

Bonny Pit Laddie

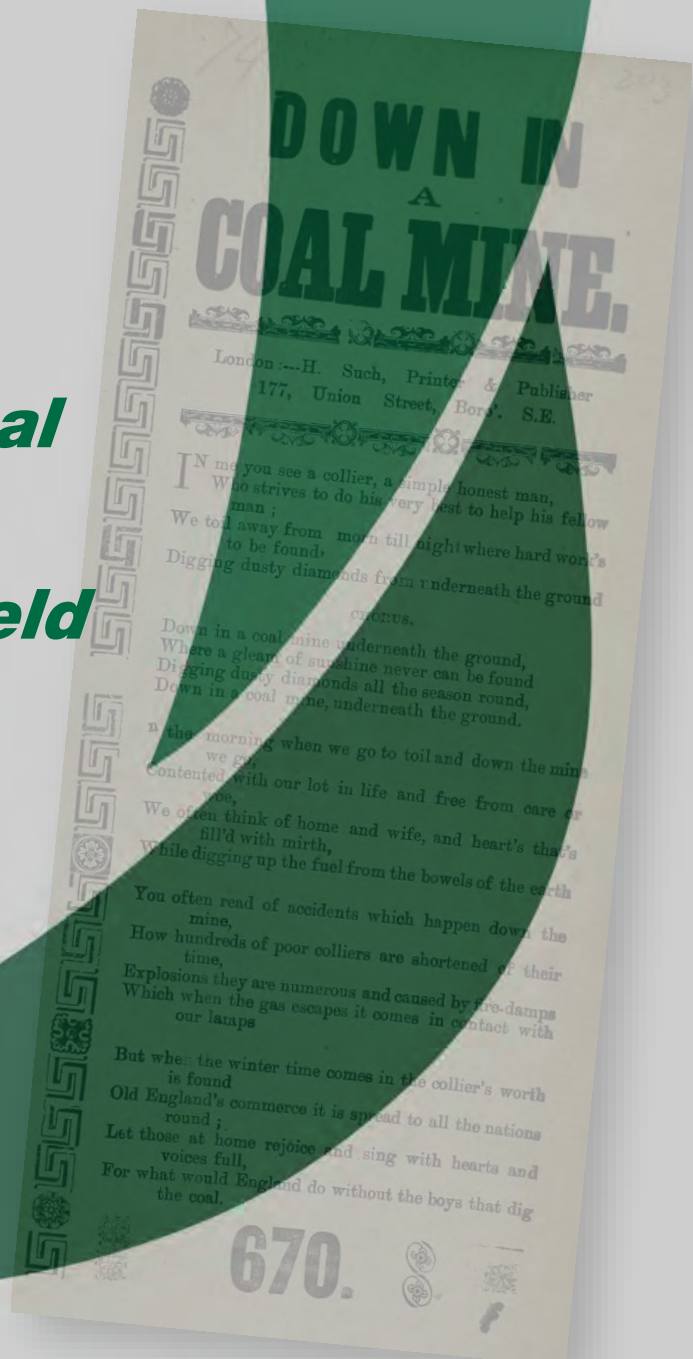
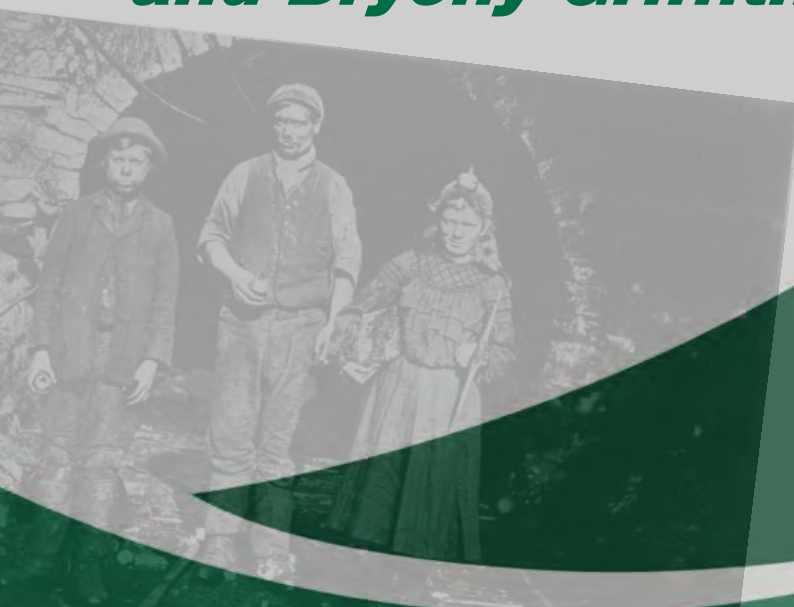
Feb 27 1909

bonny pit laddie, the canny pit laddie  
The bonny pit laddie sets in  
as a cracker and money to  
in a cracker and money in a jacket and



# Coal mining with folk arts and poetry

*With the National Coal Mining Museum for England, Sue Bousfield and Bryony Griffith*





## **The Full English**

The Full English was a unique nationwide project unlocking hidden treasures of England's cultural heritage by making over 58,000 original source documents from 12 major folk collectors available to the world via a ground-breaking nationwide digital archive and learning project. The project was led by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and in partnership with other cultural partners across England.

The Full English digital archive ([www.vwml.org](http://www.vwml.org)) continues to provide access to thousands of records detailing traditional folk songs, music, dances, customs and traditions that were collected from across the country. Some of these are known widely, others have lain dormant in notebooks and files within archives for decades.

The Full English learning programme worked across the country in 19 different schools including primary, secondary and special educational needs settings. It also worked with a range of cultural partners across England, organising community, family and adult learning events.

**Supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Folk Music Fund and The Folklore Society.**



Produced by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), June 2014

Written by Jayne Ambrose (NCMME), Sue Bousfield and Bryony Griffith

Edited by: Frances Watt

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## Additional Resources

Audio recordings of the songs in this pack are available for free download from [www.efdss.org/resourcebank](http://www.efdss.org/resourcebank)

## Introduction to the pack

There is a wealth of folk music, song and dance associated with coal mining. The living conditions of mining families also feature in songs, as do tales of child labour and poverty. There are many songs about the different jobs and roles that people had, and sad laments about mining disasters that occurred. There is also the rapper dance tradition that grew from coal mining communities in the North East, and tunes that accompanied the dances.

This pack brings some background information about coal mining together with songs and poems that can be used in primary schools to explore and analyse the issues surrounding coal mining. There are strong characters such as Polly (*The Collier Lass*) and the *Bonny Pit Laddie* who will help pupils identify with the real lives of children involved in coal mining. There is also background information on rapper dancing.

The material presented has all been tried and tested with visitors to the National Coal Mining Museum for England, pupils at Flockton C of E (c) First School, Wakefield (thanks to the East Peak Industrial Heritage Support Programme), and also in The Full English school projects at St John with St Mark CofE Primary School, Bury and Shawlands Primary School, Barnsley.

There is also some background information on the rapper dance tradition, including some website links that can show you examples of the dance in action.

All the material can be used to explore themes of local history, industrial revolution, child labour, poverty and social change. The material is aimed at primary age children and their teachers.



## **National Coal Mining Museum for England**

The National Coal Mining Museum for England is the museum of the English coalfields and is based near Wakefield in West Yorkshire. Set in a reclaimed coal mining landscape including two historic pits, Caphouse Colliery and Hope Pit, the Museum brings to life the history of one of the country's oldest industries.

Visitors can access original colliery buildings to find out how life at a pit worked and explore interactive galleries, which tell the story of the thousands of people who laboured in the industry and the communities that grew around them. The Museum's nature trail and mine water treatment plant with reed beds show how, even today, coal mining leaves its mark on the landscape.



