THE FOLKSONGS OF BRITAIN Vol. IX

Songs of Christmas

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY
PETER KENNEDY AND ALAN LOMAX

NOTES AND TEXT

1. CORNISH WASSAIL SONG

Charlie Bate (accompanying himself on accordion), Padstow, Cornwall
(recorded by P. Kennedy)
Truro "Wassail Bowl" singers, Malpas, Cornwall
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

The Singers

Charlie Bate, who performs the first two verses of the Padstow Wassail, is the chief accordion-player of "The Old Oss Party" and one of the leading figures in the May Day Hobby Horse Ceremony. (See OSS OSS WEE OSS B. 12).

The Truro "Wassail Boys", up to the time when this recording was made, had maintained an unbroken tradition of wassailing around Truro and district between Christmas and New Year. Into the wooden "Wassail Bowl", which they carry from door to door, went a wide variety of alcoholic drinks and coins, donated by the house-holders and landlords of public houses on whom they call.

"The Boys" consisted on this occasion (1957) of: Harold Tozer (Aged 52), lead singer; Thomas Jewel (Aged 64), bass; and Albert Jose (Age 67), descant. Mr. Tozer started going round with the "Wassail Boys" at the age of 16 and the other two joined ten years prior to the year of the recording.

The Songs

The custom of Christmas and New Year Wassailing is still practiced from Cornwall, in the extreme South West, to Yorkshire in the extreme North East of England, in the same areas of England where May carols are sung, thus possibly giving the main areas of survivals of pagan ritual.

The word "wassail" comes from Anglo Saxon "Wes" (be) and "hal" (whole) and means: "Be of good health." Like Christmas carolers, Mummers and Mayers, the wassailers visit from house-to-house and are given food and drink and this brings good luck to both visitors and visited. In most cases the wassailers carry some kind of emblem of good luck such as a wassail bowl, box, vessel, bough, or evergreen branches or seasonal flowers.

One of the earliest "wassails" was a Saxon toasting cry sung in the English camp on the eve of the Battle of Hastings by the Anglo-Norman poet (d.1180) quoted by Sir James Ramsay in *Foundations of England,* vol. ii.

Bublie crient e weissel	*Rejoice and wassail*
E latcome e drencheheil	*Pass the bottle and drink health*
Drinc Hindreward e Drintome	*Drink backwards and drink to me*
Drinc Helf, e drinc tome	*Drink half and drink empty*

Although Bishop Thomas Percy, after publication of his famous *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,* when he was vicar of Easton Maudit in Northamptonshire (about 1760), wrote down the words of a "Staffordshire Wassel Song" (Percy Unpublished papers in Harvard University Library):

We have been walking among the leaves so green
And hither we are comeing so stately to be seen
With our wassel, our jolly wassel
All joys come to you and to our wassel bowl

Good master and good mistress, as you sit by the fire
Remember us poor wassellers that travel in the mire

Our bowl is made of the mulberry tree
And soe is your ale of the best barley

Pray rise up, master Butler, and put on your golden ring
And bring to us a jug of ale, the better we shall sing

Our purse it is made of the finest calves skin
We want a little silver to line it well within

Good Mr. X, good Mist(ress), if that you are but willing
Send down two of your little boys to each of us a shill(ing)

We(')ll hang a silver knapkin upon a golden spear
And come no more a wassiling untill another year

e bowl of these wassailers was "mulberry". Later versions have "Rosemary" (Bramley and Stainer), "White ıple tree "(Vaughan Williams), "Eldberry Bough" (see Gower Wassail Song) and "Ashen tree" (Sharp). cil Sharp contended that this took us back to the period when all common domestic vessels were made of ıod and when there was an ecclesiastical edict against the use of wooden vessels for the Holy Communion.

some cases the carrying of greenery accompanied the singing of the song. A Yorkshire version in Broadwood's *glish County Songs* (1893) "The children carry green boughs and wave them over their heads asking for a w Year's gift." At Camborne in Cornwall, the local "Carol Party" were accompanied by a small child ıssed in evergreens who was known as "Lucy Green".

Here we come a-wassailing long with our Lucy Green
And here we come a-wandering as fair to be seen
Love and joy come to you and to your wassail too
And God send you a happy New Year
(see *Journal of The Folk Song Society* No. 33 p. 120)

. Dunstan in his *Christmas Carols* (1925) prints a West Yorkshire version sung by children, with blackened es, decked with and carrying greenery who sang:

Pier, Tier, Wessel
And a jolly wessel

Yorkshire too, until a few years ago, an image of the Saviour was placed in a box surrounded by evergreens d flowers and each house visited was allowed to take one sprig from the "Wessel Box". All these would seem be survivals of the bearing of the Christmas vessel-cup.

ere are numerous European equivalents of these various English wassails. For example the Roumanian lusari dancers carry with them a pole decorated at the end with silver or silken knapkins together with ir potently magic garlic (V. Alford). Similar poems are sung in France by youths going from house to house ring Advent and at Christmas time (Chants Pop. du Bas-Quercy 1889) and in Greece children sing a wassail ıg varying little from one sung by their forefathers in classical times (Broadwood).

CORNISH WASSAIL SONG

ırlie Bate
O master and mistress, our Wassail begins
Pray open your doors and let us come in
With our wassail, wassail, wassail, wassail
And joy comes with our jolly wassail

O master and mistress sitting down by the fire
While we poor wassail boys are travelling the mire

ro "Wassail Bowl" singers

er singing the first two verses outside the house, they knock on the door and go in calling out, "The ıpliments of the season to you all."

3. *OMITTED This ancient old house, we'll kindly salute*
It is the old custom you need not dispute

4. *OMITTED We are here in this place, we orderly stand*
We're the jolly wassail boys with a bowl in our hands

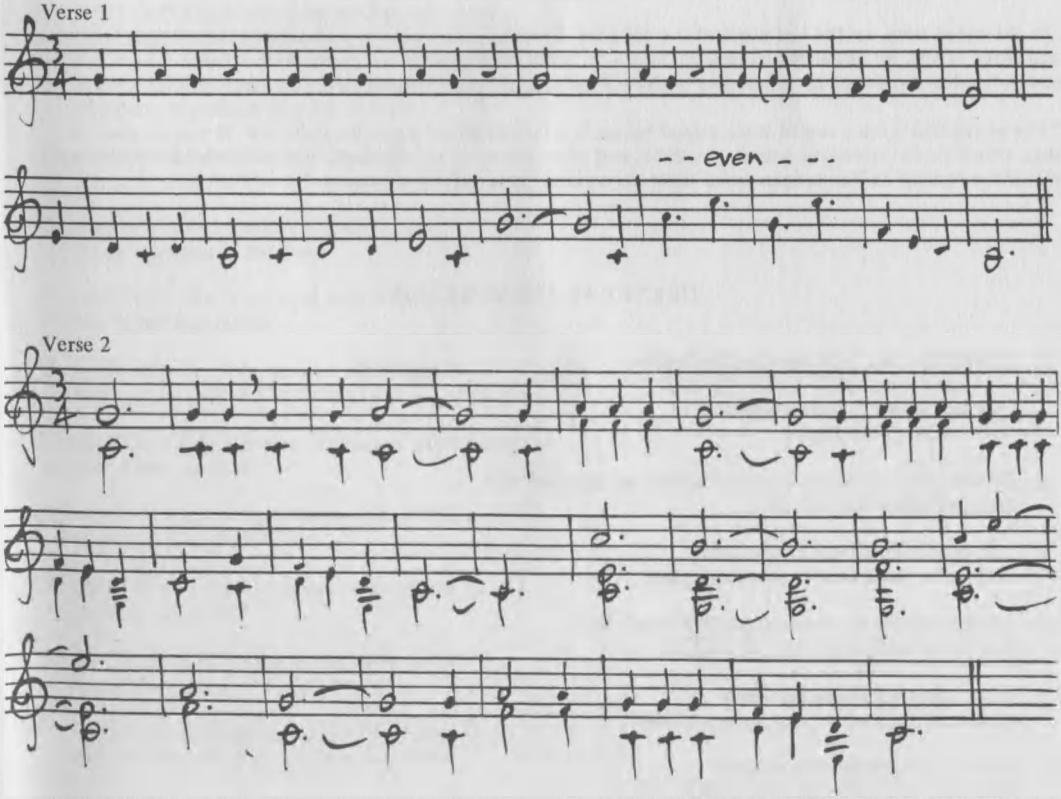
5. *OMITTED We hope that your apple trees will prosper and bear*
And bring forth good cider when we come next year

6. *OMITTED We hope that your barley will prosper and grow*
That you may have plenty and some to bestow

7. *Good mistress and master, how can you forbear*
Come full up our bowl with cider or beer
For our wassail, wassail, wassail, wassail
And joy come to our jolly wassail
(Sound of beer being poured into the wassail bowl during chorus)

8. *Good mistress and master sitting down at your ease*
Put your hands in your pockets and give what you please
To our wassail, wassail, wassail, wassail
And joy come to our jolly wassail
(Sound of coins being thrown into the bowl during chorus)

9. *OMITTED I wish you a blessing and a long time to live*
Since you've been so free and so willing to give
To our wassail
And joy come to our jolly wassail



2. "NEW'R EVEN'S SONG"

AN ORKNEY NEW YEAR'S CAROL

Sidney Scott and company, Orkney
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

Sidney Scott talked as follows about the background of this carol:

"The idea was that every man visited every house on Hogmanay (New Year). They had one fellow with a good carrying voice who took the leading part. They sang, just at the door, and they wouldn't let them in until they finished. Then the lady of the house came out with a big oatcake and broke it over the head of the singer and everybody picked up the fragments. When they came in, they got as much to eat and drink as they liked.

"All the fully grown men and the very oldest, as long as they were able, had to be at every house in their own township. There was a leader in every township who was the chief man, and they had to do as he said. I think the original idea was, that, if they tried to skip a verse, the oldest man in the company he'd put staff across the singers' back."

Dan Gorrie, writing about "Summers and Winters in the Orkneys" in 1867 explained the term "carrying horse" and how the company grew in strength as they went from house to house:

"The singing-men, at starting, were few in number, but every house visited sent forth fresh relays, and the chorus waxed in volume as the number of voices increased.

"The carrying-horse mentioned was the clown or jester of the party, who suffered himself to be beaten with knotted handkerchiefs, and received double rations as the reward of his folly."

County Folk-Lore (IIIp. 204), describes a similar custom kept up in Shetland:

"In the olden time, on the last night of the old year, 5 young lads, consisting of a gentleman, a carrying-horse, and three others, all disguised, went from house to house singing what was called THE NEW'R EVEN'S SONG and collecting provisions for a banquet on New Year's night."

"The gentleman wore a cap of straw round his neck, a belt of straw round his right arm. It was his duty to sing, which he did, standing outside the door; and when the song was finished, he could enter the house and introduce himself as Vanderigan come from Drontheim (pronounced Dornton)."

ORKNEY NEW YEAR'S CAROL

1. *OMITTED Guid be to this boldly begging*
   WE ARE A' ST' MARY'S MEN
   Frae the staiths unto the rigging
   FOR WOR LADY

2. *OMITTED Guid bless the guid wife and sae the guid man*
   Dish and table, pot and pan

3. *This night is guid Nor Even's Night*
   And we've come here to crave wor right

4. *OMITTED The morn it is Guid Nor Year's Day*
   And we've come here to sport and play

5. *And if we get nor what we seek*
   We'll tak' the head o' your ewe or sheep

6. *May a' your kye be weel to calf*
   And every ane ha'e a quey or a calf

7. *OMITTED May a' your mares be weel to foal*
And every ane ha'e mare or foal

8. *OMITTED May a' your ewes be weel to lamb*
And every ane ha'e a ewe or ram

9. *OMITTED May a' your geese be weel to thrive*
And every ane ha'e three times five

10. *OMITTED May a' your hens rin in a reel*
And every ane twirl at her heel

11. *OMITTED King Henry he is nor at hame*
But he is to the greenwoods game

12. *OMITTED We ha'e na baith his hawk and hound*
And the fair lady Rosamund

13. *We'll tell you hoo oor queen is dressed*
If you will gi'e us o' your best

14. *OMITTED She wears upon her well-made head*
The golden croon and it fu' braid

15. *OMITTED She wears upon her bonnie breist-bane*
The glittering brooches many a ane

16. *She wears upon her middle sma'*
The gilt and gold and girdles a'

17. *OMITTED She wears upon her legs her sheen*
Stockings of the red tameen

18. *OMITTED She wears upon her bonnie feet*
The cornered shoon that are so neat

19. *War is the guid man o' this house?*
War is he that man?

20. *And why is he no asked before*
At the opening o' the door?

21. *OMITTED War is the guid wife o' this house?*
War is she that dame?

22. *OMITTED And why is she no ask before?*
We have fu' cog on the flame (?)

23. *OMITTED War is the servant lass o' this house?*
War is she that lass?

24. *OMITTED And why is she no asked before*
In sweeping oot the hoose

25. *OMITTED War is the servant man o' this house?*
War is he that lad?

26. *OMITTED And why is he no asked before?*
Oot dale and wee a' sped

27. *OMITTED This night is Guid Nor Even's Night*
And we've come here to claim wor right

8. *OMITTED Guid man, go to your geeling vat*
And fetch us here a quarter o' that

9. *OMITTED Fetch us ane and fetch us twa*
And we'll gang a' the merrier awa'

0. *OMITTED Guid wife go to your butter-ark*
And weigh us oot o' that ten mark

1. *OMITTED Guid man, go to your bacon vat*
And cut us doon a daghan o' that

2. *OMITTED Cut it logg-ed, cut it roon*
Look at you dinna cut your tongue

3. *OMITTED Guid wife, go to your coggy creel*
And what you cut, try cut it weel

4. *OMITTED The last hoose that we were at*
Twas there we got bree-bare cake

5. *OMITTED The girl that bak-ed it so thin*
Merry an' wanton may she rin

6. *OMITTED We will cast netter in her tow*
And burn it in a red red lowe

7. *OMITTED And when the red lowe is gane*
She will get awa' like shame

8. *OMITTED We ha'e oor ships sail on the sea*
And mighty men o'er lands are we

9. *OMITTED We ha'e wor stack a-standing*
And we ha'e oor ploughs a-ganging

0. *OMITTED We ha'e wor fat gaults in the stye*
A few to sell and nane to buy

1. *Here we ha'e wor carryin' horse*
And muckle vengeance fair his course

2. *OMITTED For he would eat mair meat*
Or a' that we can gather an' get

3. *OMITTED And he would drink mair drink*
Or a' that we can swither and swink

4. *Be ye maids or be ye nane*
You's a' be kissed or we gang hame

5. *OMITTED Oor shoon they're made o' mare's hide*
Wi' feet sae cold we canna bide

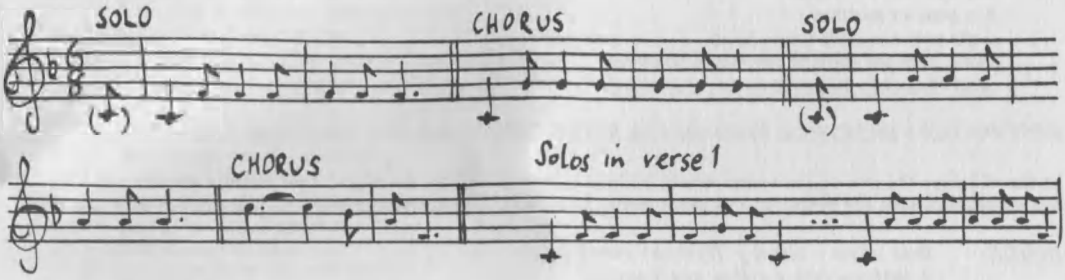
6. *And if you do no' open your door*
We'll lay it flat upon the floor

7. *OMITTED Guid wife just lift your amprey lid*
And fetch the bustlings and the red

8. *OMITTED And the three-lugged cog that's standing fu'*
Fetch it here to weep oor more

49. *OMITTED This is the best that we can tak'*
And we will drink till oor lugs crack

50. *OMITTED This is the seventh night o' year*
And by mysel' I think it'll fair



3. THE WELSH "MARI LWYD" CEREMONY

David Thomas and party Llangynwyd, Maesteg, Glam., S. Wales
Mrs. Margaretta Thomas (of Nantgarw)
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

The first part of the recording was made inside a house at Llangynwyd as the company waits expectantly for the arrival of the "Mari Lwyd". We hear the farmer say:

"Hallo? What was that now? I can hear footsteps somewhere. I'll go and bolt the door now! They're here! I can hear them coming on the (farm) bailey now."

