus Christ gathered up the fragments and mended all the vessels; and when he was free he filled his own vessel with water.

6. The last tale comes from *Narrationes de Vita et Conversatione Beatae Mariae Virginis*, which also gives the story of Zeno's fall from the roof. *De Infantia Salvatoris* is quoted as the source of both tales, though the new tale is not in any of the currently known manuscripts. While Jesus was bringing water to his mother from the fountain, he hung the vessel on the rays of the sun, and after that, the sunbeam was like a rope with the vessel.

The various sources quoted also contain other tales of Christ's childhood. Those I have mentioned above come together in a manuscript (17) under the heading "Jci comence le enfance ili'u crist". Dating from about 1300, the text is in English, and appears to be a translation of a French original. The text, in rhyming couplets, is lengthy and sometimes confused, eg the reference to "heroudes Pe king of egypte" (P = modern th). (see footnote)

We have seen how the original stories of Christ's childhood, in pseudo-Thomas and -James, were added to during the middle ages. Mary D McCabe, in her MA thesis at Durham (18), deals simultaneously with *the Bitter Withy* and *the Holy Well*. She supports Gerould's hypothesis that both songs derive from a common source, which she calls *the Sunbeam Ballad*. She concludes that this originated in mediaeval legend, before the reformation, and survived not much changed into the 18th century. By textual analysis she concludes that it would then have been "contaminated" by the *Hugh of Lincoln* ballad, forming the *Bitter Withy*. However, a new story is made.

The illustrations above are taken from the *Klosterneuburger Evangelienwerk*, a 14th-century gospel translation. It is held in the Schaffhausen public library, Switzerland.(19)

For me the appeal of the *Bitter Withy* comes from having been told as a child "You must be good, like Jesus," So the thought of Jesus being naughty and Mary punishing him holds a certain appeal. Considering he had just committed multiple murder, he got away with it pretty lightly.

**Footnote** The *enfance* manuscript also includes the date-palm/cherry-tree incident.(20) Interestingly, it bears many similarities to Pseudo-Matthew. It occurs during the flight to Egypt and there is no reference to Joseph being jealous. The kind of fruit is not specified: "Of Pat fruyt Pat it bar". Christ commands the tree to bow and to rise again, and afterwards to open its roots to a spring, from which they drink. Then "cam an Aungel and tok Pree braunches of Pat tree aud sette heom [them] in paradis".

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Charles Menteith © November 2023

Our next issue, FTJ 75, March 2024, will include an article by Charles on the related song 'The Holy Well'.

**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. **Contact sam@folklife.uk**

❖ **Researchers, folklife societies, institutions:** please send in details for our **FOLKLIFE TRADITIONS DIRECTORY, www.folklife-traditions.uk**





**"Unite and unite and let us all unite for summer is a-come unto day..."  
A personal reminiscence of May Days past and present, by Rosie Upton**

May Day photos © Doc Rowe



I was a student when I first travelled to Padstow for May Day. I'd heard of it, but as a teenager from Derbyshire I wasn't sure what it was all about. It was nothing like anything I had experienced before. The traditional May Day Celebrations in Padstow are a revelation, their origins unknown, perhaps Celtic, perhaps not. The words of the May Song impenetrable in parts. An awakening of summertime – ancient, primitive and mysterious.

The Red or Old 'Oss and the Blue Ribbon 'Oss, each with a vast black skirt with stylised head and tail topped by a grotesque mask, dance through the narrow streets and round the harbour. Accompanied by a Teaser, followers and musicians wearing white with red or blue ribbons. The sound of accordions, melodeons and drums urgent and unrelenting. The streets and buildings decorated with tree branches and a profusion of flowers. They do say that a maiden who finds herself below the skirts of the Oss will have a child by the following year!

I was part of a group of friends, guests of the late Mervyn Vincent, that travelled down there for a week each year in an old van driven by Harry White. I have my doubts whether it was roadworthy but for several years it transported us there and back again without serious mishap. Harry worked for SW Gas and subjected us to occasional detours to view 'memorable' gas holders. I doubt any of us shared his enthusiasm. We did share a chalet, Beachfield at Treynaron Bay, owned by a Miss Hill, Mervyn's employer and alleged girlfriend of the future King Edward VIII who abdicated. Later we stayed with the indomitable Mary Dann at Duke House in Padstow.

Mervyn, his chant "Sing You Buggers Sing", was not always the easiest man. Banned from numerous different pubs over the years it resulted in great sings in many different locations – Rosehill, Pickwick, Tredrea, Waterbeach, Cornish Arms and others. I remember some of the old singers and musicians like Charlie Bate who died many years ago and Reg Hall of The Rakes still with us but not in Padstow this year. Doc Rowe as ever recording events for posterity. The Ring O' Bells in St Issey, the village where Mervyn and his family lived, was the place for breakfast beer and some of the best songs and singers. As the years passed by the Watersons, Martin Carthy, Tom and Barbara Brown, Vic Legg, Mo Keast, Dave Webber and Anni Fentiman. So many well know revival singers had all been there. Wonderful memories.

I'm not sure why I stopped making my annual trip to Padstow but after a gap of 20 years I was back there again in May 2023. It was a shock to find much changed. Not the actual event but bigger crowds, more drunkards and general disruption. Much more commercialised. Most of the shops open and busy whereas I remember most were closed on May Day.

We always followed the Old 'Oss, stabled at the Golden Lion. Outside the Golden Lion before midnight this year the streets were packed. A fight broke out, thankfully a group of decoy musicians led most of the drunks away before the clock struck twelve and the Night Song began.

Standing on the hillside above the town in the past we heard the gentle drift of the Night Song but apart from that all was still. I remember once staying with Mary Dann when the singers came to her door. We heard them sing "Arise Mrs Dann..." but Mary slept through it! This year the song echoed through the woodland interrupted by shouting from drunks down by the harbour. We didn't stay long but returned the following morning to see the Old 'Oss emerge from his stable at 11am. We moved on to Prideaux Place, a historic house above the town to await his arrival. More crowds than ever, perhaps because it was a Bank Holiday. At regular intervals through the day the Old 'Oss and the Blue Ribbon 'Oss and their entourages parade through the town singing the May Song. These days the visitors seem more intent on shopping, sight-seeing, eating and drinking than respecting this ancient tradition.

A tall Maypole bedecked with flowers, flags and ribbons stands in the middle of the town. Nothing like those little maypoles beloved of primary school children to dance innocently around. In Padstow the Children's 'Oss is a smaller version of the adult ones. May Day celebrations end with the Old 'Oss and Blue Ribbon 'Oss meeting to prance with unfading energy around the Maypole before bidding farewell and returning to their stables until another year.

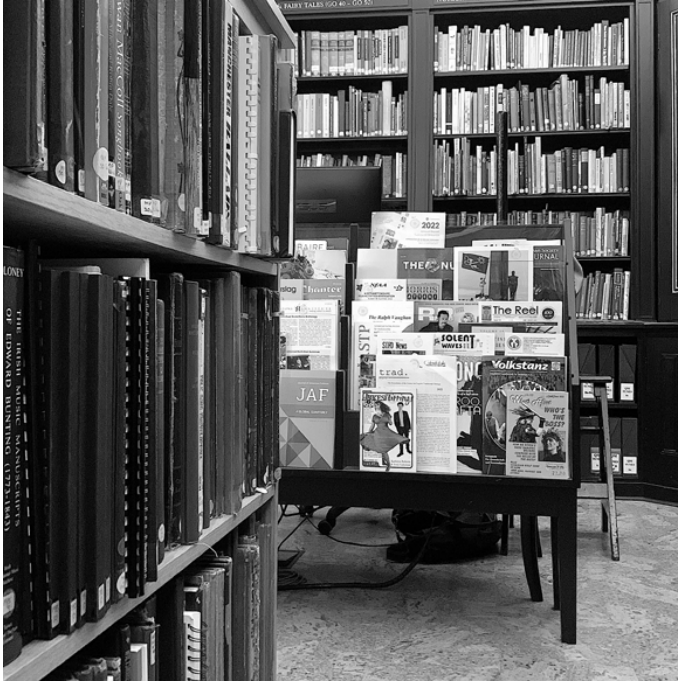
The years evaporated as I met old friends and heard the old songs including those popularised by Charlie Bate and Mervyn Vincent and more recent ones like Dave Webber's May Song. A new landlord at the Ring O' Bells but otherwise unchanged. Next year? I hope to return. *"Now fare you well and bid you all good cheer..."*



Rosie Upton © November 2023



## FolkLife Organisations: the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library



The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML) is England's national library and archive of folk music and dance, a part of the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), based at Cecil Sharp House in Camden, London. EFDSS was founded in 1932 upon the merger of the English Folk Dance Society and Folk-Song Society. The library predates the merger by two years, and started as a home for Cecil Sharp's book collection which was installed there upon the construction of the present building in 1930. The holdings of the library grew with subsequent donations, bequests and purchases, and it was given its present name in 1958 on the death of composer and song collector **Ralph Vaughan Williams**. He was the first, and serving, president of EFDSS, and was actively involved in raising funds for the library's future at the time of his passing.

