

singing histories

Sunderland



Contents

4	Foreword
10	<i>Two People, Two Churches, Two Rivers</i>
12	<i>Jack he was a Sunderland Lad!</i>
14	<i>Spottee</i>
18	<i>The Rigs of Sunderland Fair</i>
21	<i>Pretty Girls of Sunderland</i>
24	<i>The Old Wife's Lament</i>
28	<i>The Meeting of the First</i>
30	<i>Boat Race on the Wear</i>
32	<i>The Sunderland Trip</i>
36	<i>Winding Men</i>
38	<i>The Safety Lamp Song</i>
40	<i>The Lads upon the Wear</i>

Foreword

The aim of a *Singing History* is to allow 'local' people – old and young alike – to enjoy the richness of their local heritage through the medium of song.

The songs in this particular collection relate to the area traditionally known as Wearside, which today encompasses the city of Sunderland.

Inside the modern city's bounds are a number of large settlements including the former town of Sunderland itself, the 'new' town of Washington and numerous small towns and villages developed over the centuries to service the coal industry.

The history

When it comes to history and heritage, this is an area of true national and international importance.

Artefacts and burial sites found in the area show that people lived in Sunderland from about 9000 years ago. Its written history begins in 674 with the foundation of the Monastery of St Peter at Monkwearmouth; a local man, the Venerable Bede, chronicled the development of the monastery. Bede's major work 'A History of the English Church and People' ranks among the greatest works of history to emerge from Medieval Europe and is still the most important single source for English church history, in particular, but also for early English history in general.

The driving force behind the foundation of the monastery was Benedict Biscop, now the City's Patron Saint; he was determined to make the monastery as magnificent as possible. To build what was one of the first stone structures built in the north since the Romans left he had to bring in masons and glaziers from Gaul. In 681 he obtained more land and founded the monastery of Saint Paul in what is now Jarrow. 686 saw further expansions this time

on the southern bank of the Wear, which may well be the Sundered land that gave Sunderland its name.

Under Ceolfrith, Benedict's successor, the monastery became a great centre of religion and learning. One of the magnificent bibles produced by the monks here survives in a library in Florence; the Codex Amiatinus is a huge volume some ten inches thick which was taken by Ceolfrith on a pilgrimage to Rome as a present for the Pope. In the late 8th century raids by the Vikings probably destroyed the monastery.

South of the River Wear the land was in the direct control of the Bishop of Durham, as opposed to the monastery, hence Bishopwearmouth. A community grew up around the church of St Michael's, founded in 940, and a smaller, fishing village, Sunderland, developed at the river mouth.

Two important strands in the history of Sunderland are indicated in early evidence: in 1346 a licence was granted to one Thomas Menvil to build a ship at Hendon and there is a record of 1396 of coal exported from Sunderland to Whitby Abbey.

The next development of any significance was in 1589 when Robert Bowes and John Smith set up a salt business, boiling sea water in massive iron pans using local coal. The area is still known as the Panns. The town continued to develop: it was granted a charter by Bishop Morton in 1634 and by 1642 the population of Sunderland was 1400.

During the English Civil War Sunderland was on the side of Parliament, which enabled the local merchants to break into the London coal trade, which had previously been dominated by Newcastle, a Royalist town.

By the early eighteenth century developments speeded up: Sunderland was made a separate parish in 1712, the River Wear Commissioners started their work in 1717

and in 1719, Holy Trinity and Sunderland's Parish Church was opened. The end of the century saw the building of Wearmouth Bridge, the largest single span bridge in the world.

Major changes were taking place in the coal trade. The Newbottle waggonway that brought coal directly to the port led to riots by the Keel men whose jobs would disappear. In 1822 Lyons Pit at Hetton opened: the pit was connected to the Wear by the Hetton Colliery Railway, designed and built by George Stephenson, and operated over part of its length by locomotives.

Monkwearmouth Colliery, which was then the deepest sinking in the world, shipped its first coals in 1835.

The Experiment, launched in 1845, was the first steam-powered ocean going ship built on the Wear followed in 1852 by the Loftus, the first iron ship launched in Sunderland.

A bitter struggle was carried on over the sites for docks, which were increasingly needed as trade increased. Sir Hedworth Williamson headed the North side challenge and opened Wearmouth Dock in 1837 but it was never successful and earned the nickname 'Sir Hedworth's Bath Tub', even though Isambard Kingdom Brunel designed it. A deal was then made with George Hudson: he would be elected MP for Sunderland and in return he would build docks on the South side and connect them with his considerable railway interests.