*National Coal Mining Museum for England: Bird hides and Caphouse © NCMME*

The highlight of a visit to the Museum, however, is a trip underground. With a former miner as their personal guide, visitors ride the cage 140 metres underground in a shaft dating back to 1791, to discover first-hand what life was like at the coal-face.

The Museum runs a vibrant learning programme for school groups, welcoming over 16,000 pupils every year. The combination of historic buildings, galleries and natural landscape provide a unique creative learning space where pupils can investigate the past, solve a scientific problem, dress-up, touch the real thing, sketch, observe and be amazed. The Education team offer a series of workshops and trails, which support learning across the curriculum and provide a stimulus for lots of creative projects.

**For more information about learning opportunities at the Museum, please visit the website [www.ncm.org.uk/learning](http://www.ncm.org.uk/learning)**

National Coal Mining Museum for England, Caphouse Colliery, New Road, Overton, Wakefield. WF4 4RH  
Tel: 01924 848806 Email: [education@ncm.org.uk](mailto:education@ncm.org.uk)

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## Background information on coal mining

Coal has been used as a fuel for centuries and there are extensive coal deposits in Britain. In England coal was worked from Kent, Bristol and Somerset and the Forest of Dean and as far north as Cumbria and Northumberland. Coalfields changed in importance over the centuries with the North-East, Yorkshire, the Midlands and the North-West being most well-known during the twentieth century.

In medieval times, mining was quite primitive. Coal would be gathered by hand where coal seams reach the earth's surface (outcrop) or men would follow the coal seam using picks to reach it. Bell pits were sunk to reach coal in shallow seams, up to 10 metres below the surface. A vertical shaft would be dug down to the level of the coal seam, and coal dug out from around the shaft. When the risk of the roof falling or lack of ventilation became too great, the shaft was abandoned and a new one sunk.

The change to industrial production during the Industrial Revolution provided a huge market for the use of coal. Coal powered machines, drove locomotives and steamships and kept houses warm. From this point, coal mines became deeper, more widespread and the workforce began to grow; at the start of the twentieth Century more than a million people worked in mining. The demand for more coal also encouraged the production of more efficient machines and methods of mining.



*Historic Caphouse © NCMME*

The first machines used in mining were steam-powered engines designed to pump water out of mines. As mines became deeper, and more coal was dug out, steam winding engines were used to transport people and coal up and down the shaft.

Until the early nineteenth century, it was common for whole families of father, mother and children to be employed together in the mines, each with a role: the *hewer*, who would dig the coal out; the *getter*, who might load the coal into a *tub* or a *corve*; the *hurrier* and the *thruster*, who would pull or push the tubs and corves; and the *trapper*, often the youngest member of the family, who would be responsible for keeping the ventilation doors shut until a tub needed to pass through.



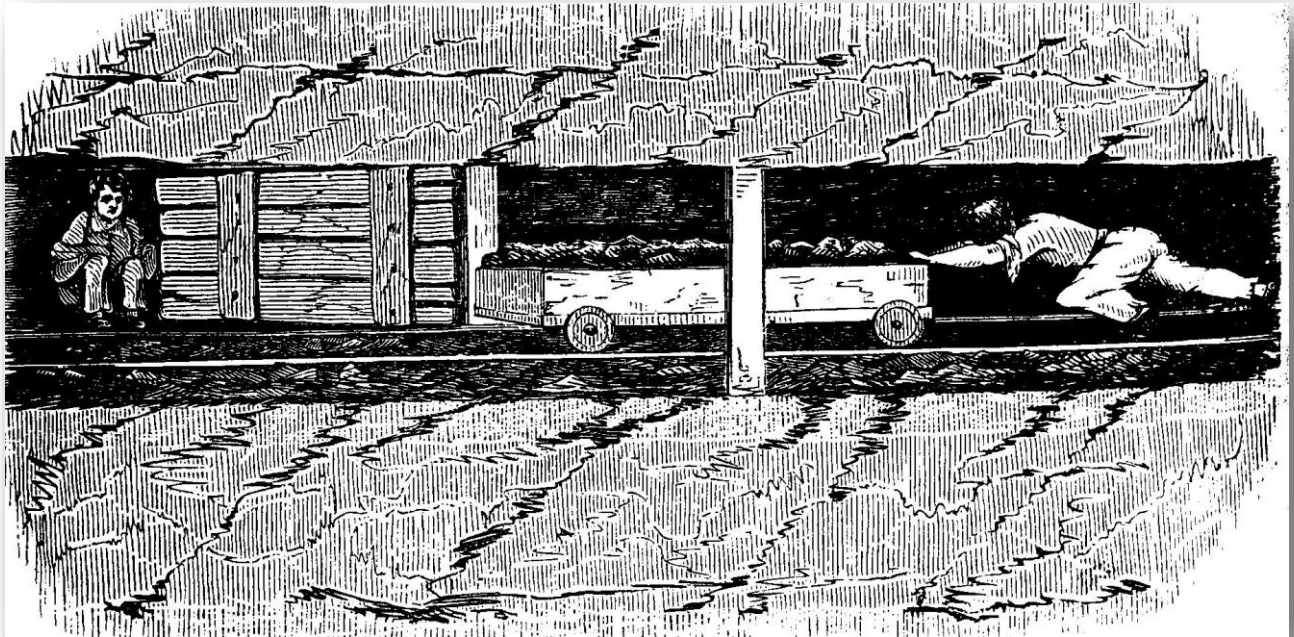
Coal mining family © NCMME

Conditions underground were difficult, dark and dangerous. The only light available was usually from a tallow candle, made from animal fat and even these the miners had to buy themselves. Conditions were often cramped. With some thin-seam mines roadways were as little as 60 – 120 cm in height. Some mines were very hot and wet, or hot and dusty. In some mines, it was so hot that workers wore little or no clothing whilst they worked.



Illustration from the Report of the 1842 Royal Commission into Children's Employment (Mines) © NCMME

*Illustration from the Report of the 1842 Royal Commission into Children's Employment (Mines) © NCMME*



In 1842, a parliamentary Act was passed in Great Britain preventing children under ten years old and women from working underground. This caused problems for mine-owners who lost some of their workforce, but also for families who had no other means of income. This change affected some regions more severely than others.

Ponies became more widely used as a means of transport for pulling coal tubs underground and on the surface. The number of working ponies reached a peak just before World War I, with 70,000 ponies in 1913. After this the number declined, firstly due to the demands of the war, and after that, as more machines were introduced.

In the 1900s, more processes became mechanised, and larger-scale mining techniques became possible using coal-cutting machines.

Britain's coal-mining industry was nationalised on January 1st 1947. This meant that all the larger pits around the country became the responsibility of the National Coal Board (NCB) and the industry now belonged to the government, every citizen and taxpayer. When it took over the industry in 1947, the National Coal Board became the biggest employer of labour in the western world, employing 700,000 miners in 980 mines. For miners, nationalisation brought clear improvements to their working lives. The National Coal Board offered paid holidays, sick pay, pensions and rest homes for miners to recover after mining accidents. Safety was also much improved.



By 1970, however, as demand for coal fell due to an increase in the use of oil, so too did the workforce to 300,000 miners working in just 293 pits. More pit closures followed in the 1980s and at the start of the year-long strike in 1984 the number of men working in mines was down to 181,000. The miners went on strike to save the remaining pits and their jobs but they were not successful and they returned to work in 1985 knowing more pits would be closed.

Today, although coal mining is still a large industry in other countries such as China and India, there are just two working deep mines in Britain.

### ***Coal mining communities***

In mining areas, strong communities have always developed. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries housing, shops and other facilities varied considerably from area to area and living conditions depended on many things, including earnings, education and the attitude of the local colliery company.

