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We also publish *Folklife West*, folk-news magazine, Jan, May, Sept.



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pp16-17, including song & music *Crantock Games*,
sometimes referred to as *Willy Coombe*.

*Tw'as in the month of May, when flowers spring,
And pretty lambkins play and thrushes sing,
When young men do resort to walk about in sport,
Not thinking any harm at Crantock Games.*



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Spottie

'A Comical Tale I'll Tell unto Ye'
— *Spottie* [song], by Keith Gregson, pp5-7



Tune: Calon Lân

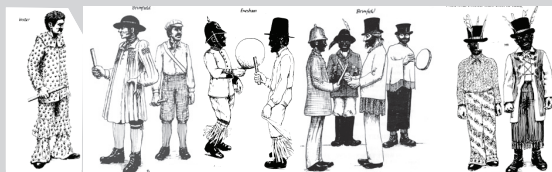
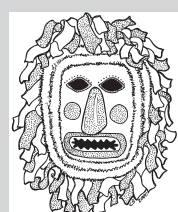
1. The miner's life is like a sailor's

Folklife news: societies & organisations, researchers, publications

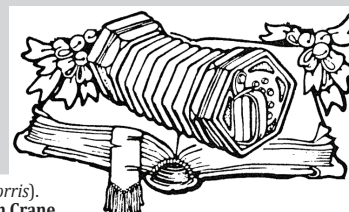


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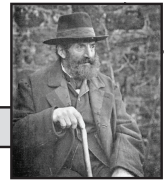
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Morris dancers © Annie Jones (Dave Jones, *The Roots Of Welsh Border Morris*).
Our logos: Minehead Hobby Horse © Chris Beaumont; concertina/book © John Crane

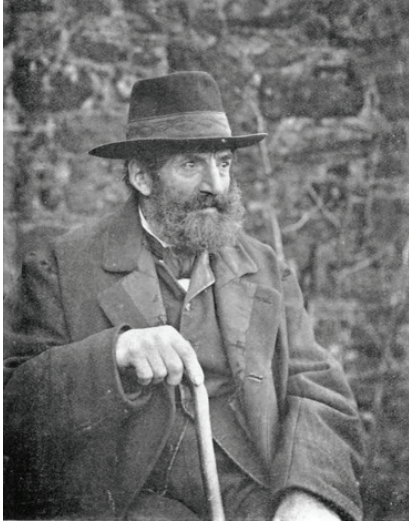


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Baring-Gould's People. 3 – Robert Hard, by Martin Graebe

When, in 1888, Sabine Baring-Gould decided to collect Devonshire folk songs, he wrote to the newspapers asking for people to send him old folk songs. Among those who replied was a retired dentist, Charles Spence Bate, who told him about two old men who lived near him in South Brent. One of these was Robert Hard, a crippled labourer, then 75 years old.



Hard was born at Diptford, near South Brent in 1813 and worked as a farm labourer for most of his life. He had three wives and 10 children – the youngest of which was born when he was 70 years old. Baring-Gould describes him as having “sharply-chiselled features – he must have been a handsome man in his youth, bright eyes, a gentle, courteous manner, and a marvellous store of old words and tunes in his head.”¹

Baring-Gould added “he has a charming old wife; and he and the old woman sing together in parts their quaint ancient ballads.” This would have referred to his third wife, Ann, who would only have been 49 years old at the time. This is an interesting reference to harmony singing. Because Baring-Gould and his colleagues, like the other folk song collectors, were recording melodies, they rarely noted any harmony singing that they heard. Baring-Gould reported that, even though Hard said that his memory was failing, he still managed to give him eighty distinct songs. Many were versions of songs sung throughout England, but there are some unusual examples as well.

At the time Baring-Gould met him Hard was living on £4 a year from the parish, for which he was expected to break stones for road repairs. Baring-Gould organised a concert in South Brent with the intention that the proceeds should go to the old men from whom he had collected songs. Robert Hard was sent £5, but when the parish found out, they threatened to stop his relief money. Baring-Gould ensured that Hard continued to receive his relief and topped it up with more in following years.²

Baring-Gould and his Colleagues visited South Brent twice in 1888 to collect songs. Then, in 1892, Baring-Gould heard that Hard's health was failing. On the 8th of November he took the early train down to South Brent to meet with Hard again. He persuaded the vicar to let him use his living room and his piano and he spent the day, from 9:30 to 6:30 with the old man, listening to more of his songs. Less than a month later Hard collapsed while on his way to break stones to earn his relief money and died a few days later.

The photograph at the head of the article was published in the *Western Weekly News* shortly after his death.³ He attracted some obituaries in other regional papers, because of his fame as one of Baring-Gould's singers. We learn from these that he was a prominent member of the church and sang in the choir for several years. He was said to ‘sing a good song and make good company almost at the last.’⁴

Baring-Gould wrote a letter to the *Western Morning News* describing Robert Hard's contributions to his collection. Because this was written contemporaneously the information can be considered more accurate than some of his later accounts.

Death of Robert Hard of South Brent

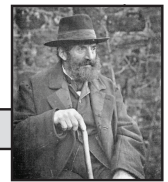
SIR, - The old stone breaker who has just passed away at South Brent, at an advanced age deserves a little further notice than a hasty paragraph in a daily paper. He was a man who is likely to be named for many generations. With one exception that I know, his has proved the most retentive memory, and also the most accurate for old ballads and songs and their melodies. I made his acquaintance in 1888, when the late Mr. C. Spence Bate wrote to me to say that there was a crippled stone-breaker at South Brent, who was rather famous locally as a song-man. First Mr. W. F. [Sic] Bussell and I, and then Rev H. Fleetwood Sheppard and I went to South Brent and collected his ballads with their melodies. I find that we have already published nine airs with their words taken down from his lips, but this by no means represents the whole amount collected from him. In fact, I have got as many as thirty-two from him, independent of others that are common property. Recently, indeed last month, I went to South Brent to see the old man once again and ascertain if he knew some of the melodies I had got from other singers in an incorrect or incomplete form. I had a whole day with him, from ten in the morning to six in the evening, and I then took down from him as many as eleven airs, one or two of which were very early and interesting. One was a song that is found among a collection of West Country Garlands in the British

1 Sabine Baring-Gould, *Old Country Life* (London: Methuen, 1889), pp. 279-280.

2 ‘Death of Robert Hard of South Brent’, *Western Morning News*, 6 December 1892, p. 3.

3 ‘Death of an Old Ballad Singer’, *Western Weekly News*, 10 December 1892, p. 5.

4 ‘South Brent’, *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 2 December 1892, p. 5.



Baring-Gould's People. 3 – Robert Hard, by Martin Graebe, *continued*

Museum, in 'The Valiant Maiden's Garland' printed in Bristol about 1755. He knew nearly the whole ballad consisting of eleven stanzas, and, what was most interesting, the melody, which, I suppose, has never been printed. I have given both the portrait of Robert Hard and an account of him in my 'Old Country Life'. He was a remarkably handsome man, picturesque with his dark eyes and finely cut features, was singularly courteous and gentle. He was a cripple, and had to labour painfully along, leaning on two sticks, a martyr to rheumatism, and yet obliged to earn his scanty livelihood by breaking stones by the roadside. His old wife still lives; she was wont to sing along with him, and a charming sight it was to see the venerable couple by the fireside chirping forth some ancient ballad, old as the Wars of the Roses in parts. I am glad to say that for the last three winters, out of the profits of 'Songs of the West', I have been able to help the poor old man to keep the wolf from the door.

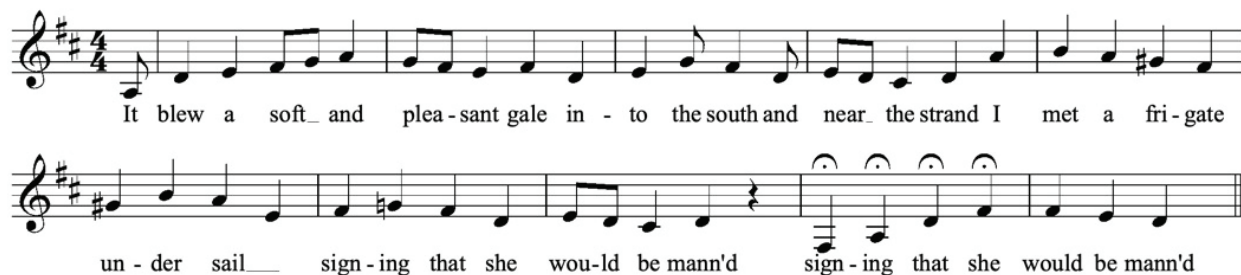
Since I began collecting Westcountry songs in 1888, Jonas Coaker, of Post Bridge, is dead; so is poor Will Huggins of Lydford, so Roger Luxton, of Halwell; and now Robert Hard is laid in the dust. So the old singers of ancient ballads pass away. The old order changeth, and there come in new songs of different kind to new and not very melodious and original airs. To me it will always be mingled pleasure and ache of heart that I think of the dear old men, so ready to oblige, so cheerful, and so pleased in their decline of life to find that there were some who could still appreciate the quaint melodies that had been the delight of their youth. They are men not to be forgotten in the West, they have shown that Devon and Cornwall have had their own music in the past, as well as Wales and Scotland.

