

Songs from the James Madison Carpenter Collection

For Key Stages 1–5



By Hazel Askew

The English Folk Dance and Song Society

The English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) is the national development organisation for folk music, dance and related arts, based at Cecil Sharp House, a dedicated folk arts centre and music venue, in Camden, North London.

EFDSS creates and delivers creative learning projects for children, young people, adults and families at Cecil Sharp House, across London and around the country; often in partnership with other organisations. Learning programmes draw on the diverse and vibrant traditional folk arts of Britain and beyond, focusing on song, music, dance and related art forms such as storytelling, drama, and arts and crafts.

Vaughan Williams Memorial Library

Cecil Sharp House is also home to EFDSS's Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML), England's national folk music and dance archive, which provides free online access to over 200,000 searchable folk manuscripts and other materials.

Carpenter Folk Online

Dr James Madison Carpenter was an American scholar who collected extensively in Britain in 1928–35. His collection is held at the American Folklife Center Archive at the Library of Congress, USA. In 2001, a group of scholars from the UK and US formed to edit the Carpenter Collection for publication in a critical edition. They first created an online catalogue of the collection in Encoded Archival Description. This was published by hriOnline, University of Sheffield, in 2003.

Carpenter Folk Online (2017–18) is a collaborative project to make the Carpenter collection publicly accessible online for the first time as part of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library's Digital Archive. This involved converting the catalogue data and linking it to the digitised images of the collection made by the Library of Congress. The addition of the Carpenter collection, has introduced an extensive audio dimension to the VWML digital archive.

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Produced by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), June 2018.

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About this resource

This resource aims to introduce learners to folk songs using material from the rich and diverse collection made by James Madison Carpenter in England and Scotland in the period 1928 –1935.

It is designed to support learning from Key Stage 1–4 and reflects the many different types of song within the collection - from singing games suitable for younger children and as warm ups, to longer, more complex songs and ballads suitable for older students and more in-depth work.

For each song there are a range of suggested tasks and areas of study, which include musical tasks, as well as tasks related to other areas of the curriculum, such as English Literature, Art & Design, Physical Education, Maths and History. There are also background notes providing information on the history and social context of the songs, as well as ways to open up discussion on possible meanings and interpretations.

The songs are primarily arranged for unison singing, with some additional vocal or instrumental harmonies, accompaniment chords, as well as suggestions for performance, composition and song re-writing. There are vocal and instrumental sound files to accompany this resource pack. These can be accessed via the EFDSS Resource Bank www.efdss.org/resourcebank.

Throughout the resource there is reference to the Roud Folk Song Index. This is a comprehensive online database with over 200,000 references to traditional songs found in both published and unpublished sources in the English language. Songs can be found by title, singer, place, etc., and variants of the same song can be identified using a unique numbering system. You will see references to the 'Roud number' next to the songs. For more information visit www.vwml.org.

Next to all the song scores in this resource there are hyperlinks starting with <http://www.vwml.org/record/> which link directly to the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library's online digital archive which holds digitised versions of original manuscripts and other archival material.

Please note: material on the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library website is not censored or expurgated and may contain material considered offensive by modern standards.

About James Madison Carpenter

James Madison Carpenter (1888–1983) was an American academic who travelled around Britain during 1928–1935, making one of the largest collections of British folk songs to date. Carpenter was a native of Mississippi, and first became interested in folk songs whilst studying for a PhD at Harvard in 1920. He eventually wrote his thesis on songs and sea shanties he had collected in the US and UK in 1927–28. He returned to Britain in 1929 and spent the next six years travelling around by car and collecting songs.

He collected most extensively in the North East of Scotland, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, the Cotswolds and Cornwall. Overall he gathered some 2,500 items, including ballads, bothy songs, shanties, carols, singing games, dance tunes, and folk plays.

His collection is important as few other folk song collectors were active in Britain in the interwar period, so it fills a gap between earlier and later collections. In the collection there are a huge variety of types of song, including sea shanties documented from the last generation of men to have worked on board ships in the age of sail.

Carpenter was also the first folk song collector in Britain to make extensive use of sound recording. His classic method was to record several stanzas of a singer's rendition using a Dictaphone cylinder machine, recording on to wax cylinders. He would then ask the singer to dictate the words while he typed them up on a portable typewriter. Returning to the US, Carpenter edited much of his collection but it was never published. He sold it to the Library of Congress in 1972 where it has been preserved and digitised.



From the James Madison Carpenter Collection,
American Folklife Center Archive,
Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Portrait of James Madison Carpenter JMC/1/9/5
(IM5395)

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLImageIndex/IM5395>

Image by kind permission of the American Folklife
Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



Sally Jumped Over the Stars

KS1/ KS2 A simple song with a dance

This simple song has been collected in many places across England, as well as in Ireland, Canada, the United States and Trinidad. It's a fun song that can include movement, which can help to improve coordination and also makes it a perfect warm up song.

*****KS1/2 National Curriculum links*****

Music, English, Art & Design, Physical Education (see page 41)

Task suggestions

- Learn the song first by ear, and then add the dance element.
- Why not try creating some additional actions/physical movements for words such as 'stars', 'moon' and 'chimney pots'?
- Creative writing task - discuss the story as a class. Could you expand Sally's narrative into a full story and turn it into a creative writing exercise? Who is Sally? How is she able to jump over the moon? Does she have special powers?
- Art task - could this be an opportunity for an art exercise to imagine Sally on her adventures? Students could work either individually or in small groups to draw Sally at different points of the story, which could be put together into a storyboard.
- KS2 Extension task – have a listen to the original collected recording of Mrs. C. S. Neal singing the song (see the URL under the song title). Discuss how the song was physically recorded (see page 5 for info on Carpenter's recording methods). What does it sound like? What is it like to hear someone singing from the 1930s? How would you record a song today?



Sally Jumped Over the Stars

Roud number: 11591

Collected from Mrs. C. S. Neal in Aston Subedge, Gloucestershire

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN9334>

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff contains the first two lines of the melody: 'Sa - lly jumped o - ver the stars,' and 'Sa - lly jumped o - ver the moon,'. The second staff contains the final line: 'Sa - lly jumped o - ver the chim - ney pots, On a Sun - day aft - er - noon, Ooh!'. The melody is simple and folk-like, using quarter and eighth notes.

Sally jumped over the stars
Sally jumped over the moon
Sally jumped over the chimney pots
On a Sunday afternoon – ooh!



Accompanying Dance

This song was traditionally sung whilst doing a simple dance. Join hands and dance around in a ring to the left whilst singing, and at the word 'ooh', everyone lets go of each other's hands and raises their right arm and leg into the air. This can then be repeated in the opposite direction, circling to the right and raising left arms and legs.



*From the James Madison Carpenter Collection,
American Folklife Center Archive,
Library of Congress, Washington D.C.*

*Cotswold Village May Day, JMC/1/9/5 (IM5297) <https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLImageIndex/IM5355>
by kind permission of the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C*



The One-O

KS1/ KS2 A cumulative song

This cumulative song was very popular and many versions have been collected across England, Scotland, Canada, the USA, as well as some related versions in France and the Czech Republic. The verses below are quite mysterious and contain lots of folk symbolism. Older versions of the song have 12 verses, some of which are based on Christian imagery (examples can be found on the URL link above the song notation). The version presented here is a shorter secular adaption. It works really well sung by two groups and presents a great opportunity to write your own verses.

*****KS1/2 National Curriculum links*****

Music, English, Maths, Physical Education (see page 41)

Task suggestions

- Learn the song by ear, a line at a time using call and response, starting with the first verse and working through the additional verses. The song works best sung in two groups or teams, alternating between the first four lines, which can be a great opportunity to encourage each group to sing better than the other!
-
- Could you create some actions/physical movements for the different verses?
-
- Creative writing task - could you write your own verses, perhaps on a theme that links to some topic work you are doing?
-
- Listening task - listen to the original recording of Miss Bessie Wallace singing part of the song (this can be found on the URL below the song score). What is it like to hear someone singing from the 1930s? Can you recognise the song?