From being the 'largest shipbuilding town in the world' at the beginning of the twentieth century – and after prodigious efforts in the First World War – the Wear yards were seriously affected by the post-war depression. By 1926 there were 19,000 unemployed and full employment only returned as the country started to prepare for World War

Two. President Eisenhower called the Liberty ship the one greatest war-winning weapon. These simple cargo ships were built in huge numbers to a design from Thompson's shipyard in Sunderland.

As a major builder of merchant ships Sunderland was a target for German bombers and in a series of air raids from 1940 to 1943 it became one of the seven most bombed towns in the country. 267 people were killed and nearly 400 badly injured. 4000 houses were wrecked and many more seriously damaged.

Post war saw a process of amalgamation of the shipyards and many famous names disappeared. The fewer and much bigger yards lost the fight against foreign competition – even the incredibly successful SD14 design from Austin and Pickersgill failed to halt the decline and the last ship was launched in 1988.

Coal-mining stopped in 1993 which spelled the end for the traditional industries that made Sunderland. Nissan started building cars in 1986 and now Sunderland is home to a much greater range of industries and occupations, no longer reliant on the two staples.

Washington, Sunderland, is a picturesque town located to the west of Sunderland in the North East of England. It is divided into small villages and districts, with the original settlement being named Washington Village.

Washington became a new town in 1964 and a part of Sunderland in 1974, dating back as a settlement to at least Anglo Saxon times.

Today Washington is diverse in its offerings. Where once coal was loaded by the tonne, you will now find breathtaking views of the countryside, fascinating history, heritage and leisure attractions, including Washington Old Hall, Washington F Pit and Bowes Railway.

The songs and music

When it comes to 'traditional song', it would be false to argue that Wearside has a rich tradition. Perhaps the most famous song connected with the area is *The Lambton Worm*, based on a legend with roots on the fringes of Wearside. Even this ditty started life further north – as a pantomime song on late nineteenth century Tyneside!

The songs in this collection therefore represent many different strands in the musical spectrum. A number of them started life as penny or street ballads in the early nineteenth century; some of them come from the so-called Tyneside song era in the 1860s and 1870s when entertainers wandered the north east making up songs of current interest. One came from a sailor passing through the port many years ago while a final batch has been created recently by local singer/songwriter Keith Gregson specifically for the use of youngsters. Keith has been steeped in traditional music, song and dance since the 1950s and has deliberately turned to traditional music styles for his ditties. He has also arranged and adapted many of the older songs in the collection.

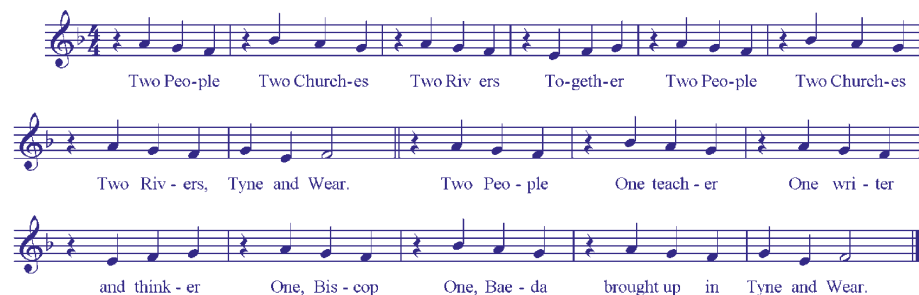
Whatever their origins, these songs reflect the magnificent heritage of modern Sunderland. Coal production, shipbuilding and the maritime trade are all here as well as local heroes from Bede and Biscop through to Jack Crawford, 'the hero of Camperdown' and beyond.

The songs have been made 'singable' by intention and many have easy rousing choruses and can be improved in performance by the addition of actions. Hopefully this will encourage youngsters, in particular, to learn them and, in consequence, to discover more about their locality. After all, they are the future and it has been proven that to face the future without knowledge of the past can be a dangerous thing!



Two People, Two Churches, Two Rivers

Lyrics and music by Keith Gregson



*Two People, Two Churches,
Two Rivers – Together
Two People, Two Churches,
Two Rivers – Tyne and Wear*

Two Churches – like brothers –
united – together
One Wearmouth – one Jarrow –
one Peter – one Paul

*Two People, Two Churches,
Two Rivers – Together
Two People, Two Churches,
Two Rivers – Tyne and Wear*

Two rivers – once home to –
ship building – coal loading
Still flowing – and showing –
what's meant by – Tyne and Wear

*Two People, Two Churches,
Two Rivers – Together
Two People, Two Churches,
Two Rivers – Tyne and Wear*



St Peter's Church

The north east of England is proud that it gave birth to the Roman Wall and the modern railway. You will probably have heard of Hadrian (who ordered the wall to be built) and George Stephenson (who was a great railway builder).