S. Baring Gould
December 2nd, 1892 ⁵

The song that I have chosen to represent Robert Hard is 'A Frigate Well Manned' (Roud 21847), one of those that he sang to Baring-Gould on that final visit in November 1892. It is a mildly naughty piece in which a sailor meets a lady of negotiable affection who is represented as a vessel.

A Frigate Well Manned

Collected from Robert Hard, South Brent, 8 November 1892



It blew a soft & pleasant gale
Into the south & near the strand
I met a Frigate under sail
Signing that she would be mann'd.

Her swelling sails & streamers spread
So sweetly in the wind she steer'd
She saileth without line or lead
Into the Western Port she bare.

Instead of heavy canvas wings
Her sails were made of satin fine
Her ropes were silk, her bolts gold rings
She strove fair Flora to outshine.

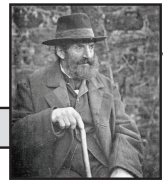
Her name it was the 'Virgin Dove'
She lately came from Plymouth town
She's laden deep with charms of love
And chartered for Venus (Venice?) bound.

O when I viewed her every part
Maintop & mizen, bows & stern
Deluded by her treacherous heart
I could no more of her discern.

I built myself a very shift
To row ashore when tide was low
I left that Frigate about to drift
Now she is gone - so let her go.

This can be found in Volume 2 of Baring-Gould's 'Personal Copy' manuscript on page 327. It has been assigned Roud number 21847.

⁵ 'Death of Robert Hard of South Brent', *Western Morning News*, 6 December 1892, p. 3.



Baring-Gould's People. 3 – Robert Hard, by Martin Graebe, *continued*

Baring-Gould discovered a version of this song in an eighteenth century chapbook, *The Mistaken Ladys' [Sic] Garland*, while working in the British Museum Library.⁶ This matches his manuscript copy closely but includes two additional verses. The first line of the final verse in both Baring-Gould's manuscript version and in the broadside is 'I built myself a very shift'. I think that this is likely to have been a mishearing by the broadside printer of 'a wherry swift'.

Baring-Gould also draws our attention to a mention in the *Bagford Ballads* of a song, 'The Pinnacle'; an early ancestor of 'A Frigate Well Manned' which was well known in the sixteenth century. The earliest known report of it was by Samuel Rowlands in *A Crew of Kind Gossips met to be merry* (1613) and it is said to have been among the songs denounced by the writer, Philip Stubbes, in his *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583).⁷

A pinnacle rigg'd with silken sailes
What is more lovely then to see
But still to see is small availe
I must aboard, as thinketh me
To see is well
But more to tell
Lackes more than sight, you will agree

I must aboard, to note eche parte
And then go down into her holde
The outside can not me divert
Albeit be of silke and gold
To see without
Keepeth in doubt
She must be felt, and I'll be bold

Her timbers I must eke survey
To know if they be strong and sound
That must I do without delay
And all her frame examine round
Her ribs of oke
They may be broke
And in her nether parts unsound

A pinnacle may be rigged with silke
And all may be but outward show
Her bottom must be white as milke
And all her tackling gere below
She may be stale
With silken saile
That at the first I faine would know

In such a case you can not make
Too sure of what you enter thus
Some pinnaces such lading take
As of-times is most dangerous
To board a prize
To please your eyes
O then, far better not untrusse.

Martin Graebe © 27 October 2025

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

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

⁶ Ref: *The Mistaken Ladys' Garland*, BM. 11621,C.4. No. 23, c. 1760.

⁷ 'The Pinnacle' is included in the 'Amanda Group' of J W Ebsworth (Ed), *The Bagford Ballads, Second Division* (Hertford: Stephen Austin for the Ballad Society, 1878), pp. *515 - *517.

Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; publications. ➤ *More news from p15.*

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



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

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

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

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

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

The exhibition will be on display at The Salisbury Museum from 7th February – 10th May 2026.

For more information visit:

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



'A Comical Tale I'll Tell unto Ye' — Spottee, by Keith Gregson

Keith Gregson looks at the story behind what might be Wearside's oldest known song

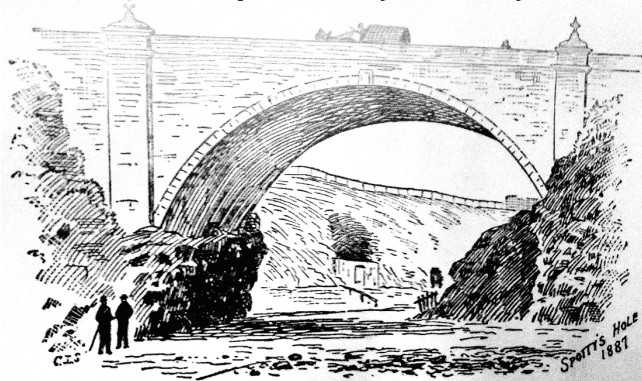
If Tyneside and County Durham/Wearside were to lay claims to their own 'national anthems', their inhabitants would doubtlessly choose 'The Blaydon Races' and 'The Lambton Worm'.⁽¹⁾ Both these songs are traceable back to the North East of the 1860s – the former to the music/concert halls and the latter to the traditional theatre and pantomime. Wearside's capital, Sunderland, has recently been accepted into the International Music Cities Network.⁽²⁾ One outcome of this acceptance has been an increased interest in songs relating to the city – songs ancient and modern. In August 2025, a large crowd gathered to take part in 'National Mackem Day' where 18 artists and poets performed material directly related to the city.⁽³⁾ Sunderland has every right to be named a 'Music City'. There is a lengthy tradition of music and song here. Local man Bede (later canonised) mentioned the appearance at St Peter's Monastery at Monkwearmouth of Rome's Cantor John – one of the great singer/songwriters of his day – and that was over 1300 years ago.

In gathering together Wearside songs from the past, one in particular stands out as worthy of close examination. Its title is simply '**Spottee**' or '**Spottie**' and its origins may be traced back to the eighteenth century. The song appears in three major publications from which we can garner both words and a viable tune. The earliest publication is in Cuthbert Sharp's 1834 'Bishoprick Garland'.⁽⁴⁾ Joseph Crawhall's 'A Beuk of Newcassel Songs' (1888) has both words and tune and is accompanied by a note stating 'though relating to Sunderland, Spottie may not inaptly find a place here'.⁵ Later in the century 'Spottee' became the subject of a lengthy article in the *Monthly Chronicle* – an arts and cultural publication produced on Tyneside.⁽⁶⁾ Now and again, newspaper articles have turned up, but these have usually used the earlier publications as sources.

The song Spottee is based on a mixture of unsourced 'facts' and handed down legend, although the existence of the main character has never been in doubt. He was known as Spotty, Spottee or Spottie on account of the spotted clothes he wore. His origins are uncertain but for one reason or another he was either unable or unwilling to communicate with others. One theory is that he was a foreign sailor who was shipwrecked and unable to speak English. Another, put rather crudely by Crawhall, was that he was 'a poor lunatic'.⁽⁷⁾

Whatever the case, it has always been accepted that he inhabited a cave known today as Spottee's Cave or Spottee's Hole which is a short walk away from the mouth of the River Wear and close to the beach and sea front. There are a number of small caves around the area which is known as Roker Ravine although there is some dispute as to which of them was 'Spottee's Hole'.

Spottee's Hole from Monthly Chronicle



Crawhall's woodcut of Spottee's face



The song refers to a number of incidents concerning the Wearside hermit with two of them usually earmarked as of interest. The first concerns the fact that the fishwives of nearby Whitburn had to cross the beach in front of the cave in order to get to the fish quay. So frightened were they that they went out to sea in fishing cobbles and reached the fish quay via the mouth of the river. The town fishwives were also frightened to go near – especially when accompanied by their children.⁽⁸⁾

The second tale accuses Spottee of causing a collier brig to crash into nearby rocks. It is suggested that he had lit a fire on the beach and that the ship's captain had mistaken the flames for the light of a local lighthouse. When the captain adjusted his position accordingly, he found himself grounded and in danger of sinking. After this, or so the story goes, Spottee was never seen again.