*From the James Madison Carpenter Collection,
American Folklife Center Archive,
Library of Congress, Washington D.C.*

A portrait of 'Bessie', who may be Bessie Wallace.

JMC/1/9/5 (IM5434) <https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLImageIndex/IM5434>

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The One-O

Come and I will sing you,
What will you sing me?
I will sing your **one-o***,
What is your one-o?*

One is one and all alone and ever more shall be so

Come and I will sing you,
What will you sing me?
I will sing your **two-o***,
What is your two-o?*

Two is for the lily-white babes, clothed in morning green-o
One is one and all alone and ever more shall be so

Come and I will sing you,
What will you sing me?
I will sing your **three-o***,
What is your three-o?*

Three of them are strangers
Two is for the lily-white babes, clothed in morning green-o
One is one and all alone and ever more shall be so

The subsequent verses follow the same pattern, each adding one new line and repeating all the earlier lines so that each verse is one line longer than its predecessor:

Four is the cheerful giver
Five is the ferryman in the boat
Six is the moonshine bright and clear
Seven is the seven stars in the sky

*replace with 'two-o', 'three-o', 'four-o' etc. as the song progresses



The One-O

Roud number: 133

Based on a version collected from Miss Bessie Wallace in Camborne, Cornwall

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN11353>

Come and I will sing you, Wh - at will you sing me?

I will sing you one - o, Wh - at is your one - o?

One is one and all a - lone and e - ver more shall be so.

The Old Woman Wrapped Up in a Blanket

KS1/ KS2 - A short song with a fun, visual narrative

This little song was very popular in Oxfordshire, and versions have also been collected from Scotland, Ireland and the USA. It's sometimes related to a morris dance and tune of the same name. It's a fun song with a very visual narrative, which is perfect for inspiring art, drama and creative writing tasks.

*****KS1/2 National Curriculum links*****

Music, English, Art & Design (see page 41)

Task suggestions

- Learn the song by ear line by line. You could split the final 4 lines between 2 groups, the first group singing the speaker's lines, and the second group singing the old woman's lines.
- Discuss the story – Who is talking? Why is the old woman sweeping the sky? Is she good or bad?
- Could you create some actions to help tell the story as you sing it? There is also a traditional morris dance by the same name as this song – could you turn your actions into your own dance?
- Creative writing task – could you expand the narrative of the song into a full story?
- Art task - This song has a very visual narrative, could it be the basis of an art project, perhaps with different students or groups of students illustrating parts of the story, creating a class storyboard?
- Drama task – could you take the old woman and develop her character: what would she be like? How would she walk? How would she talk? Can you work out a way to dramatise the moon, the sky, the cobwebs? Or perhaps you could make a dramatisation of her with a different narrative and new characters?



The Old Woman Wrapped Up in a Blanket

There was an old dummon wrapped up in a blanket
Ninety miles beyond the moon
Under one arm she carried a basket
Under the other she carried a broom

‘Old dummon, old dummon, old dummon’ said I
‘Oh whither, oh whither, oh whither so high?’
‘I’m going to sweep cobwebs beyond the skies,
And I shall be back with thee by and by

Glossary

- Old dummon – Carpenter’s spelling is probably intended to convey the regional pronunciation of ‘old woman’
- Whither – to where
- By and by – before long, eventually



The Old Woman Wrapped Up in a Blanket

Roud number: 1297

Text collected from William Kimber in Headington, Oxfordshire

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN16302>

Tune collected from Thomas Bunting of Sherbourne, Warwickshire

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN16298>

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/8. It consists of six staves of music with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: 'There was an old du-mmon wrapped up in a blan - ket, N - i - nety miles be - yon - d the moon. Un - der one arm she ca - rried a bas - ket, Un - der the o - ther she ca - rried a broom. 'Old du - mmon, Old du - mmon, Old du - mmon' says I, 'Oh whi ther, Oh whi ther, Oh whi - ther so high?' 'I'm going to sweep cob - webs o - ff the sky, And I shall be back with thee by and by'.

Wassail Song

KS2/ KS3 – A jolly winter song celebrating the New Year through the custom of wassailing

This song would have been sung whilst wassailing, an old English tradition usually celebrated around Twelfth Night or Old Twelfth Night (which would have been 17th January) to welcome in the New Year. The term wassail is thought to come from the Old English “waes hael” (“be thou in good health”) and some people think it could have connections with pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon traditions.

Wassailing would usually consist of making wassail (a hot mulled punch often made from cider or apple juice) which would then be taken from door to door whilst singing and drinking, much like carolling traditions. In the south west of England, they would also carry out orchard-visiting wassails, where people would drink and sing to the health of the trees, to scare away evil spirits and awake the trees so that they might have a good harvest the next autumn. There are many different regional variations on wassailing traditions and many still take place today, especially in the south west of England.

This jolly song is arranged here with optional three-part harmonies, and is perfect for forming the basis of your own wassail celebration to welcome in the New Year.

*****KS2/3 National Curriculum links*****

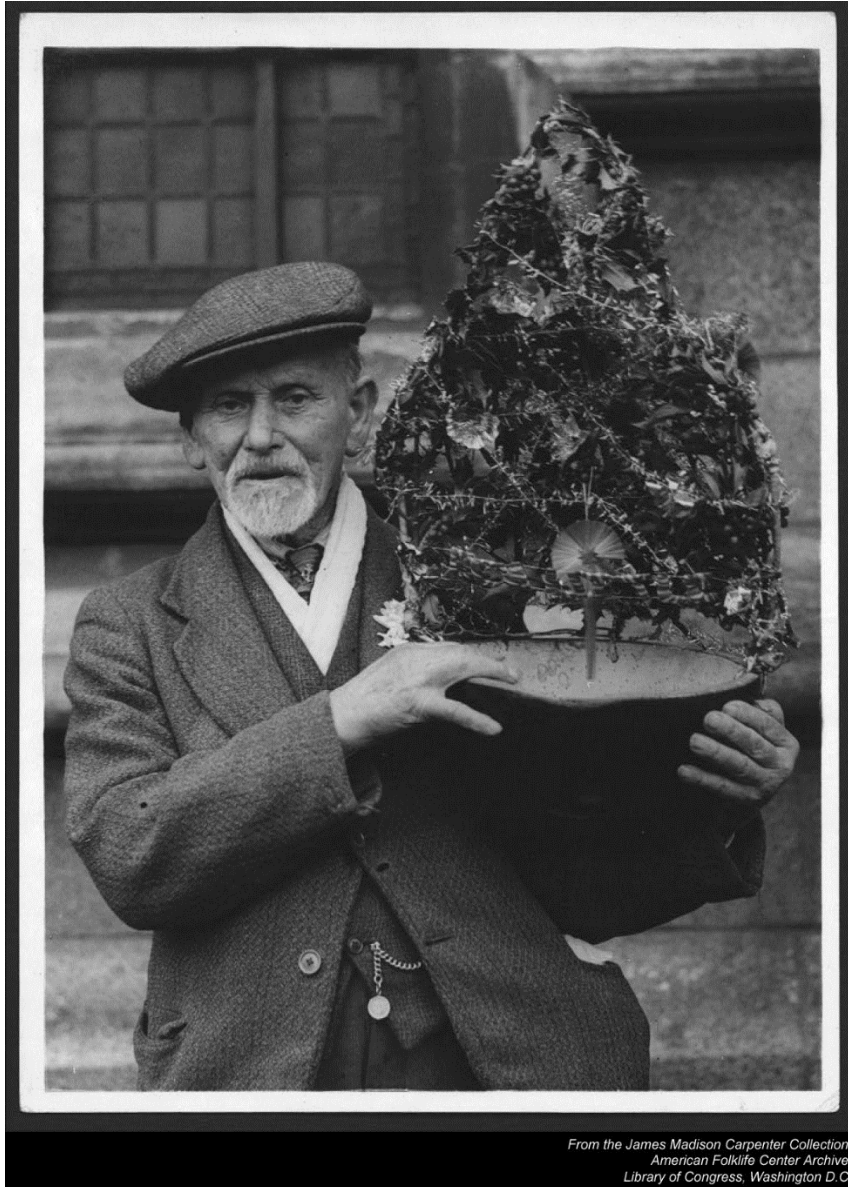
Music, English, Art & Design (see page 41/43)

Task suggestions

- Try learning the first verse by ear without the lyrics (this can help to learn the melody more securely). Then try singing the other verses from the text.
- Once the melody of the song has been learnt, try adding the vocal harmony lines. As an extension these could even be played on instruments.
- Learn about the tradition of wassailing as a class.
- Create your own wassail celebration, perhaps for the New Year? This could incorporate making wassail bowls (looking at the archive photo below for inspiration), creating a wassail drink based on apple juice, baking a wassail cake, as well as singing the song. Perhaps you could visit other classes with your wassail, singing them the song and



offering them a drink and some cake? You could even write some of your own verses about your hopes for the New Year?