The arrival of the horse itself is always given away by the sound of the small bells and other jingling objects decorating the horse's head. The "Mari Lwyd" (or Grey Mare/Mary) consists of a man covered over by a white sheet who holds a broom stick on which is mounted the skull of a horse's head. The singing party generally consist of four or five men from the neighbouring farm land. They stop outside the door to sing.

A.–PERMISSION VERSE (sung outside by "Mari Lwyd" party)

Wel dyna ni'n dwad
Gyffeillion dinewad
I ofin am gennad
I ofin am gennad
I ofin am gennad i ganu
(Well here we come, harmless friends
To ask your permission to sing)

B.–WELCOME VERSE (sung from inside by farmer or farmer's wife)

Pob greso i'r Feri
I ganu faint fyn hi
I ganu faint fyn hi
I ganu faint fyn hi, nos heno
(All welcome to the grey Mary
To sing as much as she likes, this night)

Mrs. Thomas then goes on to explain how in the old days there used often to be a "Punch and Judy", two extra characters who came with the "Mari Lwyd".

"And then there was a Punch and Judy with the "Feri", you see, and the Punch sometimes would stir all the fire out, you see now. And if the Punch was with the "Feri", he would make a noise, like this! (Mrs. Thomas bangs the poker on the ground.) Like that! And they knew that there was a Punch.

And then they'd go in, and there's an awful to-do after they go in, you see; laughing and drinking, if it's a public ouse; and if it's another house, they drink wine and they eat cake and so on. And then they say, when they go ut, they sang."

FAREWELL VERSE (sung at the door by the "Mari Lwyd" party)

Wel dyma hi'n myned
A'n pena i'r gweired
A dir wyr cyn belled, nos heno
(Well, here we go with our heads downhill
And God only knows how far, this night)

EST OF THE VERSES (OMITTED ON THE RECORDING)–

1 the old days the rest of the verses would be largely improvised by the Mari Lwyd outside the door and by the ouseholders inside the house, but in more recent years Mrs. Thomas remembers the following typical pattern:

VSIDE: *Beth ydyw y twrw, y ffysto a'r curo?*
A beth yw eich ewyllys, nos heno?
(What is this fuss of knockings and trampings?
What are your wishes, this night?)

)UTSIDE: *Y Feri Lwyd lawen, a'i chwt ar i chefen,*
Sy' yma a'i Miri, nos heno
(The merry Grey Mary, with her tail on her back
Is here with her merriment and fun, this night)
The "Mari Lwyd" snaps her teeth together outside the door

VSIDE: *As ydyw y Feri yn addo i'r cwmpni*
I ymddwyn yn deidi, heb gnoi na thraf lyncu
Caeff ddyfod i'r cwmpni, nos heno
(If the Mary will promise the company
To behave and not bite or gulp
We will let you into this company, this night)

)UTSIDE: *Maer Feri yn addo i uno'n'y cympni*
Heb gnoi na thraflyngco, ond dyplu y Miri
Wrth ganu baletu, nos heno
(The Mary promises to join in the company
Without biting or gulping
And to double the merriment
By singing ballads, this night

uring this last verse the Punch is heard tapping the stones with his poker while the Judy sweeps the outside f the windows. So the company decides to keep the door locked a bit longer, and they sing some more verses.

VSIDE: *Pob greso i'r Feri i ganu faint fyn hi*
Ond beth am y Pwnsh ar Procar ar Judi
I ddifa y cysur, ar Tanllwyth i'r cwmpni
Ar Tanllwyth i'r cwmpni, nos heno?
(All welcome to Mary to sing as much as she likes
But what of the Punch and his poker and the Judy
To destroy the comfort of the company
And rake out the fire, this night?)

)UTSIDE: *Mae r Feri yn addo fod Pwnsh a'r hen Judi*
I sefyll yn llonydd, ac ymddwyn yn deidi
A gatal y Tanllwyth i'r cwmpni, nos heno
(The Mary promises that Punch and old Judy
Will stand still and behave well
And will not destroy the fire
Or the comfort of the company, this night)

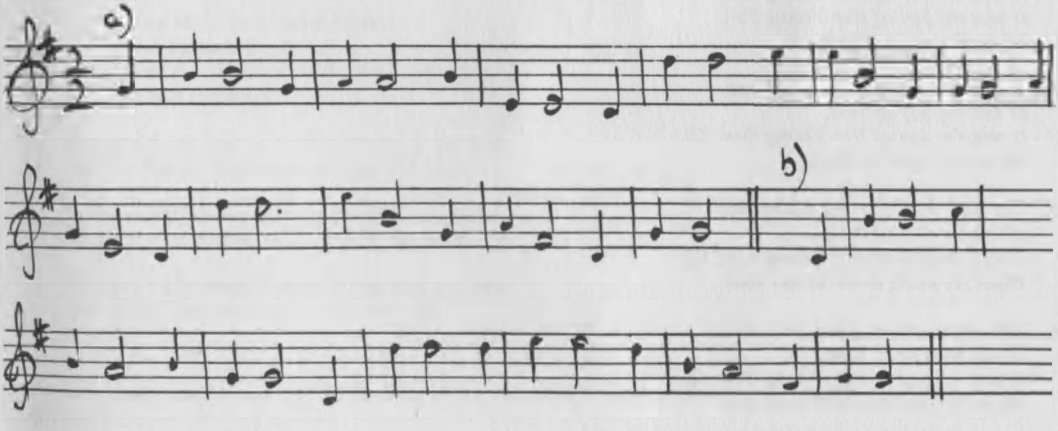
INSIDE: *Mae cwmpni yn fishi yn doti y llestri*
A dishan yn deidi, cyn acor drws iddi
Cyn acor i'r Feri, nos heno
(The company is busy preparing the dishes
And putting the cake ready for the Mary)

OUTSIDE: *Mae Feri yn rhewi a'i thrad bron a fferi*
Wrth aros i'r cwmpni i acor drws iddi
I acor drws iddi, nos heno
(The Mary is perishing and her feet are freezing
Through waiting for the company to open the door)

INSIDE: *(They repeat the previous verse about being*
busy preparing the dishes)

OUTSIDE: *Fe ddotiff y Feri y dishan yn deidi*
Yn fola y Feri, ynghenol y Miri
Ond acor drws iddi
Ond acor drws iddi, nos heno
(The Mary will put the cake in its belly
In the midst of the merriment
Only open the door, this night)

INSIDE: *Yr ydym yn acor y clocon am noson*
O ganu, a dawnsio, a'r crwth, hen Delyn
Ynghenol y twrw, wrth ranu y cwrw,
Pob greso i'r Feri, nos heno
(We now open the locks for a night of singing
And dancing with the harp and the fiddle (crwth)
With the drinking of beer
All welcome to the Mary, this night)



4. THE JOYS OF MARY

Teresa Maguire, Belfast, N. Ireland
(recorded by Sean O'Boyle)

Anne Gilchrist (in *The Journal of the Folk Song Society* No. 18 p. 20) says: This is a very old carol. A 14th Century version gives the number of Joys as five. Properly, the Seven Joys, as enumerated by the Roman Catholic Church, were: (1) The Annunciation (2) The Visitation (3) The Nativity (4) The Adoration of the Magi (5) The Presentation in the Temple (6) Christ found by His Mother (7) The Assumption and Coronation (of the Virgin).

In the traditional versions of the carol only about three of these usually figure, but the list is extended by some of the Miracles and also by the inclusion of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin. The earlier copies have "Our Lady" (as sung by Mrs. Mcguire on our recording).

Cecil Sharp found that most versions concluded with the Seventh Joy but in fact collected one with ten (Somerset) and another with twelve (Gloucestershire).

1. To suck at her breast-bone
2. To make the lame to go
3. To make the blind to see
4. To read the Bible o'er
5. To raise the dead to life
6. To bear the crucifix
7. To wear the crown of Heaven
8. To make the crooked straight
9. To turn water into wine
10. To write with a golden pen
11. To have the keys of Heaven
12. To have the keys of hell

"Eight Joys" have been noted in Cornwall and in Berkshire "Nine Joys" starting "The first good joy of Mary Ann. . ." There is a version in *The Journal of the Irish Folk-Song Society* vol. cii under the title "The Seven Rejoices of Mary". Sandys' *Christmas Carols* (1833) gives the text of a medieval version from the Sloane Ms. 2593.

THE JOYS OF MARY

1. *The very first joy Our Lady had,*
   It was the joy of one,
   It was the joy of Her Young Son,
   It was the joy of Her Young Son,
   When He was newly born.

2. *The very next joy Our Lady had,*
   It was the joy of two,
   It was the joy of Her Young Son, (2)
   When He began to grow.

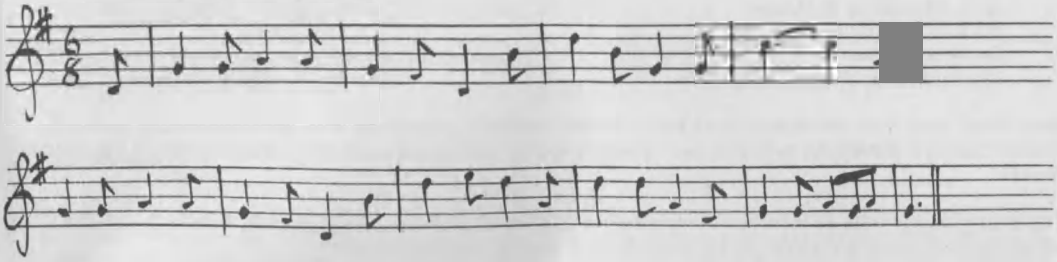
3. *The very next joy Our Lady had,*
   It was the joy of three,
   It was the joy of Her Young Son, (2)
   When He knelt down at her knee.

4. *The very next joy Our Lady had,*
   It was the joy of four,
   It was the joy of Her Young Son, (2)
   When He read the scriptures o'er.

5. *The very next joy Our Lady had,*
   It was the joy of five,
   It was the joy of Her Young Son, (2)
   When He raised the dead to life.

6. *The very next joy Our Lady had,*
   It was the joy of six,
   It was the joy of Her Young Son, (2)
   When He bore the crucifix.

7. *The very next joy Our Lady had,*
   It was the joy of seven,
   It was the joy of Her Young Son,
   (When He) ascended into Heaven.



5. THE HOLLY AND THE IVY

Peter Jones, Bromsash, Ross, Hereford
(recorded by P. Shuldham-Shaw & M. Karpeles)

Variants of this carol, mostly springing from a Birmingham broadsheet, were printed in Husk's *Songs of the Nativity* (1868); Bramley and Stainer's *Christmas Carols* (1871); Chope's *Carols for Christmas and Epiphany* (1877). Versions collected from traditional singers in Chipping Camden, Gloucestershire and in Somerset appear in Sharp's *English Folk Carols* (1911) and *School Series* (1913).

Another version of the "Holly and the Ivy", known as "The St. Day Carol", was taken down at St. Day in the parish of Gwennap in Cornwall, and printed in Dunstan's *Cornish Song Book* (1929).

Now the holly bears a berry as white as any milk
And Mary bore Jesus who was wrapped up in silk
CHORUS
And Mary bore Jesus Christ
Our Saviour for to be
And the first tree of the greenwood
It was the holly

Now the holly bears a berry as green as the grass
And Mary bore Jesus who died on the cross

Now the holly bears a berry as red as the blood
And Mary bore Jesus who died on the road

Now the holly bears a berry as black as the coal
And Mary bore Jesus who dies for us all

Another Cornish version sung by Mr. Thomas at Camborne had a special set of words which were sung at Eastertide:–

The holly and the ivy
Are plants that are well known
Of all the trees that grow in woods
The holly bears the crown

Its head it points to Heaven
To show its berries red
In token of the drops of blood
Which on Calvary were shed

And in the holly prickle
You can plainly see
The crown of thorns our Saviour wore
When going up Calvarie

And although up in Heaven
His love can still be seen
In the ivy colour
The everlasting green

Peter Jones' tune does not seem to have been collected before in association with this carol and Dr. Karpeles remarks that it is interesting to find a new variant of such a well-known carol still surviving amongst traditional singers.

The singer was 81 when he recorded. He was born at Linton a few miles from Bromsash, near Ross-on-Wye, where he was living when visited by Dr. Karpeles and Patrick Shuldham-Shaw.

THE HOLLY AND THE IVY

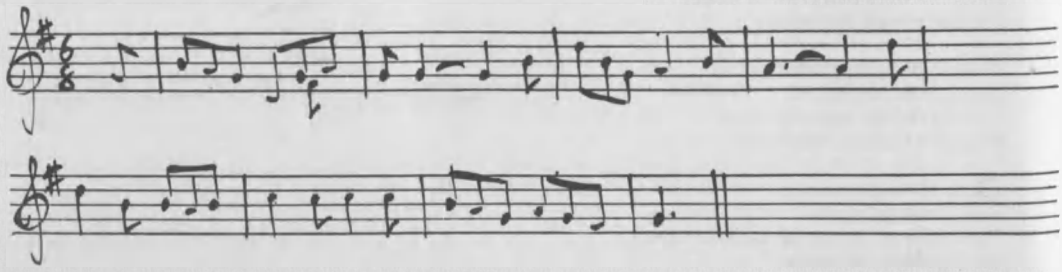
1. *The 'olly and the ivy,*
   Now they are both full grown,
   Of all the trees that are in the wood
   The 'olly tree bears the crown.
   CHORUS
   The rising of the sun,
   The running of the deer,
   The playing of the merry ergot (organ),
   Sweet singing all in the choir.

2. *The 'olly tree bears a blossom,*
   As white as any flower,
   As Mary bore Sweet Jesus Christ
   To be our sweet Saviour.
   CHORUS OMITTED

3. *The 'olly tree bears a berry,*
   As red as any blood,
   As Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
   To do poor sinners good.
   CHORUS OMITTED

4. *The 'olly tree bears a bark,*
   As bitter as any gall,
   As Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
   To do redeem us all.
   CHORUS OMITTED

5. *The 'olly tree bears a prickle,*
   As sharp as any thorn,
   As Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
   On Christmas day in the morn.
   CHORUS



6. THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

Bob and Ron Copper, Rottingdean, Brighton, Sussex
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

THE SINGERS

Bob and Ron Copper, both publicans, are members of a folk-singing family which has lived in or around the village of Rottingdean in Sussex, England, for the last 300 years or more. They are cousins, and their grandfather and his brother, John and Tom Copper, sang to collector Kate Lee who published some of their songs in the first Journal of the Folk Song Society in 1899. An album by Bob and Ron has been published by the English Folk Dance and Song Society and also by Folk Legacy Records, Huntington, Vermont in 1964.

THE SONG

"The Christmas Presents" is the name by which the members of the Copper family know this famous carol. According to singers, who performed versions for the late Cecil Sharp in Somerset, the proper way to sing it is to give it what they called "The Double Going-Over". That is to say, to start at the "Twelfth Day", each verse getting shorter in the chorus, until the "First Day" is reached and repeat the process getting longer choruses after each verse, making a total of 23 verses.

At one time it was the custom in many districts of England to refrain from any kind of work between Christmas Day and Twelfth Day (Epiphany), so that this carol may be a survival of a kind of penalty-game which reminded people that they should abide by such pagan practices rather than Christian beliefs. The song was also common in Wales; three Welsh versions appear in *The Journal of the Welsh Folk Song Society* (vol. 1. Part 4).