Across the years, a variety of correspondents have labelled Spottee as the oldest known Wearside song. Of greater interest perhaps is the survival of evidence for the song's performance. From about 1819 to approximately 1870, the song was the go-to song in the repertoires of a number of local singers. Between 1819 and 1822 the press reported on its performance at local gatherings (in 1819 and 1820 in Sunderland and in 1822 at Chester le Street). The suggestion was that it was 'an excellent song' and one capable of creating 'lively interest'. The link between the performances appears to have been Cuthbert Sharp of the 'Bishoprick Garlands' who was a guest at least two of the three events and probably sang the songs himself.⁽⁹⁾ A couple of decades later it became a staple in Robert Toppliff's Merry Neet which toured the theatres of North East England in the 1840s. Here it was heard alongside songs written by Robert Anderson the Cumberland Bard, as well as 'Washing Day', 'The Keel Row', 'Blow the Wind Southerly', 'Elsie Marley' and 'Bobby Shafto' and a number of other songs which modern north easterners would own as 'local folk songs' – and this before the famous Tyneside Songs of the 1860s written and popularised by Ridley, Wilson and Corvan.⁽¹⁰⁾ While these three singer/songwriters were performing across the halls of North east England, a Wearside man was ensuring the continued popularity of Spottee. A Folk Life article has already noted Captain Edward 'Ned' Robinson as a preserver of Wearside song including 'The Ship is all laden'.⁽¹¹⁾ 'Spottee' was his most requested song and the ex-master mariner would often dress up as the hermit in order to perform it. When he died in 1870, the author of his obituary noted that he was famed for singing 'Spottee' not only at local entertainments but also in foreign ports.⁽¹²⁾

After Robinson's death, the performance trail for Spottee goes cold. Across the last 150 years local journalists have occasionally referenced the story and printed a verse or two of the song. However, there is no indication that it has remained popular and performed across the North East as have 'Blaydon Races' and 'Lambton Worm' – and this despite the cave (or what some thought to be the cave) forming part of the Sunderland illuminations in the 1980s.⁽¹³⁾

In the late nineteenth century, a journalist on a Tyneside newspaper suggested that Cuthbert Sharp had found the words in the papers of Thomas Clarke – a Wearside poet and songwriter – and suspected that Clarke may have been the author.⁽¹⁴⁾ The version most performed in the 19th century (with the occasional differences) can be found in Crawhall and a couple of regional newspapers.⁽¹⁵⁾

Words and tune from Crawhall - next page

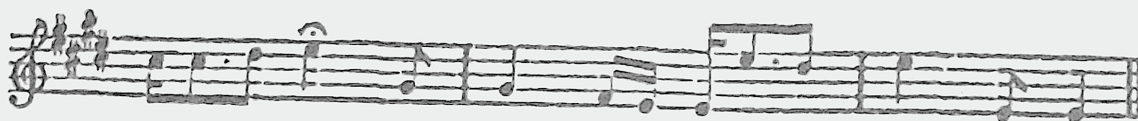
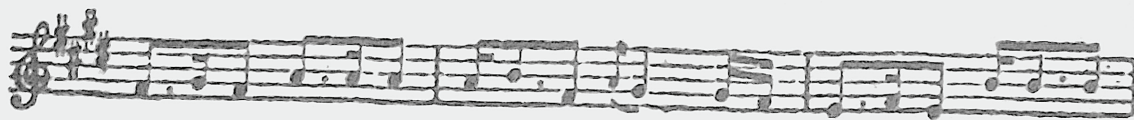


'A Comical Tale I'll Tell unto Ye' — Spottie, by Keith Gregson, *cont'd*

Though relating to Sunderland, Spottie may not inaptly find a place here.

Spottie.

[Spottie was a poor lunatic, who lived in a cave at Roker, between Whitburn and Sunderland, which still retains the name of "Spottie's Hole."]



COME all ye good people and listen to me,
And a comical tale I will tell unto ye,
Belangin' yen Spottie—lcev'd on the law
Quay,
That had nowther hoose nor harbour he.

THE poor auld wives o' the North side dissn't know
what for to dee,
For they daurna' come to see their husbands when they
come to the Quay :
They're feared for their sels, an' their infants tee,
For this roguish fellow they ca' Spottie.

Keith Gregson © March 2026

Keith is a Sunderland singer, writer, and historian.

P.S. When working as a facilitator in Sunderland Schools earlier this century, I was keen on ensuring that local schoolchildren knew the story behind 'Spottee's Hole'. so arranged and adapted the original and added a chorus. It can be viewed on the EFDSS web site as part of the online version of my *Singing Histories Sunderland* –

[EFDSS Education RecentProjects
SingingHistoriesSunderland.pdf](#)

Endnotes

- (1) See my article 'The Worm That Turned' in FTJ No 78, Nov 2025. pp16-18.
- (2) [Music Cities Network](#) | Non-profit association for information on the association's terms of reference.
- (3) Sunderland folks are known as Mackems for reasons much disputed. I have my own theory so please get in touch if interested.
- (4) See my biography of Sharp in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography - [Sharp, Sir Cuthbert \(1781-1849\), historian](#) | [Oxford Dictionary of National Biography](#).
(Ednotes continues next page)



BUT noo he's gyen away unto the seaside,
Where mony a yen wishes he may be wshed
away wi' the tide,
For if Flouter's flood com' as it used for to dee,
It'll drive his heart oot—then where'll his midred be ?

THE poor auld wives of Whitburn dissn't knaw what
for to dee,
For they daur na come along the sands wi' their lang-
rail skyets i' their hands, to Jacob Spence's
landin' as they used for to dee,
They daurna come along the sands wi' their swills i'
their hands,
But they're forced to tyek a coble an' come in by the sea.

AS Laird Forster was riding along the sands,
As he, or ony other gentleman might chance for
to dee,

Spottie cam' oot—his tanter-wallups did flee—
His horse teuk the boggle, an' off flew he.

HE gethers coals i' the day-time, as he's well knawn
for to dee,
An' myeks a fire on at neet, which kests a leet into the sea,
Which gar'd a poor sloopy cry "hellem a lee,"
An' aback o' the Carcasses cam' poor she.

ALACK ! an' well-a-day, said the Maister—"What
mun we dee ?"

"Trust to Providence" said the Mate, "an' we're sure to
get free ;"

There was a poor little lad 'at had come a trial viage to sea,
His heart went like a pair of bellowses, an' he didn't
knaw what for to dee,

JOHNNY USHER, the Maister, wad ha'e carried
him away,

But the ships company swore, de'il be their fate if they
wad wi' him stay ;

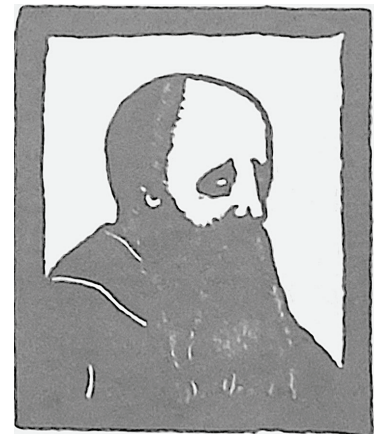
We'll first forfeit oor wages for not gannin' to sea
Afore we'll gan' wi' that roguish fellow they ca' Spottie.



**'A Comical Tale
I'll Tell unto Ye' —
Spottee, by Keith
Gregson, cont'd**

Endnotes, continued

- (5) A Beuk O Newcassel Songs - collected by Joseph Crawhall (1888 reprinted Newcastle 1965). pp116-118.
- (6) Monthly Chronicle of North-Country Law and Legend 1893.
- (7) Crawhall ibid.
- (8) There has never been a suggestion that he actually attacked anybody.
- (9) Belfast News-Letter, 25 June 1819; Durham County Advertiser, 29 April 1820 and 7 December 1822.
- (10) Newcastle Courant, 15 November 1844. Durham Chronicle, 5 November 1847.
- (11) FTJ No 75, March 2024, pp12/13.
- (12) Times of India, 8 January 1870, and many others.
- (13) Monkwearmouth Academy in Sunderland made a video based on Spottee's life earlier this century.
- (14) Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 7 December 1885.
- (15) Crawhall pp 116 -118; Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 8 September 1863 ('as performed by Topliff') and Newcastle Evening Chronicle.





Two songs from Worcestershire, by Charles Menteith

Worcestershire Folklife
Folklife West Journal
Nº. 1, September 2006

This new Journal starts with a special issue for Worcestershire

Worcestershire Songs collected by Charles Menteith: "Bill The Weaver" and "Now on that hill ..."

Originally published in *Vol. 1, Nº 1, pp8-9*. This article was print-only ~ so is not included in our online **Folklife Traditions Journal Archive** (free PDF downloads) at <https://folklife.uk/journal> (original used 'ITC Bookman BT' typeface; now using 'Bookman Old Style' as the nearest we have).

Now on that hill . . . , from Stanley Cope

The Tree on the Hill

Now on that hill there stands a tree, such a nice lit - tle tree you ne'er did see, and the tree on the hill and the hill stood still, and the green grass grew all a - round my boys, and the green grass grew all a - round, and the green grass grew all a - round, all a - round, and the green grass grew all a - round.

* This bar is repeated as often as necessary.

"Now on that hill there stands a tree,
Such a nice little tree you ne'er did see,
And the tree on the hill and the hill stood still, And the green grass grew all around my boys And the green grass grew all around.,
And the green grass grew all around, all around, And the green grass grew all around.."

Further items are added to the beginning of the third line, until the last verse, which is as follows:

Now on this leg there was a claw,
Such a nice little claw you ne'er did see,
And the claw on. the leg,
And the leg on. the crow,
And the crow in the egg,
And the egg in the nest,
And the nest on the leaf,
Mid the leaf on the twig,
And the twig on the branch,
And the branch on the bough,
And the bough on the tree,
And the tree or. the hill,
And the hill stood still,
And the green grass grew all around my boys, And the green grass grew all around,
And the green grass grew all around, all around, And the green grass grew all around.