The VWML has continued to expand, and is now a multimedia library of distinction, containing books, pamphlets, periodicals, press cuttings, broadsides, paintings, photographs, slides, artefacts, records, reel-to-reel tapes, phonograph cylinders, videos, cine films, compact discs, audio cassettes and more. It holds original papers of many prominent first and second folk revivalists, including **Cecil Sharp, Lucy Broadwood, George Butterworth, Ralph Vaughan Williams** (although most of his archive is at the British Library), **Percy Grainger, Maud Karpeles, Anne Geddes Gilchrist, Frank Kidson, Clive Carey and Patrick Shuldham Shaw**. It continues to add collections to its archives in the present. It also stays on the pulse of new publishing on folk, adding new books and journal

issues to its shelves as they are published, and indexing relevant articles and chapters in wider publications. Most of its collections relate to folk song, music and dance in the English speaking world, but it holds a certain amount of material on other traditions, from the rest of the British Isles and far beyond.

**The library's ethos is to make the heritage of the people accessible to as many of those people as possible, and to that end, access in-person at Cecil Sharp House is free.** There is no need to register, or to make an appointment, though it can be helpful to us to know what people would like to see before they arrive so that we can retrieve material and think about some of the more complex enquiries in advance. There are also some lesser-used items which are stored offsite due to constraints of space, and these can take 48 hours to arrive. We are open Tuesday to Friday, as well as the first and third Saturdays of the month, but always check the website before visiting, as there can be changes.

**We realise, however, that most people are unable to visit the library in person;** users are spread across the country and the world, with reach expanding still further as a result of the online events of the pandemic. **Accessibility** was behind a pioneering project called **'The Full English'**, begun in 2012, which saw the VWML work with several partner institutions, including Clare College Cambridge (alma mater of Cecil Sharp), the British Library, the Mitchell Library in Glasgow and the Grainger Museum in Melbourne, to create a **collective digital archive of nineteen separate folk collections. It constitutes the world's largest online repository of English folk manuscripts.** There are digital images of notebooks, diaries, letters, and music manuscripts, and field recordings from the VWML's wax cylinder collection. The collections can be searched either in combination or alone, or users can browse them. **Like access to the physical library, access to this resource is completely free.**

Combined with the archive catalogues are several indexes, the best known of which is the **Roud Index**, which is hosted and made searchable through the VWML. It is possible to cross reference from the Roud Index to other catalogues, enabling users to find multiple sources for songs collected under the same Roud number. There are also further VWML song indexes, and others relating to dance and tunes, and customs and drama. Alongside these is the **Folk Song Subject Index**, a searchable and browsable resource which allows users to find songs on a particular topic, from unrequited love, to milkmaids and highwaymen. This is very much a work in progress; it aims to index every song in the Roud Index by its subjects, an enormous undertaking which, even with a team of dedicated volunteers, will take many years to complete. It now holds over a thousand songs, which, even though there is a long way to go, makes it an invaluable and unique tool for artists and researchers alike.

**Such a dense, specialist web of catalogues and indexes needs an extremely powerful search tool, capable of huge complexity. This is provided by the VWML's current website at [vwml.org](http://vwml.org),** where you can also find out about the events we run (an annual two-day conference, Broadside Day, and Library Lectures), projects we carry out, both ourselves and with partners in academia and beyond, and our Folk Music Journal. However, in order to ensure the future online viability and functionality of our offering, we need to move forward and build a new site which is more sustainable and more technologically stable, as well as being more user-friendly for both the newcomer and the seasoned researcher. Taking this step is in no sense a vanity project - we had no choice - but it does present us with an opportunity. We are currently in the advanced stages of pulling this together, and will share the new URL when it is live. The new site, including the archives and indexes search tool, will do everything the current site does, but hopefully offer a clearer and more seamless experience, while safeguarding the unique online collections for the future. You can read more about this crucial project here:

<https://www.efdss.org/about-us/what-we-do/news/12897-online-archives-move-on?highlight=WyJhcmNoaXZlcyIsIm1vdmUiLCJvbiJd>.

**For all the latest news from the VWML,** including news of the new website, you can sign up to receive our newsletters here: <https://www.efdss.org/newsletter> (select 'Library & Archive news' from the dropdown. You can also follow us on Instagram: @thevwml.

**Our next event is our autumn conference on 11-12 November, 'Folk Dance: Grappling with Tradition'.** For more details, and to book, visit: <https://www.vwml.org/events>.

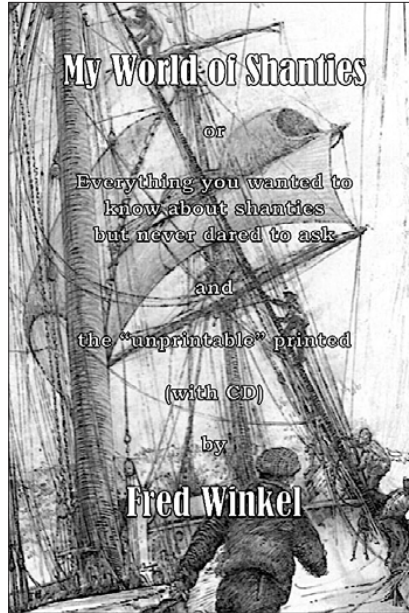
*Tiffany Hore, Library and Archives Director © November 2023*

The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, English Folk Dance and Song Society, Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London NW1 7AY . [efdss.org](http://efdss.org) | [cecilsharpshouse.org](http://cecilsharpshouse.org) | [vwml.org](http://vwml.org)





**publications & recordings announced up to 200 words per publication welcome**



My world of shanties

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**MY WORLD OF SHANTIES, by Fred Winkel.**

I proudly present you in English my self-published book including a CD and it's looking great. Its size is A4, printed in full colour on glossy 115 grams paper according to a fsc-standard. It has 244 pages with on every page at least one picture, several of them never published in a book. With QR-codes you get extra information, YouTube-recordings and other sound recordings. Of several of the shanties the uncamoouflaged version is also present.

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Fred Winkel, Concertstraat 15, 7323 KM Apeldoorn, the Netherlands.

**HEAVE AWAY; HAUL AWAY; SAIL AWAY, by Jim Mageean.**

I wrote the three books during the first year of the Covid Lockdown (2020).

With nothing to do, and unable to go out for very long, I started compiling all the shanties and sea songs that I sing into a leather-bound ledger. When I'd finished, I found there were over 300 (just the ones I sing, not all). My family (mostly the Unthanks) started pressurising me to publish it.

There were a couple of problems with this: (1) it was too long and (2) I can't write music.

The solution occurred to me that I had recordings of myself singing a lot of these songs dating back over 50 years. So I could make CD's of them. My good friend Barrie Temple has a recording studio, so I sent them to him. Being just as bored as me in lockdown, he set about putting them on disc. Without being able to meet up in person at this time, we did everything using emails and 'We Transfer'.

I decided to compile all the 'hauling' (i.e. pulling) shanties together. The result was the book and CD 'Haul Away'.