The words were printed for the first time without a melody in Husk's Songs of the Nativity (1868). It had been taken from Newcastle broadsides (that refer to "The First Day of Yule") and had been reprinted then from a manuscript of the time of Henry VI (see Bruce and Stokoe's *Northumbrian Minstrelsy*, p. 129). It is the Northumbrian version which has become the best known. It has been described as "one of the quaintest of Christmas carols, now relegated to the nursery as a forfeit-game, where each child in succession has to repeat the gifts of the day and incurs a forfeit for every error."

A similar type of game appears as a Rhyming Game in Halliwell's *Nursery Rhymes:*

Take this!
What's this?
A gaping wide-mouthed waddling frog. . .
(with the last verse)
12 Huntsmen with horses and hounds
Hunting over other men's ground
11 Ships sailing o'er the Main
Some bound for France and some for Spain
I wish them all safe home again
10 comets in the sky
Some low and some high
9 peacocks in the air
I wonder how they all come there
I do not know and I do not care
8 joiners in Joiner's Hall
Working with the tools and all
7 lobsters in a dish
As fresh as any heart could wish
6 Beetles against the wall
Close by an old woman's apple stall
5 puppies in Highgate Hall
Who daily for their breakfast call
4 Mares stuck in a bog

3 Monkies tied to a log
2 pudding-ends would choke a dog
With a gaping wide-mouthed waddling frog

A version in Chambers' Popular Rhymes (p. 42) which has a suggestion of minstrel or trouvere culture with "a papingo" (parrot) and "Arabian baboon" has the refrain: "Wha learns my carol and carries it awa'?" (Buchan Mss.). Anne Gilchrist (See *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, No. 20 p. 280) suspects from the constancy of the "partridge" and "the pear tree", in English, French and Languedoc versions, that the Old French "pertrix" was carried into England and that "juniper tree" in certain other versions may come from the French "joli perdrix". She goes on to argue that the "Five Gold Rings" may be a substitution for an early form of "gobbler" or "gulderer" (turkeys) that is found in French versions.

Lucy Broadwood: (1) That in Christian art the partridge, in common with other pied birds, is an emblem of the devil and the pear is a symbol of fertility. (2) That the partridge's supposed habit of deserting its young symbolizes a departure from the Christian faith. (3) In some Catalan parallels the partridge is a symbol of the devil who reveals King Herod to the Virgin Mary hidden beneath a sheaf of corn, and for this its head is cursed for ever (4) In Swiss chant, traced back to 1769, a pear tree has bewitched fruit which will not drop. Jack is sent out to knock the fruit down, but cannot do so until he has gone through the usual sequence of powers to secure them. This recitation was also current in Swabia and Westphalia where it was followed or accompanied by a dance on the feast of St. Lambert (Sept. 17th).

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

"The Christmas Presents"

1. *On the* first *day of Christmas my true love sent to me*
   A partridge in a pear tree

2. *On the* second *day of Christmas my true love sent to me*
   Two turtle doves and a partridge in a pear tree

3. *On the* third *day of Christmas my true love sent to me*
   Three French hens, two turtle doves and a partridge in a pear tree

4. *On the* fourth *day of Christmas my true love sent to me*
   Four canary birds, three French hens, two turtle doves,
   And a partridge in a pear tree

5. *On the* fifth *day of Christmas my true love sent to me*
   Five gold rings,
   Four canary birds, three French hens, two turtle doves,
   And a partridge in a pear tree.

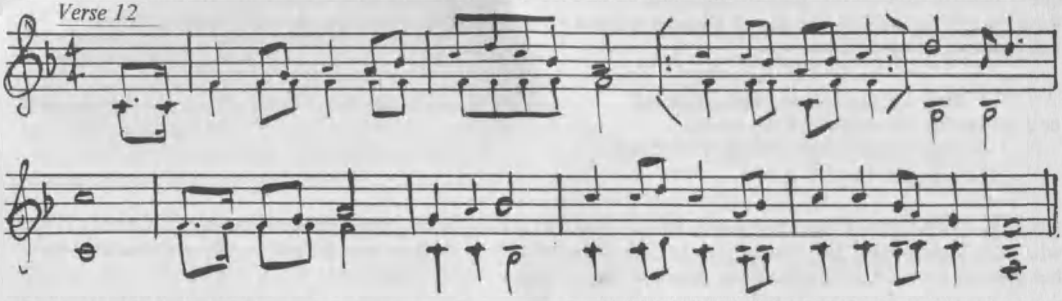
OMITTED 6-9

10. *On the* tenth *day of Christmas my true love sent to me*
    Ten ladies skipping, nine lads a-leaping, eight deers
    a-running, seven swans a-swimming, six geese a-laying
    Five gold rings,
    Four canary birds, three French hens, two turtle doves,
    And a partridge in a pear tree

11. *On the* eleventh *day of Christmas. . .*
    Eleven bears a-baiting. . .

12. *On the* twelfth *day of Christmas. . .*
    Twelve parsons preaching
    Eleven bears a-baiting

Ten ladies skipping
Nine lads a-leaping
Eight deers a-running
Seven swans a-swimming
Six geese a-laying
Five gold rings
Four canary birds
Three French hens
Two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree



7. THE BITTER WITHY

Charlotte Smith, Tarrington, Ledbury, Hereford
(recorded by P. Kennedy)
William Payne, Gloucester
(recorded by M. Karpeles & P. Shuldham-Shaw)

Although one verse was contributed to *Notes and Queries* in 1868, the first complete version of this ballad was submitted by Frank Sidgwick and printed in *Notes and Queries* in 1905. (Further texts appeared also from Mr. Sidgwick, in *Folk-Lore* in 1908). The same year Dr. Vaughan Williams noted a Sussex version called "Our Saviour tarried out" from a Mr. Hunt at Wimbledon (JFSS No. 8 p. 205).

Prof. F. B. Gummere in *The Popular Ballad* (1907) regarded this carol as one of the first genuine popular ballads brought to light since the publication of Child's great survey. (Child included only two carols: *The Cherry Tree* and *Dives and Lazarus.)* Prof. G. H. Gerould in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (xxiii, i, pp. 141-167) has investigated the possible sources of the carol.

He quotes three different Pseudo-Matthew legends as the ecclesiastical foundation of the folk ballad. These three were then expanded into six by "fictional embroidery", and spread through England and Europe by word of mouth and in vernacular versions.

The three original Apocryphal Gospel legends were the stories of Zeno's fatal fall, of the broken jug, and of Christ's sitting on the sunbeams. The expanded series, in the order in which they are given in the English 15th Centruy poem known as *MS. Additional 31042* (British Museum) are:

(1) The leap from the hill, fatally imitated by Christ's companions (explaining the entry of the "bridge" into the story)
(2) The repairing of the broken jug
(3) The suspension of the jug on the sun-ray
(4) Christ sitting on the sun-beam
(5) The story of Zeno
(6) The gathering up of the spilled water

Anne Gilchrist in *The Journal of the Folk Song Society* (JFSS No. 14, 1910) describes in detail the various English Mss. of the 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries, written in three different dialects, which are tabulated by Prof. Gerould. She goes on to add a seventh incident coming from the Greek Gospel of Thomas which depicts Christ going out to play after rain-showers and collecting the fallen water into pools. These are maliciously broken down by the child of Annas, who is cursed by Christ and made to wither like the willow-branch in his hand with which he had destroyed the pools.

References to Celtic legends with similar themes were also cited in this Journal by Miss Lucy Broadwood.

The Bitter Withy has much in common with the ballad, *The Jews Garden* and Child Ballad No. 155, which can be heard on TC 1146 in this series. The idea of the mother telling her child to go and play and the subsequent tragedy provide the dramatic incident. In fact the opening stanzas of some versions are similar. The location of the ballad to the city of Lincoln perhaps accounts for the inclusion, in some versions, of the ballad verse in the carol:

Then up Lin-cull and down Lin-cull
or as it goes in our version on the record:
Then upward ball and downward ball

Like *The Cherry Tree Carol, The Bitter Withy* resembles stories in *The Apocryphal Gospels of Infance,* where the Infant Jesus goes out to play and an offender suffers death or punishment by supernatural forces; but there is no one tale which seems clearly to be the source for this carol.

A variant of the carol *The Holy Well,* found in nineteenth century chap-books and broadsides, is thought to be a later reconstruction of *The Bitter Withy.* It has a similar first part to the story but, in the end, Jesus refuses to punish those who have slighted him, even after his mother has tried to persuade him to do so—a pretty clear attempt by some publishers to soften and conventionalize the old ballad.

Sweet Jesus go down to yonder town
As far as the Holy Well
And take away those sinful souls
And dip them deep in hell

Nay, nay, nor nay, Sweet Jesus he did say
Nay that never can be
For there are too many sinful souls
Crying out for the help of me

THE SINGERS

Charlotte Smith was a gipsy woman living in a square tent.

William Henry Payne, still living, was aged 59 when he recorded this song for collectors Dr. Maud Karpeles and Pat Shaw. Like his father he had been a stockman all his life and learned the song from his father who used to sing to his family "around the fire on winter evenings without music." His father, who had little or no education, came from Lea Bailey, Gloucestershire

Mrs. Smith

1. *As 'e fell out as my holiday,*
   As my 'oliday so whi',
   Sweet Jesus 'e asked that 'is own mother dear,
   Whether 'e should go to play.

2. *"To play, to play, dear child she did say,*
   It's time that you 'ave been gone,
   And don't let me 'ear no complaint upon you
   But at night when you do came home."

Mr. Payne

3. *Now our Saviour walk-ed down unto yonder town,*
As far as the 'oly, 'oly Well,
And there he met three of the finest child-e-ren,
That ever any tongue could tell.

4. *"Good morn, good morn, good morn," said they,*
"Good morning then," said *'e,*
"Now which of you three fine child-e-ren
Will play at ball with me?"

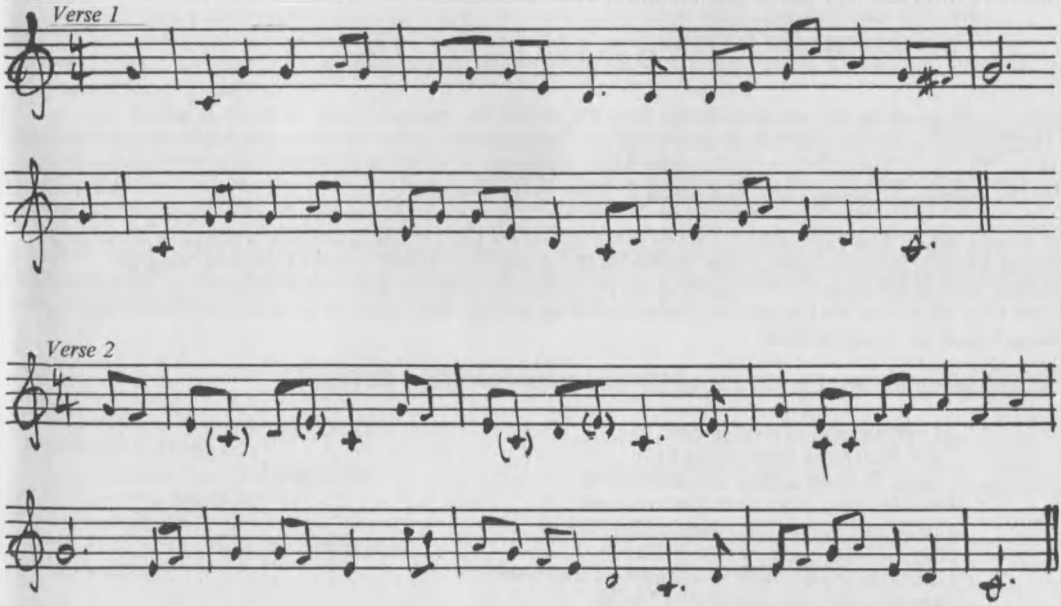
5. *"Now we are lords' and ladies' sons,*
Borned in a bowery 'n'all;
And you are but a maiden's child,
Borned in an oxen's stall."

6. *Now our Saviour built a bridge with the beams of the sun*
And over 'e walked He,
And the three jolly children they followed Him
And drownded they were all three.

7. *OMITTED Then upward ball and downward ball*
Their mothers they did wall and squall
Saying: Mary Mild, fetch home your child
For ours they are drownded all

8. *OMITTED Then Mary Mild picked a handful of small withies*
And laid our dear Saviour across her knee
And with that handful of small withies
She gave him slashes three

9. *OMITTED O curs-ed be to the bitter with-ie*
That has caus-eth me to smart
And that shall be the very first tree
That shall perish right at the heart



8. AS I SAT ON A SUNNY BANK

John Thomas, Camborne, Cornwall
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

The Singer

"Jan" Thomas was 82 when he recorded this family version of the ancient "Three Ships" carol. It was from him that the song "Camborne Hill" (see Caedmon Record No. TC 1225) was first collected. Jan was a miner whose slogan, while he was alive, was "to sing whenever he could for the benefit of other people." He told us that he never spent much time in his own house, but was always out singing for others.

The Song

Ritson in his *Scotch Songs* (Ip. civ) gives a version which was popular about the middle of the sixteenth century:

There comes a ship far sailing then
St. Michel was the stierse-man
St. John sat in the horn
Our Lord harped, our Lady sang
And all the bells of Heaven they rang
On Christ's sonday at morn

An earlier version reprinted in Husk's *Songs of the Nativity* (1868) appeared in Forbes's *Cantus* (Aberdeen (1666).

It has been collected in many areas of England. Baring Gould prints an interesting version sung by a boatman on the river Humber in his *Garland of Country Song* (1895).

I saw three ships come sailing by
I axed 'em what they'd got aboard
They said they'd got three crawns
I axed 'em where they was taken to
They said they was ganging to Coln upon Rhine
I axed 'em where they came frae
They said they came frae Bethlehem

This would appear to be a reference to the three CRAWNS, the crania or skulls, of the Magi, which were, in 1162, presented to Cologne Cathedral by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa who had taken them from S. Eustorgio, Milan. The story is that 300 years after their death the bodies of the three Magi were taken to Constantinople by the Empress Helen and from thence later to Milan by St. Eustatius.

A version called "The Three Kings" (in this case they are the three Kings of Galilee) dating from the reign of Henry VII appeared in Wright's *Songs and Carols* (Percy Society). It tells the story of three Kings of Galilee, their offerings and their evasion of Herod's attempts to obtain news of the whereabouts of the holy child (See *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* 1946 p. 31 for an article on "The Three Kings" carol by Anne Gilchrist).

An unusual version noted by Cecil Sharp in Worcestershire introduces the Passion:

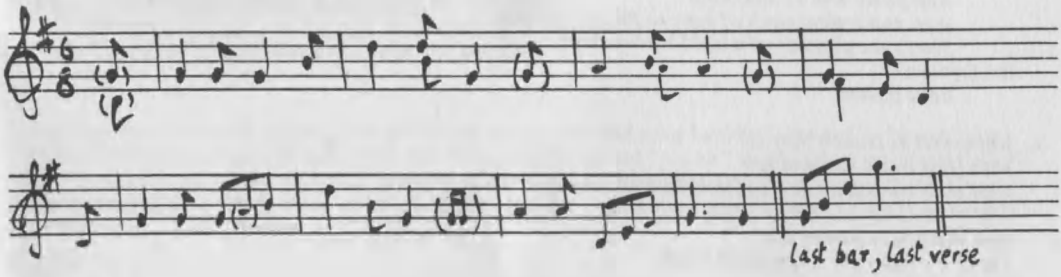
As I sat by my old cottage door
I saw three ships come sailing by
I asked them what they had got in them
They said they'd got their Saviour there
I asked them where they were taking Him to
They said they took Him to Jerusalem
I asked them what they would do with Him there
They said that they would Him crucify

1. *As I sat on a sunny bank,*
   As I sat on a sunny bank,
   As I sat on a sunny bank
   On the Christmas day in the morning.

2. *I spied three ships come* sailing by,
   On a Christmas day in the morning.

3. *And who do you think was* in the ship?
   Joseph and his fair lady.

4. *He did whistle and she did sing*
   And hall the bells on hearth did ring,
   For He did whistle and she did sing
   On Christmas day in the morning.