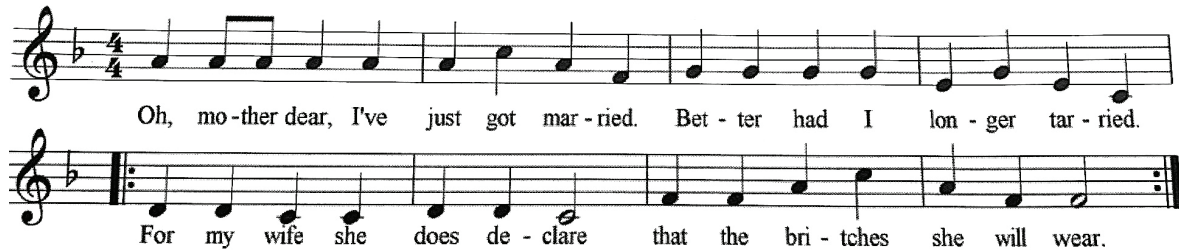
The above song was collected by the author and Gwilym and Carol Davies from Stanley Cope, who has lived at Ashton-under-Hill all his life. A similar version is sung by 'Buster' Mustoe, landlord of the "Round of Gras" in Badsey, and the song is remembered by William Davies, who was brought up at Norton. It seems likely that this version of a widely known song enjoyed wide currency in the Vale of Evesham. Ray Hartland, of Tirley, Glos, sings a version with similar words in the chorus.

The most similar version which has come to my attention is Cornish (Canow Kernow, p 57), and here the tree is also on the hill, with the green grass growing around. Three versions in the Journal of the Welsh Folk Song Society, Vol. I, also have the tree on the hill, followed by the hill on the earth and the earth on nothing. Most other versions, including several collected in the South-West by Baring-Gould, and in the Upper Thames Valley by Alfred Williams, place the tree in a wood.

This song is often entitled "The Everlasting Circle", because of a version collected by Baring-Gould from James Parsons, of Lew Down, and J. Woodrich. In this version there is a feather on the bird, a bed from the feather, a couple in the bed who have a son who plants an acorn, thus making a new tree. James Reeves implies in "The Idiom of the .People" (1958) and "The Everlasting Circle" (1960) that this Circle is an essential part of the original form of the song, and that all other versions are degenerate in that they have lost it. This view has been repeated recently by Roy Palmer (Everyman's Book of English Country Songs). I suspect that this view is strongly influenced by the antiquarian attitude



Bill the Weaver, from Buster Mustoe



"Oh mother dear I've just got married.
Better had I longer tarried.
For my wife she does declare
That the britches she will wear."

"Come loving son no more discover.
I'll have thee go home and love her
And give thy wife just what's her due,
For I don't want no more of you."

"I'll give her clothes, I'll give her diet,
Anything to keep her quiet.
Then if on me she does rebel,
I'll get a stick and I'll wallop her well."

Now the neighbours they did tell him,
For they all did want to please him.
"I'll tell thee where and I'll tell thee how,
Who I saw with thy wife just now."

We saw her with Bill the Weaver.
They were very close together
On the footpath by thy door.
In they went and we saw no more."

Now he went home all in a wonder,
Knocking on the door like thunder.
"Who is there?" the weaver cried,
"It is my husband, thee must hide."

Up the chimney then he ventured,
She opened the door and her husband entered.
He searched the rooms and the chambers
round,
But not a soul could there be found.

Up the chimney then he gazed.
He stood there like one amazed.
There he saw that wretched soul
Perched on the top of the chimney pole.

"Now, Bill the Weaver, I have got thee,
I shall neither hang nor drown thee.
I shall stifle thee with smoke."
Thus he thought, but he never spoke.

So he built up a roaring fire,
Just to please his own desire,
Which made poor Bill to cough and sneeze,
Where he sat at little ease.

As he stacked on more fuel,
His wife said "As I am your jewel,
As long as I am thy lawful wife,
Please take him out and spare his life."

Out of the chimney then he took him,
And he did severely shook him.
He cried out with every stroke:
"Come here no more to stop my smoke."

There was never black devil or a chimney
sweeper
Half as black as Bill the Weaver.
Hands and face and clothes likewise,
He sent him home with two black eyes.

"Buster" Mustoe was the landlord of the "Round of Gras" at Badsey near Evesham. The pub was indeed well known for the asparagus there. Fred Evans remembered him singing *Bill the Weaver* on cricket tours to Hampshire during the 30's.
He kindly recorded the song for Charles Menteith on 7 December 1974.

Now on that hill . . . , from Stanley Cope (from previous page)

to songs prevalent at the end of the 19th century, which saw songs current in the tradition as being more or less debased versions of the originals, from which it might be possible to deduce the true original form.

I only know of one version of this song which includes the "everlasting circle". The tree, branch, twig, nest, egg, bird (and often feather) are found in most versions. In those that continue further, a variety of items are found. I suggest that these are the products of local imagination in various places by various singers. The Everlasting Circle version would be a particularly elaborate and satisfying example.

Charles Menteith © September 2006, March 2026

Many thanks to Charlie for these two songs.

Now on that hill ... was originally published in *Folkwrite* (N° 9, Autumn 1981).



Sea Shanties — The North Shields Connection, by Jim Mageean

Before the 1830's, there is little evidence of shanties being sung at sea by European or American sailors.

There are no shanties collected during the entire Eighteenth Century and few from previous centuries where songs of piracy and shipwreck seemed to dominate.

A few records exist of chants with simple refrains being used aboard Mediaeval vessels but not complete songs with story lines and choruses.

So, what happened to change this?

The centuries-long Wars between the British, French, Spanish, Dutch and even the Americans came to an end in 1815.

Commerce could thrive again, particularly across the Atlantic Ocean.

European sailors once again came into contact with their American counterparts and also with the men who loaded their ships with lumber, sugar, coffee, rum and particularly, cotton.

The men who did this loading were, almost exclusively, black and of African origin.

These men (stevedores and hoosiers) were known to never engage in a job of work without a song to accompany it. Songs they had learned from their forebears on the plantations. Songs which had their origins in West Africa.

Sailors heard this singing as their ships were being loaded. This would take weeks or even months. Sometimes the ship's crew would even take part in the loading process – screwing the cotton into the ships hold by means of huge jack-screws.

In this way these songs from the land found their way to sea as work songs or shanties. Of course, the texts of the songs were altered to suit their new environment. Hence songs like 'Blow the Man Down' and 'Roll the Old Chariot Along' came to be sung by British and American sailors.

However, something else happened around this time to aid the process. The equipment used by the sailors aboard ship underwent a technological revolution!

Hauling on ropes to set and manage the sails was still as it had been for centuries but, slowly, winches were employed to ease this work.

The old see-saw mechanism pumps (needed to constantly keep the sea water out of the bilges) became modernized to include fly wheels (the Downton Pump). But the biggest change came in the mechanism for heaving up the heavy anchors.

For centuries the device used for this was the 'spoke windlass' (or wyndlas in Middle English) where handles attached to a horizontal barrel were turned to wind in the anchor cable. This type of mechanism, said to have been invented by Archimedes, is still employed to this day aboard Chinese Junks and Arab Dhows.

However, it soon became extinct during the 1830's in Merchant ships.

A man from North Shields at the mouth of the River Tyne saw to that!

In 1832 he invented and patented a new improved device called the **Patent Brake Windlass** at his iron works in Low Lights on the quayside.

The patent was granted on August 3rd 1832 to **Thomas Storer Dobinson and his partner Benjamin Cowie Tyzack**. For years they had been makers of ships anchors, chains and cables at their Tyne Chain Works.

The History of Tynemouth (1841) declares: "At Low Lights



are extensive iron works, the property of Messrs B.C. Tyzack and T.S. Dobinson patentees of an improved windlass called Tyzack & Dobinson's Patent Windlass. They are extensive government contractors for supplying Her Majesty's Navy with anchors, chains and cables... Mr Dobinson was appointed Deputy High Admiral of the coast of Northumberland".

Despite his high office, on May 12th 1851, Thomas was declared bankrupt at Her Majesty's Court in Newcastle.

He died at Percy Banks, North Shields in 1865 in his 80th year.

Dobinson's new device worked in a similar fashion to the see-saw pumps but was much larger with huge handles on both sides. It took several men on each side to operate it in a double-action movement.

From above head height to chest height in one movement, then downward to below knee height in the second.

This double 'heave' lent itself to the type of 'chanty' songs the sailors had learned from the stevedores at the jack-screws. A double refrain could be yelled out after simple lead lines from the 'chanteyman' (as the hoosiers called him).

Thus, a new type of heaving shanty was born with two refrain lines instead of the single line used in hauling shanties.

This was probably the 'birth' of shanty singing as we know it today.

Dobinson's brake windlass (and its later counterpart the vertical barrelled capstan) would allow shanty singing to develop into the style we know and love today with story lines and great choruses as in 'Lowlands', 'Sally Brown' and 'Santiana'.