A photo from the Carpenter archives of Ben Little, a wassailer from Truro, Cornwall, holding a wassail bowl

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLImageIndex/IM5414>

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Wassail Song

1. Now Christmas is over, the New Year begins
Come open your doors and let us come in
With our wassail, wassail, wassail, wassail
And joy come to our jolly wassail
2. Come master and mistress who sit by the fire
While we poor wassailers do walk through the mire
With our wassail, wassail, wassail, wassail
And joy come to our jolly wassail
3. We at this door, we do orderly stand
Us jolly wassailers with a bowl in our hand
With our wassail, wassail, wassail, wassail
And joy come to our jolly wassail
4. Good mistress and master, sitting down at your ease
Put your hand in your pocket and give what you please
With our wassail, wassail, wassail, wassail
And joy come to our jolly wassail
5. It's Happy New Year, and long may you live
Since you've been so kind and willing to give
To our wassail, wassail, wassail, wassail
And joy come to our jolly wassail



Wassail Song

Roud number: 209

Tune collated from a version collected from Miss Bessie Wallace in Camborne, Cornwall

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN11344>

And a version collected from Mr W. D. Watson in Penzance, Cornwall

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN11343>

Words collated from various sources in the Carpenter collection

C F C F C

High harmony

Tune

Low harmony

Now Christ-mas is o-ver, the New Year be-gins, Come o-pen your do-ors and
 Now Christ-mas is o-ver, the New Year be-gins, Come o pen your do-ors and

Dm C F G C D C/E F

Was - sail, was - sail, w-as
 let us come i - n, With o - ur was - sail, was - sail, was - sa - il, was -
 let us come i - n, With our - was - sail, was - sa - i - l, was - sa - a - il, was -

G F C F G C

sail. And joy come to our jo - lly was - sail.
 sail. And j - oy come t - o our jo - lly was - sail.
 sail. And joy come t - o our jo - lly was - sail.

Hard, Hard Times

*KS2/ KS3 - A song from the USA lamenting
unfair experiences in life*

This song is thought to have been collected by one of Carpenter's students in the USA, where this song was very popular, and other versions have also been collected in Canada and England. The song has a light-hearted tone. The speaker is bemoaning ways in which they feel they have been cheated by different people in society. Many of the collected versions seem to have different verses added to reflect the experiences of the people in that community, so this song is perfect for rewriting to reflect unfair experiences of today.

*****KS2/3 National Curriculum links*****

Music, English, History (see page 41/43)

Task suggestions

- Try learning the first verse by ear without the lyrics (this can help to learn the melody more securely). Then try singing the other verses from the text.
- Discuss the meaning of the song – What is the speaker saying? Who is mentioned in the song? Do you feel the song is relevant to you?
- History link – this song was collected between 1928 and 1935. Why do think this song might have been popular in the USA at this time? Link to The Great Depression (from 1929 throughout the 1930s).
- Try adding some instrumental accompaniment using the chords above the score as a starting point.
- Song rewriting task – can you think of something unfair that has happened to you, or some way you feel someone in society has ripped you off? Can you turn that into a verse and create a new song as a class? You could even write a version based on more specific work on the Great Depression. You can use the song rewriting worksheet below to help you construct your own verses.



Hard, Hard Times

1. Come listen my friends and I'll sing you a song
Concerning hard times and it won't take me long
When everybody is striving to buy
And cheating each other – I cannot tell why

And it's hard, hard times

2. First there's the merchant, so honest we're told
Whatever he sells you, my friend, you are sold
Believe what I tell you and don't be surprised
If what's worth a dollar will now cost you five

And it's hard, hard times

3. Then there's the lawyer, you plainly will see
He will plead your case for a very large fee
He'll law you and tell the wrong side is right
And make you believe that a black horse is white

And it's hard, hard times

4. And then there's the doctor, I liked to've forgot
I believe to my soul he's the worst of the lot
He'll tell you he'll cure you for half you possess
And when you are buried he'll take all the rest

And it's hard, hard times

5. And last there's the preacher, the worst of them all
Preaching for money but not for the soul
He rides his circuit some twelve times a year
And if your soul's lost you'll be sure he don't care

And it's hard, hard times



Hard, Hard Times

Roud number: 876

Collected from Mrs. Katherine Stirling in Alicesville, Alabama, USA. Additional words from other versions collected in the USA.

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN11593>

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN11594>

C G G

Come li - sten my friends and I'll sing you a song, Con - cern ing hard times and it

C C F

won't take me long, When e - ve - ry - bo - dy is striv - ing to buy, And

G G C G C

cheat - ing each o - ther I can - not tell why. And it's hard, hard times.

Hard, Hard Times - Song rewriting worksheet

Example verse:

And then there's the lawyer, you plainly will see
He will plead your case for a very large fee
He'll law you and tell the wrong side is right,
And make you believe that a black horse is white

Rewriting:

Think of something you feel is unfair in today's world or a way you feel cheated, and see if you can write a verse about it. If you want to write about a person, make sure it's a person in a role rather than a specific person.

- In the first line, introduce the issue or person who is treating you unfairly
- In the remaining 3 lines, describe an instance of this unfairness
- The form of your writing should be rhyming couplets (the first two lines should rhyme together, and the second two lines should have a different rhyme, AABB)
- Every line should have 11 syllables