9. THE SINGING OF THE TRAVELS

Chorus of Symondsbury Mummers, Bridport, Dorset
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

The song of "The Husbandman and the Servingman" is here sung by a group of West Dorset Mummers as the finale of their local Christmas folk play. St. George, St. Patrick, Egyptian King, Captain Bluster, Gracious King, General Valentine and Colonel Spring, the seven "Champions of Christendom", form a circle round an old couple called Jan (Father Christmas) and Bet. They sing the verses and circle round Jan and Bet, standing facing them for their duologues.

We first recorded this version of the song in 1950 from old Tom Eveleigh of Eype who had been one of the mummers at the turn of the century. As a result of local enquiries a revival of the custom was effected and the following Christmas saw a new young team going round the houses. The story of this remarkable revival and the full text of the play are given in the *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society,* 1952.

A Sussex version of the song appeared in Dixon's *Songs of the Peasantry* (1846) "said in a sort of a chant or recitative." Lucy Broadwood added a footnote in *English County Songs* (1893) that "the oldest printed version of this dialogue is in the *Loyal Garland."* (Percy Society vol.29)

THE SINGING OF THE TRAVELS

1. *OMITTED We're to meet our brothers dear*
   All on the highway
   And so solemn I was walking along,
   So pray come tell to me
   What calling yours may be
   And I'll have you for some servant man.
   Jan (spoken):

For all thy diligence I give thee many thanks
Aye, and I'll quit thee as soon as I can
For I can plough and sow, aye, and reap and mow
But vain do I know whether you can do so
To show the pleasure of a servant man

Bet (spoken):

No Jan

2. *Some servant men of pleasure*
Will make pastime out of leisure
For to see the horse trip over the plain,
With our horses and our hounds
We'll make hills and valleys sound,
That's a pleasure for some servant man.

Jan (spoken):

My pleasure is more than that,
It's to see my oxen grow fat,
And prove well in their kind
Aye, and a good stack of corn to fill up me barn
That's the pleasure of a wold husbandman.

Bet (spoken):

So it is, Jan

3. *When next to church they go*
With their livery fine and gay
With their cocked-up hats and gold lace all round,
With their shirts as white as milk
And stitched as fine as silk,
That's the habit for some servant man.

Jan (spoken):

Don't talk to I about your silks and your garments
That be not fit for us to travel the bushes in,
Let I have on me wold leather coat
Aye, and in my purse a groat,
That's the habit of a wold husbandman.

Bet (spoken):

So it is, Jan

4. *Some servant men do eat*
The very best of meat,
Such as cock, goose, capon and swan,
When the lords and ladies dine,
They drink strong beer, ale and wine,
That's the diet for some servant man.

Jan (spoken):

Don't talk to I about your cocks and your capons.
Let I have a good rusty piece of bacon.
Aye, and a good piece of pickled pork always in my house.
Aye, and a good hard crust of bread and cheese once now and then.
That's the diet of a wold husbandman.

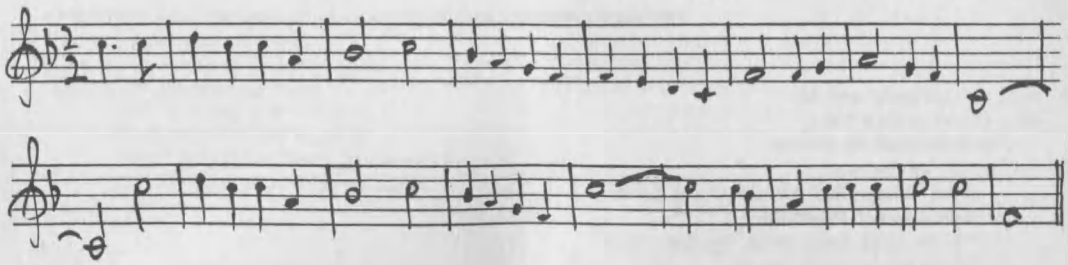
Bet (spoken):

So it is, Jan

5. *For now we needs confess*
That our calling is the best
And we'll give you the uppermost hand,
So now we won't delay,
But pray both night and day
To God bless the honest husbandman.

CHANTED

Well done, old Father Christmas,
And that is the best of all,
We wish you a Merry Christmas
And God bless you all.



10. DIVERS AND LAZARUS

Emily Bishop, Bromsberrow Heath, Ledbury, Hereford
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

Early registered versions include "A ballet of the Ryche man and poor Lazarus" licensed to Master John Wallye and Mistress Toye, 19 July 1557 and "a ballett, Dyves and Lazarus" to W. Pekerynge, 22 July 1570. The Elizabethan dramatist, Fletcher, in his *Monsieur Thomas* (1639) has a fiddler who says he can "sing The Merry Ballad of Diverus and Lazarus" (act iii scene 3). In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Nice Valour* it is mentioned as a ballad hanging at church corners.

"Joshua Sylvester" (thought to be a pseudonym for the London printer, John Camden Hotten) printed the words from an old Birmingham broadside in his *Garland of Christmas Carols* (1861) p.50. Also included were "I saw three ships" (As I sat on a sunny bank); "The Cherry Tree", "The Holly and the Ivy" and "Here we come a-wassailing". These came from Worcestershire or Birmingham broadsides.

William Henry Husk followed up this previous collection with his *Songs of the Nativity* (1868) and included a Worcestershire version of about 1700 (p. 94). Husk was Librarian to the Sacred Harmonic Society and the printer was again J. C. Hotten. It owes much to Sylvester's collection and also to that of William Sandys printed in London in 1833.

Unknown to either of these two editors, the carol had previously appeared in *"A Good Christmas Box"* printed by G. Walters at Dudley in Worcestershire (1847). This was a roughly printed chap-book with woodcuts still in use in the North Midlands at the turn of the century.

In Frank Sidgwick's *Popular Carols* (1908) a stanza was added just before the last from a source Sidgwick would not reveal, but seemingly from another carol, *Christ Made a Trance:*

O had I as many years to abide
As there are blades of grass
Then there would be an end, but now
Hell's pains will ne'er part

The tune of this carol, which has come to be known as "The Lazarus tune", is also used by traditional singers for other carols such as "Come all ye worthy Christian men" and other folk songs such as "The Murder of Maria Martin" or "The Red Barn", "The Thresher and the Squire", "Cold blows the wind". It resembles the tune of the Scottish ballad "Gilderoy" which appeared in D'Urfey's *Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1719); it is perhaps better known as "The Star of the County Down" and has much influenced the work of the composer Dr. Ralph Vaughan Williams.

There is a fine major variant, sung at Eardisley in Herefordshire, and a similar one, also distinct from the so called "Lazarus tune", in Bramley and Stainer's *Christmas Carols Old and New* (1871).

1. *As it fell out upon one day*
Rich Divers made a feast,
And he invited all his friends
And gentry of the best.
Then Lazarus laid him down and down
And down at Divers door.
"Some meat, some drink, brother Divers,
To bestow upon the poor."

2. *"Thou art none of my brothers, Lazarus,*
That lies begging at my door.
No meat, nor drink will I give thee
Nor bestow upon the poor."
Then Lazarus laid him down and down
And down at Divers gate.
"Some meat, some drink, brother Divers,
For Jesus Christ's sake."

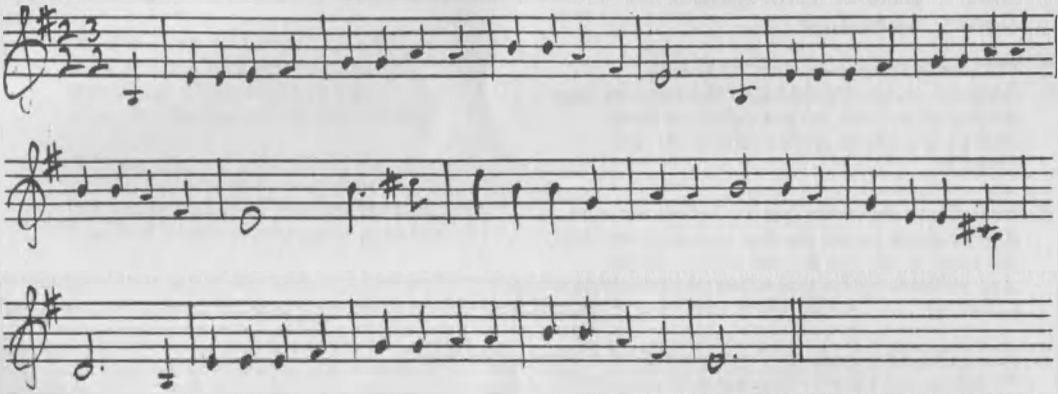
3. *"Thou'rt none of my brothers, Lazarus,*
That lies begging at my gate,
No meat nor drink will I give thee
For Jesus Christ's sake."
Then Dive sent out two merry men
To whip poor Lazarus away,
They had no power to strike a stroke,
But threw their whips away.

4. *OMITTED Thou'rt none of my brothers, Lazarus,*
That lies begging at my wall.
No meat nor drink will I give thee
But with hunger starve you shall.
SUNG:
Then Dive sent out two hungry dogs
To bite him as he lay,
They had no power to bite at all,
But licked his sores away.

5. *As it fell out upon one day,*
Poor Lazarus sickened and died.
There came two angels out of Heaven
His soul therein to guide.
"Rise up, rise up, brother Lazarus,
And come along with me,
For there's a place prepared in Heaven
To sit on an angel's knee."

6. *OMITTED As it fell out upon a day*
Rich Divers sickened and died.
There came two serpents out of hell
His soul therein to guide.
SUNG:
"Rise up, rise up, brother Divers,
And come along with me,
For there's a place prepared in hell
From which thou can'st not flee."

7. *OMITTED Then Divers looked up with his eyes*
And saw poor Lazarus blest,
"Give me one drop of water" he said,
"To quench my flaming thirst.
Had I as many years to live,
As there are blades of grass,
Then I would find some peace secure,
And the devil should have no part."



11. THE GOWER WASSAIL SONG

Charlie Bate, Padstow, Cornwall
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

Other verses of a similar type of Wassail were recorded from Sidney Richards at Curry Rivel near Langport in Somerset:

O maid, O maid, with your silver-headed pin
Pray open this door and let us all walk in
And for to fill our wassail bowl and so away again
To your wassail
Aye, and joy come to our jolly wassail

O maid, O maid, with your glove and your mug (mace)
Pray come unto this door and show your fine face
For we are truly weary of standing in this place

O Master and Mistress, if you are so well pleased
To set upon your table with your white loaf and your cheese
With your roast beef and your bold-rings and your pies

O Master and Mistress, if we've done you any harm
Pray open this door and let us all pass on
And give us hearty thanks for singing of our song

The tune resembles the Welsh *Cob Maltreath (Journal of the Welsh Folk-Song Society* vol. II No. 58 First Version) which has a similar nonsense chorus and could be sung to the same words. It is in "the folk minor", a Dorian mode with a number of "foreign" passing notes. Whenever there is an ascending pattern in the tune the mode is given a momentary twist with a rise and fall of a semitone, and vice-versa with a descending pattern. This is beautifully demonstrated by Phil Tanner's original recording of the song (which can be heard on the Columbia recording SL–206 in the series "World Library of Folk and Primitive Music: England).

1. *A-wassail, a-wassail, throughout of this town,*
Our cup it is white and our ale it is brown,
Our wassail is made of good ale and cake,
Of nutmeg and ginger, the best we can bake.
CHORUS
Al-di-dal, al-di-dal-di.
Dal al-di-dal-di dal al-di-dal-di-dee,
SING: di-deer-ol, SING: di-deer-di,
SING: too-ral-li-don.

2. *Our wassail is made of the el'berry bough,*
Although my good neighbour I'll drink unto thou,
Besides all on earth, we have apples in store,
Pray let us come in, for it's cold by the door.
CHORUS

3. *We know by the moon that we are not too soon,*
And we know by the sky that we are not too high,
We know by the star that we are not too far,
And we know by the ground that we are within sound,
CHORUS

4. *OMITTED Now master and mistress will your company forbear*
To full up our wassail with your cider and beer,
We want none of your pale beer, nor none of your small,
But a drop of your little kilderkin, that's next to the wall.

5. *OMITTED Now master and mistress, if you are within,*
Pray send out your maid with her lily-white skin,
For to open the door without more delay,
Our time it is precious and we cannot stay.

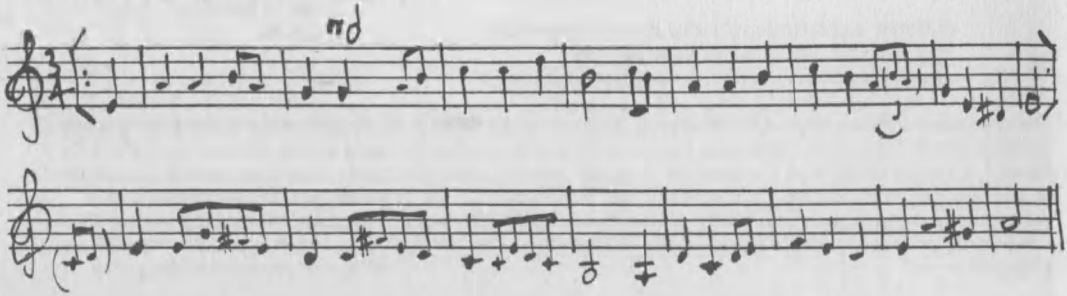
Then the Maid sings the following verse standing in the doorway:

6. *OMITTED You've brought your jolly wassail which is very well known*
But I can assure you we've as good of our own
As for your jolly wassail we care not one pin
But it's for your good company I'll let you come in

After drinks all round the wassailers sing:

7. *OMITTED Here's a health to our Colley and her croo-ed horn*
May God send her master a good crop of corn
Of barley and wheat and all sorts of grain
May God send her mistress a long life to reign

8. *OMITTED Now master and mistress, know you will give*
Unto our jolly wassail, as long as we live,
And if we do live till another new year,
We'll call in again just to see who lives here.



1. TALADH AN LEINBH LOSA (The Christ-child Lullaby)

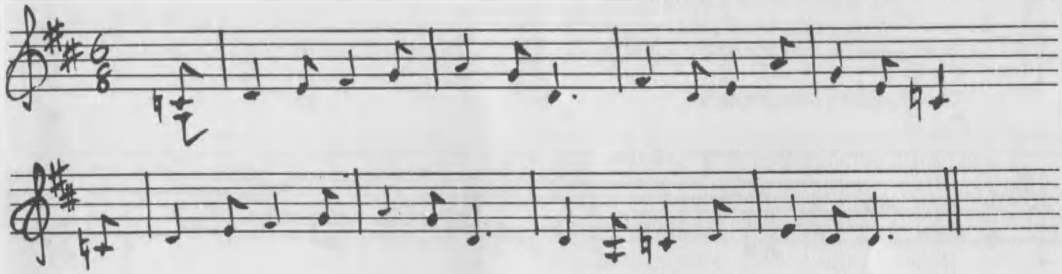
Group of crofters, S. Uist, Hebrides
(recorded by A. Lomax)

One of the best known Hebridean folk songs, this was found on a small island nearby Barra and thence spread throughout the Scots Gaelic speaking world, where it is a favorite among all singers.

Mo ghaol, mo gradh is m'eudail thu,
M' iunndas ur is M'aighneas thu,
Mo nhacan aluinn cendtach thu,
Chan fhiu mi fhin a bhith 'n do dhail.

My near one, my love, my joy are you,
My new wonder and my anxiety are you,
My lovely wonderful little son are you,
I am not worthy to be in your presence.