Stan Hugill said that "when the last American whaling ship 'Charles W Morgan' was being hauled into port for the last time, with her crowd at the windlass roaring out 'Santiana', it is reported that many old timers on the quayside had tears in their eyes as they listened to the swelling chorus of this ancient work-song".

Why do them yellin' gals love me so

Chorus: Away, Santiana!

Because I don't tell 'em all I know

Chorus: All along the plains of Mexico!

Jim Mageean © Mar 20, 2024

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



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

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

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





The Miner's Life (sung by Walter Haydn Davies) (Tems 295), by Mick Tems

Tune: Calon Lân, see text below

1. The miner's life is like a sailor's,

'Board a ship to cross the waves
Every day his life's in danger,
Still he ventures, being brave.
Watch the rocks, they're always falling,
Careless miners often fail;
Keep your hands upon your wages
And keep your eyes upon the Scale.

Chorus: Union members, stand together,

Never heed the owners' tale;
Keep your hand upon your wages
And your eyes upon the Scale.

2. You've been docked and docked again, boys, You've been told that you have won, (*you've been working two to one*)

What have you to show for working
Since your mining days begun?
But worn-out bodies, worn-out miners,
And your children looking pale;
Keep your hands upon your wages
And keep your eyes upon the Scale.

Chorus

3. In conclusion, bear in memory

Keep this password in your mind:
God provides for every worker
When in union they combine.
Stand like men, and stand together
Victory for you will then prevail;
Keep your hands upon your wages
And your eyes upon the Scale.

Chorus

This was sung to the hymn tune 'Calon Lân', original verses by **Gwyrsoydd** - Daniel James of Swansea, a puddler working at local ironworks and tinsplate works - and composed by **John Hughes**, an organist from Swansea. ⁽¹⁾

It originated from the **Welsh Coal Strike of 1898**, when The South Wales Miners' Federation protested about the coal-owners' attitude to the **Sliding Scale**, a process where the miners' wages were regulated by the coal price fluctuations of the market. The instigator of the Sliding Scale was the coal magnate **William Thomas Lewis**, (nicknamed 'Sir Wil'), created the First Baron Merthyr in 1911. He was owner of a number of pits, including the Lewis Merthyr colliery at the village of Trehafod near Porth, Rhondda Valley. Lewis had two sons, Bertie and Trevor, and named the two pit shafts at the Lewis Merthyr colliery after them. The strike quickly deteriorated into a six-month lock-out; nevertheless, the Sliding Scale survived, which resulted in failure for the strikers.

After the strike, many miners joined their fellow Welshmen in the great diaspora and emigrated to America to seek out a new life in the coal-rich region of Scranton, Pennsylvania. (When Calennig toured in America, we played a concert in Scranton, organised by the Welsh Society, and were struck by so many similarities. We could have been in the Rhondda Valley!) **Welsh miners brought 'The Miner's Life'**

to America, but American miners sang it to the tune of the hymn 'Life's Stairway to Heaven'.

I collected 'The Miner's Life' from Gareth Williams, lodge secretary at Morlais Colliery and later Lord Mayor of Swansea; this version of the song came from the traditional singer and author **Walter Haydn Davies** (1903-1984), a Bedlinog miner who left the mining industry and later held the post of headmaster of Bargoed Grammar Technical School.

Lewis also owned The Universal Colliery at Senghenydd, in the Aber Valley near Caerphilly, **which held the notorious record of the worst mining disaster in the whole of Britain**. The colliery was developed from 1891. In 1901, an explosion at the colliery killed 81 men. The Mines Inspectorate was critical of Lewis for not improving safety.

In 1911 (the same year that Lewis was made a peer), the new Mines Act required that all collieries were to be capable of reversing the air current ventilating the mine by January 1913. No work was undertaken at Senghenydd to implement this requirement, and the Mines Inspectorate gave Lewis an extended deadline of September 1913 to complete the work; but again this deadline was missed.

On the morning of October 14, 1913, six weeks after the final mines inspectorate deadline, approximately 950 men worked in Universal Colliery's two pits. Just after 8am, an explosion ripped through the west side underground workings. The cause was probably a build-up of firedamp (methane) being ignited by electric sparking from equipment such as electric bell signalling gear. The initial explosion disturbed coal dust present on the floor, raising a cloud that then also ignited. The shock wave ahead of the explosion raised yet more coal dust, so that the blast was effectively self-fueling. Those miners not killed immediately by the fire and explosion would have died quickly from afterdamp, the noxious gases formed by combustion. These include lethal quantities of carbon monoxide, which kills very quickly by combining with haemoglobin in the blood, resulting in suffocation by lack of oxygen or anoxia.

The death count was 439 miners, plus one rescuer. A journalist from The Times wrote:

"The numbers are truly awful. We talk in awed terms of the decimation of a regiment in a bloody battle, but here a great community engaged in the pursuit of a peaceful vocation is threatened with the loss of at least a quarter of its able bodied manhood".

Survivors were extracted from the colliery, with the last 18 miners rescued in the early hours of October 15. The resulting funerals took over a month to complete. Edward Shaw, the mines manager, was fined £24 for breaches of the mines safety code, while Lewis was fined £10 - only a few pence for each miner killed.

Mick Tems © March 2026

Mick Tems is a singer, musician, and collector.

Some of his **archive** is at <http://www.folk.wales/archives.html>
More on Archive: see **p19** & www.folklife.uk/mick-tems-archive

Mick is a founder of the long-running **Llantrisant Folk Club**; our **all-Wales correspondent for Folklife West**, and recently created **The FolkWales Listings**, an instantaneous all-Wales showcase of folk events on www.folk.wales/updates/the-folkwales-listings

Notes: ⁽¹⁾ **Calon Lân** ('A Pure Heart'), one of the most popular Welsh hymns, also popular at rugby matches. Written in the 1890s, very popular at the time of the strike (Welsh hymn tunes were and are used for political songs). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calon_Lân.

A BBC choral / orchestra arrangement of Calon Lân is on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIDZNAzXPVA>
 The tune used in English folk clubs is the American one noted in the text.



The Life Of A Man, Two versions in GlosTrad, by Veronica Lowe

The Life Of A Man, Two versions in GlosTrad: "As leaves on trees, such is the life of man", Homer.

Memento mori, reminders of our mortality, have clearly been around for thousands of years. One of the best known visual ones is The Ambassadors by Hans Holbein, with a diagonal elongated skull at the bottom.

At this time of year, Christians will be reminded 'Remember man that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return,' as they are marked on the forehead with a cross that gives Ash Wednesday its name. Traditionally the ashes are from the burnt palm leaves from the previous Palm Sunday: Leaves and decay and the years going round.

An alternative title is **The Fall of the Leaf**, though this is a title also used by Robert Burns for a longer poem on the subject, and by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in his quite different poem.

The comparison of man's life and that of a tree was used in a broadside as early as the mid 1600s, and more frequently during the first half of the C19th.

There are two versions of **(What is) The Life Of A Man** in the Glostrad collection, both noted in the last fifty or so years. The song and its many variants are Roud No. 848.

Gwilym Davies collected the two verse version in 1975 from **Dick Parsons** who was born 1909 in the Bentham - Shurdington area. When young he went 'waysailing' with his brother, around Hatherley and Shurdington, taking a wassail bowl. They lived in a caravan, and Dick was a regular singer in 70s in Birdlip, and at The Cheeserollers.

Archer Goode was born in December 1906 in Herefordshire, of a farming family. His father spent some time working in Blakeney, and Archer himself worked in various agricultural jobs in the surrounding counties, eventually settling in Cheltenham. Gwilym, with Mike Yates, collected 12 songs from him in the late 70s, including the three verse version.

In Steve Roud and Julia Bishop's *New Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, it is contained in the section called Traditional Religious Songs, clarified as songs with a religious theme which are not actually hymns that would be sung in church.

Just three days before this last Christmas, **Terry Haines**, a great friend and supporter of all things folk, died suddenly while making arrangements for Christmas and New Year runs for Severn Athletic Club. He took part in the Cheltenham December Ceilidh, and had been singing at the Third Thursday daytime session in The Folk of Gloucester only the previous week. He had been Mayor of Gloucester twice, also Sheriff. Terry's multiple areas of public interest and devoted service brought a huge crowd to his funeral, in his parish church, Holy Trinity Church, Longlevens.

Text continues after 2nd song

The Life of a Man sung by Dick Parsons, Shurdington

As I was a - - walk - - ing one eve - - ning at ease, _____ a

view - ing the leaves as they flew [sic] on the tree, _____ And all in full

mo - tion a - pear - ing to grow. When the time comes a - long, _____ down they must go.

Chorus:

What's the life of a man any more than the leaves?
A man has his season, then why should he grieve?
Although in this life he appears fine and gay
Like the leaves he must wither and soon fade away.

2. In autumn I walked once again the same road
The leaves they were turning to silver and gold.
But first came a frost and then came a storm.
The leaves they were withered, down they did fall.