Colliery villages built for pit workers were often part of a company's effort to recruit workers to new pits. Some were closed communities with the pit at their centre and sons following their fathers down the mine, although this depended on the region and available job choices

It was a hard life for women, a round of preparing meals at odd times to fit in with different shifts, of cleaning away the ever present dirt from coal fires, and washing and drying filthy work clothes. Many streets only had a communal tap. There was the constant worry that even a small accident down the pit could stop the money coming in.



*Pithead Baths © NCMME*

Close ties underground were reflected in leisure pursuits on the surface. Time off was spent in a number of ways. For some men there was the peace of tending allotments, or training pigeons, or there were working men's clubs or communal sports, Rugby League broke away in 1895 so that players could be paid to compensate for their lost wages.

From 1921 the Miners' Welfare Fund, financed by a levy on coal, provided health and recreation facilities such as convalescent homes and sports grounds and the all-important pithead baths.

# Creative Activity using 'Collier Lass' and 'Deep Down In The Coalmine'

*The Collier Lass* is a Lancastrian song about a girl having to work in the mines. Whilst in *Deep Down in the Coalmine* it is Polly's father who works in the mines. Using these real people enables you to engage the children's interest rather than nameless faceless populates! Lyric sheets and notation for both songs are provided on pages 17-20.

## Additional Resources

Audio recordings of the songs in this pack are available for free download from [www.efdss.org/resourcebank](http://www.efdss.org/resourcebank)

## Initial activity suggestions

- a) Imagine you are in a time machine and you go back 300 years. What would the town be like? E.g. nothing, there just a few farms.
- b) Talk about the Industrial Revolution and the growth of the mill towns. It was also a time of growth in machinery development.
- c) Areas of industrialization chosen because of water (plentiful) –needed for steam power, transport (canals) environmental conditions for cotton. Needed coal to power machinery so developed collieries like those at Worsley
- d) People came from all over the country for work and housing. Homes were tied to the job therefore colliery owners were very powerful! No unions! Children had to work. Why did children have to work? It was very different for Rich & Poor. Why? Why did they put up with it? (Poverty, dependency, no precedent or expectation of anything else because of the isolation of their experiences.) NB: there a plenty of images on the internet showing Victorian mining conditions with children working.
- e) Talk about various jobs underground, and on the top.
- f) What were the specific jobs children would be expected to do?
- g) What do children think are the dangers involved in working underground?
- h) Vocabulary – collier, colliery ,perish, firedamp, deprived, water in, black faces,

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## ***Song activity suggestions***

a) Ask the children to listen to *The Collier Lass* carefully to answer these questions later

- Why did Polly work?
- Where was she from?
- What dangers did she mention?
- What was she deprived of?
- Was she unhappy?

Ask the questions and discuss.

b) Listen to the song *Deep Down In The Coalmine*

- Imagine you are Polly's little brother or sister and you have to work as a door opener-all alone, in the dark. Close your eyes. What would that be like? How would you feel? What would you be thinking? Would you like it?
- *Song/Poem writing: see grids on next two pages.*
  - Break into groups.
  - Each child should write one line about working underground. Write their sentence on a strip of paper.
  - As a group arrange the lines interspersed with given lines to make a poem. Remember it may be necessary to add connectives.
  - As a group arrange the lines and tape together to make a poem.
  - Rehearse a performance of the poem.
  - Choose to act it out, perform as a choral piece or sing it!
  - Listen to each other's work

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***Song/Poem Writing Grid***

**I'm all alone in the dark**

**Because I have to work**

**When all I can do is think**

**Deep, deep under the ground**

**A little collier child**



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## ***Blank Song/Poem Writing Grid***

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## ***Ideas for further work***

- a) **Literacy** – write a diary of a collier child's day. Design a poster advertising jobs. Write a letter to the colliery owner asking for better conditions or pay. Write a newspaper report about a mining disaster.
- b) **Social History** – find out about the housing, schooling changes, sanitation, clothing and other jobs available .Find out about clog dancing.
- c) **Science**- find out how coal is formed, how does steam work a machine? Why use canals as transport (floating easier for horses to pull weight)? How do water mills work?
- d) **Technology**- how does a lift work with cogs and pulleys, why were the carts on rails? Try darning a sock. Try making a sampler.
- e) **Art**-do charcoal drawings of mines like the given pictures. Design dusty diamonds.
- f) **Geography** – find out where the industrialization areas of the Revolution were. Find out about mining .Draw plans of terraced housing and factories. Why is there gas under the ground? Why is there a lot of rain in Lancashire? Where does rain go? Why do lakes and streams form?
- g) Why was “The water in” the mine?
- h) **Maths** – use tally marks. Try adding up in pounds, shillings and pence!
- i) **PE** – try playing street games, morris dancing or a social dance.
- j) **RE/PSHE** – talk about why children stopped being used as labourers. Talk about spread of infection and links with sanitation and health. Discuss child labour still in use today in other countries.
- k) **Investigating primary evidence** - In the 1840s people began to become concerned about the plight of children working in coal mines. Lord Ashley, later the Earl of Shaftesbury, helped to set up a Royal Commission (an inquiry) to investigate the conditions of women and children working in mines. Commissioners were appointed to collect and compile evidence. They interviewed people at the coal mines to find out about their work and home life.

Read the following testimonies taken from men, women and children who worked in the Lancashire coalfield (supplied by NCMME):

LANCASHIRE  
COAL-FIELD.

Evidence  
collected by  
*J. L. Kennedy, Esq.*

No. 93.  
Hours of work.

Wages.  
Accidents.

Females employed  
in pits.  
Present employ-  
ment preferred  
because most lucra-  
tive.

Helpers.

Punishments.

Distance which the  
drawers have to drag  
their tubs.

No regular meal-  
hours.

No. 93.—*Ann Stevenson*, Drawer at the Bridgewater Colliery, Worsley, May 6,  
1841 :—

What age are you?—I am 23 years old.  
How long have you been employed at Worsley?—I have been at work 12 years. 5  
What are you?—I am a drawer.  
What hours do you work?—I come down at seven in the morning, and go out at five in the  
afternoon, sometimes six or eight, just as there is work. I have done now [one o'clock] for  
to-day. Work is very slack.  
How much can you earn per week?—I can 7*s.* 6*d.* a-week on an average.  
Have you ever met with any accidents?—I have had my ankle put out, and a small bone 10  
broken in my leg by the roof falling in.  
What number of girls are employed in this pit?—There are about 25 girls and women in  
this pit.  
Should you prefer other work out of the pit, or do you like your present occupation?—I  
should like to work on the top better than in the pit if I could get enough to live on, but I 15  
should have to work such long hours at weaving to make the same wages, that I would rather  
work in the pit.  
Have you a helper?—Yes, my brother thrutches for me.  
What wages does he get?—5*s.* a-week.  
Do you ever thrash him?—Yes, I thrash him sometimes when he does not behave himself; 20  
I sometimes hit him with my hand, and sometimes with my foot.  
What distance do you draw your tubs?—I have to draw 150 yards up brow with the empty  
and 150 yards down with the full ones—300 yards. I have to go eight up and eight times  
down, and sometimes ten or more [that is 6000 yards].  
Have you regular hours for your food?—No, we never stop at any regular time; we eat 25  
when we have time.

No. 94.—*Mary Jones*, Drawer at the Bridgewater Colliery, Worsley :—

No. 94.  
Age.

Wages.

Bad language used  
in pits.

Nature of employ-  
ment.

What age are you?—21 years old.  
What are you?—A drawer. 30  
How long have you worked in the pit?—Seven or eight years.  
What wages do you earn?—About 7*s.* 6*d.* a-week.  
What distance do you draw?—The same as *Ann Stevenson*.  
Do you hear much bad language used by the girls in the pits?—Yes; sometimes there's a  
very great deal of swearing and bad language, when there are a many boys and girls together 35  
in the pits; but every lass thinks herself best.  
How do you work?—We draw with a belt and chain.  
For whom do you work?—I draw for my father.