Bede and Biscop are just as famous and their links are with the River Wear and Sunderland and the River Tyne and Jarrow.

Bede was the first person to write a history book about the English people. Biscop looked after the great monasteries at Monkwearmouth (now St Peter's Church) and Jarrow (now St Paul's Church).

Both men were alive in the time of the Anglo-Saxons over 1300 years ago. Bede is one of the most important historical characters in the English speaking world and, we think, like Jack Crawford, that he was 'a Sunlan' Lad'.

Wearmouth-Jarrow is the UK's nomination for World Heritage Status in 2010. If the nomination is successful, the site will be listed alongside a number of impressive heritage sites from around the world including the Taj Mahal, the Great Wall of China and Egyptian Pyramids.

Things to do

1. Bede is buried in Durham Cathedral and his tombstone has a Latin rhyming joke on it. See if you can find out what the joke is and what it means.
2. Find out as much as you can about Bede and Biscop. Recently Biscop became Sunderland's own 'patron saint'. What does that mean? You will certainly find out more about them if you visit Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, Sunderland Local Studies Centre, St Peter's Church and Bede's World.

Jack he was a Sunderland Lad!

Lyrics by Keith Gregson

Traditional



He went and joined the navy,
the navy, the navy
He went and joined the navy
then sailed away to sea

He did his deed of bravery,
of bravery, of bravery
He did his deed of bravery
then came back home again

He went back to the keelboats,
the keelboats, the keelboats
He went back to the keelboats –
upon the River Wear

He sadly died of fever, of fever,
of fever
He sadly died of fever but we think
of him today



Jack Crawford from 'The Monthly Chronicle 1888'

This song was written as part of the celebrations for the two hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar in 2005.

The battle, which also saw the death of Lord Nelson, took place in 1805 and there were many Sunderland sailors taking part in the fight. They are remembered in a ceremony held at the Old Parish Church of Sunderland every October.

Jack Crawford, a Sunderland man, served in Nelson's Navy and became a national hero when he nailed back the colours or flag to the mast during the Battle of Camperdown – against the Dutch in 1797.

There is a statue of him in Mowbray Park today and his story is told in books and objects at the Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens and in the Local Studies Centre at the City Library and Arts Centre.

Things to do

1. Use local resources to find out as much as you can about Jack Crawford. You might like to pick up a leaflet about him from the local studies library, have a look at his statue in Mowbray Park and see some of the objects associated with him in the Museum & Winter Gardens.
2. See if you can find out what the keelmen did. They are mentioned in another song in the collection.

Spottee

Traditional

Music by Keith Gregson

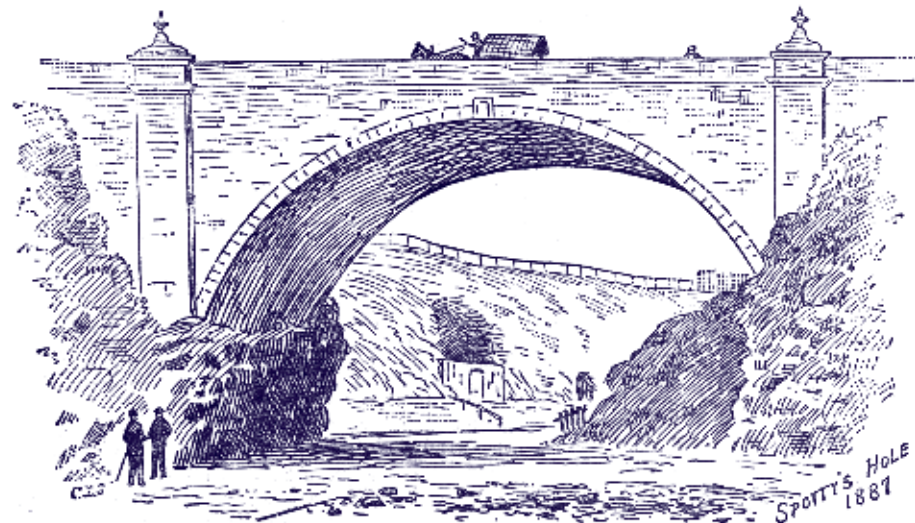
Come Sun-der-land peo-ple and list-en to me, And a fun-ny old tale I'll tell to ye; A -

bout one called Spot-tee lived down by the quay, And nei-ther a har-bour or house had he.