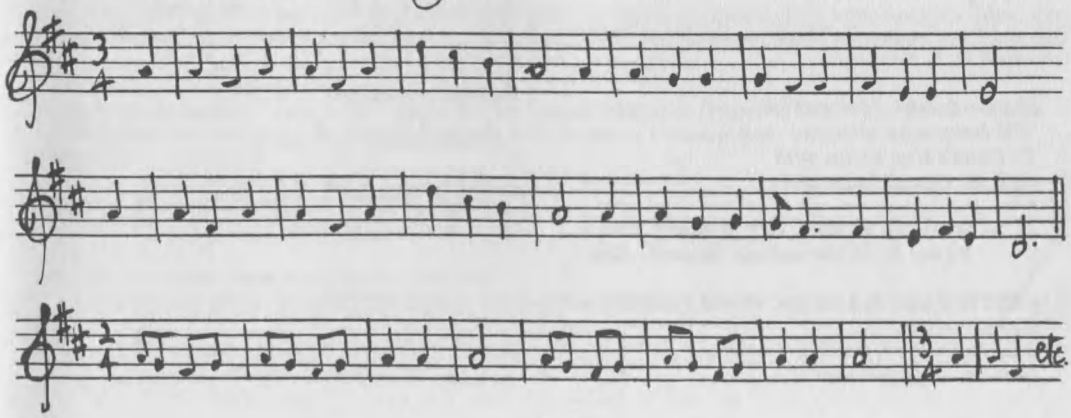
The song goes on to tell of the trials, troubles and terrors of the journey made by the Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus; their search for lodgings and the star which guided the Three Kings to Bethleham.



2. I. THE ST. CLEMENT'S SONG

Phyllis Carnwell, Hammerwich, Lichfield, Stafford
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

Clements-ly, clements-ly clear,
We only come once a year;
Apples or pears, a plum or a cherry,–
Anything you've got to make us all merry.



Mrs. Carnwell (Age 73) told us:

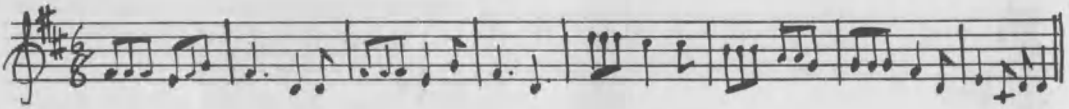
"On St. Clement's Day (November 23rd) the village lads would get together and go round the houses singing the old St. Clement's Song.

"They went in gangs of eight to ten lads and carried a lantern, a scooped-out swede with a tallow candle in it, and a square piece cut out for the flame to show through. They used to come home with quite an assortment of things including "coppers" (coins). A very old man, old Joey Johnson we called him, used to make a point of starting his Christmas carol singing on St. Clement's Day. It's at least 60 years since I heard it sung."

2. II. THE SHROVE TUESDAY SONG

Herbert Prince, Warminster, Wiltshire
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

Soft Tuesday, soft Tuesday
Poor Jack went to plough,
His mother made pancakes
She did not know how.
She twist them, she tossed them,
She made them so fat,
She put too much pepper
And poisoned poor Jack.
Thread a nidle, thread a nidle, (needle)
E, I, O
Thread a nidle, thread a nidle
E, I, O



This custom, still maintained by children in many parts of the West Country and Midland areas, is interesting as a probable survival of attempts to bring traditional pagan revelry into a more ordered ecclesiastical environment. No doubt this is the kind of dancing that took place round the English may-pole, rather than the ribbon-plaiting, later introduced by school-teachers. A survival of a "thread the needle" dance was found as part of a civic ceremony performed in Durham City. A similar figure is also found in the many variants of the Yorkshire "Long Sword" Dances.

3. SHEPHERDS ARISE

E.A.R says sung by her father (my grandpa Seaman) & his brother George – ex Norfolk.

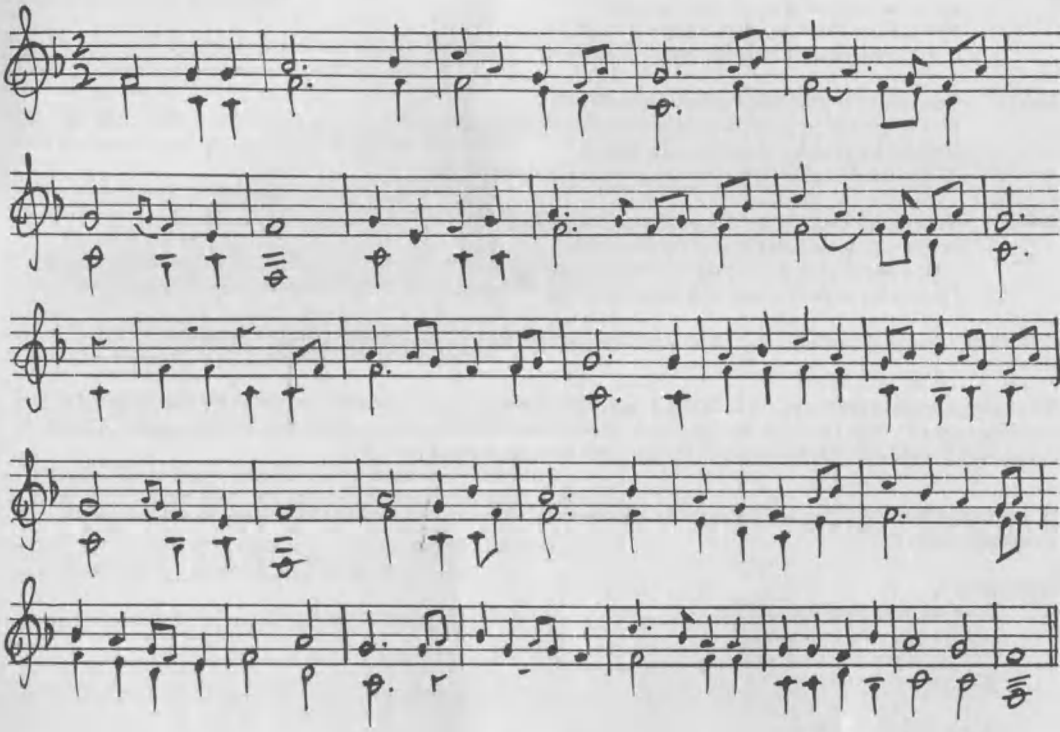
Bob and Ron Copper, Rottingdean, Brighton, Sussex
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

1. *Shepherds arise, be not afraid,*
With hasty steps prepare–
To David's city, sin on earth
With our blessed Infant there.

Sing, sing, all earth, eternal praises, sing,
To our Redeemer and our Heavenly King.

2. *OMITTED Laid in a manger, moved a child*
Humility divine
Sweet innocence, meek and mild
Grace in his features shine

3. *For us the Saviour came on earth,*
For us his life he gave,
To save us from eternal death
And to raise us from the grave.



4. THE CHERRY TREE CAROL

John Partridge, Cinderford, Gloucester
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

Once again, the story of this carol is similar but not identical to those in *The Apocryphal Gospels,* see especially Pseudo-Matthew xx. (See notes to *The Bitter Withy).*

Joseph and Mary with the Infant are fleeing into Egypt, when Mary suggests resting under a fruit-laden palm tree. Mary asks Joseph to get some fruit to eat but Joseph is more concerned to find some water to drink. The Infant Jesus, sitting in his mother's lap, speaks to the palm tree. First it bows down for Mary to pick the fruit, then it raises itself up again and a spring of water flows from its roots.

A much nearer incident to the carol is found in *The Coventry Miracles* (Piece xv) when they are on the road to "Bedlem" (Bethlehem) to be taxed and there is a conversation between them (see Hone's *Mysteries* pp. 67 f).

Maria: *A my swete husbond! wolde ye telle me,*
What tre is yon, standing vpon yon hylle?

Joseph: *For suthe Mary it is clepyd a chery tre;*
In tyme of yer, ye myght ffede yow theron yowr fylle.

Maria: *Turn a geyn, husbond, & be holde yon tre,*
How that it blomyght, how, so swetly.

Joseph: *Cum on Mary, that we wern at yon Cyte,*
or ellys we may be blamyd, I telle yow lythly.

Maria: *Now my spowse, I pray yow to be hold*
How the cheryes growyn vpon yon tre;
ffor to have them, of ryght, ffayn I wold,
& it plesyd yow to labor' so mec'h for me.

Joseph: *You' desyr to ffulfylle I schall assay sekyrly:–*
Ow! to plucke yow of these cheries it is a werk wylde!
ffor the tre is so hy! it wol not be lyghtly
Y' for lete hy' pluk yow cheryes, be gatt yow with childe.

Maria: *Now, good lord, I pray the, graunt me this bonn,*
to haue of these cheries, & it be yo' wylle;
now, I thank it god, yis tre bowyth to me down
I may now gader'y a nowe, & etyn my ffylle.

Joseph then humbles himself, the miracle convincing him that he has offended "god i' trinyte".

The earliest printed tune appears in William *Sandys'* Christmas Carols (1833), revised in Husk's *Songs of the Nativity* (1868). Anne Gilchrist thought both should have been barred in tripple time. It was one of the few carols which appear in Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (No. 54).

We had the following extra verses from Mr. Thomas of Camborne (who recorded *As I sat on a sunny bank, Camborne Hill* etc.):–

After verse 1
And when he had married her
To his home he had her brought
She gave him a little child
But Joseph knew it not

Then Joseph and Mary
Went a -walking down the grove
They saw berries and cherries
As red as any rose

After verse 7
My child shall not be cloth-ed
In purple or in pall
But in the finest linen
The whitest of all

After verse 8
This World, said Joseph
Is like the stones in the street
The sun, moon and the stars
Shall lie under your feet

THE SINGER

The late *John William Partridge* worked underground as a miner in the local colliery at Cinderford for 56 years. His particular job was that of "colliery roadman" which involved laying steel rails for the coal trolleys running to the coal face. The song had been sung by generations of the Partridge family and was always known as "The Family Carol". On Boxing Day there followed this special spoken toast:

God bless the mistress of this house
And all her family, too,
Send them good cheer, good bread and good beer
And now we wish you a Happy New Year

1. *OMITTED Now Joseph was an old man and an old man was 'e*
   And 'e married Mary, the Queen of Galilee
   (The second line is repeated)

2. *Now Joseph and Mary walking down the garden green,*
   Where the cherries 'ang 'eavy on e-v-er-y limb.

3. *"Pick me some cherries, Joseph, pick me some cherries, do;*
   Pick me some cherries, Joseph, that 'ang on the bough."

4. *Then up spoke old Joseph with his words so unkind,*
   "Let the man gather the cherries that owneth the child."

5. *Then up spoke Our Saviour all in his mother's arms (womb),*
   "Bow down thou blessed cherry tree that Mary may 'ave some."

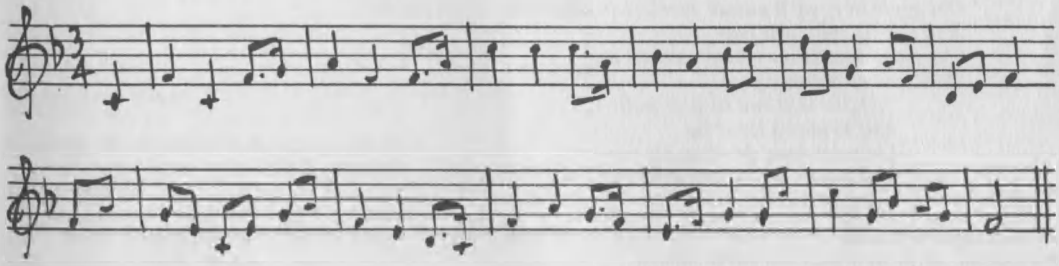
6. *The very top branches bow'ed down to 'er feet,–*
   "Now you can see, Joseph, there are cherries for me."

7. *OMITTED My child shall not be christened in silver nor in gold,*
   But in some twigg-ed cradle where the babes are reck-ed all

8. *OMITTED Then Mary placed her own child upon her knee*
   Saying, "Son, come now and tell me what this World now shall be."

9. *OMITTED The moon it shall be darkened and be burst into blood*
   And this World set on fire by the vengence of God

   (Spoken at end) We wish you a merry Christmas



5. SOMERSET WASSAIL SONG

Harry and Walter Sealy, Ash Priors, Taunton, Somerset
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

A further verse of this Somerset Wassail Song has been noted at Crowcombe (not far from Ash Priors):–

I will go home to old mother Joan
And tell her to put on the big marrow bone
To wash it and boil it and skim off the scum
And we will have porridge when do come home
Home, me boys, home (2)
(Repeat last line)

Cecil Sharp gave a vivid description of the wassailers in the village of Drayton where they sang another version of this same Wassail:

"The singers, twelve to fifteen strong, assembled at the vicarage and arranged themselves in a semi-circle around the front door, which was closed. They then sang their song in full and lusty tones, with upturned faces and half-closed eyes, pronouncing their words sharply and clearly after the manner of all good folk-singers. At its conclusion the leader advanced a step or two and in a loud voice greeted the family and household

God bless Master and Missus and all the family
And we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year
And many of them

The door was opened and, on the invitation of the vicar, the company entered the house and received thanks and donations, after which they took their leave and proceeded on their round. The whole ceremony occupied only a few minutes, but in its perfect simplicity, in the curious old-fashioned words and the beautiful tune to which they were sung, it was wonderfully effective, and one could only deplore the gradual but sure diappearance of such a pretty and social custom." (Cecil Sharp 1909).

Harry and Walter Sealy told us the song had been sung in Ash Priors district mostly round the fruit trees. As Harry told us:

"You see, they'd sing their wassail song and then after they'd sung they'd go back to the farmer's back door and have cider. And then they'd go under a pear tree or plum tree and instead of "apples or cider" they'd say "pears and perry", d'see what I mean, dont'e, sir?"

His brother Walter added: "O then they used to fire the gun up in the apple tree to drive the evil spirits out the tree. And they even used to hang a little bit of toast in the limbs for the robin to come and pick."

At Minehead one informant sang an Apple Tree Wassail to Cecil Sharp and described how they wassailed the apple trees on the 17th. of January every year. The custom is still kept up at Carhampton, near Minehead. They would meet in the orchard about 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening, join hands and then dance in a ring round an apple tree singing

Old apple tree, we'll wassail thee
And hoping thou wilt bear
The Lord does know where we shall be
To be merry another year
To blow well and to bear well
And so merry let us be
Let every man drink up his cup
And health to the old apple tree

At the conclusion of the song, they stamped on the ground, fired off their guns and made as much noise as they could, while they shouted out in unison:

"Apples now, hatfulls, capfulls, three bushel bagfulls, tallets ole fulls, barn's floor fulls, little heap under the stairs. Hip, hip, hip, hooroo." (3 times).

Having placed some pieces of toast soaked in cider on one of the branches, they proceeded to another tree, around which they repeated the ceremony.

A further verse from Bradford-on-Tone referred to the robin:

A poor little robin sits up in the tree
And all the day long so merry sings he
A-widdling and twiddling to keep himself warm
And a little more cider won't do us no harm

The fact that at many places in Somerset the traditional date for Apple Tree Wassailing is January 17th (the date of the Epiphany, old-style) clearly proves this to be an Epiphany or Twelfth Day custom rather than a Christmas one.