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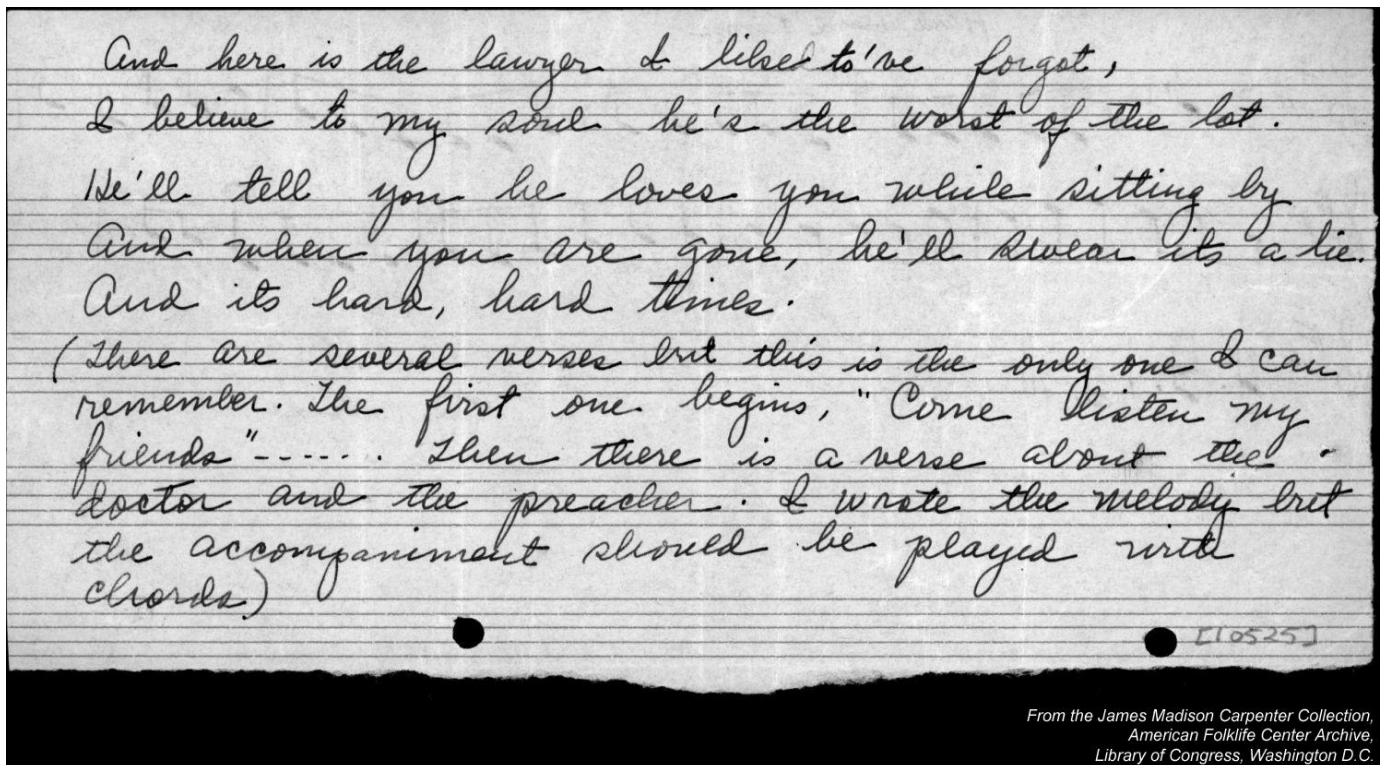
And it's hard, hard times



Hard, Hard Times

KS3 Extension - Song collecting context

- How do you think a traditional song like this was collected in the 1920s/1930s? (You can refer to the information on wax cylinders on page 5.) How would you collect a song today?
- At the beginning of the 20th century, a whole group of people started travelling the UK and other parts of the world, collecting traditional songs as they were dying out. Why do you think they were dying out? Reasons include large numbers of people migrating from the countryside to the city, changes in technology, people having access to a wider variety of entertainment, more people being able to read music and learn songs from other genres, gradual shift to listening to recorded music and the radio.
- When this song was collected from Mrs Katherine Stirling, it was incompletely remembered (look at the manuscript below as a class).



Carpenter collection manuscript of Mrs. Katherine Stirling's recollection of *Hard, Hard Times*

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN21444>. By kind permission of the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C

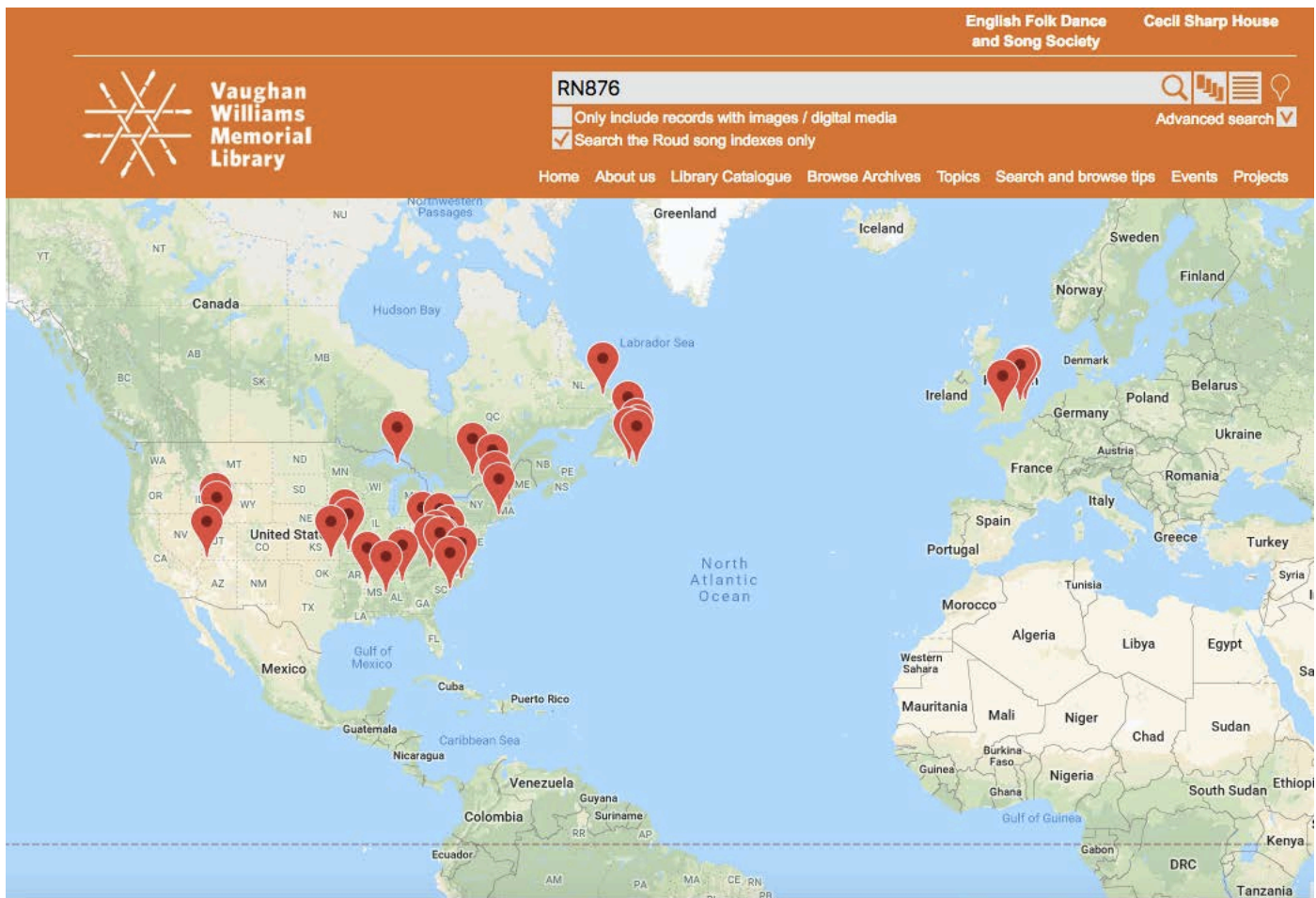
- What are the pros and cons of collecting a song and writing it down? Possible answers include: it won't be forgotten and lost, people in the future might be able to sing it and learn about song of the past, we're able to see what songs were being sung in different



places, songs used to evolve and change as people sung them but writing one down means that there is a definite version which some might view as the 'correct version', it could stop them evolving?

- How would you try and reconstruct this song if you wanted to sing it from this information? Take a look at this map of all the versions of this song collected in the world. It's been produced by searching this song's Roud number (see page 4 for more information on Roud numbers). This version of the song printed in this resource has been reconstructed using the information collected from Mrs. Katherine Stirling, and other versions on this map:

https://www.vwml.org/search?q=RN876&subview=map&collectionfilter=RoudFS%3BRoudBS&is=1&qis_pos=%5B39.688282934838504%2C-106.14068212733468%2C4%5D



Thomas the Rhymer

***KS3/ KS4 – A ballad about a journey to Elfland.
Includes opportunities for instrumental accompaniment***

This is a dramatic tale of a man called Thomas who is taken to Elfland by the Queen of the Fairies. Almost all the versions of it collected were found in Scotland, except two from the USA and one from Canada. Thomas the Rhymer was a Scottish laird and prophet (Sir Thomas de Ercildoun, 1220–1298), and this ballad is the legendary tale of how he gained the gift of prophecy and the ability to never tell a lie. The ballad is thought to date from around 1700 and is based on part of a medieval romance from around 1400.