No. 95.—*John Jones*, Bridgewater Colliery, May 6, 1841 :—

No. 95.  
Age.  
Accidents.

What age are you?—I am 15 years old.  
Have you ever been hurt?—No, I have never been much hurt. I fell down the ladder-pit 40  
once; a lad trod on my hands, and I let go. It shook me a good deal, but I never lost much  
time by it.

No. 96.  
Age.

Hours of work.

Distance that the  
drawers have to  
draw their tubs.

Belt and chain used.  
Baskets drawn on  
sledges.

No. 96.—*Ellen Yates*, Drawer, Bridgewater Colliery, May 6, 1841 :—  
What age are you?—I am 16 years old.  
How long have you been in the pits?—I have been four years in the pits. I am a drawer 54  
and work for my father.  
What hours do you work?—Sometimes I come at five o'clock in the morning, sometimes six  
and seven; and I go up at three, four, five, and six o'clock at night, just as it happens.  
What distance do you draw?—180 yards.  
How many times a-day?—10 or 12 times a-day, sometimes more and sometimes less, just 50  
as it happens.  
Do you draw with a belt and chain?—Yes.  
Have you wheels to your tubs?—No; we sled\* 'em.

master.]

	No. 74.— <i>Martha Haslam</i> , Mr. Andrew Knowles's, Clifton, March 3, 1841 :—	
Age.	What age are you?—I am 12 years old.	
	How long have you been at work?—Four years.	
Wages.	What wages do you get?—I get a quarter of a "kale."*	
Hours of work.	What hours do you work?—I go down at six o'clock in the morning, and I come up at 15 seven and sometimes eight o'clock at night.	
Meals.	What hours have you for meals?—I stop a bit for dinner, but no regular time. We never stop for "baggin" [tea].	
Punishment.	Are you ever beaten?—No, they never beat me.	
	No. 75.— <i>Eliza Haslam</i> , at Mr. A. Knowles's, Clifton, March 3, 1841 :—	20
Want of education.	Have you ever been to school?—No. I can neither read nor write.	
	Have you ever been hurt?—I have had my thumb slit with a waggon-wheel.	
	What are you?—I am a thrutcher.	
Age.	What age are you?—Near 10 years old.	
	How long have you been in the pits?—A year and a half.	25
Working in the pit fatiguing.	Do you like working in the pits?—No, I don't, it makes me so tired; but I'm like to work.	
Hours of work.	What hours do you work?—I go down at six o'clock in the morning, and I come up at the same time as my sister, seven o'clock at night, and sometimes it is eight.	
	No. 76.— <i>Alice Singleton</i> , at Mr. A. Knowles's, Clifton, March 3, 1841 :—	30
Age.	What age are you?—I am going in 13.	
	How long have you been in the pits?—About half a year.	
Hours of work.	What hours do you work?—I goes down at six o'clock in the morning, and comes up at seven at night for regular.	
Punishment.	Are you ever beaten?—Yes, I get beat sometimes.	
	What do they beat with?—With a pick-arm, or a belt, or "cut," or anything, just as it happens.	35
	Do all these boys work the same hours?—Yes, all alike.	
	[I examined these boys, to ascertain if they had received injuries. I found that they had all received an injury of some kind, though many of them were very slight. The parents of those marked with asterisks had died by accidents in the pit:—]	

- What were the hours and conditions of work for the mining families?
- What kind of jobs were the children doing underground?
- If you were an inspector what questions would you ask?
- Role-play being an inspector and a mine worker.
- Use the testimonies to write your recommendations on what changes to the mine you would want to see in a law – remember to use formal language and style. Research the change in law that was passed following the report - the 1842 Mines Act. How do your recommendations compare?



# The Collier Lass

*Words collected in a printed broadside by Frank Kidson  
 Tune compiled from two traditional tunes by Mike Harding  
[www.vwml.org/record/FK/11/107/2](http://www.vwml.org/record/FK/11/107/2)  
 Roud Number: V7863  
 Traditional*

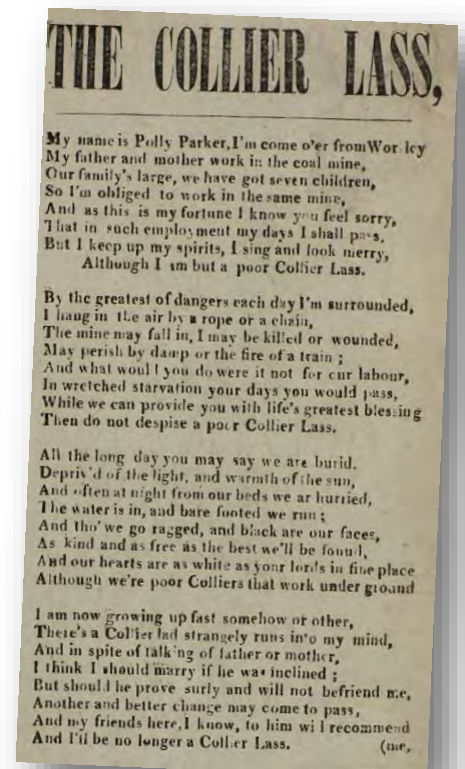
My name's Polly Parker, I'm come o'er from Worsley  
 My father and mother work in a coal mine  
 My family's large, we've got seven children  
 And so I am forced to work down the coal mine

By the greatest of dangers each day we're surrounded,  
 I hang in the air by a rope and a chain.  
 The mine may fall in; I may be killed or be wounded  
 May perish by firedamp or the fire of a train.

And what would you do were it not for our labour  
 In wretched starvation your days they would pass  
 While we can provide you with life's greatest blessing  
 Oh do not despise a poor collier lass.

All the day long you may see we are buried  
 Deprived of the light and the warmth of the sun  
 And often at night from our beds we are hurried  
 The water is in and bare footed we run.

Although we are ragged and black are our faces  
 As kind and as free as the best we are found  
 And our hearts are as right as your lords in high places  
 Although we're poor colliers who work underground.



## The Collier Lass

Words collected in a printed broadside by Frank Kidson

Tune compiled from two traditional tunes by Mike Harding

Roud Number: V7863

Traditional

My name's Pol - ly Par - ker, I'm come o'er from Wors - ley, My fath - er and moth - er work  
 in a coal mine. My fam - il - y's large, we've got sev - en  
 child - ren And so I am forced to work down the coal mine.

My name is Polly Parker, I'm come o'er from Worsley  
 My father and mother work in the coal mine,  
 Our family's large, we have got seven children,  
 So I'm obliged to work in the same mine.

And as this is my fortune I know you feel sorry  
 That in such employment my days I shall pass,  
 But I keep up my spirits, I sing and look merry,  
 Although I am but a poor Collier Lass.

By the greatest of dangers each day I'm surrounded,  
 I hang in the air by a rope or a chain,  
 The mine may fall in, I may be killed or wounded,  
 May perish by damp or the fire of a train.

And what would you do were it not for our labour,  
 In wretched starvation your days you would pass,  
 While we can provide you with life's greatest blessing,  
 Then do not despise a poor Collier Lass.

All the long day you may say we are buried  
 Depriv'd of the light, and warmth of the sun,  
 And often at night from our beds we are hurried  
 The water is in, and bare footed we run.

And tho' we go ragged, and black are our faces,  
 As kind and as free as the best we'll be found,  
 And our hearts are as white as your lords in fine place  
 Although we're poor Colliers that work underground.

I am now growing up fast somehow or other,  
 There's a Collier lad strangely runs into my mind,  
 And in spite of talking of father or mother,  
 I think I should marry if he was inclined.