At Duncton, near Petworth in Sussex, there was a special song for wassailing the bees. The men danced round the bee-hives beating them with sticks and sang this "Bee Worsle":

Bees, bees of Paradise
Do the work of Jesus Christ
Do the work that no man can
God made bees, bees make honey
God made man, men make money
God made men to harr'w and to plow
And God made the little boy
To holloa off the crow
Holloa, boys, holloa
Hip, hip, hurrah

Once again this type of Wassail song does not seem to have been confined to the South West of England, for we find it again in the North East. A Northumbrian variant published in Mason's *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* (1877) has a final chorus:

Green grow the leaves upon the hawthorn tree
Some they grow high and some they grow lee
But the wranglers and the janglers they never agree
And the burthen of my song goes merrily
20, 19, 18
17, 16, 15
14, 13, 12, 11
10, 9, 8, 7, 6
5, 4, 3
(Repeat last line)

SOMERSET WASSAIL SONG

(Walter Sealy sings)

1. *There was an old man, he 'ad an old cow,*
And 'ow to keep 'er 'e didn't know how.
He built up a barn to keep his cow warm
And a little more liquor won't do us no harm,
Harm, me boys, 'arm
Harm, me boys, 'arm
And a little more liquor won't do us no harm,

2. *There was an old fox down in the green copse,*
Clothin' his den and smockin' 'is chops.
Or shall we go catch 'im? O, yes, if you can.
Ten thousand to one we'll catch him or none.
None, me boys, none,
None, me boys, none,
Ten thousand to one we'll catch him or none

(Harry and Walter sing)

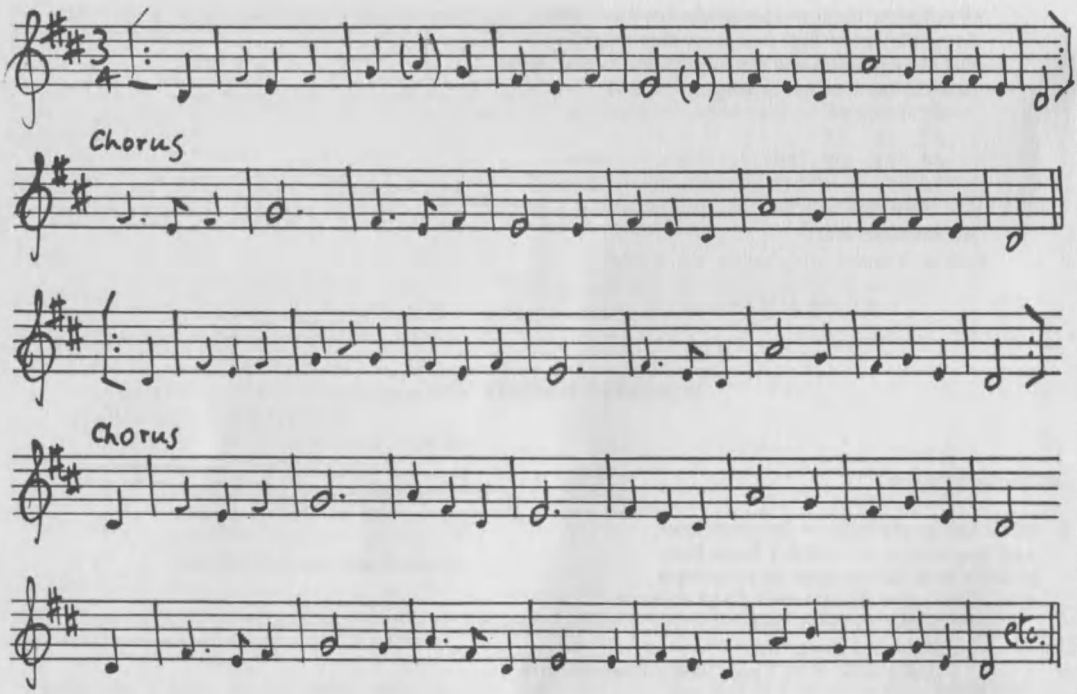
3. *O lily-white lily, o lily-white pin,*
Please to come down and let us all in,
O lily-white lily, o lily-white smock,
Please to come down and shut back the lock.
For it's our wassail, jolly wassail,
Jolly go with our jolly wassail,
So well they might bloom, so well they might bear,
That we may have apples and cider this year.

4. *O missus and master, o now, if you please,*
Please to bring forth a white loaf and cheese.
For it's our wassail, jolly wassail,
Jolly go with our jolly wassail.

For the ringles and the jingles,
And the tenor of our song goes merrily,
Merrily, merrily,
And the tenor of our song goes merrily.

They shout:

Hatfuls, capfuls, three bushel bagfuls
Little heap in under the stairs,
Hip, hip, hooray.



6. HUNTING THE WREN

Joe and Winifred Woods, Douglas, Isle of Man
(recorded by L. Daiken)

On a certain day of the year (Dec.26th), a wren was caught and killed. It was carried round, by a singing procession of men or boys, in a decorated receptacle from house to house, its feathers, in exchange for food or coins, being distributed to be worn as protective charms or luck-bringing amulets, or being kept in the houses or fishing boats for the same purpose. The body of the bird was afterwards buried to the singing of "dirges", formerly in the churchyard with subsequent circular dances, but latterly on the seashore or in any convenient piece of waste ground.

(The above condensed from accounts written by Waldron (1731), Mrs Bullock (1816) and Train (1845) was published in *A Second Manx Scrapbook* (1932) by W. Walter Gill).

In the Isle of Man, the wren was usually carried about in a small box made of coloured paper and gaily decorated with ribbons or paper streamers, tinsel or foil, or else it was suspended by a leg from the junction-point of two hoops of willow or other flexible wood with their ends fastened together to form two circles, and intersecting each other at right angles, the decorations being similar to those of the box. Bunches of such greenery as could be got, at that time of the year, often holly or ivy, were sometimes fixed round the receptacle. This must have been an essential part of the equipment formerly, for its technical name was always "The Bush" or "The Wren Bush".

Dr. John Clague (1842-1908) who was a fellow collector of Gill's, gives further interesting accounts in his *Manx Reminiscences* (1911) which was printed posthumously in parallel pages of Manx-Gaelic and English. He quotes the Manx legend that during the Irish Rebellion, when English soldiers and Manx Fencibles were in Ireland, the noise made by the wren on the end of a drum, by waking a sleeping sentry, saved them from being taken unawares, and this was the origin of the custom of hunting the wren on St. Stephen's Day.

Clague describes the ceremonial carrying of the wren: The bird was placed on a stick between two boys, on a firbranch tied with ribbons. A third boy was covered with a net, his face was blackened and a bunch of leeks tied together served as a tail. He carried a long pole for a stick and kept time with the tune with heavy stamping. This was also done by an Adderbury (Oxfordshire) shepherd, also a Morris Dancer, who sang a version of the song called "Richard to Robin" noted by Janet Blunt (JFSS 18 p. 77).

The Wren Song is also still sung in Ireland where there is a similar ceremony:

The Wren, the Wren, the king of all birds
St. Stephen's Day, was caught in the furze
Although he is little, his family's great
I pray you good landlady, give us a treat

The Song was first published in Horncastle's *Music of Ireland* (1844) and an account of the custom given in *Folk-Lore* vol xxvii No. 3. (1916). There is a version called "The Cricketty Wee" No. 744 in the Sam Henry Collection.

There are Scottish variants in Chambers' *Popular Rhymes* and also in Buchan Ms. vol.i. pp.166(a)–167(b) which begins:

Where are ye gain? quoth Hose to Mose
Where are ye gain? quoth Johnny Rednose
And where are ye gain? quoth brethren three
To shoot the wren, quo' Wise Willie

A number of Welsh variants appear in *The Journal of The Welsh Folk-Song Society* vol. i part 3 pp. 99-113 (1911) together with an account of the custom by Llew Tegid. A Breton version is given in M. Luzel's *Chanson Populaires de la Basse Bretagne.*

A version called "The Cutty Wren" sung in English in Carmarthenshire is published in Mason's *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* (1908):

O where are you going? says Milder to Malder
O I cannot tell, says Festel to Fose
We're going to the woods, says John the Red Nose
We're going to the woods, says John the Red Nose

O what will you do there?
We'll shoot the Cutty Wren

O how will you shoot her?
With arrows and bows

O that will not do
With cannons and guns

O how will you bring her home?
On 4 strong men's shoulders

O that will not do
In waggons and carts

O what will you cut her up with?
With knives and with forks

O that will not do
With hatchets and cleavers

O how will you boil her?
In kettles and pots

O that will not do
In cauldrons and pans

O who'll have the spare ribs?
We'll give them to the poor

A Yorkshire version does not contain the shooting; the bird is merely found:

I fun'a bird's nest says Robin a-bobbin
What will we do wi' ut?
We'll tak' ut to keepers
What shall we get for it?
Three ha-pence a piece
What shall we do wi' ut?
We'll go and get drunk!

There always seems to be great trouble getting it into the cart or in this case, a "cab":

How shall we get home?
We'll hire a cab
How shall we get in?
We'll tumble in
How shall we get out?
Same way we got in

An Oxfordshire version elaborates on the cooking:

How shall us cook her?
We'll buy a furnace
We must hire a cook
What shall us gie her?
We must gie her the feathers
That won't be enough
We must gie her the bones
The feathers will choke her
The feathers have *choked her*
So the poor cook is dead!

For comments on the significance of this song see Lina Eckenstein's *Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes* (1906) and *The Journal of the Folk Song Society* No. 20 (1916) and also *The Singing Englishman,* A. L. Lloyd. Manx versions are given in No. 28 (1924).

HUNTING THE WREN

1. *OMITTED We'll hunt the wren says Robbin the bobbin*
   We'll hunt the wren says Richie the robin
   We'll hunt the wren says Jack of the land
   We'll hunt the wren says everyone

2. *OMITTED Where, O where?*

3. *In yonder green bush.*

4. *How get him down?*

5. *With sticks and stones.*

6. *How get him home?*

7. *The brewers big cart.*

8. *How'll we ate him?*

9. *With knives and forks.*

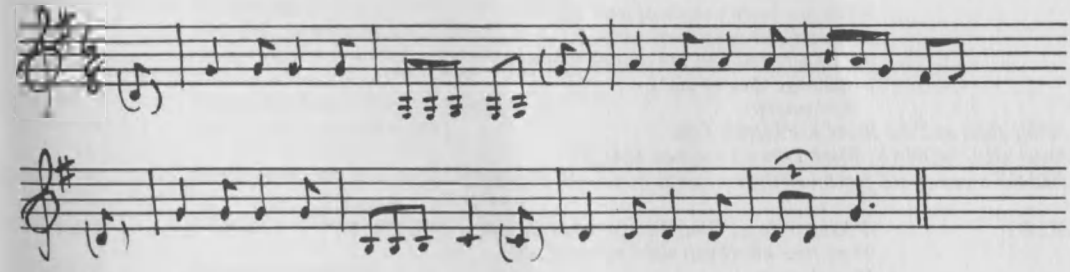
10. *Who'll come to dinner?*

11. *The king and the queen.*

12. *Eyes to the blind,*
Legs to the lame,
Pluck to the poor,
Bones to the dogs.

CHORUS: *The wren, the wren, is king of the birds,*
St. Stephen's Day he's caught in the furze.
Although he is little, his family is great.
We pray you, good people, to give us a trate.
(They knock on the house door)

Come on with the money, mister,
Or it'll be "Bad House" we'll be singing!



7. THE ANTROBUS SOULCAKER'S PLAY

(Performed annually on All Hallow's Eve)

The Antrobus Soulcakers, Nortwich, Cheshire
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

After singing the "Souling Song" outside the door of the house, they knock three times to be admitted.
(Enter LETTER-IN Frock coat, tall hat and walking stick)

LETTER-IN *Ladies and gentleman, sit around*
Make a fire and strike a light
For in this house, there's going to be a dreadful fight
Between King George and the Black Prince
And we all hope King George will win
But whether he may win, lose, fight or fall
We'll do our best to please you all
Step in, King George and clear the way
(Enter KING GEORGE; Red tunic, peak cap and steel sword)

K. GEORGE *In comes I, King George, the champion bold*
I won ten thousand pounds in gold
'Twas I that fought the fiery dragon
And brought him to his slaughter
And by these means I won the King of Egypt's daughter
I 'ave travelled the whole world round and round
And never a man of my equals have I found
If you don't believe these words I say
Step in, Black Prince, and clear the way

(Enter BLACK PRINCE; black tunic with gold braid, helmet with spike on top and a blackened face)

B. PRINCE *In comes I, Black Prince of Paradise*
Born of high renown
This night I've come to take
King George's life and courage down
If that be he that standeth there
That slew my master, son and heir
If that be he of royal blood
I'll make it flow like Noah's flood

K. GEORGE *Mind what thou sayest*

B. PRINCE *I say what I mean*

K.GEORGE *Stand back, thou black Morocco dog*
Or by my sword thou shalt die
I'll pierce thy body full of holes
And make thy buttons fly

B. PRINCE *How canst thou pierce my body full of holes*
And make my buttons fly?
When my body's made of iron
My head and sword's of steel
My fingers and toes are double-jointed
I challenge thee to yield
And prepare

(They fight and the BLACK PRINCE falls.
Enter OLD WOMAN, Black Prince's mother, MARY)
(MARY wearing old fashioned drawers with lace down to ankles)

MARY *O King George, King George, what hast thor done*
Thou hast killed and slain my only son
My only heir
Look at him lying died and bleeding there

K. GEORGE *Well, Mary, he challenged me*
Better to fight than to die
£5 for a doctor, ten for a quack
To raise this man from off his back
If you don't believe these words I say
Step in, Quack Doctor, and clear the way

(Enter QUACK DOCTOR: Frock coat, tall hat, beard, gloves, spectacles, doctor's bag with hammer, pincers, saw and bottles)

QUACK *In comes I, Tom Brown*
The best quack doctor of this town
Straight from the continent I came
To cure this man King George has slain

MARY *How camest thou to be a doctor?*

QUACK *O, by my travels*

MARY *Where'st thou travelled?*

QUACK *O, Icky, Picky, France and Spain*
Three times to the West Indies
And now back to Old England
To cure diseases again

MARY *What diseases canst thou cure?*

QUACK *Allsorts*

MARY *What's allsorts?*

QUACK *O, the omp, the gomp, the gir, the gout*
The pain within and the pain without
And if there's nineteen devils in that man's heart
I can cast twenty out
In my bag I have spectacles for blind bumble bees
Crutches for lame ducks
Likewise plasters for broken-backed earwigs

MARY *What's thy fees to cure my son?*

QUACK *Well now then £5*
But seeing'st thou's a decent old woman
I'll only charge thee ten
(QUACK DOCTOR bends down over corpse and gets out his variety of carpentry tools and tests the corpse)

O, he's "djed" all right
Here, Jack (administers bottle)
Take two or three sips out of this bottle
Let it run down thy thrittle-throttle
Now, Jack, arise and fight thy battle
For I'm bound to say, ladies and gentlemen
That this man's as safe and sound
As any man on England's ground

MARY *Thou silly man, as green as grass*
The "djed" man never stirs

B. PRINCE *O, my back, my back (groaning)*

MARY *What ails thy back, my son?*

B. PRINCE *My back is broken*
My heart is confounded
Knocked out seven senses into fourteen score
Which has never been known in old England before

QUACK *O Mary, I quite forgot*
I took the right cork off the wrong bottle
And the wrong bottle from the right cork
But I have another little bottle here
In me inside, outside, round about my backside
Jacket, waistcoat, breeches-pocket
Here we are
It's a little bottle that me great grandfather
Sent me from Spain
Called eeky-oaky-enemy-pokey
It will bring live men to dead again
Now, Jack, just take a few sips out of this bottle
Let it run down thy thrittle-throttlee
Now Jack, arise and fight thy battle
For I'm bound to say this man's as safe and sound
As any man on England's ground
(B. PRINCE gets up and fights K. GEORGE again. Enter LETTER-IN)

LETTER-IN *Lay down your swords and rest*
For peace and quietness is the best
He who fights and runs away
Shall live to fight another day
If you don't believe these words I say
Step in, Dairy Doubt, clear the way
(Enter DAIRY DOUBT with long tail to his shirt)

D. DOUBT *In comes I, young Dairy Doubt*
With me shirt lap hanging out
Five yards in and five yards out
And out with little Dairy Doubt
And if you don't believe these words I say
Step in, Beelzebub, and clear the way
(Enter BEELZEBUB with clog and banging frying-pan)

BEELZEBUB *In comes I, Beelzebub*
On my shoulder I carry me clog
In me hand me dripping-pan
And I reckon meself a jolly old man
With a ring ting ting (banging pan three times)
I'll sup pint pots dry with any man
If you don't believe me, just try me
'Twas early on Wednesday morning
Late on Saturday night
I looked a thousand mile away
Saw a house just out of sight
The walls projected back'ards
The front was round at back
Alone it stood between two more
And it were white-washed black
I've just done 6 months in Knutsford Gaol
Making a whip crack out of a mouse's tail
I can creep and crawl like a big black snail
If you don't believe these words I say
Step in, Wild Horse, and clear the way
(Amid shouts enter the GROOM wearing red coat with green collar of Cheshire Hunt with whip and spurs. He is leading WILD HORSE, a man covered with a sack holding a real horse's head painted and set on a broomstick)