Here it is arranged for voice, with suggestions for different accompanying chords and a vocal/instrumental harmony line. The story also lends itself to cross-arts tasks and performance, with options for dramatic, visual and written interpretations of the story.

*****KS3/4 National Curriculum links*****

Music, English, History, PSHE (see page 43/45)

Task suggestions

- Listen to the recording of the song as a class – discuss the story, what happens, were there any words that you weren't familiar with, where do they come from, what do they mean?
- Musical modes – this song is in the Aeolian mode. Could you use this as an opportunity to learn about modes?
- Learn the first verse by ear and then try singing through the whole song, either as a class or with smaller groups taking a few verses each. There are lots of decisions you can make with the verses:
 - Like many long traditional ballads, some of the verses have too many syllables and don't fit well with the tune as notated. Do you want to tweak any lines to fit?
 - You could add a variation of the tune to help the text fit the tune in some of these places, which many traditional singers would have done.
 - The most important thing when singing a ballad is for the story to be communicated. Do you have your own words or expression you might add to the song lyrics?



- Try using instruments to accompany the song, using the chords written above and the harmony line with alternative chords. Could you use these to construct an arrangement of the song that enhances the story? Could you create some new musical ideas as a class (a riff, drones, different rhythms, percussion?)
- Creative writing task – can you write the story in your own words? For KS2 you could focus on the sections describing the paths to righteousness, wicked and Elfland, perhaps dividing into small groups and focusing on using the five senses to describe them. For KS3 you could rewrite all or sections of the song in prose, or in another form (different rhyming structures, limericks, haiku etc).
- Try making a performance piece from this ballad. It could include multiple elements above, such as sung sections, instrumental breaks with different chords and the harmony, spoken storytelling sections from the writing task with musical underscoring.

Thomas the Rhymer

This text has been semi-anglicised but still retains some Scots language words (see the glossary below).

1. True Thomas lay on Huntlie Bank
A wondrous sight there he did see
Oh there he saw a lady bright
Come riding down by the Eildon Tree
2. Her skirt was of the grass-green silk
Her mantle of the velvet fine
At every strand of her horse's mane
Hung fifty silver bells and nine
3. True Thomas he pulled off his cap
And bended low down on his knee
'All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven
Thy peer on earth I never did see'
4. 'O no, O no, Thomas' she said
That names does not belong to me
I am the Queen of fair Elfland
And I have come here to visit thee
5. 'Harp and carp, Thomas' she said
'Harp and carp along with me
And if you dare to kiss my lips
Sure of your body I will be'
6. 'Betide me weal, betide me woe
That fate shall never daunt me'
Then he has kissed her rosy lips
All underneath the Eildon Tree
7. 'Now you must come with me' she said
True Thomas you must come with me
And you must serve me seven years
Through weal, through woe as chance may
be'
8. She mounted on her milk-white steed
She's taken True Thomas up behind
And aye whenever her bridle rang
The steed flew swifter than the wind
9. They rode on and farther on
The steed rode swifter than the wind
Until they reached a desert wide
And living land was left behind
10. 'Light down, light down now, True Thomas
And lean your head upon my knee
Abide and rest a little space
And I will show you wonders three
11. 'O see you not yon narrow road
So thick beset with thorns and briars?
That is the path of righteousness
Though after it but few enquire
12. 'And see you not that broad, broad road
That lies across the lily leven
That is the path of wickedness
Though some call do it the road to heaven
13. 'And see you not that bonnie road
That winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road to fair Elfland
Where thou and I this night must go
14. 'But Thomas you must hold your tongue
Whatever you may hear or see
If you speak a word in Elfin land
You'll not return to your own country'



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15. They rode on and farther on
They waded rivers above the knee
And they saw neither sun nor moon
But they heard the roaring of the sea
16. It was dark with no starlight
They waded red blood to the knee
For all the blood that's shed on earth
Runs through the springs of that country
17. And when they came to a garden green
She pulled an apple from a tree
'Take this for your wage', she said
'It will give you a tongue that will never lie'
18. 'My tongue's my own', True Thomas said
'A goodly gift you would give to me
I never thought to buy or sell
At fair or tryst where I may be
19. 'I'll neither speak to prince or peer
Nor ask of grace from fair lady'
'Now hold thy peace', the lady said
'For as I say, so it must be'
20. He's gotten a coat of the even cloth
A pair of shoes of the velvet green
Till seven long years were past and gone
True Thomas on earth was never seen
21. When seven long years were past and
gone
The sun blinked fair on hill and stream
And Thomas lay on Huntlie Bank
Like one awakened from a dream

Glossary

- Huntlie Bank – a slope on the Eildon hills, in Earlston, Scotland
- Eildon Tree – A tree on the Eildon hills
- Betide – to happen or chance to
- Weal – well
- Aye – yes
- Briar – a prickly shrub
- Leven – variant of 'lea', an open area of grass or farm land
- Brae - a hillside or brow of a hill

Thomas the Rhymer

Roud number: 219

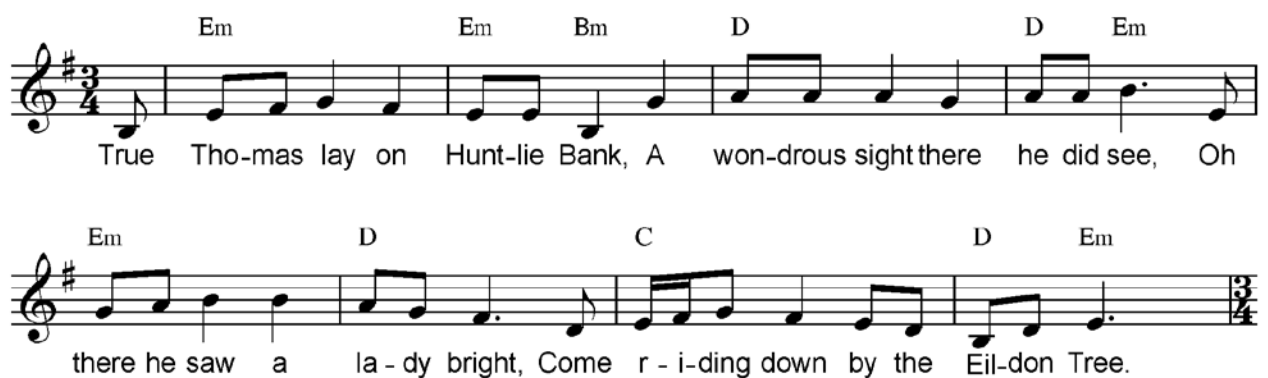
Text collected from Mrs Watson Gray in Fochabers, Scotland, 1931.