I was very pleased with the reception it got so set about on the next book. This was a compilation of all the 'heaving' (i.e. pushing) shanties 'Heave Away' and it too was received very well by friends and folkies on 'Zoom'. The 3rd compilation was of the 'forebitters' (i.e leisure songs) sailors sang. Thus 'Sail Away' was born.

For all three book/CDs, I was helped greatly by Barrie (editing and recording) and my son Joby with artwork. My partner Pat Unthank was also very patient and understanding throughout the project.

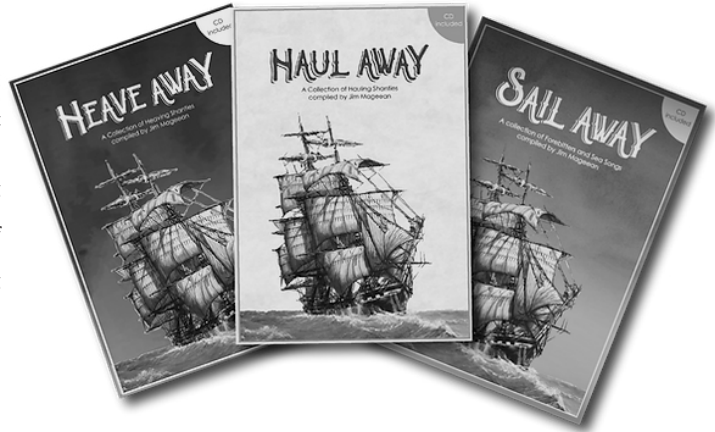
Happily, in the 2nd year of Covid Lockdown, several On-line Festivals started to happen and here I found a good market for my books.

They have found their way all across the globe and continue to do so.

*Cheers,*

Jim Mageean

[www.jimmageean.co.uk](http://www.jimmageean.co.uk) The books are £10 each + £2 UK postage (so £32 for the set), email [shanty\\_jim@hotmail.com](mailto:shanty_jim@hotmail.com) for details



**Our online Directory ([www.folklife-directory.uk](http://www.folklife-directory.uk)) includes some shanty-singers**

Performers/Music & Song/Shanty (Chantey) Groups, Duos, Solo on [www.folklife-directory.uk/perf-shanty.html](http://www.folklife-directory.uk/perf-shanty.html)

Our main areas are: Wales, England West Country & West Midlands.

Currently, most entries are from paying Folklife Members, and most are in those areas.

But the Directory is now open to all, and all entries are free.

Since Lockdown/Zoom, some entries from other areas, mainly by personal contact, so not full coverage, but all are welcome!

Our priority is our printed magazines - this *Journal*, and *Folklife West* - so sadly no time to research/contact all possible entries. So, please tell folks to visit [www.folklife-directory.uk](http://www.folklife-directory.uk) for entry details, or contact [sam@folklife.uk](mailto:sam@folklife.uk), and we'll be happy to help.

*"As I was a-walkin' down Paradise Street", woodcut by Freda Bone, from Capstan Bars, by David W. Bone, Edinburgh, The Porpoise Press, 1931.*



## Bard of the Boats, by Keith Gregson

The greet event's cum off at last, The Championship it's wun, Be Chambers pride ov a' Tyneside, The  
Cocknies thar oot-deun; Tho two te one they laid upon Thor man to get first place, An  
badly used the Tyneside lad, Bob Chambers won the race <sup>CH</sup> THEN OH, LADS, JOIN IN THE SANG, AN  
SING IN PRAISE OV BRAVE BOB CHAMBERS. OH, LADS, JOIN I<sup>1</sup> THE SANG, THE CHAMPIONSHIP HEE' WON.

Keith's 1980's transcription of the first verse of 'Chambers and Sadler' (to the 'Lambton Worm' tune).

**Keith Gregson reflects on how a popular north east song writer is a useful source for sporting and musical history.**

Ask older folk in the north east England for a handful of 'traditional' songs from the region, then the chances are that two written by Joe Wilson (1841-1875) – namely *Keep Your Feet Still*, *Geordie Hinny and Cum*, *Geordie Haad the Bairn* – will be mentioned. Those more familiar with the post-war folk club world will also acknowledge modern adaptations of his lovely ballads *Sally Wheatley* and *The Gateshead Lass*. (i) However Joe has another claim to fame. He was a passionate supporter of professional boat racing, which flourished on Tyneside from approximately 1840 to 1880 – a betting and backing sport which only fell by the wayside with the growth of association football.

Boat racing features frequently in Joe's songs, stories and monologues, and these combine to provide historians with at least one fan's attitude to what was then an important sport. Indeed national and international aquatic champions such as Harry Clasper, Bob Chambers and Jim Renforth enjoyed the kind of fame reserved today for the greatest performers on the world's football grounds. (ii)

There are a couple of sources for Joe's songs – the main one being a major publication put together in his lifetime and revised later. *Tyneside Songs and Drolleries* featured the following relevant songs and tunes selected by him (where tunes were suggested); (iii)

1. *A Welcum! Te Bob Chambers after his defeat for the Championship* p.91 / *John Anderson, my jo*
2. *Chambers an Sadler* p.123 / *Whe's for the Bank*
3. *Me Bonny Brave Boat Rower* p.133 / *Martha, the Milkman's Dowter*
4. *Renforth – the Champein* p.167 / *The Postman's Knock*
5. *The Deeth of Bob Chambers* p.173 / *Come into my cabin, Red Robin*
6. *The Deeth of Harry Clasper* p.197 / *Black-Eyed Susan*
7. *The Defeat of the Cockneys!* p.224 / *Barbary Bell or the Wonderful Tallegraff*
8. *The Deeth o' Renforth* p.245 (no tune)
9. *Bagnall an' Taylor* p.256 / *Sally Lee*
10. *The Champein ov all Champeins* p.301 / *Babylon is Falling*
11. *Aleck Hogarth – Champein of the Wear* p.303 / *Aw'll Sing Ye A Tyneside Sang*
12. *The Cockney's Lament* p.340 (no tune)
13. *The One Mile Race – July 1863* p.343 / *The Pawnshop Bleezing*
14. *The Greet Boat Race – Sept. 5 & 6, 1864* p.346 / *The Hair or Hop Light Loo*

There is also a ballad sheet (no publisher) from 1859 discovered in Newcastle Reference Library in the 1980s - *Chambers For Ever!* To the tune of *Kiss Me Quick, and Go my honey*.

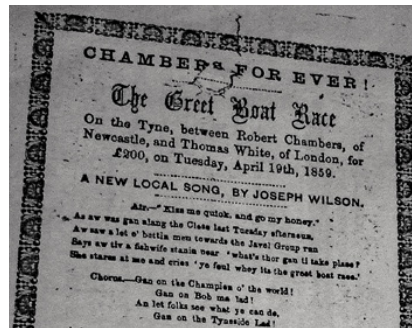
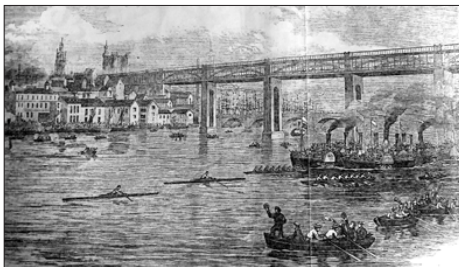
Most of these songs were written in the 1860s when the actual races took place. Three of the songs appeared on a CD entitled *Champion Oars* released in 2009. Song 13 was set to the tune recommended by Wilson; songs 11 and 4 were set to tunes selected for the recording (although *Postman's Knock* was still accessible). Nearly all the songs were featured in a 1980s' radio series called *The Bonny Brave Boat Rower* which I recorded for BBC Radio Newcastle. (iv)

The words of these songs are of immense value to sporting historians when examined alongside other sources such as newspaper reports (Wilson's bias in the great contest between the Tyne and the Thames is blatantly obvious; his songs are filled with 'cheating cockneys'!) At the same time the tunes selected for the songs help to throw a light on the resources available to a local professional songwriter like Wilson working during the mid-Victorian period. These tunes and their origins are worth examining in detail.