GROOM *In comes Dick and all his men*
He's come to see thee once again
He was once alive but now he's died
He's now got a poor old horse's head
So stand around, Dick, and show theeself
Whoa! Whoa! (Shows the horse round room)
Now ladies and gentlemen
Just look around
Thou hast never seen a finer horse
Stand on England's ground
He's double-ribbed, sound-footed
And a splendid horse in any gaze
But, by gum, ride him if they can
Whoa!
But as thou seest Dick's getting old
So I've put this old bag on him
To keep him from the cold
He's getting more wrinkles in his forehead
Than there are furrows in an acre of fresh-ploo'd ground
But he's still good, strong and sound
Whoa!
He's got a (h)eye like a hawk
A neck like a swan

A pair of ears like a ladies pocket-book
So read 'em as they come
Every time he opens his mouth, his head's half off
Every tooth in his head
Stands rink, jink, and jank
Like a regiment of pickled onions
If thou looks down his mouth
You'll see the dirty heels of his socks
Whoa!
Now he's a very fine horse
He's very well bred
On Antrobus oats this horse has been fed
He's won Derby and the Oaks
And finished up pulling an old milk-float
So stand around, Dick, and show theeself
Whoa! Whoa!
Now as this horse was going round Frandley Brook
He saw a caravan drawn on't side of road
He ran into it, he knocked a wheel off
He broke one or two mahogany fire-arms
And the glass wheel-barrow
What they use to fetch in sticks with
But that's not all this horse's career
O, no!
He's travelled high, he's travelled low
He's travelled through both frost and snow
He's travelled in the land of Icky-picky
Where there's neither land nor city
Where houses are thatched with pancakes
Walls built with dumplings
Streets paved with penny loaves
Black puddings grow on apple trees
And thou pluck'st them as thou wants them
Little pigs running about
With knives and forks sticking in their backs
Crying out: Who'll eat me?
I said one, and me horse another
So stand around, Dick, and show yourself
Whoa! Whoa!
Now this horse was born on Antrobus Moss
Where as you all know the crows fly tail first
And just before he was found
He shot his mother
To save her being drowned
Now he was fed night and day with a spoon
And at one time he could dance to any old tune
Come on, lad. Whoa, Dick!
(Dance)
But now, as thee sees, Dick's getting old in one leg
And with that leg he's forced to beg
And what he begs it is but small
So now you all kind ladies and gentlemen
I ask you to open your hearts
We're collecting for Dick a new spring cart
Not one for him to draw, no, no
One for him to ride in
And if thee doesn't believe these words I say
Ask these other blokes
They're bigger liars than me

.L *And lots of votes*

ROOM *And now, Dick, show thee obedience to thee best friends*

(Horse bows to the company)
And now to thee worst
(WILD HORSE chases GROOM)

ALL sing *And now our play is ended*
And we can no longer stay
But with your kind permission
We will call another day
But before we go, we'll have you to know
We'll have you to understand
We're a credit to old England
And the boys of the Antrobus gang.

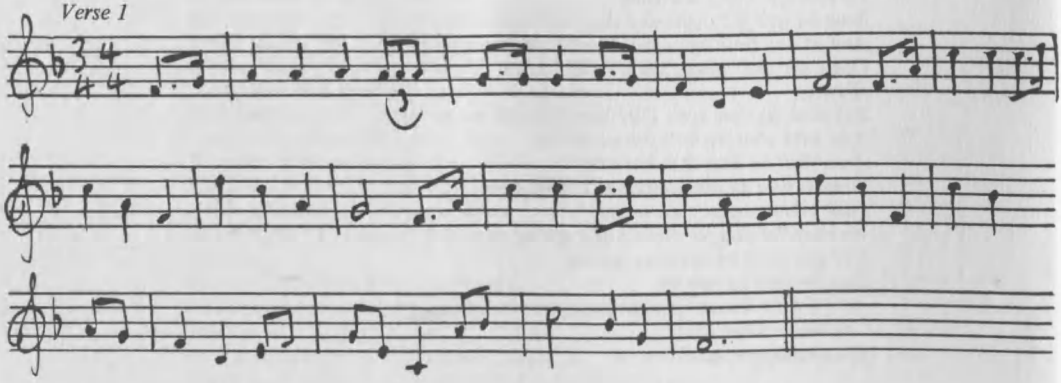
CHESHIRE SOULING SONG

1. *Here comes one, two, three jolly good hearty lads,*
And we're all in one mind,
For this night we've come a-souling
Good nature to find.
For this night we've come a-souling,
As it doth appear,
And it's all that we are souling for
Is your ale and strong beer.

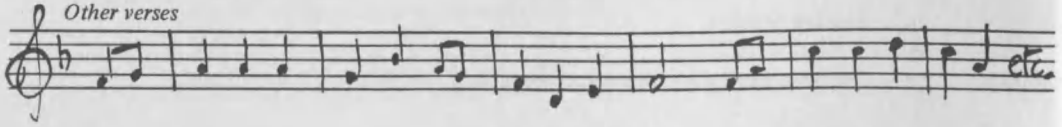
2. *And the next that steps up*
Is Lord Nelson, you see,
With a bunch of blue ribbons
Tied down to his knee,
And the star on his bosom
Like silver doth shine,
And I hope you will remember
That it's soul-caking time.

3. *And the next that steps up*
Is the miser you see;
He wears his old rags
To every degree,
And when he does sell them
He sells them so dear
That no-one will buy them
Until this time next year.

Verse 1



Other verses



8. SIX JOLLY MINERS

Louis Rowe, Grenoside, Sheffield, W. Yorks
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

Louis Rowe described this local begging custom:

"As kiddies we used to get a pick, an old shovel, bit of coal, and if we could get some "Motties" (metal coal tallies with holes through and numbers which every collier had for his coal allowance), knee-pads, and black faces, and backside-out trousers and shirt pulled through and we used to go singing from door to door and they would have us singing in the public houses, gathering coppers at Christmas time." Mr. Rowe said that even if only two colliers went round singing they still sang "Six Jolly Miners". A Hampshire version (from the unpublished Gardiner Ms. at Cecil Sharp House) has the following verses:

It's of six jolly miners, six miners you shall hear
And they had been a-mining for many a long year
So they travelled old England, Ireland and Scotland all round
And of their delight was a-working underground

There was one came from Cornwall and two from Derby town
The other three from Williamsbridge, young lads of high renown
But of all their delight was to split those rocks in twine
And it's all for the treasure, my boys, as we does undermine

Sometimes we have money, boys, sometimes we have none at all
But we can have good credit, my boys, when on it we do call
We call for liquors merrily and drink our healths all round
Here's a health to all my jolly miners that works all underground

So 'tis down by the crystal river stream I heard a fair maid sing
O haven't you seen my miner, or haven't you been this way?
So haven't you seen my miner? So sweetly sang she
For of all the trades in England it's the miners for me

We recorded a Scots version from Mrs. A. Cosgrave at Newtongrange which included two further verses:

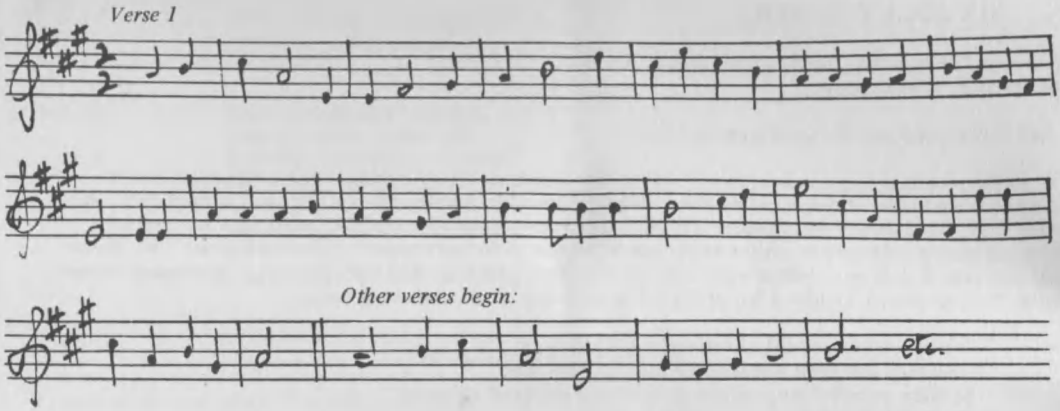
I'll knit my love a grovat as doggie as can be
And the colours I'll put in it will fairly tak' his e'e
The reddles they should go up to him and say: Where did you get that?
O I got it frae my wee doggie bloke and what d 'ye think o' that?

I'll build my love a castle, a castle of high renown
Neither kings, queens, or earls will pull that castle down
The king loves the queen and the emperor does the same
Here's my hand to every wee collier lad that works below the ground

SIX JOLLY MINERS

1. *Six jolly miners,*
We're not worth a pin,
But when we get a bit of coal,
We'll make the kettle sing.
CHORUS:
So we'll riddle and we'll fiddle
And we'll make the earth go round,
If you don't mind your trouble,
You will have a "motty down".
(Last half repeated)

2. *Two came from Derby*
And two from Derby town,
The others came from Oughterbridge
And they all came firing down.



9. JOHN BARLEYCORN

Carol sung at the annual Hood Game, Haxey, *Lincs. England*
(recorded by Peter Kennedy and Seamus Ennis)

The Haxey Hood

This is one of the three songs which are performed by a group of thirteen men known as "The Boggens", who go round the village of Haxey every evening the week before the date of the local "Hood" custom. The "Hood" is a cylindrical shaped "ball" of leather which is fought for by young men, somewhat in the manner of playing Rugby football (i. e. with "scrums" or packs of men pushing against each other to gain better positions). The custom is similar to other such "folk football" games which take place annually in other localities, in which one part of a township is divided against the other (often known as "The Ups" and "The Downs"). In the case of "The Haxey Hood" the leading character is known as "The Fool" and has to make a "nonsense" speech while he is "burnt" over a heap of damp straw in front of the church. He has 12 boggens to assist him in the conduct of the game, and he carries a wand of 13 willow rods which are bound round 13 times.

After the Fool has made his speech, the "Sway" takes place. 13 sham hoods are thrown first of all. If an individual carries them to a nearby pub he receives free drinks. Then the main hood is thrown and the teams from the village struggle to carry it into the area of the opposing team. Spectators are drawn in, snow turns to steam over the scrum of struggling young men and on occasions the church wall is toppled over by the side thrust of the "sway".

At one time the Hood was roasted over a fire and basted with beer which the winners drank. Perhaps the Hood was once a bullock. The local stories about the hood are of little use in clearing up the mystery of this curious custom. One story for example tells of Lady Mowbray who lost her hood in a high wind and gave the land on which the Sway takes place in trust for 12 men who restored it to her.

The other two songs sung on this occasion are DRINK OLD ENGLAND DRY (See Caedmon Album of Soldier Songs TC 1164) and a version of THE FARMER'S BOY.

THE SONG

John Barleycorn appears in Chappell's *National English Airs* where it is probably taken from Evan's *Old Ballads* (1810 Edition)

> *A pleasant new ballad to sing even and morne*
> *Of the bloody murder of Sir John Barley-corn*

There are 34 verses, of which the first 6 and last 4 are concerned with 3 other "noblemen": Thomas Good-ale, Richard Beer and Sir William White-Wine who meet John Barley-corn for a "fray".

Some of them fought in a black jack
Some of them in a can
But the chiefest in a black pot
Like a worthy nobleman

Sir Barley-corn fought in a bowl
Who won the victory
Which made them all to fume and swear
That John Barleycorn should die

The earliest known copy is in the Pepys Collection (i. 426) in black-letter printed by H. Gosson (1607-1641) in the reign of James I. Another in the same collection (i. 470) comes from the reign of Charles II. Robert Burns altered the song considerably and added further verses. Jameson in *Popular* Ballads (1806) tells us that he heard it sung in Morayshire before Burns' songs were published. Dixon in *Songs of the English Peasantry* (1846) said it was sung throughout England to the tune of "stingo or Oil of Barley" which occurs in Playford's *English Dancing Master* (1650-1690).

Anne Gilchrist, in *Journal of the Folk Song Society* No. 21 (1918) has an interesting note:–

There is a reminiscence of the old song JOHN DORY

The grappling hooks were brought at length
The browne bill and the sword-a
John Dory at length, for all his strength
Was clapt fast under board-a

JOHN DORY, a very famous ditty, is amongst the Freemen's (Three Men's) songs in Ravenscroft's *Deuteromelia* (1609). It relates in 8 verses an incident that apparently took place in the 14th century.

If JOHN BARLEYCORN was originally a three-men's song, this might explain the "Three men from the East" (or West) in the first verse (of many versions), as the three-men songmen seem often to have announced themselves as a trio. It will be remembered that the shearers of *The Winter's Tale* were "three-man songmen all, and very good ones". JOHN BARLEYCORN is certainly a very appropriate shearers' song, and it would be interesting if it could be traced back to the musical harvesters of Elizabethan times. Put into the first person, like one of the old sword-dance or pace-egging (calling-on) songs, it suggests an early rustic song with appropriate dramatic action.

The three men, knights or kings, in slaying John Barleycorn, may have been reapers competing in the custom of "crying the mare" (or neck) for the harvest-lordship, when the last patch of corn was left standing and the reapers threw their sickles (held by the point) at the ears of corn to cut them off.

Various tradesmen seem to be brought in to the later verses of some English versions:

The huntsman he can't hunt the fox
Nor so loudly blow his horn
And the tinker he can't mend kettles or pots
Without a little of Barleycorn

Sometimes at Haxey, in verse 10, they sing the last line: *And a farmer burn his corn*

A Scots version in Christie's *Traditional Ballad Airs* (1877) has these verses:

The browster wife we'll not forget
She well her tale can tell
She's ta'en the sap out of his bodie
And made of it good ale

And they have filled it in a cap
And drank it round and round
And aye the mair they drank o' it
The mair did joy abound

John Barleycorn is the wightest man
That ever throve on land
For he could pit a Wallace down
By the turning of his hand

One Irish singer we recorded in Co. Tyrone believed the song to be the life-cycle of "Whisky":

"John Barleycorn is definitely made on whisky–how it's tilled from the soil, grew up, matured, then it's threshed, cleaned and ground in the mill. Then it goes to the distilleries, it's malted there and then comes out in that great stuff that keeps the world going."

His last verse gave the final note:

Of all the sins as I came through
Sure this was the worst of all
When a big man swallowed me down his throat
And he pissed me against the wall

JOHN BARLEYCORN

1. *There was two brothers stood on yon hill,*
As it might be you and I,
And betwixt those two brothers there rose a dispute
That John Barleycorn should die (2)

2. *So they buried him by yonder hill so high*
And they threw soil over his head,
And there he lay a considerable time,
Till they thought he was almost dead (2)

3. *OMITTED He laid in the ground for a long long time*
Till the rain from the skies did fall
And then Sir John how he plucked up his head
And he did surprise them all

4. *He laid till midsummer time of the year*
Till the weather was pleasant and warm,
And there Sir John how he grew a beard
And he soon became a man (2)

5. *OMITTED Then they hired men with their scythes so sharp*
And they cut him down to the knee
And how they used poor Barleycorn
They served him barbarously

6. *OMITTED Then they hired men with a fork so sharp*
And they pricked him down to the heart
And how they used poor Barleycorn
For they tied him fast to a cart

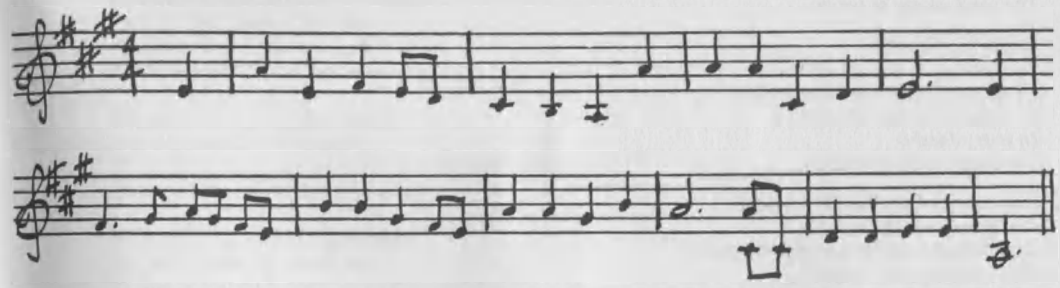
7. *OMITTED Then they wheeled him around and around again*
Till they wheeled him into a barn
And there they made a mold of him
And with that they thought no harm

8. *OMITTED Then they hired men with a flail so strong*
And they flick-ed flesh from his bones
But the miller used him a ten times worse
For he ground him betwixt two stones

9. *You can put red wine into a glass,*
Put brandy into a can,
You can put Sir John in a nut brown jug
And he'll make the merriest man.