Chorus

Spot - tee was here, Spot - tee was there, Spot - tee was near - ly ev' - ry - where.

Spot - tee was scar - y, Spot - tee was grand, Spot - tee the her - mit of Sun - der - land.



The fishwives of Whitburn didn't
know what te dee
They daren't come along by
the sands, can't you see
Along by the sands as they once
used to dee
So they got in a coble and come
by the sea

And the Wearside wives didn't
know what to dee
They dared not come down
by themselves to the quay
They feared for their lives – for their
infants tee
And all for this fellow called Spottee

He got coal in the daytime – was
well known to dee
And his fire at night casts a light out
to sea
Which caused a poor sloop to cry
'helm a lee'
And head for the rocks – oh poor old
she!

Well, said the master. What must
we dee?
Trust to luck, said the mate
and we're sure to break free
But a poor little lad who was first
time at sea
Felt his heart pitter-patter so scared
was he

Johnny Usher, the master, wished
Spottee away
But the rest of the crew shouted out
'let him stay'
We'll go without wages for our trip
out to sea
Before we go near to that rogue
Spottee

This song has been around since the early eighteen hundreds and is based on fact. Spottee was a local Wearside character who lived as a hermit in a cave in what is now part of Roker Park. The cave is still known to this day as Spottee's Hole. From the song you will gather that he was thought to be rather strange and often frightened people with his antics.

The song talks about the fisher women or fishwives of Whitburn. This helps to remind us that, until fairly recently, fishing was an important job in and around the mouth of the River Wear. The fisher women or fishwives would travel round selling the fish caught by their men and many of them were well known characters in towns around the north east. The song also suggests that the fire Spottee lit for himself often put ships off the coast in danger. In these times, there were lighthouses and watchtowers around the coast to guide sailors and to make sure their ships did not crash into rocks or the shore. In some parts of the country, people were known to start fires on purpose so ships would wreck and the fire-starters could steal the cargo.

Things to do

1. See if you can visit Spottee's Hole (It is just in the ravine near the bridge and behind the Smugglers pub). Do you get any feel or atmosphere there after singing the song?
2. Travel a mile or two up the road to Whitburn and look at the whitewashed fishermen's cottages beside the sea. See if you can find out more about the Wearside fisher folk from the museum or local studies centre
3. What were the 'cobles' and 'sloops' mentioned in the songs?



The Rigs of Sunderland Fair

Lyrics adapted by Keith Gregson

Traditional



This song was written and published in the very year of Queen Victoria's birth – 1819. Times were hard in the days after the Wars with Napoleon, which ended in 1815, so folks were happy to enjoy themselves as and when they could.

The song is about a fair in Sunderland and in those days fairs were classed alongside markets, hirings and churches as places where you were likely to meet your future husband or wife.

The song refers to many streets and villages in and around the modern City of Sunderland and some which are not!

This suggests that the person who wrote this song may not have known Sunderland very well.

Things to do

1. Make a list of the places in Wearside mentioned in the song that you know.
2. What was a fairing?
3. Can you find any more famous songs from the past about fairs.
4. The girls in the song were wearing 'fine dandy gowns'. What might those gowns have looked like in 1819?

Each lad brings his favourite lass
to the fair
He'll buy her a fairing when he gets
her down there
So fill up your glasses and let them
go round
Among the brave lasses
of Sunderland town

They're from down Sailor's Alley
and Robinson's Lane
At Sunderland Fair, lads, they're
playing a game
And when you all see them, believe
me it's true,
At Sunderland Fair, lads, they'll find
sweethearts new

From Southwick and Wearmouth
I'll bring them in first
Because I am certain they're none
of the worst
They'll all get a fairing, which I dare
not tell
In a very short time they'll not know
themselves

From Wapping and Campton,
likewise Shiney Row
And from Philadelphia they'll not be
too slow
And from Bishopwearmouth our
lasses will come
With their new dandy gowns, lads,
just see how they run

From Biddick and Fatfield
and Washington too
And the lasses from Hilton will not
be a few
So let us come forward as fast as we
can
To get a blithe kiss from our lads –
everyone

Now is the time for to finish to my
song
May Old England flourish before
very long
We'll have drinking and singing
and a day that is rare
When we go with our sailors
to Sunderland Fair



Bridge in Sunderland

Pretty Girls of Sunderland

Lyrics adapted by Keith Gregson

Traditional

As I walked up a Sun-der-land street, it was on a Mon-day eve A -
bout the hour of ten o'clock or near I do be-lieve I
soon e-spied two pret-ty girls Walk-ing arm in arm; As
soon as these I did e-spy my blood it ran quite warm. We
rolled a-long and we sang this song to the pret-ty girls of Sun-der-land.