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN13421>

Tune from Blaikie MS as referenced in *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads*,

by B. H. Bronson

<https://www.vwml.org/record/RoudFS/S223429>



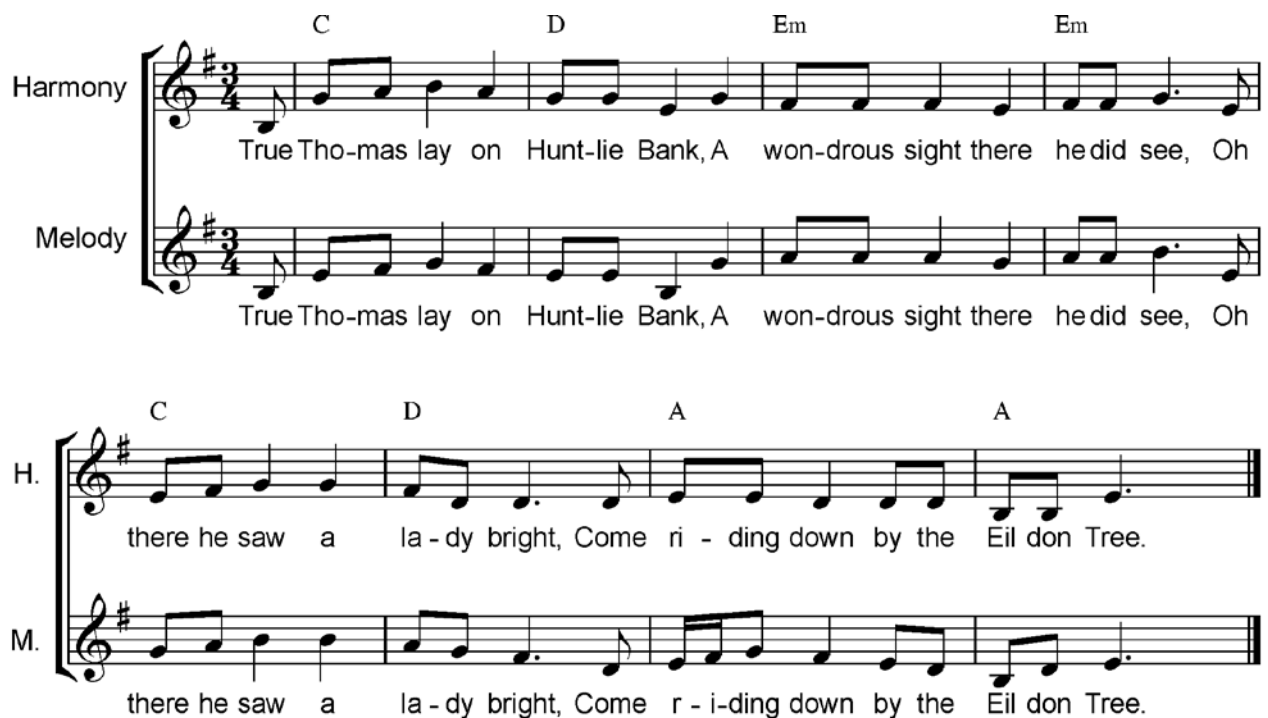
Em Em Bm D D Em

True Tho-mas lay on Hunt-lie Bank, A won-drous sight there he did see, Oh

Em D C D Em

there he saw a la - dy bright, Come r - i-ding down by the Eil-don Tree.

Melody plus vocal/instrumental harmony line and alternative chords:



Harmony C D Em Em

True Tho-mas lay on Hunt-lie Bank, A won-drous sight there he did see, Oh

Melody

True Tho-mas lay on Hunt-lie Bank, A won-drous sight there he did see, Oh

H. C D A A

there he saw a la - dy bright, Come ri - ding down by the Eil don Tree.

M.

there he saw a la - dy bright, Come r - i-ding down by the Eil don Tree.

The Wife of Usher's Well

KS4/5 – A tragic ballad with three contrasting versions from Scotland, England and the USA. Including GCSE Music links

Roud number: 196

The Wife of Usher's Well is an old traditional ballad and a moving tale of a woman's desperation to be reunited with her children who have died. Most of the collected versions that survive are from the USA, where the story has a more overtly Christian narrative, but there are a handful of versions of it collected in the UK, including a few from Scotland, which seem to contain hints of older folklore and magic.

At the time when Carpenter was collecting, it was thought that the main versions of all the ballads had already been collected and that not many people were still singing them.. However, he was able to record a surprising number, mainly in Scotland, which is where he met Mrs Annie Kidd who sang him this version of The Wife of Usher's Well.

Here we have Mrs Kidd's version presented alongside a version from England and a version from the USA, with three accompanying recordings by singers from each country. These are perfect for comparing and contrasting from both a musical and a literary point of view. There is also opportunity to harmonise, arrange and compose new versions of this old song, as well as further listening to contemporary folk interpretations of the ballad with instrumentation.

*****KS4/5 and GCSE National Curriculum links*****

Music and English, Drama, Art & Design (see page 45/47)

Main points of the narrative:

- A woman sends her children away and later learns that they have died
- She grieves for their loss and makes some kind of plea for them to return, often to God but sometimes to the elements
- The children return, usually in the winter, and she is overjoyed, but they are not quite right and they cannot eat or drink any of the feast she prepares
- She makes them a bed and in the morning a cockerel crows and they have to leave to go back to the dead/heaven

Task suggestions

- Listen to and analyse the three versions above, then compare and contrast, considering some of the areas below:

Musical analysis

- Modes and tonality - these three versions are all in different modes – what effects do these different modes have? How do they change the feel of the story?
- How does the delivery of the three singers vary? Consider timbre, tempo, vocal range
- Listen out for use of ornamentation in the three versions, can you work out what ornaments are being used and notate them?

Literary/Textual analysis

- Go through each song and consider the main points of the story and how they vary in each version. What effect do they have? How do the introductions and conclusions of each song affect the story? Do some versions make you empathise more with the wife or the children? Are some versions more heart-breaking? Pay particular attention to the language and details of the text.
- Make a structural analysis of all three versions:
 - All three are in ballad meter, with the 1st and 3rd lines in iambic tetrameter and the 2nd and 4th lines in iambic trimeter – does this ever vary? What affect does it have?
 - Look at the rhyme structure – a typical ballad would usually have an ABCB or ABAB structure – what structure does each version follow and how much do they vary? Consider the effect of pronunciation and dialect words on rhyme.
- Try learning one of the versions and making it your own, perhaps in a small group? The most important thing when singing a ballad is for the story to be communicated – are there any words that you would change in order for you to be able to communicate the story clearly in your own way?
- Try splitting into groups and harmonising some or all of the song melodies, creating a chord structure and perhaps some harmonies. Pay attention to the mode the song is in. You could turn this into an accompaniment for the whole ballad to be performed.

- Could you compose your own version of this song? From the three versions you can get a sense of the main points of the story, try creating your own version of it and composing a tune for it. You could even set the story in today's world.
- Further listening – there have been many contemporary folk interpretations of this ballad with instrumental accompaniment. Consider listening to and comparing versions by: Bellowhead on their Broadside album (named artist in GCSE Area of study 6 – Contemporary traditional music), Karine Polwart on This Earthly Spell and Martin Carthy on Signs of Life. Do you think the accompaniments help communicate the story? What musical techniques do they use in their arrangements?

Other subject links

- Drama – could this story be the inspiration for a drama project or the devising of a new play/performance?
- Art & Design – there are many very visual elements to this story – could it be the inspiration for an Art & Design project, perhaps depicting the story or inspired by elements of it?

Version A – Scotland

The Wife of Usher’s Well

Glossary

1. ‘Why mourn ye for your gowd, your gowd,
An for your fite money
It’s I dae mourn for ma three bonnie sons
That death has taen fae me

gowd: gold
fite: white
dae: do
taen frae: taken from

2. ‘I’ll hie me doon tae yon green kirkyard
It lies low aneth the ben
An I’ll chapp upon them een bi een
That aa the wardle may ken

kirkyard: churchyard
aneth the ben: beneath the hill
chapp: knock, een bi een: one by one
wardle: world, ken: know

3. It fell upon the Yule tide
Fan the nights were lang and dark
Fan in it come her three bonnie sons
Their heids clad ower with bark

fan: when, lang: long

heids: heads

4. ‘Far gat ye that, my three bonnie sons
Upon your heids sae hee?’
‘It’s we got this in Paradise
But there’s nane grows there for thee’

far got: where got
sae hee: so high

nane: none

5. ‘Come ben, come ben, ma three bonnie sons,
Come ben and sup with me
And aa this hoose shall sup this night
Noo ma three sons are here

ben: inside
sup: eat supper
hoose: house
noo: now

6. ‘Blaw up the fire, my maidens aa,
Bring watter fae the wall,
For aa this hoose shall feast thenight
Noo ma three bonnie sons are hale

watter fae the wall: water from the well
thenicht: this night
hale: in good health

7. ‘Na, we winna sup wi thee, mother,
Nor drink nane of your wine
Nor drink ony o your wall watter
Thoch it came fae tap or tawn

winna: will not
ony o: any of
thoch: though, tawn: tun

Glossary

8. But ye'll mak tae us a lang, lang bed,
An ye'll mak it lang and neat
An ye'll tak ye'er nichtgown roon about ye
An ye'll lie close doon at our feet'

roon about: round about

9. It's she has made a lang, lang bed
She's made it lang an neat
And she's taken her nichtgoon roon about her
And lain close doon at their feet

10. But the cock he crawed a merry mornin
An he flapped his wings sae wide,
An the youngest tae the eldest said
'We can nae langer bide.