Source: Sung by Dick Parsons, Shurdington. Collected by Gwilym Davies 27 September 1975



The Life of a Man sung by Archer Goode, Cheltenham

1. As I was out walk - ing one morn - ing at my ease, _____ a
view - ing the leaves as they fell from the trees. They were all in full mo - tion ap -
pear - ing to be _____ and those that were with - ered _____ they fell from the tree.
Chorus
What is the life of a man an - - y more than the leaves? A
man has _____ his seas - son _____ so why _____ should he grieve? Al - though for a time he ap -
pears blithe and gay, like the leaves he must with - er _____ and soon fade a - way.

2. Now don't you remember a short while ago
The leaves were in full motion apparently so
A frost came upon them and withered them up
The rain came upon them and down they did drop.

Chorus

3. If you go in yonder churchyard, many names there you will find
Old friends have left this wide world like leaves in the wynd
Old age and affliction on them it did call
And those that were withered, all down they did fall.

Chorus

Source: Sung by Archer Goode, Cheltenham; collected by Gwilym Davies and Mike Yates, 1980

© Gloucestershire Traditions

After traditional hymns, and readings from the King James bible, The Life Of A Man was sung by our wonderful Ken Langsbury. Ken explained that nearly 20 years ago he and Terry made a pact: that whichever of them died first, the other would sing it in tribute. Ken told us he had learned the shorter version from the singing of Charlie Townsend, over 50 years ago in the now demolished Air Balloon pub up on the A417 by Birdlip. Charlie had got it from Dick Parsons. After the two verses, Ken sang the last verse taken from Archer Goode. My one regret is that we, a large folk presence, were too polite to join in the chorus. Ken told me we should have done! I wish we had, - we could have raised the roof.

Veronica Lowe © March 2026

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

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

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

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



Memories of Lacock — and the Herring. By Rosie Upton



A photo of Dan MacGregor, his wife Celia and Pete as a toddler in Scotland just after the war.

More than thirty years ago my father-in-law, **Dan MacGregor**, came to visit us in Bradford on Avon from his home in Scotland. He was keen to visit Lacock, because at the start his army service during the war he had been posted to Wiltshire and subsequently Hampshire before leaving for France. He was especially keen to see the 14th century Tithe Barn there, though we had no idea why. Its importance as a Grade I listed building is significant, especially given that it retains much of its original building fabric and was once part of the medieval Lacock Abbey and is in the centre of this historic village. Following our visit to the barn, we sat down to enjoy lunch in the nearby Red Lion. He told us in a hushed whisper a surprising story of which we could later find no historic record. He had been a Captain but initially signed up as a Private, and was despatched to guard the Tithe Barn as part of a top-secret mission when stationed nearby. It remains 'hush-hush' to this day. The barn's primary use during the war was for agricultural storage but he told us that hidden within and heavily disguised were armaments, ammunition and explosives that would have been utilised in the event of an invasion. I've often wondered about the veracity of this story. It's hard to believe but he seemed sincere and otherwise why would he have been so keen to visit Lacock? Would the military really have risked a potential explosion at such an important historic site? Perhaps because it seems so improbable it might have been the last place that German invaders might have looked!! Or was it just a red herring? He was, if you read on, something of an authority on herrings.

My late husband Pete MacGregor's father Dan (Donald) was a Gaelic speaker from Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides whose summer holidays were spent in Tolsta Chaolais, pronounced Toolsta Hoolish, a village on the West Coast of Lewis where

his parents were born. He had fond memories of growing up in a seaside town and herring port and recalled in writing some of the events of his youth.

Dan wrote "My father (born in 1878) was a cooper by trade, and in the years after the Great War, was the foreman in a fish-curing and kippering company". The herring were rapidly cleaned and gutted by the 'herring girls or lasses' with small sharp knives as soon as possible on arrival at the port. His job as a cooper was to construct and prepare the barrels ready to be filled with the gutted and salted herring. Once tightly packed and cured, he would check they were watertight and seal the lid. "Those were the years when Stornoway was the busiest herring port in the West of Scotland. During the summer herring season, it was usual for 500 or more boats to be fishing out of the port daily. They came from Fraserburgh, Buckie, Peterhead, Lerwick, Aberdeen, Grimsby and Yarmouth. Many and strange were the dialects of the various crews. Those were the days of the steam drifters and even several old sailing wherries were still fishing the Minch. The saying goes 'where there's muck there's brass' but ours was 'where there's scadan (the Gaelic word for herring) there's dough'".

"The herring were swung from the boat's hold onto the pier in baskets filled to the brim. Each basket held approximately 250 herring, and four baskets made one 'cran'. A boat's derrick swung the baskets of herring across. The fish sliding off the top and dropping on to the deck or the pier were the youngsters' perquisite, if a youngster was on the spot to collect the drop-offs. Those were the large, fat, juicy Minch herrings of pre-war days, when the only method of fishing for herring was by driftnet. We could string twenty of those beautiful fish on to a piece of cord, in a matter of minutes, and it was quite usual to collect three or four 'gads' (string of twenty herrings each) and take them up to a sales pitch in the town centre, aptly nicknamed 'Billingsgate', and sell them to thrifty housewives at one shilling for a string of twenty, or for just ninepence if herring were very plentiful." He remembered a verse of a ditty sung locally by the children.

*"Were you ever in a hurry?
O'er the gun'l of a wherry
When you only needed two
To make the score."*

Several thousand skilled, hard-working and hard-living Stornoway lasses were employed in the herring industry, working both in the town and following the herring fleets to other ports in Scotland and the Northeast of England in the 19th and early 20th century. Despite being devoutly religious, they loved a glass of whisky, a ceilidh and a song, including the songs they sang whilst gutting the herring. They are commemorated in a statue of a young girl carrying a wicker basket of herring beside a row of barrels on the harbourside in Stornoway. By the second world war the herring trade in Stornoway was all but finished and Pete's grandfather had become a crofter.

Dan remembered the Gaelic work songs of the herring girls including "Rionnag às an Oidhche Fhrasaich" and "Mura Tig Thu Dhòmhnull Mhóir". There are archive recordings of many of these songs.

Dan, who was born in 1915, left the Isle of Lewis in 1939 to join the army and only returned occasionally on holiday until his death in 2001. He wrote in his 70s that "I have never lost my ability to converse in the Gaelic language, but I can tell you that the long separation has affected my fluency quite a lot, so that nowadays I have sometimes to 'grobe' for the odd word or phrase, which in my youth unconsciously tripped off my tongue. I sing the Gaelic songs of my youth, and many more that I have learned from recordings in the meantime, and I can boast to have quite a repertoire. Singing Gaelic is in my opinion, much easier than using it in



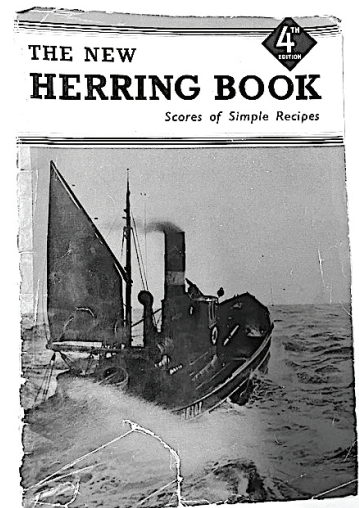
conversation, and even if a little 'rusty' in conversation, in song it is word-perfect." Regrettably the family has no recordings of Dan's singing though I'm told that like his son Pete, he had a fine tenor voice.

Dan always enjoyed a glass of whisky and who can blame him! "The Hebridean's life can be a hard and rough one, as far as the elements are concerned, and one cannot be blamed too much for using whisky as a means of fortifying oneself, in such conditions." "Many of our island's Gaelic songs are sad, because they tell of war, of famine, of partings and of cruelties, and of those, a good many relate to the pathos of partings."

Rosie Upton © March 2026

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

Illustration: 'The New Herring Book', n.d., belonged to Sam (the editor's) mother.



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Cecil Sharp collecting. © EFDSS ...



ENGLISH FOLK SONG & DANCE SOCIETY: EFDSS [F]

We champion the folk arts at the heart of England's rich and diverse cultural landscape. We deliver programmes of learning and participation and artist development: through our arts venue, Cecil Sharp House; through our library and archive, the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library; online and at a range of venues across England, and sometimes beyond. This includes workshops. For details, please see website.

Office: 020 7485 2206. www.efdss.org

Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London NW1 7AY.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS MEMORIAL LIBRARY [F]

EFDSS. Cecil Sharp House, London. **VWML events:**

LIBRARY LECTURES now on sale! The last 2 of 4 events on Zoom, with the recording available to watch for ticket-buyers for a month after the event. £5 per lecture: www.efdss.org/about-us/what-we-do/news/15491-library-lectures-2026

- **Tuesday 10 March: Lucy Wright - Folk is a Feminist Issue! Uncovering the hidden women in British seasonal customs** www.efdss.org/whats-on/61-conferences/15489-library-lecture-lucy-wright-folk-is-a-feminist-issue
- **Tuesday 14 April: Vic Gammon, with Sheila Gammon (Reader) & Bridget Enever (Fiddler) 'The Catterwauling Scrapes of Thrashing Fiddlers': Explorations in the history of English Vernacular Fiddle Players, 1600-1900** www.efdss.org/whats-on/61-conferences/15490-library-lecture-vic-gammon-the-catterwauling-scrapes-of-thrashing-fiddlers

Tiffany Hore, Library and Archives Director

Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, at EFDSS, address above. vwml.org
Instagram @thevwml. 020 7485 2206 ext.229 / 020 7241 8959

ACCESS FOLK

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

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

TSF THE TRADITIONAL SONG FORUM (TSF) [F]

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

TSF organises successful talks on Zoom, these are very popular, attracting international visitors, limited to 100 places; so if interested, see www.tradsong.org sooner rather than later. These typically have 3 speakers, plus occasional single-speaker sessions. Next is **8 Mar 2026**, TSF Online 80, Papers from the American Folklore Society conference #3.