Two tunes (songs 5 and 7) were known to Wilson under the titles *Come into my Cabin*, *Reed Robin* and *Barbary Bell* – both songs composed and set to older tunes by Robert Anderson 'the Cumberland Bard', whose main compositions were put together during the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The tune for the former is traceable back to Scotland in the mid-eighteenth century, while the latter is from the genre which spawned *St Patrick's Day in the Morning*. Anderson's songs may have drifted across the Pennines from Cumberland to the North East of England although Wilson himself did spend some time in Carlisle – the 'capital' of old Cumberland. *Barbary Bell* or *Barbara Bell* was certainly known on Tyneside as it was used by other songwriters for their own compositions. (v) *Black-Eyed Susan* (song 6) is traceable back to the eighteenth century and to the work of John Gay while the Scottish song *John Anderson, My Jo* (song 1) enjoyed popularity after a reworking by Robbie Burns toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. (vi) Moving back to Tyneside – song 13 was set to a patter tune massively popular with local songwriters throughout the nineteenth century under the title *The Pawnshop Bleezing* and known earlier as *XYZ at Newcastle Races*. (vii)

In his tune selection, Joe was also influenced by what was going on in the music halls beyond Tyneside (or brought north by visiting music hall entertainers). The development of rail transport may have had much to do with this (Newcastle Central Station opened when Wilson was still a child). At this time the influence of the American entertainers (and in particular black-faced minstrels) was very strong. For song 9, Joe suggested *Sally Lee* which was another of his compositions. *Sally Lee* had been set to the tune of *The Knickerbocker Line* – a song traceable firmly to a form of transport in New York in the 1840s/50s and to a ditty emanating from there. It is suggested on one online site that a British version also surfaced in the 1860s. (viii) *Babylon is Fallen/Falling* (song 10) seems to have started life in the U.S.A as a Shaker Hymn. (ix)

There are also links in Wilson's choice of tunes to the London Music Halls, although (as noted above) these too were heavily influenced by what was happening in America. *The Hair/Hop Light Loo* (song 14) is linked to songwriter George Ware and entertainer E W Mackney although American



From left: Sketch of the legendary Harry Clasper; Race on Tyne from London Illustrated News; Wilson Ballad sheet.

versions of the song also exist. (x) Two other songs came from the pen of the prolific jingoist G W Hunt. The first was *Martha the Milkman's Dowter* (song 3) which was composed in 1860 and discovered in an 1880 version in Cumberland. (xi) The second (and final one in this article) should be of considerable interest to all with an eye to north east song.

Joe Wilson's *Chambers and Sadler* (song 2) had for its tune *Who's For the Bank*. The chorus to Wilson's chorus runs;

*Oh lads join in the song  
We'll sing in praise of Brave Bob Chambers  
Oh Lads join in the song  
For the championship it's won*

He also used the tune for *What Will the Neighbors Say?* With the chorus;

*For, oh dear! What will they say?  
What will the neighbors say when they hear on't  
For, oh dear! What will they say?  
Ay, what will the neighbors say?*

The original song and tune for *Who's or who's For the Bank* was written by Hunt in 1865 and was about public transport in the Bank area of London. Fittingly, there is a colourful copy of words and music in the London Transport Museum. (xii) There is also a fine account of the song and its singing in an article entitled *Hubert Woodward Looks Back* which can be found on the online site of Quorn Museum. (xiii) Over the Christmas/New Year period of 1867/8 a massively successful pantomime was staged at the Tyne Theatre in Newcastle and one song in particular attracted attention. Early in 1868 the *Newcastle Chronicle* published the words to it under the following heading;

'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'* Set to the 'air' - *Who's For The Bank* the chorus runs

*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 (xiv)*

Here we have what is probably the first sighting in print of the anthemic Durham 'folk song' - *The Lambton Worm*. It seems to have been written in 1867, and set to a tune composed in 1865 and already used by Wilson for a boat race tune in 1866. The original differs in a few ways from the version published slightly later in a collection of Tyneside songs and the one which is still sung with great gusto today - especially in local schools.

Joe Wilson's boat race songs are worth revisiting. They sing well to the tunes suggested by him (and especially *Chambers and Sadler*), and provide a useful resource for the both the sporting and 'folk' historian.

### Keith Gregson © November 2023

#### Footnote

A great deal of my research into boat race songs was carried out in the 1980s. I continued to sing some of them but did little more until about fifteen years ago when I was persuaded by Professor Mike Huggins of St Martins Lancaster to do a joint paper with him for the academic journal *Northern History* on the role of the sporting hero on Tyneside in Victorian times. 'Northern Songs, Sporting Heroes and Regional Consciousness, c1800 - c 1880; Wor Stars that Shine' was published in *Northern History* in 2007 (Vol XLIV). A year later I was asked to do a lead article on boat racing and its songs for *Ancestors* - the now defunct magazine of *The National Archives*. *The Bonny Brave Boat Rowers* was duly published in December 2008. Those interested in aquatic history and song may be able to lay hands on copies still.

[www.keithgregson.com](http://www.keithgregson.com)

**Notes:** (i) In particular versions recorded by Bob Fox with a number of different singing partners

(ii) See footnote for guidance to more on boat race history

(iii) Harker, Dave, *The Gallowgate Lad - Joe Wilson's Life and Songs*, Wisecrack, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2017 pp166/7 lists the numerous editions of the Songs and Drolleries. I have used the SR Publishers, Wakefield, 1970 reprint version

(iv) <https://heartheboating.com/2019/04/03/crewcial-collectables-a-nice-pair-part-i/> For more on the Champion Oars CD released by Tyne and Wear Museums in 2009

(v) These topics are discussed in more detail in two of my articles - *Bridging the Gap* - in the 1981 *Journal of the Lakeland Dialect Society* and *The Cumberland Bard and Cumberland Ballads* in the 1982 edition of the same *Journal*. North Eastern Songwriter J P Robson set his song about the coming of the telegraph - *The Wonderful Tallygrip* - to Barbara Bell.

(vi) Roud 560 and <https://mainlynorfolk.info/shirley.collins/songs/blackeyesusan.html> for Black-Eyed Susan and [https://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/robertburns/works/john\\_anderson\\_my\\_jo/](https://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/robertburns/works/john_anderson_my_jo/) for John Anderson, my Jo

(vii) Roud 8085

(viii) Roud 2149 and the following site for the British version <https://secondhandsongs.com/work/144550/all>

(ix) <http://random-idea-english.blogspot.com/2014/08/random-thoughts-on-kiss-me-quick.html> for Kiss Me Quick and Roud 13968 for the 'oft recorded' *Babylon is Fallen*

(x) <https://folksongandmusichall.com/index.php/george-ware/>

(xi) <http://folksongandmusichall.com/index.php/martha-the-milkmans-daughter/>

(xii) <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/collections-online/ephemera/item/1995-3770>

(xiii) <http://www.quornmuseum.com/artefacts/pdf/1303.pdf>

(xiv) I first found this in the 1980s in a cutting from *The Newcastle Daily Chronicle* in a scrapbook in South Shields Library - no date but noted in writing as 1868. I have not been able to find the original yet via the online *British Newspaper Archive* but have discovered dozens of reports on the pantomime covering the period from November 1867 to January 1868. I have been able to transcribe the whole song from the rather faded photocopy I still have.



## The Fair Flower of Northumberland, by Linn Phipps & Doug Huggins

The following article is derived/adapted from the script of a presentation given in February 2023, to an online meeting of *The Traditional Song Forum*, <https://tradsong.org/>.

### 1. The process of choosing songs: adapting a cappella singing to Zoom, and singing together

*Hello and special thanks to Sam and Eleanor Simmons for the opportunity to share our interest in this song with you. We'd like to introduce ourselves, from both sides of the Atlantic.*

Linn Phipps, based between Yorkshire and the Isle of Lewis, is a traditional singer in Gaelic and English, with special passions for Gaelic song and World War One. Since the start of lockdown she created a website and a Youtube channel, issued 4 CDs, hosted over 60 workshops to learn a Gaelic song and over 30 online Gaelic song ceilidhs, and participated in Zoom sings and festivals and collaborations all over the world.