11. 'For the cock he craws a merry mornin,
An the wild fowl badeth day,
An the psalms o heaven will be sung,
An we'll be missed away

12. 'For the cock he craws a merry mornin,
An the wild fowl badeth day,
An the gates o heaven will be shut
An we'll be missed away'

13. Bit she has flawn atween them and the door
Like ony a baited bear
An they've aa three flown ower her heid
Like the wild fowl o the air

flawn: flown

14. Fareweel, fareweel, our ain mother dear
Fareweel tae barn an byre
An fare thee weel, tae our little sister
Fa bade in the hoose yestreen

ain: own

byre: cowshed

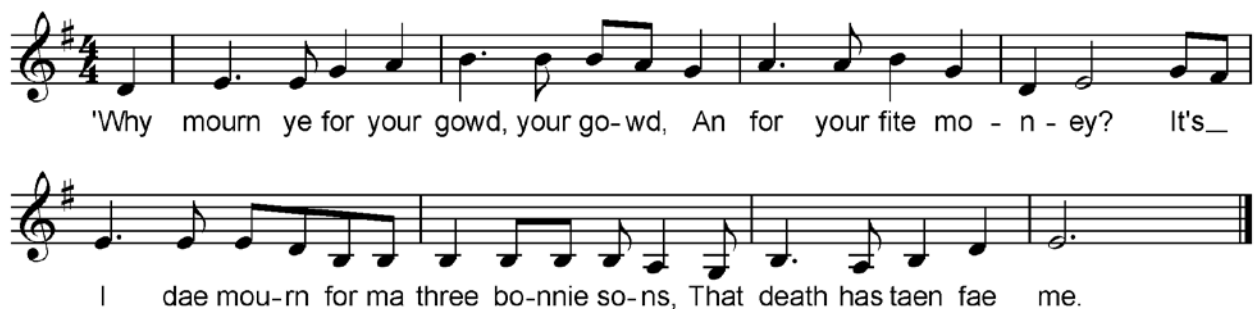
Fa bade: who stayed in, yestreen: yesterday evening

Version A – Scotland

The Wife of Usher's Well

Collected from Mrs. Annie Kidd in Glen Ythen, Scotland. Learnt from her sister Annie Bannerman 65 years before.

<https://www.vwml.org/record/VWMLSongIndex/SN13381>



'Why mourn ye for your gowd, your go-wd, An for your fite mo - n - ey? It's_

I dae mou-rn for ma three bo-nnie so-ns, That death has taen fae me.

Visit efdss.org/resourcebank/songs-from-the-james-madison-carpenter-folk-collection and listen to **The Wife Of Usher's Well (Version A)**.

Sung on this recording by Dr Thomas A McKean:

"I learnt this song about 15 years ago from Annie Kidd's recording and text, so obviously it's changed a little as the years have gone by. I was attracted to the song initially because of the text (some really interesting phrases, imagery and ideas), the story, and the local connection. I live a few miles from Ivy Cottage where Annie Kidd lived and I've been around there a couple of times to see the house"

Key points from this version:

- This tune is in the Aeolian Mode
- Story begins with the wife speaking and denouncing those who mourn material things such as money in comparison with the loss of her sons
- The second stanza is ambiguous, but she goes to the churchyard and knocks, possibly on each grave, so everyone may know she wants her sons back
- The sons return at Yule time and their hats are made of bark which comes from paradise
- At the end she flies up to try and stop them leaving but they fly above her

Version B - England

There Was a Lady in Merry Scotland

1. There was a lady in merry Scotland
And she had sons by three
She sent them in to merry England
To learn some English deeds
2. They had not been in merry England
Past twelve months and one day
Before she had news from her three sons
That they was clothed in cold clay
3. 'I will not believe in God' she said
'Nor Christ nor the Trinity
Til they send back my own three sons
Safe as they went from me'
4. So God put life into their bodies
Their bodies all in their chest
And sent them back to their own dear mother
For in heaven they could take no rest
5. And when they reached their own mother's
gates
So loud the bell they did ring
There was none so ready as their own sweet
mother
For to let those children in
6. The cloth was spread, the meat put on
'No meat, Lord, can we take
Since it's so long and many a day
Since we have been here before'
7. 'Why don't you eat, dear children' she said
Why don't you make some cheer?
Oh has it ever been so long
Since we have seen you before?
8. 'How can we eat, dear mother' they said
'How can we make any cheer?
When you would not let our sweet souls rest
At Heaven when we were there?'
9. Then Christ did call for the roasted cock,
That was feathered with his holy hands
He crowed three times all in the dish
In the place where he did stand
10. They've taken a yew tree by the top
And splored it by the root
'Aint that a pity, they all three sons said
'As the quick should part from the dead'
11. 'Farewell stick and farewell stone
Farewell to the maidens all
Farewell to the nurse that gave us suck
And down the tears did fall'

Version B - England

The Wife of Usher's Well

Notated by Reverend C. J. Shebbeare from the singing of three traveller furze-cutters on 24th Dec 1910 in Swerford, Oxfordshire,

<https://www.vwml.org/record/JHB/6/3>

Some additional lines from the version sung by Mrs Loveridge of Dilwyn, Herefordshire which was collected by Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1908

<https://www.vwml.org/record/RoudFS/S162999>



There was a la-dy in me-rry Scot-land, And she had sons b-y three, Sh-e
sent them in to me-rry Eng-land, T-o learn some E-ng-lish deeds.

Visit efdss.org/resourcebank/songs-from-the-james-madison-carpenter-folk-collection and listen to **The Wife Of Usher's Well (Version B)**.

Sung on this recording by Hazel Askew:

"I've always loved this song as although like most ballads, it focuses more on the actions of the characters rather than detailing their emotions, every line aches with the wife's agonising grief and desperation to bring her sons back. I've known this song for many years and the first version I learnt about 6 years ago was based on a Scottish version collected from an old woman in Kirkhill and published by Sir Walter Scott in 1833. This English version is quite unusual and the wife's threat to stop believing in God is so overt and feels very heretical. I like that the crowing cock in this version is a roasted chicken that gets up and speaks whilst still on the table, this feels like quite a comic interpretation of that motif in quite a serious song!"

Key points from this version:

- This tune is in the Ionian Mode/major key
- The wife specifically says she won't believe in God until her children are returned to her
- The cockerel that crows for day is a roasted chicken on the table in the version
- Some of the lines towards the end are repetitive and possibly miss remembered by the singer, but there is an unusual reference to a yew tree, often associated with the dead

Version C - USA

The Wife of Usher's Well

1. There was a woman and she lived alone
And babies she had three
She sent them away to the north country
"To learn their grammarie"

2. They'd not been gone but a very short time,
Scarcely six weeks to the day,
When death, cold death spread through the
land
And swept them babes away.

3. She prayed to the Lord in Heaven above,
Wearing a starry crown:
'Oh, send to me my three little babes,
Tonight, or in the morning soon.'

4. It was very close to Christmas time
The nights was long and cold. And the very
next morning at the break of day
Them babes a-come a-running home.

5. She set the table for them to eat,
Upon it spread bread and wine.
'Come eat, come drink, my three little babes;
Come eat, come drink of mine.'