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

TSF Spring conference, 18 April, on Women and Folk Song: the contribution of women to traditional folk song in Britain, Ireland, and elsewhere. At the Portico Library, Mosley Street, Manchester (<https://www.theportico.org.uk/>). The contribution of women to the world of traditional folk song is often overlooked but has always been substantial. In the early days, the Folk Song Society would not have survived without Kate Lee and Lucy Broadwood; Cecil Sharp's famous Appalachian trips would have failed without Maud Karpeles by his side, and while there they collected twice as many songs from female singers as from men. The morris dance revival would have been impossible without the women involved.

Autumn Conference 2026. Planning for this is in the very early stages, but we will be holding a conference in **Leeds Central Library** to commemorate the **100th anniversary of Frank Kidson's death**. The event will be on a Saturday in October. The theme will be on the lines of **"Traditional Folk Song in the North of England"**.

Richard Spencer (TSF Assistant Secretary)

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



PEDLARS PACK [F]

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

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

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

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



A Forgotten Feast Day in Cornwall, by Lamorna Spry

Cornish Feast Days, normally associated with a local Saint, have been an important part of village life across Cornwall for centuries and traditionally involved the community in an annual religious celebration alongside various sports, dancing, tea treats and music. In recent years, whereas festivals such as **Helston Flora**, **Padstow 'Obby Oss'** and **Penzance Golowan** have flourished, the local Feast Days have declined in popularity and in many cases died out. An example of a popular Feast Day that, apart from a folk song, has largely been forgotten is the **Crantock Feast Day for Saint Carantoc**.

Crantock is a beautiful village on the north coast of Cornwall just west of Newquay. Nowadays it is a popular tourist destination and famous for its extensive sandy beach. However, it has a fascinating history going back over 2000 years and was a major ecclesiastical power centre in medieval Cornwall. It is thought that Saint Carantoc established a missionary centre in what was then known as 'Langurroc'. Legend has it that he always carried a tame dove with him and on his arrival to Cornwall decided to collect brushwood and kindle a fire. His dove took one twig into its beak, flew away some distance and threw it on the ground, revealing to Carantoc that he should found a holy monastery on that spot. Whatever the foundation of the legend, the monastery developed into a significant medieval collegiate institution and although it was not the equivalent of a modern university, it was nevertheless a place of great learning and education, similar to the famous Glasney College. At some point the college was disbanded but even in the 16th century, Crantock Church had seven dependent chapels, indicating its importance at the time.



St Carantoc Church (Photo courtesy of Dr Ben Dobson)

The Feast Day for St Carantoc is 16th May and every year, members of all the neighbouring parishes would come with relics of saints from their own churches to place on the altar of the mother-church. By the 18th century, the religious celebration was accompanied by much revelry and young men from Crantock and surrounding villages would meet up in the Ship Inn, a place notorious for contraband and duty-free rum. So it was on 16th May 1721 that men from Crantock and Newlyn East were celebrating in the Ship Inn when a young lad of 20, William Coombe, was fatally shot. The Ship Inn is now a private house but one local lady, who grew up in the house, remembers seeing bullet holes in one of the beams.

The incident gave rise to a Cornish folk song entitled **Crantock Games**, sometimes referred to as **Willy Coombe**. Although like the demise of the Feast Day itself, the song is now rarely heard, it seems that it was being sung right up to the late 19th century when the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould collected the lyrics from Anne Painter of East Looe with the tune from J. Libby near Bodmin. Between 1888 and 1903, Baring-Gould was responsible for the preservation of 800 or so folk songs from his native Cornwall and Devon. A version of the words and the tune can be found in the collection '**Canow Kernow**' (Songs and dances from Cornwall) as told by a local man, Albert Crowle. The song describes the tragic scene:

Crantock Games (sometimes referred to as Willy Coombe)

*Tw'as in the month of May, when flowers spring,
And pretty lambkins play and thrushes sing,
When young men do resort to walk about in sport,
Not thinking any harm at Crantock Games.*

*Crantock and Newlyn men, all in one room,
The first shot was then that caused my doom.
My name is Willy Coombe, just twenty in my bloom,
Just twenty in my bloom when I was shot.*

*My brother swift did fly to Truro town,
A surgeon for to find to heal my wound.
The surgeon says, 'Tis o'er, no man then can him cure,
Great pains he must endure all through the night.*

*Father, thy son is dead too true to hear,
Mother, don't weep no more, oh mother dear.
Sister, don't cry nor grieve, since there is no relief,
No warning did he give when he shot me.*

*My God who rules on high, behold my misery,
And take my sins away before I die.
I'll swear until I die I was shot wilfully,
And from that wound I'll die at Crantock Games.*

A recording of **Cyril Tawney** singing '**Crantock Games**' can be heard on the posthumous anthology '**The Song Goes On**' and is available online. The tune varies a little from Crowle's version but is very similar. ~ *see next page*

The full circumstances of the shooting or who fired the fatal shot seem to have been lost, but it certainly didn't signal the end of the Feast Day which continued well into the 20th century, although perhaps in a less religious context. There are current villagers who remember a Feast Week involving sporting events and entertainment and there is a newspaper article from 1931 referring to several concerts and tea treats, whilst in 1991 there were clog dancers and Newquay beauty queens! Whatever would St Carantoc think!

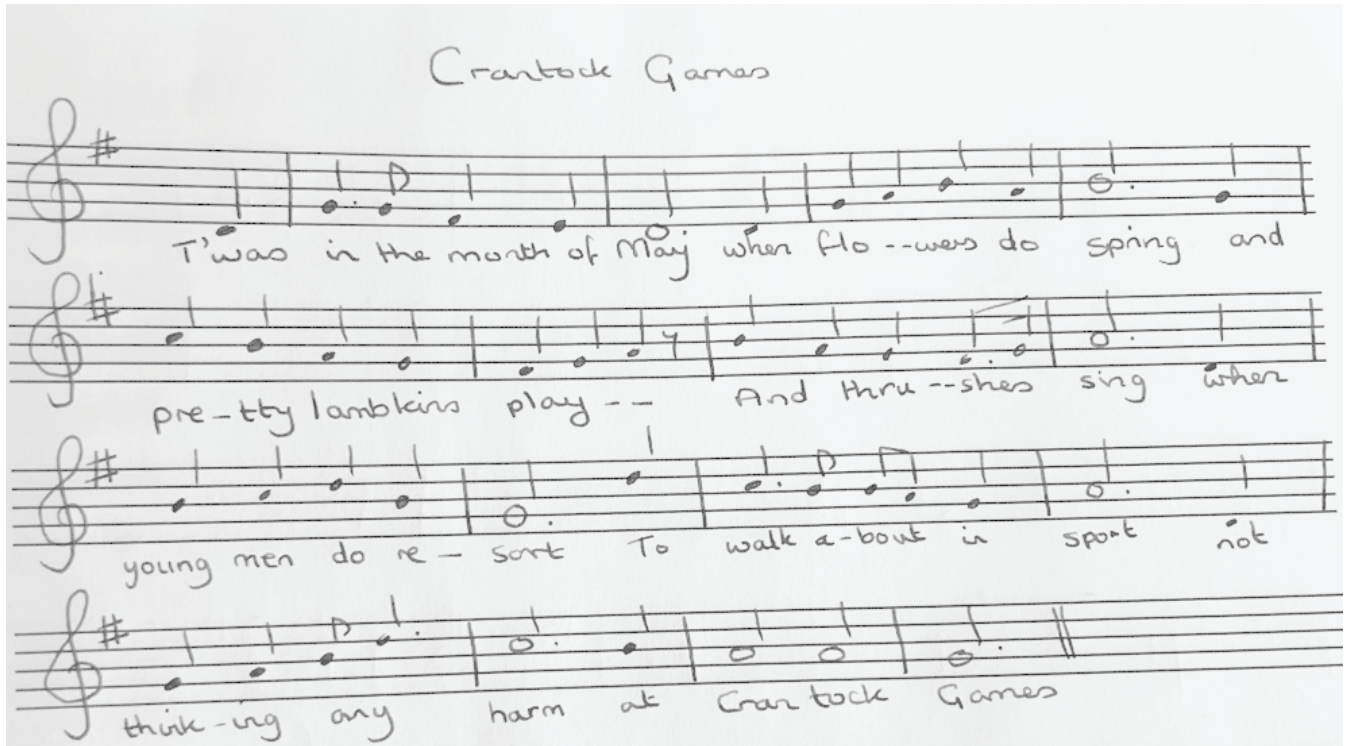
Lamorna Spry © March 2026

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



A Forgotten Feast Day in Cornwall, by Lamorna Spry

Cyril Tawney's tune to Crantock Games



Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; publications



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

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

Forthcoming Folklore Society Online Talks: tickets are £6 (£4 for FLS members with the Promo Code) via Eventbrite