I stepped up to these pretty girls
And found them both quite loving
I took one of them by the hand
And found her pulse was moving
I said, my dear, be not afraid
We'll have a pint of the best we can
She said, my bonny sailor lad
I think you're just the man

We made our way into an inn
And ran inside like thunder
Which made the landlord quite
surprised
And all inside to wonder
I called upon the landlady
To bring a pint of brandy

And fill us all a flowing glass
My young girl was a dandy
She said, young man, what
is your name?
Which port do you belong?
You've come to have a merry time
I'm sure that can't be wrong
I am a sailor as you say
From Newcastle out and out
And if ever you come that way,
my dear
Be sure to seek me out

This song tells us a great deal about pop songs in the early years of the nineteenth century. There were no records, CDs or computer downloads and the words of new songs appeared on penny broadsheets, which would have been sold on street corners by ballad sellers.

The action in the song could have happened anywhere but the writer obviously wanted to sell the song in the north east of England. There are not many songs about Sunderland because 'Sunderland' is a difficult word to fit into poetry, rhyme and even chanting (at soccer matches today – the chant is usually Sun-lan).

The theme of the song again is boy meets girl and it was about this time that the sailor nicknamed 'Jack Tar' also gained a reputation as 'Jack the Lad'.

We still use the word inn today but not as much as in the early nineteenth century when travel was slower and people had to stay at inns where the landlord and landlady would provide food, drink and a bed for the night.

Things to do

1. See what you can find out about coaching inns.

Do you know any pubs or hotels, which might once have been coaching inns?

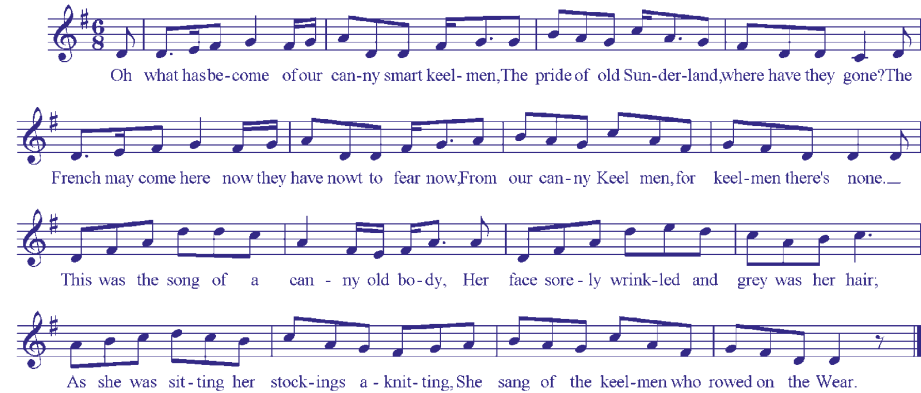
2. Some of the sailors were forced to join the navy against their will. The press gang was used to do this. See if you can find out about the press gang.



The Old Wife's Lament

Lyrics adapted by Keith Gregson

Traditional



Oh they were so bonny and smart
for to look at
And proud was the lass when
she got a keel lad
For none could dress neater
And none could dance sweeter
And men such as keelmen were rare
to be had

With gallant Lord Nelson they
bravely did venture
From their canny river to plough
the salt sea
And the Danes did soon learn then
That our canny keelmen
Nobly would conquer or bravely
would dee

But black were the days when
the drops came in fashion

Ill luck and sorrow when railways
came down
They tried with their power
To pull the trucks ower
For they knew that they'd ruin
our canny old town
Now gone are the most of them
bonny smart fellows
And those that are living are old like
myself
For no better men
Could be found in the country
At working the keelboats none
could them excel





The Parmatta being built at Laign's in 1866

We don't know who wrote this song but it was written about the middle of the eighteen hundreds when the railways had settled down.