But should he prove surly and will not befriend me,  
 Another and better change may come to pass,  
 And my friends here, I know, to him will recommend me,  
 And I'll be not longer a Collier Lass.

# Down In A Coalmine

Collected from a printed broadside by Frank Kidson

[www.vwml.org/record/FK/18/196/2](http://www.vwml.org/record/FK/18/196/2)

Roud Number: 3502



© NCMME

In me you see a collier, a simple honest man  
 Who strives to do his very best, to help his fellow man  
 We toil away from morn till night, where hard work's to be found  
 Digging dusty diamonds from underneath the ground

**Chorus:** Down in a coalmine, underneath the ground  
 Where a gleam of sunshine never can be found  
 Digging dusty diamonds all the season round  
 Down in the coalmine, underneath the ground

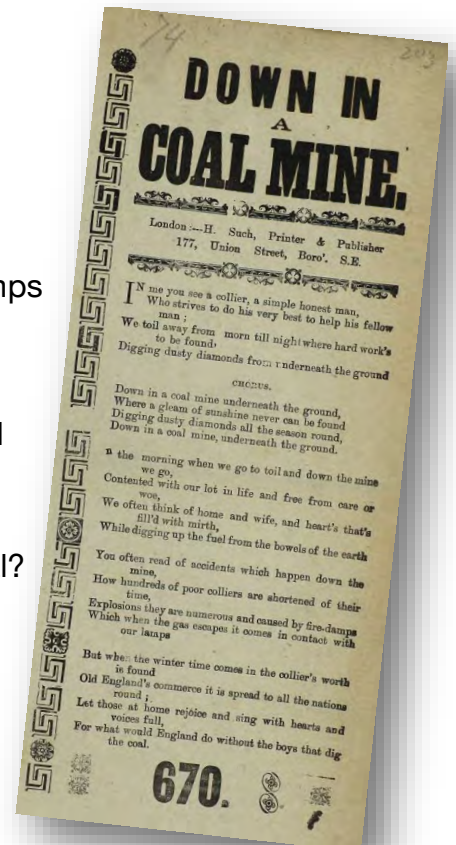
In the morning when we go to toil and down the mine we go  
 Contended with our lot in life and free from care or woe  
 We often think of home and wife, and heart's that's fill'd with mirth,  
 While digging up the fuel from the bowels of the earth.

**Chorus**

You oftimes read of accidents, which happen down the mine,  
 How hundreds of colliers are shortened of their time  
 Explosions they are numerous, and caused by fire damps  
 Which when the gas escapes it comes in contact with our lamps

**Chorus**

But when the winter time comes in the collier's worth is found  
 Old England's commerce it is spread to all the nations round  
 Let those at home rejoice and sing with hearts and voices full  
 For what would England do without the boys who dig the coal?



## Down in the Coal Mine

Words from a printed broadside collected by Frank Kidson

Tune collected from Louie Hooper and Lucy White by Cecil Sharp, Sept 1903, Hambridge, Somerset

Roud Number: 3502  
Traditional

In me you see a col-lier a sim-ple hon-est man\_\_\_ Who strives to do his ver-y best to  
help his fel - low man\_\_\_ We toil aw-ay from morn to night, where hard work's to be  
found\_\_\_ Dig- ging up the dia\_\_\_monds from un - der neath the ground  
Down in the coal mine, un-der neath the ground Where a gleam of sun shine ne-ver can be  
found\_\_\_ Dig - ging dus - ty dia - monds all the sea - son round\_\_\_  
Down in the coal mine, un - der neath the ground\_\_\_

Note: Sue Bousfield sings this song to a different tune on the audio recording. This tune is from the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library archives.

# ***Creative Activity using 'Basket Full of Coal Dust', 'Bonnie Pit Laddie' and 'The Trapper Girl'***

## ***Initial activity suggestions***

### ***1. Become 'History Detectives'***

- a) Ask family and friends if they know anyone who worked down the mines or if they know any stories about real life mining. If you are from a mining area it is likely that members of your family worked at a nearby colliery. The best stories come from real people's experiences. Write down what you discover and share with the class. Bring any photos or other evidence.
  
- b) Look for clues in the geographical landscape of your area.
  - Were there any coal mines? If so, where?
  - What evidence is there?
  - What is there now?
  - How have the pits shaped the landscape?
  - Are there still any pits in your area?
  
- c) If you are not from a mining area, identify which parts of the country were rich in coal mining communities.
  - Do you know anyone who lives in those areas?
  - Did anyone in your family ever live in a mining area?
  - Think about what industry happens or happened in your local area. Perhaps something else was mined.

## 2. Word game

If you have been for a visit to the National Coal Mining Museum, in groups, make a list of nouns or things that you remember seeing. Make another list of adjectives that describe what those things were like. Choose a few of these pairs of words and come up with a simile for the noun to play a game of 'What am I?' with the other groups.

E.g. the noun is 'coal', the adjective is 'hard', the simile is 'rock'. "I'm as hard as rock, what am I?". This is also a good way of generating content for poems and song writing.

## Song activity suggestions

### Additional Resources

Audio recordings of the songs in this pack are available for free download from [www.efdss.org/resourcebank](http://www.efdss.org/resourcebank)

### 1. Basket Full of Coal Dust (lyrics and notation on pages 26-28)

- a) Listen to Version 1 of *Basket Full of Coal Dust*. Originally it was a fragment of a song found in The Full English digital archive with only the first verse. The rest of the verses here were written with Year 4 pupils at Shawlands Primary School, Barnsley. The repetition of the melody makes it ideal for 'call and response'.

Split the class into 2 groups to sing the 2 different parts of the verses.

E.g. Group 1 'I sing "bas"'  
Group 2 'you sing "ket"'  
Group 1 'I sing coal'  
Group 2 'and you sing dust'

- b) Write some new verses! Think of two syllable words that can replace 'basket' and 'coal dust'.

In the examples given in Version 1, the present continuous *-ing* form of a verb and a noun are used.

In small groups think of mining activities that can be used in the verses, then put them into the correct tense with the appropriate connective words.

More examples:     *while dig-ging with a pick-axe*  
                          *while fill-ing up the coal-tubs*  
                          *while wish-ing for a dia-mond*

- c) You can use Version 2 of *Basket Full of Coal Dust* as a backing track so you can try out your own 4 new verses.
- d) For more of a challenge, try singing along to Version 3 of *Basket Full of Coal Dust*. It is trickier than Version 1 as the verses are done cumulatively and it speeds up at the end! There is a lyric sheet with all the words on page 25.

## 2. *The Bonny Pit Laddie (lyrics and notation on pages 29-30)*

Listen to the audio recording of *The Bonny Pit Laddie*. It is another fragment of a song from The Full English digital archive. Verse 3 is the original verse. The other verses were written with Year 4 pupils at Shawlands Primary School in Barnsley. Each verse looks at a different era of Coal Mining going back in time.

- a) See if you can identify the 5 characters/eras (answers below!)

**Verse 1:** The Miners' Strike - started in 1984, 2014 was the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The National Union of Miners led the strike under Arthur Scargill. The prime minister, Margaret Thatcher was threatening to close 20 pits.

**Verse 2:** Mining with modern machinery such as shearers, diggers, cutters and dinters.

**Verse 3:** Hewing coal by hand - using pick axes and other hand tools. A cracket is a slanted stool used to support the miner as he works lying down in different positions.

**Verse 4:** The Pit Ponies – ponies replaced people power after the Mines Act of 1842. They lived in stables underground. The 'rappers' were long, narrow strips of flexible metal with two wooden handles, used to scrape the muck and sweat from the ponies' backs.