6. "Oh, mother, we cannot eat your bread,
Neither can we drink your wine,
For tomorrow morning, at the break of day,
Our Saviour must we join."

7. She made the bed in the back-most room,
Upon it she spread a sheet,
Upon the top a golden spread
For to help them babes asleep.

8. "Rise up, rise up," said the eldest one
Rise up, rise up," said she,
For tomorrow morning, at the break of day
Our Saviour must we see.

Version C - USA

There Was a Woman Lived Near the North

*From the singing of Hedy West who learnt it from the singing of
Nan Perdue of Fairfax , Virginia*

There was a woman and she li-ved a-lone, And bab - ies she had three, She sent them
away___ to the north coun - try,_____ To learn___ the-ir gra-mm-a - rie.

Visit efdss.org/resourcebank/songs-from-the-james-madison-carpenter-folk-collection and listen to **The Wife Of Usher's Well (Version C)**.

Sung on this recording by Gemma Smith Vondras who learnt it from a recording of American singer Hedy West from 1965, who says the following:

“This is basically the version that Nan Perdue of Fairfax, Virginia, learned from her mother-in-law Eva Samples (born in 1906 near Carrollton, Georgia). I've combined this variant with a similar one from my grandmother. It was a popular ballad in the Gilmer County community, and it was part of Etta Mulkey's repertoire. Altogether this ancient and mysterious song has persisted far better in America than in the land of its origin, whether England or Scotland. The last version of it found in the British Isles was noted down in 1883 from an elderly fisherman at Bridgworth, Shropshire, but in the United States it has turned up repeatedly, especially in the South and Midwest.”

Key points from this version:

- This tune has no 6th so could be either in the Dorian or Aeolian mode
- She prays to the lord but does not say she will lose her faith if they aren't returned, like in the English version.
- The sons return at Christmas time
- The song is shorter and more concise

Appendix 1

National curriculum links: Key Stage 1/2

Music

- Use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes
- Listen with concentration and understanding to a range of high-quality live and recorded music
- Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
- Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
- Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians
- Develop an understanding of the history of music

English

- Appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage
- Becoming very familiar with key stories, fairy stories and traditional tales, retelling them and considering their particular characteristics
- Use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- Writing composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing).
- Acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language

Art & Design

- To use drawing, painting and sculpture to develop and share their ideas, experiences and imagination

Physical Education

- Perform dances using simple movement patterns.
- Develop balance, agility and co-ordination, and begin to apply these in a range of activities

Mathematics

- Help pupils develop confidence and mental fluency with whole numbers, counting and place value

Appendix 2

National curriculum links: Key Stage 3

Music

- Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
- Improvise and compose; and extend and develop musical ideas by drawing on a range of musical structures styles, genres and traditions
- Use staff and other relevant notations appropriately and accurately in a range of musical styles, genres and traditions
- Identify and use the inter-related dimensions of music expressively and with increasing sophistication, including use of tonalities, different types of scales and other musical devices
- Listen with increasing discrimination to a wide range of music from great composers and musicians
- Develop a deepening understanding of the music that they perform and to which they listen, and its history.

English

- Appreciate our rich and varied musical heritage
- Use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- Acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- Write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- Knowing the purpose, audience for and context of the writing and drawing on this knowledge to support comprehension
- Recognising a range of poetic conventions and understanding how these have been used

History

- Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day – The Great Depression (the inter-war years) – Hard, Hard Times
- The development of Church, state and society in Medieval Britain 1066 - 1509 – Thomas the Rhymer

Appendix 3

National curriculum links: Key Stage 4/ GCSE

Music

- Area of study 3: Traditional Music – music that takes influences from traditional sources including folk music and reinterprets them in a contemporary style, and traditional music from traditional sources and cultures that is performed as intended by the composer. This includes ‘Listening unfamiliar music – Contemporary folk music of the British Isles’.
- Area of study 6: Contemporary Traditional Music – music influenced by traditional musical feature fused with contemporary elements and styles.
- Broaden musical experience and interests, develop imagination and foster creativity
- Develop awareness of a variety of instruments, styles and approaches to performing and composing
- Engage with and appreciate the diverse heritage of music, in order to promote personal, social, intellectual and cultural development
- The effect of purpose and intention (e.g. of the composer, performer, commissioner) on how music is created, developed and performed in different historical, social and cultural contexts
- The effect of audience, time and place (e.g. venue, occasion) on how music is created, developed and performed in different historical, social and cultural contexts
- Tonality including major, minor and basic modulation e.g. tonic - dominant
- Structure; organisation of musical material including simple structure e.g. verse and chorus, call and response, binary and theme and variations
- Sonority including recognition of a range of instrumental and vocal timbres and articulation e.g. legato and staccato
- Tempo, metre and rhythm including pulse, simple time, compound time, and basic rhythmic devices e.g. dotted rhythms
- Dynamics; basic dynamic devices e.g. crescendo and diminuendo

English

- Appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage

- Use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- Read in depth, critically and evaluatively, so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and ideas
- Re-reading literature and other writing as a basis for making comparisons
- Exploring aspects of plot, characterisations, events and settings, the relationship between them and their effects
- Analysing a writer's choice of vocabulary, form, grammatical and structural features, and evaluating their effectiveness and impact
- Drawing on knowledge of the purpose, audience for and context of the writing, including its social, historical and cultural context and the literary tradition to which it belongs, to inform evaluation
- Write accurately, effectively and analytically about their reading, using Standard English
- Acquire and use a wide vocabulary, including the grammatical terminology and other literary and linguistic terms they need to criticise and analyse what they read

Appendix 4

National curriculum links: Key Stage 5/ A Level

Music

- Engage with, and extend appreciation of, the diverse heritage of music in order to promote personal, social, intellectual and cultural development
- Broaden musical experience and interests, develop imagination and foster creativity
- Develop knowledge and understanding of a variety of instruments and styles, and of relevant approaches to both performing and composing
- Appraise contrasting genres, styles and traditions of music, and develop understanding of musical contexts and a coherent awareness of musical chronology
- Develop as effective, independent learners and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds
- How music from different historical, social and cultural contexts has changed over time
- Analyse and evaluate music in aural and written form, using knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical contexts and musical language to make critical judgements about:
- Formulate critical judgements, which will be achieved by attentive listening (rather than just hearing) and aural perception, and could also be achieved by informed discussion (in writing and/or through speech), analysis, evaluation, contextualisation and reflection
- Comment on music heard, showing understanding through the genres, styles and traditions studied
- At least one Area of Study at both AS and A level must not be drawn from the Western Classical Tradition

English

- At AS and A level: a wide range of spoken and written texts from different times, including one text that must be non-literary
- How language choices shape meanings in texts
- Ways in which individual texts are interpreted by different readers or listeners

- Ways in which texts relate to each other and to the contexts in which they are produced and received
- The significance of contextual factors in the production and reception of texts
- How to apply linguistic and literary methodologies and concepts to inform their responses to and interpretations of texts
- Apply varied strategies for reading and listening according to text type and purpose for study
- Identify and describe how meanings and effects are created and conveyed in texts
- Use a range of techniques to produce and evaluate the effectiveness of texts for different audiences and purposes, informed by wide reading and listening

Hazel Askew



Hazel Askew is a London-based singer, musician and workshop leader. She has worked as a performer on the folk scene for many years, most notably with BBC Radio 2 Folk Award nominated vocal trio Lady Maisery and traditional English folk duo The Askew Sisters, with whom she won Best Female Singer at the 2011 Spiral Earth Awards. She was also part of 10 piece female supergroup Songs of Separation who recently won Best Album at the 2017 BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards. Hazel is a committed folk educator and often leads projects for the English Folk Dance and Song Society's adult, youth and schools programmes She has also led workshops and courses for organisations including BBC Proms, Barbican Creative Learning, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Folkworks, Soundpost Music, Aldeburgh Young Musicians, Dartington Summer School, Benslow Music, Morley College and various festivals around the country.

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