The song is about two industries important to Wearsiders – coal mining and coal transport. In the early part of the nineteenth century and earlier, most of the mines were up river around the edge of our modern city. The coal was transported by horse and cart from the mine to the river where it was placed in keelboats and taken down river to the sea-going vessels around the river mouth. The keelboats used to have two or three men and a boy in them and large numbers of Sunderland men took up this occupation.

The song refers to many of them joining the navy at the time of Nelson and playing an important role in the Battle of Copenhagen.

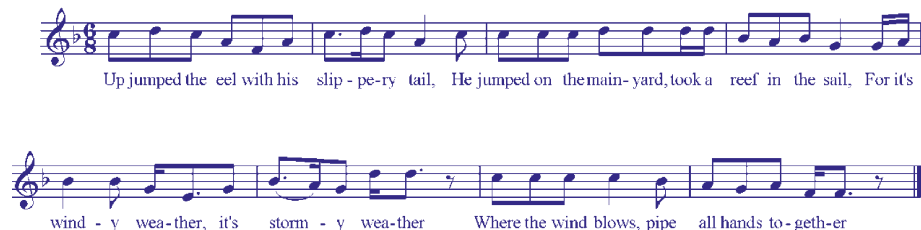
The singer is unhappy that the railways have seen the end of the keelmen. By the middle of the century, coal was being transported by rail from the mine directly to the coal drops above the ships. The song probably dates from the time when there was a scare about Napoleon III of France invading England (he was the nephew of Napoleon). Volunteer forces grew up all over the country but the public thought they were weak and often made fun of them.

Things to do

1. Find out more time! – The Battle of Copenhagen, George Stephenson and the early railways and Napoleon III.

The Meeting of the First

Traditional



Up jumped the flat fish with his
crooked mouth
If you want a good wind you must
head for the south

Up jumped the turtle with his
stripey shell
He jumped in the boat and began
for to bale.

Up jumped the heron all with
his red eyes
He jumped up to the masthead
to look out for a prize

Up jumped the haddock so white
and so glib
He jumped on the forecastle
and hauled down the jib

Then up jumped the seal – so long
and so slim
If you want a good hand then I'll
serve for the king

Up jumped the whale – so broad
and so low
He got hold of the painter and began
for to tow

Up jumped the salmon as bright
as the sun
He jumped on the forecastle
and fired the bold gun

Up jumped the mussel as black as
a rook
If you want a good hand then I'll
serve as your cook

Up jumped the shark with his six
rows of teeth
He jumped into the copper and stole
the cook's beef

This was written down by hand from the singing of a merchant sailor in Sunderland in the 1860s and shows the importance of Sunderland's sea history.

This was the time when the sailing ship still reigned as king although the steamship had begun to be used more and more.

This is a sea shanty which was used when the men were working and has the same tune as the famous sea shanty 'Blow the Man Down' and was used when hauling sails.

Experts today reckon that it was rare to have the same shanty sung twice in exactly the same way as half the fun was for the shanty man (the main singer) – or indeed the sailors themselves – to make up the verses.

Some of the verses the sailors made up were a little rude but they did not sing those verses to the people who wrote them down!

This song has nineteen verses written down but only a few have been chosen.

Things to do

1. These songs were sung by people in the merchant navy not the Royal Navy. Can you find out what was the difference?
2. Other famous sea shanties include 'What Shall We Do With The Drunken Sailor', 'Billy Boy' and 'Blow The Man Down'. See if you can find the words for them.
3. Shanties were working songs. What kind of work did sailors do when singing shanties? Why did shanties disappear when steamships became popular?

The Boat Race on the Wear

Lyrics adapted by Keith Gregson

Traditional



A lot of sporting men were there –
the betting went on fine, man
There was Lumley that belongs
the Wear and Clasper from
the Tyne, man

It really was a bonny seet
To think that two such men should
meet

And the men they gave a roaring
cheer

When they saw the rowers that
were there

Both from the Wear and Tyne, man

There was excitement in the air –
Till the boats away they broke, man
But the Pallion crew they rowed
so fast – They gained with every
stroke, man

Cud Robson, aye, and Hutton too
They were the finest in the crew
Leithead and Grievson rowed so
free

As they raced off from Baron's Quay
Upon the River Wear, man

Now as they rowed along the tide
as Sure as I am here, man
Young Clasper to the other side
of the Baron's Quay did steer, man
But when they'd got a length ahead
The Pallion lads they kept the lead
Until they got unto the place
Where finally they won the race –
The champions of the Wear, man

Now lads, I've wondered long and
hard and really think it's time, man.
They made some champions on the
Wear as well as on the Tyne, man
Then every week there'd be a race
And the Wear would be a noted
place
Regattas too there'd be round here
With bonny sport upon the Wear
Upon the River Wear, man

In the 1860s, boat racing was a very popular sport in north east England. This can be seen by the space occupied by these races on the back pages of the newspapers of the day.