**Verse 5:** The Trapper – following the Huskar Pit disaster in 1838 when 26 children lost their lives, The Mines Act of 1842 prohibited all females and boys under the age of 10 from working underground in coal mines.

- b) Split into 5 groups, taking a verse each. Discuss which era is represented in your verse and what the role of a character from that era would be.
- What would they have been doing?
  - What did they wear?
  - Where did they work?
  - How would they have felt?
  - What would conditions have been like?
- c) Learn and perform the song with the 5 different groups taking a character/verse each. Try and wear appropriate costumes for each era.
- d) Discuss the Miners' Strike in more detail.
- What does it mean when people go on strike?
  - Why were they striking?
  - Did the miners want to keep working?
  - How did the closure of pits affect the local community?
  - Come up with some slogans and chants to make banners. The message needs to be short and sharp to let people know what you are trying to say straight away. Rhyming, rhythm and alliteration are good ways of making people take notice and remember a slogan e.g. 'Coal not Dole!'

### 3. *The Trapper Girl* (lyrics and notation on pages 31-32)

*The Trapper Girl* was written with pupils from Flockton C of E (c) First School, Wakefield. (Their project was funded through the East Peak industrial heritage support programme, funded by English Heritage and Leader, DEFRA and EU.)

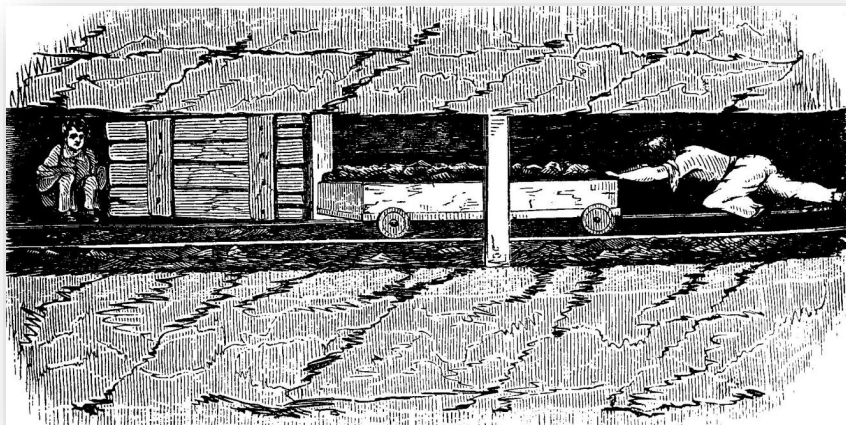


Illustration from the Report of the 1842 Royal Commission into Children's Employment (Mines) @ NCMME



- a) Listen to the audio recording of *The Trapper Girl*, available for free download from [www.efdss.org/resourcebank](http://www.efdss.org/resourcebank)

**Questions:**

1. Who is singing the song?
  2. How old is she?
  3. What is her job?
  4. Who else does she work with?
  5. How long does she work for each day?
  6. How much coal does the family have to get each day?
  7. How much does she earn each day?
  8. What are the jobs of the members of her family?
  9. Half way through verse 3, the music gets quieter. Why do you think this happens? What are the lyrics at this point?
- b) Hold a class debate to discuss whether or not children should work down the mine.
- Who would be 'for' children working down the mine?
  - Who would be 'against' it?
  - Come up with some arguments 'for' and 'against' it.

**Further Listening:** *I Can Hew*

# Basket Full of Coal Dust

Collected from Mr Wardle (miner) by Lucy Broadwood, 2 Sept 1895, Swannington, Leicestershire [www.vwml.org/record/LEB/2/39](http://www.vwml.org/record/LEB/2/39) Roud Number: 22796

1. Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
with a *basket full of coal dust*  
Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
with a *basket full of coal dust*  
You sing *bas*, I sing *ket*, you sing *coal* and I sing *dust*  
With a basket full of coal-dust.

## Extra verses written by pupils at Shawlands Primary School

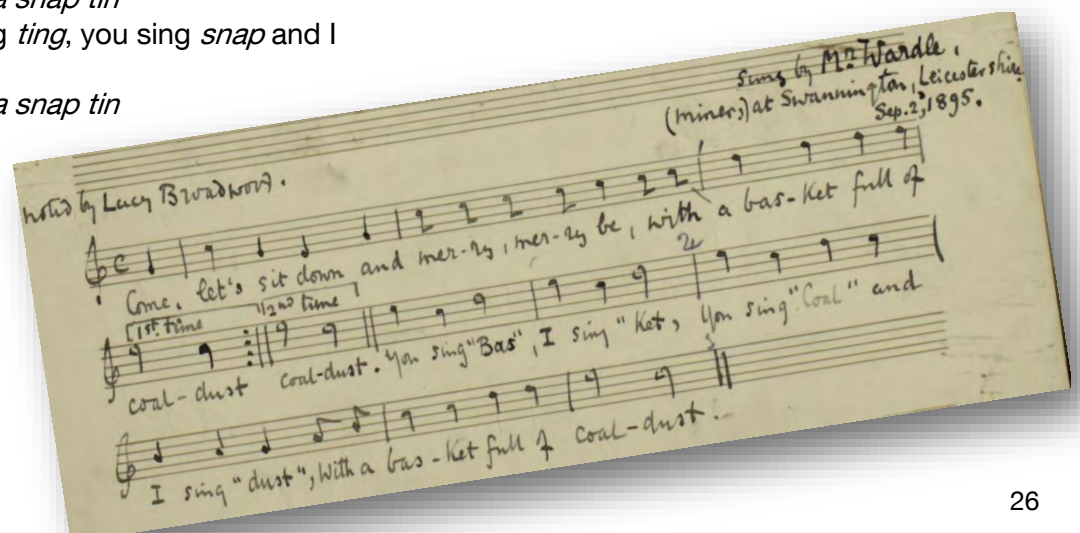
2. Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
while *hacking at the coal-face*  
Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
while *hacking at the coal-face*  
You sing *hack*, I sing *king*, you sing *coal* and  
I sing *face*,  
while *hacking at the coal-face*

3. Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
while *lying on a cracket*  
Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
while *lying on a cracket*  
You sing *lie*, I sing *ing*, you sing *crack* and I  
sing *ket*  
while *lying on a cracket*

4. Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
while *eating from a snap tin*  
Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
while *eating from a snap tin*  
You sing *eat*, I sing *ting*, you sing *snap* and I  
sing *tin*  
while *eating from a snap tin*

5. Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
while *crawling through a tunnel*  
Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
while *crawling through a tunnel*  
You sing *crawl*, I sing *ing*, you sing *tun* and I  
sing *nel*  
while *crawling through a tunnel*

6. Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
with a *basket full of coal dust*  
Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
with a *basket full of coal dust*  
You sing *bas*, I sing *ket*, you sing *coal* and I  
sing *dust*  
With a basket full of coal-dust.



### Cumulative verses written by pupils at Shawlands Primary School

1. Come let's sit down and merry, merry be while hacking at the coal-face  
Come let's sit down and merry, merry be while hacking at the coal-face  
You sing "hack", I sing "king", you sing "coal" and I sing "face",  
You sing "bas", I sing "ket", you sing "coal" and I sing "dust"  
With a basket full of coal dust.

2. Come let's sit down and merry, merry be while lying on a cracket  
Come let's sit down and merry, merry be while lying on a cracket  
You sing "lie", I sing "ing", you sing "crack" and I sing "ket"  
You sing "hack", I sing "king", you sing "coal" and I sing "face",  
You sing "bas", I sing "ket", you sing "coal" and I sing "dust"  
With a basket full of coal dust.

3. Come let's sit down and merry, merry be while eating from a snap tin  
Come let's sit down and merry, merry be while eating from a snap tin  
You sing "eat", I sing "ting", you sing "snap" and I sing "tin"  
You sing "lie", I sing "ing", you sing "crack" and I sing "ket"  
You sing "hack", I sing "king", you sing "coal" and I sing "face",  
You sing "bas", I sing "ket", you sing "coal" and I sing "dust"  
With a basket full of coal dust.