Doug Huggins, now living in Colorado, USA at the foot of Pike's Peak, grew up in California during the early 1960's amid the three Biblical plagues of that time and place: Earthquakes, ...Smog, ...and Commercial "Popular" Folk Music. At various times he's performed in Bluegrass, Country and Folk settings, in both instrumental and vocal fields, with Traditional Irish, Scottish and English Folk music always close to his heart.

Fast-forwarding to 2019, as opportunities to travel and perform disappeared into the Covid Lockdown, both of us were separately focusing on a cappella singing in Zoom sessions, including Sea Chanties, Irish and Scottish traditional song, and of course, English Folk music.

Sharing a similar taste for songs, we started singing together live on various Zoom sessions, and we have carried on singing together almost every week for over two and a half years, although we never actually planned that or expected it to happen. We had chatted regularly over Zoom and exchanged song versions, noticing similarities and differences, and that we were clearly interested in the same types of songs – and occasionally the same individual songs.

Of course on Zoom, only one person at a time can effectively sing or speak, but Zoom lends itself to sequential singing – frustrating for a group, but great fun for a duo! We made taking turns, "conversation singing," or "Shared Songs", our speciality, and rapidly discovered that very many songs, especially old songs and ballads, are in fact dialogues, although traditionally sung by just one balladeer/singer.

If the conversational style was Linn's suggestion, the choice of our very first song was Doug's. He chose a poem written by Violet Jacob, who lost her son in the First World War – one of Linn's lifelong obsessions. The song is a dialogue between the Wind and a Scottish expatriate traveller crossing England, who longs to return to Scotland – the poem was called "*The Wild Geese*." It was set to music by Jim Reid and became known as "*Norland Wind*".

We found we really loved the shared singing, and we settled into a pattern of regular joint work on choice of songs, choice of versions, adapting and arranging lyrics and airs, and what we called "division of parts" – deciding how to share the lines, practicing and performing. We even made a CD of our favourite early songs ("*Silk and Leather*"), all made by remote recording on our respective computers to be later combined into a completed whole, as we had not actually met in person at that time. We recorded many songs for Youtube and created our own channel, which now carries over 30 of our song videos.

And in participating in regular Zoom sings and perusing Ballad and Song books, we were always on the lookout for "big songs," interesting conversational ballads that would suit our style of singing and which we would find interesting and challenging. We developed a taste for songs with a comeuppance or twist, although that applies to very many ballads.

### 2. Fair Flower of Northumberland: its history

Linn heard the wonderful ballad *Fair Flower of Northumberland* on one such Zoom sing, although unable to recall who was singing it. So we started learning more about this Ballad.

The ballad probably pre-existed its publication in a famous 16<sup>th</sup> Century proto-novel. Let's take a look at how this ballad managed to survive through the centuries to be here today.

As we started reviewing 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century collections for versions of this particular ballad, we noted that *The Ballad Book*, ed. MacEdward Leach, of which each of us had acquired a second hand copy, pointed us back to a relatively famous early book (a best-seller by 16<sup>th</sup> Century standards), written by one Thomas Deloney, titled: *The pleafant Hiftorie of John Winchcomb, In his yonger yeares called Jack of Newbery* ... or, shortened for easier handling, *Jack of Newbery*.

The Frontispiece shows it was republished, with multiple printings, as seen from the Frontispiece, which mentions it's the "tenth printing" and a revised, expanded edition bearing the initials T. D., for Thomas Deloney, dated 1626.

The book is believed to have been written in about 1597, though some sources mention the book being "licensed to T. Mylinton" in 1596. This is assumed to be Thomas Millington, a London publisher of some early works of Shakespeare and who was occasionally fitted by the Printers' Guild for publishing ballads and other works ... for which he did not have the rights!

Because of its popularity and the fact that it has been studied as an early antecedent of what became the "Novel", it apparently survived into the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in many libraries and collections, and reprintings, including being reproduced in facsimile in the collected works of Thomas Deloney published in 1912.

In Deloney's book, the song we know as "*the Fair Flower (or the Heiress) of Northumberland*", "*The Provost's Tochter*", "*The Betrayed Lady*," or by several other names is titled "*The Maidens Song*," reflecting its place in Deloney's story line, where it is sung by 200 maidens working in Jack Winchcomb's rather large weaving factory, in honor of an imagined visit by King Henry the Eighth and his retinue. Looking at the first and last ages of the Maiden's Song in the book you can see the setting within the story line of how the Royal Party is presented with the song and how Henry rewards the singers afterwards.

Of course, the song itself may well be much older than Deloney's novel, since he collected, revised and published a number of then-popular songs and poems, not unlike Robert Burns did a couple hundred years later. Variants of the basic story are found on both sides of the Northumberland-Scots border. Elements of the story are also found in other countries, which we'll get into a little later.

### The Maidens Song.

*It was a Knight in Scotland borne,  
follow my loue, leap over the strand:  
Was taken prisoner and left forlorne,  
euen by the good Earle of Northumberland.*

*Then was he cast in prison strong,  
follow my loue, leap over the strand:  
Where he could not walke nor lye along,  
euen by the good Earle of Northumberland.*

*And as in sorrow thus he lay,  
follow my loue, come over the strand:  
The Earles sweet Daughter walkt that way,  
and she the faire flower of Northumberland.*

*And passing by, like an Angell bright,  
follow my loue, come over the strand:  
This prisoner had of her a sight,  
and she the faire flower of Northumberland.*

*And lowd to her this knight did cry,  
follow my loue, come over the strand:  
The salt teares standing in his eie,  
and she the faire flower of Northumberland.*

### The pleafant Hiftorie

OF

JOHN WINCHCOMB,

In his yonger yeares called

JACK OF NEWBERY,

The famous and worthy Clothier of

England, declaring his life and loue,  
together with his charitable deeds  
and great Hoftipalitie.And how he fet continually five hundred poore  
people at worke, to the great benefite of  
the Common-wealth.Now the tenth time Imprinted, corrected and enlarged  
by T. D.

Hand cura inuidiosa.

LONDON,  
Printed by H LOWNES, and are to be sold by Cuthbert  
Wright in S. Bartholomews, neer the entrance  
into the Hoftipall. 1626.



### 3. Fair Flower of Northumberland: its variants, and how we selected our version, and a tune

Now to say a bit about the versions we looked at. All of them similar in theme, with the naïve girl or lady deceived by sweet talk and promises, and finally coming to realise the scale of her deception and betrayal.

We looked at **Francis Child** (Ballad No 9) of course – pages 23-26, noting that Child does **not** give a tune, and the words we use are very similar to Child's Version One.

We sourced nearly all of our words from MacEdward Leach 1955 (but he copied his from Deloney), as to us this had the best song storyline, although we must admit we altered occasional lines in the refrain or "burden": for example we replaced line 2 of verse one, and throughout. This version has a full 35 verses. MacEdward Leach describes this Ballad as:

*"An English-Scottish Ballad, with no American versions. The oldest text is Deloney's Pleasant Historie of John Winchcomb 1633, here reprinted"* (we'll just ignore his typo which accidentally transcribed "Pleasant" as "peasant...").

We then viewed the online original here through the online book we excerpted above.

<https://archive.org/details/worksofthomasdelo00deloof/page/n45/mode/2up?view=theater> (1912 edited version of the Works of Thomas Deloney Ed by Francis Oscar Mann).

We were initially puzzled by the switch in MacEdward Leach, from 4 lines in verse 1, to 3 lines thereafter when all four lines are shown in Deloney's original. However Doug offered a theory on this. You may already have reached a similar conclusion...

Our guess is that, there was no actual need to print all of the repetitions of the second-line refrain – be it *"the Maiden's love being easily won"* or related to following the deceiver *"over the strand."* It was understood that the refrain would be sung whether printed or not. In long ballads, putting in every repetition would tend to eat up the supply of movable type in the necessary letters, as well as increasing the amount of typesetting and proofing labour, and perhaps even adding a few pages to a book. So theory is, that after the first stanza, only three lines of the successive stanzas got printed in MacEdward Leach to save the time and expense of printing and paper...or else it was perhaps an un-caught error on the editor's part. ... someone familiar with ballads would likely know to sing the full repetitions of the second line refrain.