The greatest rivalry was between the Tyne and the Thames and Sunderland folk tended to support the Tyne rowers especially Harry Clasper (father of the man mentioned in this song), Bob Chambers and Jim Renforth.

When there was the odd race between Wear rowers and Tyne rowers, of course the Wearsiders supported their own men. Boat racing was also a great betting sport with 'punters' placing bets on races as they do on horse races today and backers putting up huge sums of money to support their rowers. Here 'winner took all' the money and the rich backers would watch the race from a steamboat or even, in some cases, a slow moving railway carriage!

Things to do

1. Boat racing was very popular. See if you can find out anything about Bob Chambers, Harry Clasper or Jim Renforth.
2. Soccer (professional football) took over from boat racing as a popular sport. Can you find out about the early history of Sunderland AFC?



The Sunderland Trip

Lyrics by Joe Wilson, adapted by Keith Gregson

Traditional

Peg and me made up our minds to have a trip one day, — So onboard of a boat for Sun der-land down the

wa-ter we made our way — But, oh when we got out to sea, Poor Peg be-gan to throw, And to see the tears run

down her cheek would have mel-ted a heart of snow. — She said, are we there, or at Tyne-mouth or Shields? I can't

wait to get on dry land. For I think I'll fall out of the boat where I sit for I can-not for all the world stand.

Ay, wor Peg - gy's a caw - shun, a caw - shun ye'll a - gree; And I'll

ne - ver for - get the Sun - der - land Trip when Peg - gy went there with me.

At last we both got safe on land
and Peggy's clothes made dry
By the kitchen fire in a public house
as she stood heaving a sigh
Then arm in arm I went with Peg up
High Street right away
And all the folks they stared at Peg –
she's not one you'll see every day
When in the Park among the
flowers, She say, 'Man this is grand
And heaven will surely be like this –
if they take in the Bobby's band'
Then after we'd been an hour in
the park, in Bridge Street we made

a stop
For Peggy declared for the good
of her health she would just have
another wee drop
Then higher up the town we went
to have a really good tea
'Its nearly as good as I make myself',
says Peggy while winking at me.
Then we set off again for a walk
round the town as we made up
our minds for the train
For Peggy would never get back on
the boat – she felt like she'd gone
down a drain.

Roker Terrace





Monkwearmouth Station Museum

This is something of a crazy song – again written by Tynesider Joe Wilson. The idea and the tune were both taken later by a Durham pitman called Tommy Armstrong and turned into a very popular Tyneside song called ‘Wor Nanny’s a Maizor’.

Tommy’s song deals with a trip on the railway. ‘The Sunderland Trip’ deals with a trip by sea and railway. This must have taken place in the 1860s and gives us a wonderful picture of transport at the time. Days out on little steamboats were becoming fashionable. In this case, the boat travelled from Tynemouth to Sunderland.

The day-trippers in the song then got the train back. At that time there was no railway bridge across the river so they had to cross the road bridge to catch their train back to Tyneside from Monkwearmouth Station (now a museum).

If they wanted to travel south, they would have gone to the other station south of the river. It is still possible to follow some of their trip around the town as they visited the newly opened Mowbray Park and took tea in the High Street. It is clear that the steamboat trip was not very smooth and that the travellers tried to make a good day of it when on land!

Things to do

1. The history of transport in Sunderland is told at Monkwearmouth Station Museum so it is worth a visit. The library also has information sheets about the station and railway.
2. One of the men behind the railway and its station was George Hudson ‘The Railway King’. See what you can find out about him.

Winding Men

Lyrics and music by Keith Gregson

Wind-ing men, wind-ing men, down the pit then back a - gain, Ring the bell to tell them when, Wind-ing men, wind - ing men. One ring to take them up, Two rings to take them down, Three rings to show all's well, Wind-ing men, wind-ing men. Wind-ing men, wind-ing men, down the pit then back a - gain, Ring the bell to tell them when, Wind-ing men, wind-ing men. The banks-man's up a - bove, The on - set - ter's be - low, The wind-er's in his chair, Wind-ing men, wind-ing men. Wind-ing men, wind-ing men, down the pit then back a - gain, Ring the bell to tell them when, Wind - ing men, wind - ing men.