4. Come let's sit down and merry, merry be while crawling through a tunnel  
Come let's sit down and merry, merry be while crawling through a tunnel  
You sing "crawl", I sing "ing", you sing "tun" and I sing "nel"  
You sing "eat", I sing "ting", you sing "snap" and I sing "tin"  
You sing lie, I sing ing, you sing crack and I sing ket  
You sing "hack", I sing "king", you sing "coal" and I sing "face",  
You sing "bas", I sing "ket", you sing "coal" and I sing "dust"  
With a basket full of coal dust.

*Pupils at Shawlands Primary School  
in their end of project performance  
(Photo: Frances Watt)*



## Basket Full of Coal Dust

(Come, let's sit down and merry be)

Collected from Mr Wardle (miner) by Lucy Broadwood, 2 Sept 1895, Swannington, Leicestershire

[www.vwml.org/record/LEB/2/39](http://www.vwml.org/record/LEB/2/39)

Roud Number: 22796

Traditional

Come, let's sit down and mer-ry, mer-ry be, with a bas-ket full of coal - dust. Come,

coal dust. You sing "bas", I sing "ket", You sing "coal" and

I sing "dust", With a bas - ket full of coal - dust.

Come, let's sit down and merry, merry be  
 With a basket full of coal dust  
 Come let's sit down and merry, merry be  
 With a basked full of coal dust.

You sing "bas", I sing "ket",  
 You sing "coal" and I sing "dust",  
 With a basket full of coal dust.

# Bonny Pit Laddie

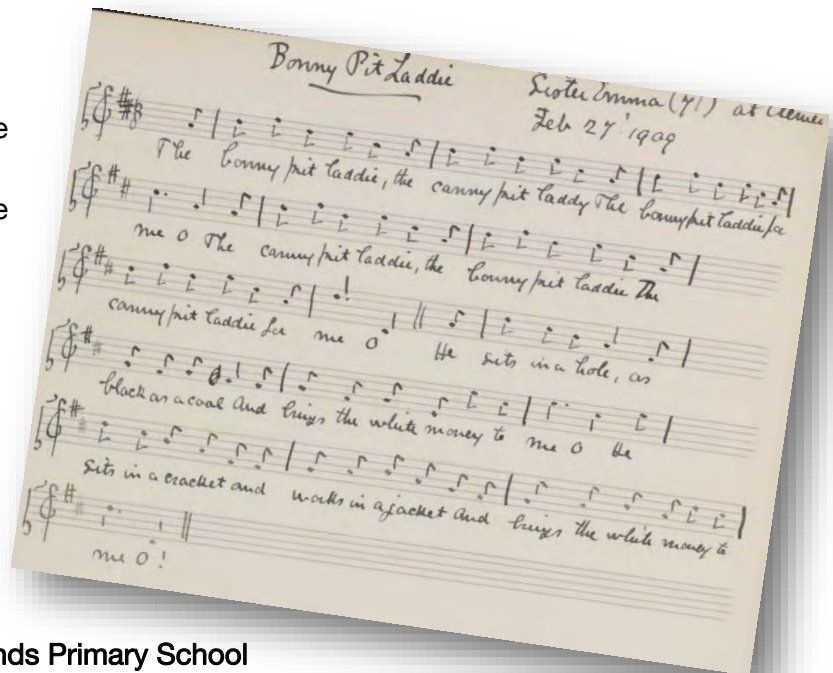
Collected from Sister Emma by Cecil Sharp, 27 Feb 1909, Clewer, Oxfordshire/Berkshire

[www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2081](http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2081)

Roud Number: 2487

The bonny pit laddie, the canny pit laddie  
The bonny pit laddie for me O  
The bonny pit laddie, the canny pit laddie  
The bonny pit laddie for me O

He sits a hole, as black as a coal  
And brings the white money to me O  
He sits in a cracket and walks in a jacket  
And brings the white money to me O



## Extra verses written by pupils at Shawlands Primary School

United we stand, our jobs we demand  
And brings the white money to me O  
Unite in disaster, to conquer the master  
And bring the white money to me O

The shearing machines that crack up the seams  
And bring the white money to me O  
Machines they are loud but the men are still proud  
And bring the white money to me O

The ponies were there with muck in their hair  
And bring the white money to me O  
A scrape of the rapper and they're looking dapper  
And bring the white money to me O

Until the new law, I opened the door  
And bring the white money to me O  
My Father and Mother and Sister and Brother  
And bring the white money to me O

## Bonny Pit Laddie

Collected Sister Emma by Cecil Sharp, 27 Feb 1909, Clewer, Oxfordshire/Berkshire  
[www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2081](http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2081)

Roud Number: 2487  
 Traditional

The bon-ny pit lad-die, the can-ny pit lad-die, The bon-ny pit lad-die for me O, The  
 can-ny pit lad-die, the bon-ny pit lad-die, The can-ny pit lad-die for me O He  
 sits in a hole, as black as a coal and brings the white mon-ey to me O He  
 sits in a crack-et and walks in a jack-et and brings the white mon-ey to me O

The bonny pit laddie, the canny pit laddie  
 The bonny pit laddie for me O  
 The canny pit laddie, the bonny pit laddie  
 The canny pit laddie for me O

He sits in a hole, as black as a coal  
 And brings the white money to me O  
 He sits in a cracket and walks in a jacket  
 And brings the white money to me O

# *The Trapper Girl*

Bryony Griffith and pupils from Flockton C of E (c) First School, Wakefield

1. My name's Sally Fletcher, I'm just 6 years old,  
I work down the mine in the dark and the cold.  
I work with my family, each with our part,  
My father's a heaver and mum's at the cart.

Chorus: But it's 12 hours, down the mine, for 26 tonnes a day.....  
And it's 12 hours down the mine for 2 and a half pence pay

2. My brother's a hurrier, pulling along,  
My sister's a thruster, her head must be strong,  
The weight of an elephant on their poor backs,  
Together they crawl all along the dirt tracks.

Chorus: But it's 12 hours, down the mine, for 26 tonnes a day.....  
And it's 12 hours down the mine for 2 and a half pence pay

3. My job is a trapper, I sit by the door  
And open it up when I hear my dad call,  
I have to stay silent I can't even sing.  
Attached to my finger, I pull on the string.

Chorus: But it's 12 hours, down the mine, for 26 tonnes a day.....  
And it's 12 hours down the mine for 2 and a half pence pay

But it's 12 hours, down the mine, for 26 tonnes a day.....  
And it's 12 hours down the mine for 2 and a half pence pay

## The Trapper Girl

Bryony Griffith  
 with Year 3 pupils at Flockton C of E (c) First School

My name's Sal-ly Flet-cher, I'm just six years old, I work down the mine in the dark and the cold. I work with my fam-ily, each with our part, My father's a hew-er and mum's at the cart. But it's twelve hours, down the mine, for twen-ty six hours a day. And it's twelve hours, down the mine for two and a half pence pay.

2. My brother's a hurrier, pulling along,  
 My sister's a thruster, her head must be strong,  
 The weight of an elephant on their poor backs,  
 Together they crawl all along the dirt tracks.

Chorus: But it's 12 hours, down the mine, for 26 tonnes a day...  
 And it's 12 hours down the mine for 2 and a half pence pay

3. My job is a trapper, I sit by the door  
 And open it up when I hear my dad call,  
 I have to stay silent I can't even sing.  
 Attached to my finger, I pull on the string.