10. *He'll make a maid dance around this room,*
Stark naked as ever she was born,
He'll make a parson pawn his books
With a little John Barleycorn. (2)

11. *OMITTED He'll turn your gold into silver*
Your silver into brass
He'll make a man become a fool
And a fool become an ass



10. HAL-AN-TOW

Group of townspeople with band, Helston, Cornwall
(BBC Sound Archive Recording)

This song is sung early in the morning of May 8th at Helston in Cornwall. Formerly a company of revellers led by a drummer went out early in the morning to gather green boughs. These revellers were known as Hal-an-tow. May 8th is Furry Day in Helston, the feast of St. Michael, the patron saint of the Parish. During the day a special type processional dance is performed around the town. In some places a serpentine of dancers passes in the front door of a house and out of the back, in the back of the next and out of the front and so on. The words to the Furry Dance give some indication of revelling that went on in Helston in former years.

John the Bone was marching on
When he met with Sally Dover
He kissed her once he kissed her twice
And he kissed her three times over.

An attempt at noting the tune of this song was made at the end of the eighteenth century by William Sandys and published in his *Specimens of Cornish Dialect.*

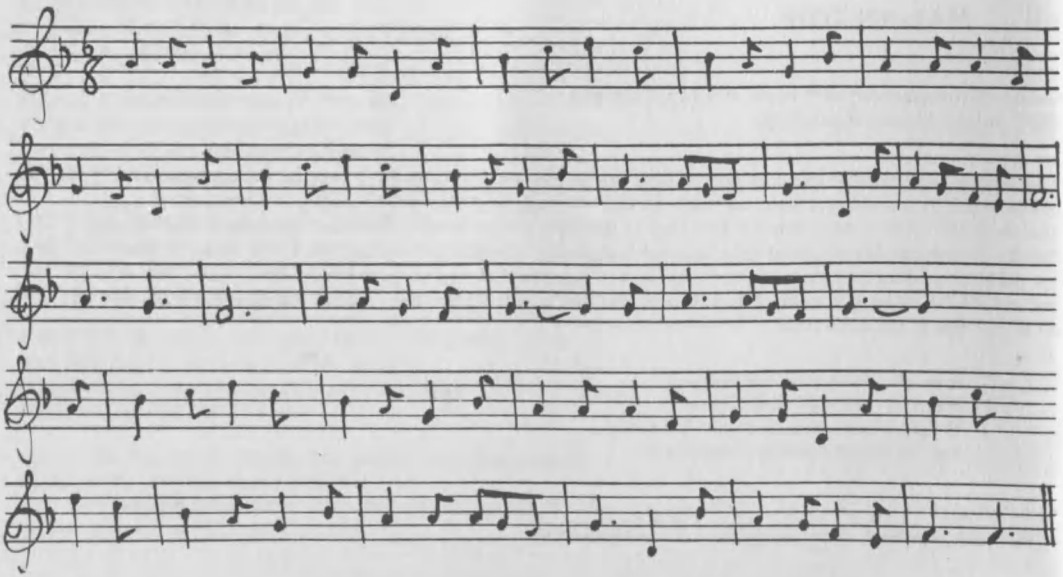
1. *Robin Hood and Little John*
   They both are gone to fair-o
   And we will to the merry green woods
   To see what they do there-o.
   And for to chase-o
   To chase the buck and doe.
   Hal an tow, jolly rumble-o,
   For we were up as soon as any day-o,
   And for to fetch the summer home,
   The summer and the may-o,
   For summer is a-come-o
   And winter is a-gone-o.

2. *OMITTED Where are the Spaniards,*
   That made so great a boast-o,
   For they shall eat the grey goose feather
   And we will eat the roast-o
   In every land-o
   The land where'er we go.

3. *As for St. George-o,*
   St. George he was a knight-o.
   Of all the knights in Christendom
   St. George he has the right-o,
   In every land-o
   The land where'er we go.

4. *But to a greater than St. George,*
   O Helston has the right-o,
   St. Michael with his wings outspread,
   The Archangel so bright-o,
   Who fought the fiend-o
   Of all mankind the foe.

5. *OMITTED God bless Aunt Mary Moses*
   With all her power and might-o,
   And send us peace in merry England
   Both by night and day-o,
   In every land-o
   The land that e'er we go.



11. HUNTINGDONSHIRE MAY CAROL

Mrs. Church and Hall (of Kimbolton, Hunts.) Biddenham, Beds.
(recorded by P. Kennedy)

This carol was sung around 100 years ago at Kimbolton in Huntingdonshire. Kimbolton lies between Huntingdon, Wellingborough, Northants. and Bedford. The two singers, now living at Biddenham in Bedfordshire, used to go round the houses together as children at Kimbolton.

They carried between them a "May Bush" garland made of two withies bent to form two wooden hoops, one inside the other, supported on a pole. A doll was suspended in the centre of the hoops which were covered with spring flowers. The garland was covered by a white cloth which was only removed while the song was being sung outside a house on May the first in the period up to mid-day.

Mrs. Church's father-in-law also recorded the Bromham May Carol. There were two parts; that sung on May Eve was known as "The Night Song".

We've been rambling all this night
And the best part of the day
And now we're returning back again
We've brought you a branch of may

A branch of may so fine and gay
And at your door it stands
It's nothing but a sprout but it's well budded out
By the works of our Lord's hands

Arise, arise, you pretty fair maid
And take your may-bush in
Or else in the morning if it should be gone
You'll say we've never been

Mr. Church described how on May Eve, as soon as it was dark, a party of young men would go out and fetch a cartload of may. They they would cut off a bough for each daughter or maidservant in a household and leave it outside the door, singing the song, while everybody slept. Their final verse indicates the time of the night they were there:

The clock strikes one, it's time to be gone
No longer can we stay
So God bless you all both great and small
And send you a happy May

On May Day itself at Bromham the young girls retaliated, they went round the houses with May garlands singing similar verses to those sung at Kimbolton, but they finished up with two rather secular verses:

Repent, repent, you wicked man of all
Repent before you die
Or how do you think that you are to repent
When in the grave you lie

Take a bible in your hand
And read the chapters through
And when the day of judgement comes
Then the Lord will think of you

In some areas, such as Edingdale, near Tamworth, Staffordshire, the children called their garlands "maypoles" and they sang a short verse followed by a chanted-out rhyme:

Maypole day, it's a very nice day
Please to remember the maypole day

Dressed in ribbons, tied in a bow
See what a maypole I can show

The roads are very dirty
And my boots not very clean
And I've got a pocket
To put a penny in
And if you haven't got a penny
A halfpenny will do
If you haven't got a halfpenny
Then God bless you
We wish you a joyful May.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE MAY CAROL

1. *Remember us, for May is here,*
And now we do begin
To lead our lives in righteousness,
For fear we should die in sin.

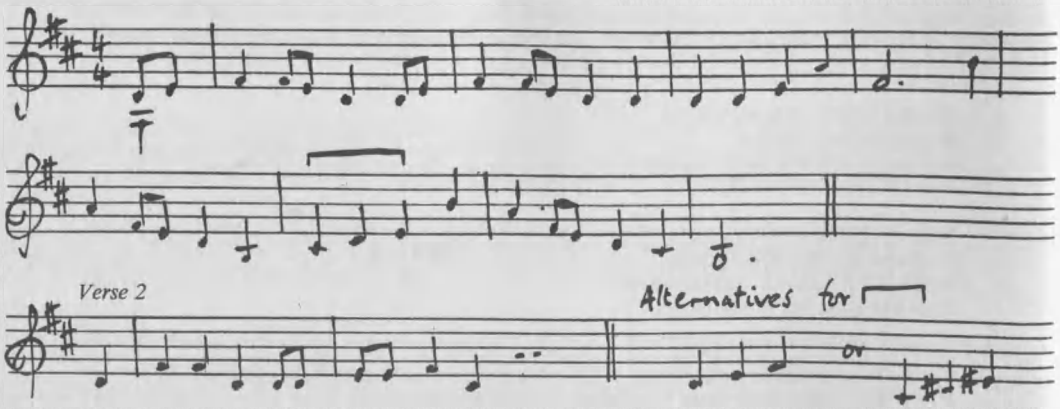
2. *To die in sin is a very sad thing,*
To go where sinners mourn,
It would have been better for our poor souls
If we had never been born.

3. *Now step into your dairy, maids,*
And fetch a cup of cream,
If not a cup of your cold cream,
A jug of your brown beer.

4. *I have a purse, a pretty little purse,*
It draws with a silken string,
And all it wants is a little silver
To line it well within.

5. *Our song has begun and is almost done,*
We can no longer stay,
So Heaven bless you all, both great and small,
And we wish you a joyful May.

(spoken) Thank you very much



12. OSS OSS WEE OSS: CORNISH MAY CAROL

May Song sung by townspeople, Padstow, Cornwall
(recorded by A. Lomax & P. Kennedy)

"Oss Oss, Wee Oss" is the cry that goes up from a "united" body of Padstow townspeople. ("Wee Oss" is thought to mean "Our Horse"). The horse is in fact a fearsome-looking object resembling the body-decorations of Australian aborigenes and the masks of certain African ceremonies. A man inside the horse-mask carries on his shoulders a heavy hoop about 6 feet in diameter which is covered with a black-painted canvas skirt. A black and white and red painted mask with a tall-pointed hood conceals the man's face. Fastened to the hoop are a hobby-horse head and tail. The horse is preceded by a sailor carrying a painted club, who is known as "The Teaser".

On May Eve when the church clock strikes twelve, the horse comes out of his winter stable for the first time. Coming out of the public house, followed by his "Ossy Choir" it follows a traditional route through the streets and gardens, stopping outside certain houses to sing special verses of "The Night Song":

Rise up Mrs. . . ., we wish you well and fine
For summer is a-come unto day
You have a shilling in your purse and I wish it were in mine
In the merry morning of May

Rise up Mr. . . ., and gold be your ring
And give to us a cup of ale and the merrier we will sing

Rise up Miss. . .all in your smock of silk
And all your body under as white as any milk

Rise up Mr. . . .and joy you betide
And bright be that bonny bride that lays by your side

Rise up Master. . .and reach out your hand
And you shall have a lively lass and a 1,000 pounds in hand

Just as it is getting light the young men of Padstow go out and "steal" greenery from the squire's plantations and decorate the town. A Maypole stands in the main square from which flags are strung out in all directions. At about ten o'clock not only does one horse perambulate the town with his accompanying Teaser and musicians but there is a rival horse, known as "The Blue Ribbon" with its own rather more respectable accompanying team.

Later in the morning accordions strike up and, as the horse and teaser dance and sway, the townspeople sing "The Day Song". Occasionally the horse makes for a young unmarried girl and catches her under his "skirt". Formerly the horse was covered in wet tar and the carrier kept a bag of soot under the skirt to squirt over her. The girl, so caught, would say, "be married by Christmas!"

Formerly the horse used to go to a small hamlet about a mile out of the town and be submerged or "drink" from a pool and the spectators were sprinkled, but this part of the ceremony has been discontinued since about thirty years ago. As the Oss party returned they sang a much longer song performed to the slower tune. The horse lay down on the ground as though dead and verses, resembling the Helston *Hal-an-tow*, were sung.

Nowadays this death sequence is repeated at frequent intervals during the procession through the town and each time after the song about St. George and Ursula Birdhood, the teaser bangs the club against the horse and it leaps up with renewed energy to sing the "Unite" verses.

There has been much speculation about Aunt Ursula and her old ewe. On previous years, "The Teaser" has not been dressed as a sailor but as a "Man-Woman", or man dressed as a woman and like "The Old Tup" in other parts of the country the horse itself may well have started as an old ewe (see THE RAM OF DERBY).

To delve deeper into the mention of Ursula is to become involved in the work of Oskar Schlade, friend of the Grimm brothers, who studied the legends of St. Ursula and concluded that the British princess was a Christianised form of the Earth-mother worshipped as the goddess of fertility by the European.

Schlade saw traces of this in the civic processions of the middle ages, which still survive, such as the plough and ship-drawing festivals in Britain and the continent (the "Up Helly-aa" in Shetland being an example).

At Minehead, a little further along the coast from Padstow, the local hobby horse is shaped like a ship and is known as "The Sailor's Horse". The mention of the "building of a ship" at Padstow may bear out the theory that at one time the so-called Hobby Horse was a ship.

Lucy Broadwood in *The Journal of the Folk Song Society* No. 20, p. 330 details the finds of Oskar Schlade and that of a Lithuanian, Leopold von Schroeder. She traces the common elements in folk rites and processions: St. George or the earlier pagan forms, the Old Woman, the waggon or ship laden with good things; the attendant's with clubs or rods; the throwing of soot or blackening of faces; the immersing in water; the rude jest, songs and the quete (collecting). Padstow is a place connected with well-worship. In fact there is a St. George's Well as well as other "holy" wells in the vicinity. The name Padstow may well derive from the word "pid", implying roots of water as well as estuary.

In Southern Germany, in the area around Innsbruck, on Shrove Tuesday youths called "Hutler", armed with whips and dirty brooms accompany the "Fastnacht srosslein", horse and rider, and chase the spectators. "Hutler" means "hoodener" and implies that they are both "hatted" and "protectors". (Robin Hood we regard as a guardian.) In parts of Kent in Southern England there were formerly hooden horses who went round the houses looking like the Welsh "Mari Lwyd" or the Midland "Old Tup". Hoodening may possibly derive from Woden who always appeared as a hat-wearer. "Birdhood" may thus refer to the hood formerly worn by the Teaser at Padstow.

In Brittany "Le Cheval Mallet", a wooden horse wreathed in flowers, dances round the may-tree and the "batonnier" sings a ceremonial song. At Padstow the may tree was sometimes as high as 90 feet and was erected by the local ship-wrights to the accompaniment of pistol-firing.

A similar Carol called "The Old May Song" was at one time sung at Swinton, near Manchester. It was printed in Chambers, *Book of Days* and contains 6 verses with an almost identical tune..

All in this pleasant evening together come are we
For the summer springs so fresh and green and gay
We'll tell you of a blossom that buds on every tree
Drawing nigh unto the pleasant month of May

Rise up the master of this house, put on your chain of gold
We hope you're not offended, with your house we make so bold

Rise up the mistress of this house with gold along your breast
And if your body be asleep I hope your soul's at rest

Rise up the children of this house in all your rich attire
For every hair upon your head shines like a silver wire

Rise up the fair maid of the house, put on your gay gold ring
And bring to us a can of beer the better we shall sing

So now we're going to leave you in peace and plenty here
We shall not sing this song again until another year

A second carol sung at Swinton, known as "The New May Carol", had ornate verses about the beauties of nature, and was sung to a tune very like the "St. George and Aunt Ursula" verses of the Padstow Day Song.

OSS OSS WEE OSS: CORNISH MAY CAROL

(Cry) Oss, Oss, Wee Oss

1. *Unite and unite and let us all unite,*
For summer is a-come unto day,
And whither we are going, we all will unite
In the merry morning of May.

2. *With a merry ring and now the joyful spring,*
O give to us a cup of ale and the merrier we will sing.

3. *The young men of Padstow, they might if they would,*
They might have built a ship and gilded it all in gold.

4. *The young women of Padstow, they might if they would,*
They might have built a garland with the white rose and the red.

5. *Where are those young men that now here should dance?*
For some they are in England and some they are in France.

O where is St. George?
O where is he-o?
He's out in his long-boat
All on the salt sea-o.

Up flies the kite,
Down falls the lark-o,
And Ursula Birdhood she had an old ewe
And she died in her own park-o.

6. *With a merry ring and now the joyful spring,*
So happy are those little birds and the merrier they will sing.