Keith Gregson wrote this song with the help of pupils from the Sunderland Primary Schools who came to work with him at Washington's F Pit Museum. The museum is in what was once the engine shed for the coal mine known as F Pit, which closed in the 1960s. The mighty engine, now worked by electricity, once operated by steam. It drove the winding gear, which pulled the cages up and down the pit shaft. These cages took the miners up and down, the coal up and the pit ponies down. The pit ponies stayed underground until they were too old to work or until they died. They would then be carried up in a wagon in one of the cages.

Things to do

1. See if you can arrange a visit to F Pit Museum when it is open or have a look at the outside when you go past. You can clearly see the wheels at the pit head which would have had the ropes wound round to carry the cages.
2. The song talks about a banksman, an onsetter and a winder. It also makes references to ringing bells. See what you can find out about these jobs and the system of bells. There is also a section on coal mining in the Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens and information on how coal was carried away from the pit by train at the Monkwearmouth Station Museum.

The Safety Lamp Song

Lyrics adapted by Keith Gregson

Traditional



On tyneside they said George –
he did it for the Geordies
George invented the safety lamp

In the south west they all rave –
it wasn't George it was Davy
Davy invented the safety lamp



Upper High Street

This song covers two topics – local personalities and coal mining. The local personality is Sunderland man Dr William Clanny.

One of the greatest dangers in a coal mine lay in explosion but in the days before electricity it was difficult to light coal mines well without danger of explosion. A number of people worked on producing a lamp which could be used safely underground and could also give warning if there was any gas about.

History writers today still argue about the person that actually 'invented' the safety lamp but all three men mentioned in the song can put up a good case that it was them. Of course, Sunderland folk like to think that it was our own Dr Clanny!

Things to do

1. See if you can find pictures of the three safety lamps mentioned and also something about the three men involved – William Clanny, George Stephenson and Humphrey Davy. The museum and schools loan service has examples of the lamps and it may be possible to see and handle at least one of them.
2. When the government was looking at ways of changing working conditions for miners and especially for child miners in the 1840s, they interviewed a number of Sunderland youngsters and teenagers. See if you can find a copy of one of these interviews and discover what it was like to work underground at that time. Some of the boys interviewed worked at Wearmouth Colliery – today the site of Sunderland Football Club's Stadium of Light.

The Lads upon the Wear

Lyrics by Joe Wilson, adapted by Keith Gregson

Traditional

In ___ Sun der-land let's sing what should make the whole house ring, It's a song that's cer-tain all the lads to cheer, For it glad - dens ev' - ry town, when their na - tives gain re-nown ,And there's hun-dreds have done that up-on the Wear. Oh, me lads, it makes me heart so glad, To ___ make a song that's going to please you here, So ___ give a heart - y cheer for the lads up - on the Wear, Yes a cheer for all the lads up - on the Wear.

What a great success they've made
In most every kind of trade
Nae shipbuilders in the world they'll
ever fear
And great launches keep their pride
Always on the brightest side
And the sailors all declare so on
the Wear

They've a town that's often praised
And both Pier and Park they've raised
And examples set to others far
and near

When the Nine Hours Strike begun
It was gained and fairly won
Foremost by the lads upon the Wear

Then in nearly every sport
Why you'll seldom find them short
And some day there'll be a champion
sculler here
Let this always be your boast
And your pleasure when you toast
'Here's success to all the lads upon
the Wear'.

A 'Geordie' songwriter – Joe Wilson – wrote this interesting song in the middle of Victoria's reign. It tells us much about Sunderland itself as seen from the outside and also about entertainment at the time.

The importance of the sea to Sunderland is shown here as it mentions both shipbuilding and sailors (by now mostly members of the merchant navy). Pride in the town is to be seen through references to the park – which was opened in the 1850s – and extended in the 1860s and also to the pier.

The sporting section also mentions the importance to the north east of rowing in the years before soccer took off (in the 1870s and 1880s).

As for entertainment, Joe Wilson was a popular singer and songwriter who performed in pubs, halls and theatres and he probably made up this song very quickly when he knew he was about to appear in Sunderland (somewhere in the late 1860s?). Shows like Joe's were very popular in the years before the cinema and television.

Things to do

1. Find out about shipbuilding on Wearside. Can you discover the names of some of the shipyards and where they were?
2. Mowbray Park has been kept like a Victorian Park. Pay it a visit.

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