So, to be sure which version we wanted to sing, we looked at a number of further versions ... And of course, we needed to find and decide on a tune.

**William Christie's Traditional Ballad Airs**, 1881– this was based on 8-line verses and contained a tune, but we didn't use it.

We were drawn to the version printed in *"Last Leaves of Traditional Airs and Ballads"*, 1925, compiled by **Gavin Greig** & edited by **Alexander Keith**. Greig says on p8 that the ballad was first published in England in the early 17<sup>th</sup> C; and that Scottish versions were published by Buchan and Kinloch; and are also found in Sharpe's and Motherwell's collections. Greig describes his printed version as closest to Kinloch's but omitting some of his stanzas. What we liked about this – 4-line verse version – was the refrains. The refrains do actually vary a little according to the verse but are essentially:

Line 2 – *"Oh, but her (or my) love was easily won"*

Line 4 – *"And she (or I, or other minor variants as events in the story dictate) the Fair Flower of Northumberland."*

We also noticed the last few verses of Greig's version round out the story of what happens when the errant daughter **does** return to her parents. And we wondered about whether we could add something of that to our version here, discussed a little more below. We adapted the Greig refrains into our version. But we still needed a tune.

Greig noted that his version did not come with a tune. But it DID include a tune from a Mrs Lyall of Lyne of Skene which is in Aberdeenshire. We loved this tune and while as written it comprises 2 lines of refrain then two of verse, we repurposed it as L1 narrative, L2 refrain/burden, L3 narrative, L4 refrain/burden.

Now we were ready to start learning it properly. ... Well, perhaps not quite. We'd noted that the MacEdward Leach / Deloney version lacked an ending about what happens when the Fair Flower returns home, whereas the Greig version includes this. However, the language Greig used, being more in Scots, did not really fit with that of the MacEdward Leach / Deloney version we were using. We took the two final verses of the Wm Christie version, and added them here, and slightly modified the language of the last verse of the Greig version regarding not wanting for silver to get a future husband.

Often when we are looking for song information, we would review secondary or open-source sites like *Mudcat* and *Mainly Norfolk*, although on this occasion, as we had a number of excellent Ballad Books to hand, we went straight to them, and forgot to have a look at the online resources. However in preparing for this article we stumbled on a site called *Bluegrass Messenger*, and this gives us some interesting links to similar songs in other countries: Bluegrass Messenger's website lists similar tales in Scandinavian, Polish, and German ballads, which may hint at a "common ancestor" ballad before Deloney immortalized it in print. Common elements include a knight on horseback persuading a maid to rob her father's household and ride away with him to become his Lady, proving false, and abandoning her in disgrace. Elements of this tale appear in: *Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight/Outlandish Knight* (Roud 21, Child 4); *Child Waters/Fair Ellen/Fair Margaret* (Roud 43, Child 63); and *Young Andrew* (Roud 6740, Child 48).

#### Links

- Our full version of The Fair Flower of Northumberland with the adaptations we've made is on YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/3RdIV0uoOZI>
- The Works of Thomas Deloney, Edited by Francis Oscar Mann, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1912: <https://archive.org/details/worksofthomasdel000delo/page/n1/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater>
- Our Sillertides (Linn Phipps and Doug Huggins) webpage: <https://linnphippfolk.co.uk/sillertides/>
- Our Youtube channel: <https://bit.ly/3hzmYNC>, please subscribe!
- Our debut CD "Silk and Leather" on bandcamp: [sillertides.bandcamp.com](https://sillertides.bandcamp.com)
- Linn is also at: <https://linnphippfolk.co.uk> & <https://www.youtube.com/c/LinnPhipps>

**Doug Huggins and Linn Phipps © July 2023**

Contact (website contact form) <https://linnphippfolk.co.uk/contact/>

#### From VIC GAMMON: I NTERNET STUFF

I have made available recordings of some of my folk revival musical activities, projects and related material on the Internet Archive. Music, performances, talks, interviews, writings.

**Vic Gammon's Audio Archive** on: <https://archive.org/search?query=Vic+Gammon>

Link for material I have placed on the **Internet Archive** (most have a pdf information file with photographs)

<https://archive.org/details/vic-gammon-audio-archive-guide> or [https://www.academia.edu/105017979/Vic\\_Gammon\\_Audio\\_Archive\\_Guide](https://www.academia.edu/105017979/Vic_Gammon_Audio_Archive_Guide)

This downloadable PDF guide gives links and descriptions for the material I have placed on the Internet Archive and, additionally, other material on the Internet. It will be updated occasionally as I add new material.

A number of people have been very helpful in making the audio archive possible and I would like especially to thank Doc Rowe, Stephen Fry, Steve Gray, Will Duke, Tony Dunn, Mike Stevens and the staff of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library for their cooperation and support.

**Articles, Essays etc:** <https://newcastle.academia.edu/VicGammon> Downloadable copies of many of my essays, articles etc.

I make this work freely available to all interested people as a 'thank you' everyone with whom I have shared music, conversation and good company. Please feel free to pass this information on to anyone who may be interested.

**Vic Gammon**

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## The Cemetery Song, from Arthur Ellaway, collected by Gwilym Davies, September 1977; by Verorica Lowe

Woe is me, full of mis-er-y, so I thought I'd take a walk round the ce-me-ter-y

Full of woe, I thought I'd go just to cheer me up with a yo-ho-ho.

Lack-a-day me, dear oh lor, on the ve-ry first tomb-stone there I saw:

Here lies the bo-dy of dear Miss Jones, She died through eat-ing of green plum stones. A

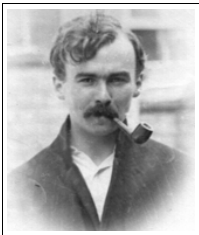
plum stone grew in her dear wind-pipe, Now they've plucked poor Magg-ie be-fore she was ripe.

2. Lackaday me, dear oh lor,  
On the very next tombstone there I saw:  
Here lies I and my two daughters,  
And we died through drinking Chelt'nham waters.  
And if we'd kept to Epsom Salts,  
We should not have been in these here vaults.
3. Lackaday me, dear oh lor,  
On the very next tombstone this I saw:  
Here lies the body of Benjamin Higgs,  
A famous man for killing pigs.  
Killing pigs was his delight,  
From Monday morning till Saturday night.

Source: Arthur Ellaway, Cheltenham. Recorded by Gwilym Davies 5th September 1977

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### publications & recordings announced up to 200 words per publication welcome



#### **ALL MY LIFE'S BURIED HERE - The Story of George Butterworth. Documentary film.**

Dear friends,

I'm writing to let you know about the release of an online streaming/downloadable option for the documentary *ALL MY LIFE'S BURIED HERE - The Story of George Butterworth* [previously featured in FT 66, Jan 2021- Ed.] The complete film (97 mins) is now available via Vimeo on Demand, either as a three day hire option, or as permanent download/watch anytime, at: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/butterworth>

I hope this will give anyone without access to DVD/BluRay playback facilities the chance to watch the film on their device of choice. It can be streamed from any location worldwide. For streaming of the film I can recommend plugging your device into some external speakers, or using headphones, for full enjoyment.

The film's website remains online and contains the link to the streaming version, as well as to the last remaining copies of the DVD/BluRay with booklet, all available by clicking 'Watch the Film': <https://www.georgebutterworth.co.uk/>

Remembering and celebrating George Butterworth on the anniversary of his death at Pozières, the Somme on 5th August 1916.

Best wishes, Stewart ~ Stewart Morgan Hajdukiewicz, Filmmaker

"Very moving ... the finest film account of a composer's life I have ever seen." - Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal, June 2019.