- **Tues 10 March**, 19:00: Viktor Wynd, 'Fairy Tales, Papua New Guinea, an Idiosyncratic Approach'. TBA
- **Tues 24 March**, 19:00: Sophie Parkes-Nield, Diane Rodgers and David Clarke 'National Folklore Survey England' <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/early-findings-from-the-national-folklore-survey-for-england-tickets-1980381952731?>
- **Tues 7 April**, 19:00: Tom Barnes, "A woman's story at a winter's fire, / Authorized by her grandam" - Macbeth the fairy tale? <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/macbeth-the-fairy-tale-tickets-1978884425587?>
- **Tues 21 April**, 19:00: Helen Frisby, 'Picturing The Dead: Spirit Photography c.1860-1940' <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/picturing-the-dead-spirit-photography-c1860-1940-tickets-1978883351374?>
- **Tues 5 May**, 19:00: Cozette Griffin-Kremer, [Title TBC]
- **Tues 19 May**, 19:00: John Clark 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them: The Search for Grindylow' <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-the-search-for-grindylow-tickets-1978959848178?>
- **Tues 23 June**, 19:00: Rosalind Kerven 'Myths, Legends and Tales for a Greener World' <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/green-myths-legends-and-folk-tales-tickets-1978885567001?>

In-Person Conference. 'Folklore on the Move' The Folklore Society's Annual Conference 2026, in collaboration with the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen. 5 - 7 June 2026. King's College, University of Aberdeen. Online conference day: Wednesday, 10 June. Highlighting the movement of folklore and the interconnectedness of people. For details, please see website.

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



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

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

Free online resources on <https://www.trac.cymru/resources> :

Tunes, Instruments, Dance, Songs, History and Folklore, Formal Education, Welsh Language, and Directory. Songs include **A Collection of Welsh Folk Songs** with the help of **Arfon Gwilym**, one of our major tradition bearers: videos, soundfiles, dots, & words.

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

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

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

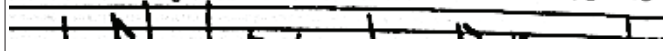


Tunes from the Isle Of Man: Yn Bollan Bane ('The White Wort'), A Tune Learnt from the Manx Fairies. By Stephen Miller

"Man returning home late in Sulby Glen heard the fairies playing the tune behind the hedge went over—committed to memory. and played it on his fiddle 'Bollan Bane' story."

From the Dr John Clague Collection, MNHL, MS 448/3 A. See Ríonach Uí Ógáin, "Music learned from the Fairies," Béaloideas 60 (1992): 107–214, and further, 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, Mass.: Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures, Harvard University, 1994) 58–74.

Man returning home late in Sulby Glen
heard the fairies playing the tune behind the hedge
went over - committed it to memory. and played
it on his fiddle. • Bollan Bane story.



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Fairy Music - The Wandescope.

Man returning home late in Sulby Glen
heard the fairies playing the tune behind the hedge
went over - committed it to memory. and played
it on his fiddle. • Bollan Bane story.

John Dugan. The Barry Loughrey at 77

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Stephen Miller, RBV © March 2026

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

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

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

Publications & recordings

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



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

Gef Lucena





Folklife news: societies & organisations; researchers; publications

The Mick Tems Archive

Mick is a singer, musician, and collector. Some of his archive is on <http://www.folk.wales/archives.html>: *Traditional drama from Wales*, and *Songs, customs and dances from Gower*.

There are about 400 Word documents, held on Mick and Olly's computers. As a precaution, Olly has copied them to Folklife.

So whilst we have no expertise in the archive field, we do now have a back-up copy for the benefit of more experienced archivists.

Songs were collected by Mick (a professional Journalist) using shorthand, but he had no recording equipment, so no music written down; he remembers the tunes and sings them. Mick has recorded some of the songs.

As to the future of the collection: suggestions welcome!

See www.folklife.uk/mick-tems-archive for more details.

Folk Legacy Books On Sale Now:

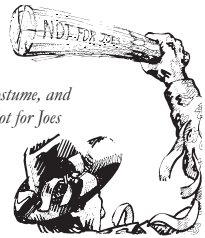
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THE CORNISH NATIONAL MUSIC ARCHIVE

... is a fantastic resource for anyone wanting to hear and play traditional tunes and songs from Cornwall.

It can be accessed on YouTube,

www.youtube.com/channel/UC-FQd0apFJSPoE6AAwt2vaw,

although a new website is currently being built,
<https://cornishnationalmusicarchive.co.uk>.

There is a vast library of performances from Tea Treats to pipe music, including music that goes back to medieval days such as the Rescorla Snail Creep. Snail Creeps were popular in the clay country and involved a procession of people walking behind a variety of instruments, eventually forming a close spiral. One is still performed every year in July at the Rescorla Festival.

Lamorna Spry ☐, **Kernow/Cornwall: Kesskriker/**
Correspondent for Folklife West



'The Ballad Partners'

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

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

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

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

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

Folklife Traditions Journal :

Contributions, Subscriptions, Adverts

We seek to raise awareness of relevant Societies, Institutions, Researchers, Publications, in print and online.

Contributions: we welcome your learned articles & other appropriate material for interested readers (see online "Articles Index" for all our articles), but note we're not a peer-reviewed journal. Please contact us before submitting: sam@folklife.uk

- **Songs, tunes, dances, & stories collected** ⁽¹⁾
- **Information from relevant Societies, Institutions, Researchers** ⁽²⁾
- **Announcing relevant publications and recordings** ⁽²⁾
- **Seasonal Local Celebrations**, based on Doc Rowe's listings, additions welcome
- **Conferences, Exhibitions, and Talks**

⁽¹⁾ Researched articles about a collected song or tune, word limits: we receive articles which are anything from just a song and a few lines or up to 500 words; other articles are often 1000 - 1500, our maximum is 2500.

⁽²⁾ News: researchers, books announced, conferences, but not "folk" news (such as clubs, artists, festivals, albums) - see *Folklife West* instead.

For more details, please go to www.folklife.uk/ftj-contribute

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Folklife West folk news magazine, 3 issues: Jan, May, Sep.

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£25, or £24 by standing order.

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DEADLINES for the JOURNAL

- **Folklife Traditions Journal: 1 Mar** Copy by 1 Feb
- **Folklife Traditions Journal: 1 Jul** Copy by 1 Jun
- **Folklife Traditions Journal: 1 Nov** Copy by 1 Oct

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

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

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

We welcome more listings, also further details & reports, contact details, photos, **subject to consent of the event's organisers** - some may not want publicity.

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

Dates believed to be correct, but some weekday dates seem to be changing towards weekends

Thaxted Morris Festival	Thaxted
Blessing the Boats	Whitby
Appleby Fair	Appleby
Border Riding	Hawick
Gŵyl Ifan: Codi'r Pawl Haf	
<i>/St John's Day Festival: Raising the Summer Pole</i>	
Election of Mayor of Ock Street	Abingdon
Selkirk Ridings	Selkirk
Midsummer Fires	various
Youlgreave Well Dressing	Youlgreave
Tideswell Well Dressing	Tideswell
Winstar Wakes	Winstar
Cakes And Ale Ceremony	Bury St Edmunds
Rushbearing	Warcup
Walking Day	Warrington

Cornwall	1st May	
Somerset	1st-3rd May	
Sussex	May Bank Holiday wk'end	
Flintshire	Early May * <i>Eds</i>	
Worcs	May BH weekend * <i>Eds</i>	
Glos	1st Sun in May	
Glos	Sat after Cheese-rolling * <i>Audrey Smith</i>	
Cheshire	1st Saturday in May	
Beds	Saturday / Monday	
Cornwall	8th May	
Dorset	13th May	
Derbys	2nd week in May	
Kent	2nd Saturday in May	
Northumberland	Wed near 18th May	
West Midlands	Sun near to 21st May	
E. Sussex	23rd May	
E. Sussex	End of May	
Derbys	29th May	
Wilts	29th May	
London	29th May	
Salops	29th May	
Oxon	Spring Bank Holiday	
Oxon	Spring Bank Holiday	
N Devon	Spring Bank Holiday	
Glos	Spring Bank Holiday	
W. Yorks	Spr. BH every 3 yrs: next 2028	
Surrey	Mid-May [was late Jan]	
Glos	Friday after Bank Holiday	
Glos	Sat. after Bank Holiday	
Yorks	Ascension Eve	
don London	Ascens. Day every 3 yrs: 2028	
Glos	Ascens. Day * <i>Audrey Smith</i> †	
Northants	Ascension Day	
Derbys	Ascension Day	
Bristol	Whit Sunday	
Glos	Whit Sunday	
Cambs	Whit Monday	

www.folklife.uk/journal