"Highly recommended." - Ian A. Anderson (fRoots magazine). "An outstanding film portrait .. fascinating and ultimately moving." - MusicWeb International.com

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**The Cemetery Song, from Arthur Ellaway, collected by Gwilym Davies, September 1977; by Verorica Lowe**

This song is the first that I learnt as we worked on the Gloucestershire Traditions project, conserving the less tangible history of the county, writing down songs for all to use. I was a transcriber and proof reader on the programme, and I absorbed songs on the go while checking the details.

Gwilym Davies collected The Cemetery Song from Arthur Ellaway in Charlton Kings in 1977. Though this is not quite 50 years ago, we have not managed to find a photo of the singer, even though I know his granddaughter who has no knowledge of his singing, nor any photo of her grandfather. The original source is unclear. It is one of the few songs in the whole Glostrad collection to make reference to actual local places or features.

The song relates to the imaginative epitaphs on Cheltenham gravestones.

The gravestone of John Higgs is famed worldwide, at least as far away as Japan. It is in the churchyard of St Mary's Church, the Cheltenham Minster, the oldest building in the town. It is a flat tombstone, and is so worn it has been re-inscribed on the exposed layer of stone, apparently a common practice, and some of the words may have been slightly different in the first carving, as one columnist in The Morning Post in 1829 reported the first two lines as:

*'Here lies a careful and industrious man  
You will scarce find such an one in ten;'*

However, as the satirical writer in question was recounting her visit to Cheltenham, she may have recollected in error.

When it was mentioned in a Cheltenham guide book around twelve years ago, it was found that there were Japanese tourists who came not for the big festivals for which Cheltenham is famous, but to visit this grave.

*To the memory of John Higgs, died 1825 aged 55.  
Here lies John Higgs  
A famous man for killing pigs  
For killing pigs was his delight  
Both morning, afternoon and night.  
Both heats and colds he did endure  
Which no physician could e'er cure  
His knife is laid, his work is done,  
I hope to heaven his soul is gone.*

The inscription goes on to say that four of his sons 'who died in their infancy' are buried there too, as sad reminder of 19th century reality.

The song calls him Benjamin Higgs, probably a bit of poetic or rhythmic licence.

And this song is not the only one about the grave. About five years ago, I was shown a copy of a short comic 'catch' composed by a community choir leader in Cheltenham. Unfortunately my brain has lost the details, and I have lost contact with my source!

The tombstone bearing the reference to a mother and two, three or four daughters was, according to Ken Langsbury, one of the graves buried under the Churchill Gardens, with some of the displaced tombstones rearranged around the boundary.

When I sing this song I reverse the second and third verses as I have found that mention of Cheltenham waters makes a good flourish at the end.

**Veronica Lowe © November 2023**

See <https://glostrad.com/cemetery-song/> to hear this song and tune as collected and hear a version to sing, in various formats. Gloucestershire Traditions - Glostrad - is the one-stop website for songs and tunes collected in Gloucestershire. See <http://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, starting this issue.

## Folklife news: societies & organisations

**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](http://www.tradsong.org) sooner rather than later.

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](http://www.tradsong.org)

All enquiries to [F] **Martin Graebe** (TSF Secretary), [martin.graebe@btinternet.com](mailto:martin.graebe@btinternet.com)

### BROADSIDE DAY

The next annual Broadside Day will be held on 17th February 2024 at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park, London NW1 7AY.

This is our regular one-day conference devoted to all things to do with street literature and cheap print of the past, in Britain and Ireland and beyond. Organised jointly by the Traditional Song Forum and the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Tickets will be on sale soon.

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers or other presentations, by 5th November 2023. Please send a title, abstract, and short biography to: [steveroud@gmail.com](mailto:steveroud@gmail.com). Other enquiries to the same address.

Steve Roud



**The Folklore Society** [F] **Office** address: The Folklore Society, 50 Fitzroy Street, London W1T 5BT, 0203 915 3034. Our Folklore Society Library and Archives are still at University College London Library and Special Collections, and publicly available for consultation. Many of our books can be loaned by Folklore Society members.

### Forthcoming Folklore Society Events:

❖ **Tue. 7 November, The Katharine Briggs Lecture, & Book Award 2023**

K.T. Paul Hall, Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 6AQ  
This year's Lecture will be given by Paul Gilroy: 'Folk Tradition and the Choosing of Ancestors'. 6pm, K.T. Paul Hall, Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 6AQ. After the lecture, we will announce the winner of this year's Katharine Briggs Award, and all the books entered for this year's award will be on display. (*in-person only*)

❖ **Tue. 14 November, Fertility, Folklore and the Reproductive Body**

50 Fitzroy Street, London W1T 5BT, and online. 10:00-17:00  
A free, one-day symposium.

❖ **Tue. 21 November, Ribbons, Flowers and Locks: A Review of some Contemporary Practices.**

A Folklore Society online talk, by George Monger, 6pm  
George Monger looks at ribbons, floral tributes, love-locks and other customary practices which came to prominence in the 20th century. Global Encyclopedia.

Details on [www.folklore-society.com](http://www.folklore-society.com)

Earishlioar Seihll Tradishoonagh is *Folklife Traditions Journal* in Manx (thanks to Culture Vannin for the translation)

## Manx tunes: Music learnt from the Fairies; The Girls of Balladoole by Stephen Miller

### MUSIC LEARNT FROM THE FAIRIES

The Gill Brothers visited Thomas Kinrade (1825–98) on 3 October 1898 and recorded two tunes from him, “**Yn Colbagh Breck er Sthrap**” (‘The speckled heifer on a strap (*ie*, tether); and the “**Wandescope**”. Kinrade was 66 years old, a fisherman, and residing at 35 Waterloo Road, Ramsey, with his wife Ann (64), and children, Henry (33), a house carpenter, and Jane (24). The Gills noted that “W[illia]m Kewiney used to play this exclusively (60 years) while going from house to house at Christmas time He had heard fairies play it in Glen Auldyn[.]” There was a William Kewiney baptised 15 April 1820 in Lezayre and buried in the same parish on 16 October 1860, aged 41 years. As regards tunes learnt from the fairies, see Barbara Hillers, “Music from the Otherworld: Modern Gaelic Legends about Fairy Music,” *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, eds. Pamela Hopkins, Laurance J. Maney and Donna Wong, vol. xiv (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1994) 58–74. A more recent study of the topic is *The Otherworld: Music & Song from Irish Tradition*, eds. Rionach ui Ógáin and Tom Sherlock, (Dublin: Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, 2022), orig. edn 2012.

“Fairy Music” or “THE WANDESCOPE”

♩ = 10 in. per min.  
0.81

“Wm Kewiney used to play this exclusively (60 years ago) while going from house to house at Christmas time He had heard the fairies play it in Glen Auldyn”

### “THE GIRLS OF BALLADOOLE”

“Altogether I have eight or nine ‘new’ songs since the ‘Girls of Balladoole’—although the last named may be Scotch, it was certainly played by the Manx fiddlers, 70 or 80 years ago.” So wrote Dr John Clague to Deemster J.F. Gill on 25 December 1895. Balladoole is a farm in Rushen parish in the south of the Isle of Man and is likely to be a local title for a tune known elsewhere under a more common name. Clague collected it from Wesley Cleator, who in the 1891 census he is 54 years old, a baker, lodging with the Shimmin household at 3 Patrick Street in Castletown.

Manx T. The Girls of Balladoole.

Wesley Cleator  
Castletown

Stephen Miller, RBV © November 2023

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 Bleaney Vanannan award 2020, see <https://culturevannin.im>

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



## Folklife news: societies & organisations

**PEDLARS PACK.** A discussion list for people interested in street literature and cheap print of the past (broadsides, 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](mailto:pedlars-pack+subscribe@groups.io)

Steve Roud

**Folklife news: societies & organisations****[F] Trac Cymru**

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. .

Free online resources: <https://trac.cymru/en/learning-resources/> including:

- **Traditions:** Articles on Wales' iconic instruments & song traditions according to the experts. <https://trac.cymru/en/articles/>
- **A Collection of Welsh Folk Songs** with the help of Arfon Gwilym, one of our major tradition bearers: videos, soundfiles, dots, & words: <https://trac.cymru/en/songs/>
- **Tunes:** get playing videos, soundfiles, and dots. <https://trac.cymru/en/tunes/>

Trac Cymru organises Gwerin Gwallgo, a residential Folk Weekend for 11-18s [see our **FESTIVALS & WORKSHOPS DIARY**]

See trac website, <https://trac.cymru>, for news, directory, listings, resources, and on Facebook, at [facebook.com/traccymruwales](https://facebook.com/traccymruwales), where you will find videos, details of gigs, etc. [F] trac, Music Traditions Wales, trac[at]trac.cymru, 01446 748 556, <https://trac.cymru/>

**Tom Brown**

**RIP: TOM BROWN**  
18 May 1948 - 30 August 2023

Tom Brown was a folklore researcher and event organiser, as well as a well-known folk performer.

Tom was wonderfully knowledgeable on traditional music particularly of the West Country, and folklore, and shared this freely. He was involved in the management, administration and performance of the vernacular arts for many years, including with EFDSS, Halsway Manor, and The Folklore Society. His M.A. dissertation was on *Mumming: the Evolution and Continuity of English Vernacular Drama* and his Doctoral thesis was on *English Vernacular Performing Arts in the Late Twentieth Century*, researching repertoire, origins, development, motivation and management in over 330 extant performing groups: morris sides, mumming groups, calendar customs and display dance teams.

Tom and Barbara were instrumental in re-establish the "The Hunting of the Earl of Rone" annual custom in Combe Martin, north Devon, now taking place each year over the four days of the Spring Bank Holiday weekend (<https://earl-of-rone.org.uk>).

Tom was a fine folk singer and musician, and together with Barbara, involved in many musical projects, including some fine albums published by Wildgoose Studios, plus festivals and singarounds, as well as the wonderful Whittlebury Song & Ale weekends. They also sang together with Charley Yarwood as Regalia.

Tom and Barbara moved for work reasons from the West Country to London, they came back to Combe Martin in Devon, and set up the Shammick Folk Club.

Tom's funeral was held on 26th September.

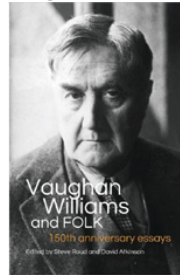


**The Roots of Welsh Border Morris**  
by the late Dave Jones,  
1988, revised 1995;  
ISBN No. 0 9526285 0 3.

£5 by post from:  
Mrs. A. J. Jones,  
Millfield, Golden Valley,  
Bishops Cleeve, Worcs WR6 5BN  
01885 490323;  
email  
[chatter@anniej.me](mailto:chatter@anniej.me)

**publications & recordings announced****LATEST PUBLICATIONS FROM THE BALLAD PARTNERS**

The Ballad Partners, a not-for-profit folk music publishing initiative, now have two more volumes under their belt with the publication this August of *Vaughan Williams and Folk: 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary essays* and, in October, a new biography of Cecil Sharp by David Sutcliffe, *Cecil Sharp, Collector of Folk Songs and Dances*.

**Vaughan Williams and Folk: 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary essays**

Edited by Steve Roud and David Atkinson, this selection of papers celebrates Ralph Vaughan Williams' lifelong involvement with British folk song and music as collector, editor, arranger, and composer. Many of the papers were first presented at the EFDSS' conference 2022, to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vaughan Williams' birth. The book also includes reprints of other key material by him and others.

The book, price £15.00 +£2.95 UK p+p., is available only through the Ballad Partners website: <https://www.theballadpartners.co.uk/publications>

**Cecil Sharp, Collector of Folk Songs and Dances – a new biography by David Sutcliffe**

Cecil Sharp was, of course, the leading figure of the Edwardian folk revival, collecting thousands of songs and dances that were fast disappearing, as well as collecting and publishing many morris, sword and country dances. He was also instrumental in having folk songs taught in schools, and in 1911 founded the English Folk Dance Society, tirelessly promoting these vernacular art forms as an essential part of our cultural heritage.

This substantial new illustrated volume presents a balanced reappraisal of Sharp's life and work, from his earliest days through to his death.

His early life as a music teacher and arranger in Australia and London is perhaps less well-known to 'folkies', who will be more familiar with the story of his hearing his first English folk song. He went on to collect, publish and champion folk songs both in England and the USA, and also teach and publish folk dances.

Sharp was certainly no saint, and he got some things wrong, but there is also much to admire in his single-minded determination and his respect for the people whose songs he meticulously noted. The Ballad Partners hope and believe that, as a result of David Sutcliffe's book – the result of many years' research – a fuller and fairer understanding of Cecil Sharp's methods and motivations will emerge to enrich the discourse.

The new illustrated biography, price £20.00 +£2.95 UK p+p., is available through the Ballad Partners website: <https://www.theballadpartners.co.uk/publications>

*The Ballad Partners* is a not-for-profit publishing company set up in 2018. It aims to publish conference papers and books on traditional song, music, dance and customs in order to raise awareness and encourage the study of the folk arts.



A LIST & PHOTOS © Doc Rowe



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](http://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. All from Doc, except in italics; additional info from †Chris Ridley, †Bill Pullen ©, †Tom & Barbara 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](http://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.

Listings © Doc Rowe except any in italics. Photos © Doc Rowe unless otherwise credited.

**NOVEMBER**

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

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

Tin Can Band	Broughton	Northants	Sunday after 12th Dec
Plygain singing	Montgomeryshire & nearby; now also elsewhere		Mostly pre-Christmas [Eds]
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
Straw Boys/ Mummers	Fermanagh	Ireland	Christmas
Barrel Rolling competition	Denbigh	Denbs	Boxing Day [Eds]
Wren Boys	Dingle	Ireland	Boxing Day
Mummer's Day	Padstow	Cornwall	Boxing Day & New Year's Day
Handsworth Sword Dancers	Handsworth	S. Yorkshire	Boxing Day
Grenoside Sword Dancers	Grenoside	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
Tewkesbury Medieval Play [Mummers]	Tewkesbury	Glos	Boxing Day [Simon Hopkins]
Symondsburys Mummers	Symondsburys	Dorset	Christmas
Fylingdale Guisers	Fylingthorpe	N. Yorks	Christmas
Flambeaux Procession	Comrie	Tayside	New Year's Eve
Swinging The Fireballs	Stonehaven	Grampian	New Year's Eve
Mari Lwyd different places - different days	S.E. Wales		Before Christmas to New Year's Day

**JANUARY**

<b>Wassailing: in many places in England West &amp; Mid-West, some listed here</b>			
Mari Lwyd different places - different days	S.E. Wales		before Christmas to New Year's Day
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	Goathland	North Yorks	1st Sat after Plough Mon
Straw Bear Day	Whittlesea	Cams	Sat nr 6 Jan.
Hen Galan [old New Year], Calennig [New Yr gifts]	Cwm Gwaun	Sir Benfro / Pems	13 Ion/Jan
Longtown Wassail #	Longtown	Herefds	a Sat in January
Apple Tree Wassailing	Whimble	Devon	17th Jan [Old Twelvy Night]
Wassailing	Carhampton	Somerset	17th Jan [Old 12th Night]
Dydd Santes Dwynwen / St Dwynwen's Day		Cymru/Wales	25 Ion/Jan.

**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	UK	2024: Sat, 10 February
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'. Based on information from © †Chris Ridley. Ref: Hurling at St Columb, Ivan Rabey (Lodeneck Press, Padstow: 1972).			
Cakes And Ale Ceremony	St Pauls	London	Ash Wednesday
Dame Elizabeth Marvyn Charity	Ufton Nervet	Berks	Mid Lent
Dydd Gŵyl Dewi (dathliadau, digwyddiadau ysgol)		Cymru	1 Mawrth /
/ St David's Day (celebrations, school events)		Wales	1 March

our Folklife Traditions Directory is on [www.folklife-traditions.uk](http://www.folklife-traditions.uk)

FOLK LIFE TRADITIONS JOURNAL 74, Nov. 2023

All events subject to change, please check first.