Chorus: But it's 12 hours, down the mine, for 26 tonnes a day....  
 And it's 12 hours down the mine for 2 and a half pence pay

But it's 12 hours, down the mine, for 26 tonnes a day....  
 And it's 12 hours down the mine for 2 and a half pence pay



## Creative activity using poetry

There is a long tradition of poetry writing within coal mining communities. Poems and songs were used to tell stories, share experiences, mark events and disasters and to celebrate mining life, and both grew out of the oral tradition. Once nationalised, the coal industry itself encouraged miners and their families to write and send in poems which were published in its own magazine, 'Coal' (see p41).

The dark underground world of a coal mine and the working lives of miners continue to provide a rich stimulus for writers today and the National Coal Mining Museum for England has a growing archive of poetry, including wonderful poems written by children who have visited the Museum. Below are some ideas to help you explore and enjoy coal mining poems and some starting points for creative writing.

### Performing poems

All poetry is best enjoyed being read aloud. Practise a whole class performance of *The Collier Lad* (see page 37) by Joseph Skipsey. You could split the class into groups and give each group a verse to learn, with the whole class reciting the chorus. Enjoy the wonderful rhythm and rhyme of this poem.

- Discuss what kind of feelings the rhythm and rhyme evoke.
- Is it happy, sombre, light-hearted, funny?
- What does this tell you about the miner in this poem?
- Read aloud some of the examples of other children's poems.
- Try a dramatic reading of *Mining, Mining, Mining!* (see page 40).

### Comparing and exploring the poems

- a) Look at the structure of *The Collier Lad* (p37). Each verse tells us something new about the miner and what he likes to do. What different things does the miner do when he isn't underground? Pupils could reinterpret the poem by drawing a cartoon strip illustrating the different aspects of the miner's life.
- b) Compare *The Collier Lad* (p37) and *The Miner* (p38). The poems are both about miners but they give a very different impression of a miner and his life.
  - Discuss or write down in two columns the things you learn from each poem about what life was like as a miner.
  - Compare your ideas – what are the differences?

- Are there any similarities?
  - Why do you think the two poems are so different?
  - Who wrote them and why?
- c) Read *The Miner* (p38) together, focussing on the words that evoke a sense of darkness, fear, heat and danger. Create a word wall of pupils' ideas.
- What does this poem tell you about what it was like to work underground?
  - How does it make you feel?
  - What does the poet think about mining?
- d) *The Miner* (p38) has a very dark, fearful atmosphere. Ask pupils to find a piece of music that could accompany this poem or ask them to use different instruments and experiment with their voices to create a complementary soundscape. They could then read the poem aloud over the soundscape.
- What effect does the music have?
  - How does listening to the poem make them feel now?
- e) Another way of interpreting the evocative words of *The Miner* (p38) is through creating art work. Pupils could first look at examples of mining art and how other artists have depicted miners working underground. Pupils could create a charcoal picture inspired by a line or a word from the poem.

### **Looking at language and dialect**

- a) Some mining poems use unusual words relating to mining. Read through *The Miner* (p38) and pick out the mining terms that are unfamiliar. Pupils could look up what these mean (*cage* – the lift that transported miners and equipment underground; *pit-shaft* – the vertical tunnel the cage travels in; *hewer* – a man that cuts the coal) Create a mining word wall that the class can keep adding to over time.
- b) Pupils could research words and phrases that originate from mining and create a poem using what they have found.
- c) *The Collier Lad* (p37) was written at the end of the nineteenth century and so some of the phrasing and vocabulary sounds quite archaic. Ask pupils to underline words and phrases that are unfamiliar. What do they mean? Language continues to change over time. What modern words and phrases do we use now that would

not have been used in the past? What words and phrases are particular to the area where you live?

## ***A story in a poem***

*Trimdon Grange Explosion* (p39) was written as a response to an explosion at a colliery in County Durham in 1882. This poem is an example of a ballad; a poem or song narrating a story in short stanzas. Traditional ballads were passed on orally from one generation to the next.

- a) Read the poem aloud together. What is the story? What happened? Who was involved? Ask pupils to write a list of what they do know about what happened and a list of questions about what they want to find out. Pupils could research what happened using these websites:
  - [www.durhamrecordsonline.com/literature/TrimdonDisaster.html](http://www.durhamrecordsonline.com/literature/TrimdonDisaster.html)
  - [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/19th-century-mining-disaster/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/19th-century-mining-disaster/)
- b) Pupils could use the information and their imaginations to create character files on Joseph, John and George:
  - Who are Joseph, John and George mentioned in the poem?
  - Are they real people?
- c) They could use the data on the websites listed above to explore the effects of this disaster on the community:
  - Where did these people all live?
  - What does that tell you?
  - Who did they leave behind?
  - How do you think the families left behind supported themselves?
- d) Pupils could write a newspaper article about the event or re-write the poem as a short play or a story.
- e) This ballad has been recorded by different singers over time. The notation for it can be found here: <http://www.joe-offer.com/folkinfo/songs/176.html>. Try singing it together as a class or listen to different versions of the song recorded by different folk artists, including *Alan Price* and *The Unthanks*.
- f) Pupils could find out about gases underground.

- Why were they so dangerous?
- What did miners do to keep safe from the dangerous gases underground?
- Use the information sheets on the Museum's website to do some research:  
[www.ncm.org.uk/learning/primary-schools/resources](http://www.ncm.org.uk/learning/primary-schools/resources)

- g) Poems relating to other coal mining disasters can be found here:  
[www.cmhrc.co.uk/site/literature/poetry/index.html](http://www.cmhrc.co.uk/site/literature/poetry/index.html)

### ***Writing your own poems***

Writing poetry is a great way to play with language and enjoy the rhythm and sounds of words. Pupils could take inspiration for writing their own poetry from poems they've read, images, art work and songs. A trip to the National Coal Mining Museum for England will provide a first-hand experience for them to draw upon. Try these ideas for getting started:

1. Hand round pieces of coal. Collect words to describe what it looks and feels like. Write a class poem starting each line with: Coal is...
2. Shut your eyes and imagine the darkness of a mine. What does it feel like to be so far beneath the earth? What can you hear? What are you thinking? Write a poem to describe the sensation of darkness
3. Write an acrostic poem using the letters of COAL or MINE
4. Coal was very important in a mining home. Coal fires kept a house warm; coal-fire ranges cooked food and heated water for washing. Look at images of fires and collect descriptive words and use these to write a poem.
5. Light a candle; collect different words for light and dark
6. Try some shape poems - Write a long thin poem the shape of a mine shaft or a circular poem the shape of a wheel
7. Start off with a captivating rhythm that you chant together and add to, for example 'Down the mine/down the mine'
8. Repeat a first line e.g. 'It was so quiet I could hear...', 'It was so dark I could feel...'
9. Try a rhyming poem using as many rhymes as you can for 'Caphouse'
10. Write a poem from the perspective of someone or something else e.g. the pit pony, the cage, the miner's snap tin.

# The Collier Lad

By Joseph Skipsey (1832-1903)

My lad he is a Collier Lad,  
And ere the lark awakes,  
He's up and away to spend the day  
Where daylight never breaks;  
But when at last the day has pass'd,  
Clean washed and cleanly clad,  
He courts his Nell who loveth well  
Her handsome Collier Lad.

*Chorus— There's not his match in smoky Shields;  
Newcastle never had  
A lad more tight, nor trim, nor bright  
Than is my Collier Lad.*

Tho' doomed to labour under ground,  
A merry lad is he;  
And when a holiday comes round,  
He'll spend that day in glee;  
He'll tell his tale o'er a pint of ale,  
And crack his joke, and bad  
Must be the heart who loveth not  
To hear the Collier Lad.

*Chorus— There's not his match, etc.*

At bowling matches on the green  
He ever takes the lead,  
For none can swing his arm and fling  
With such a pith and speed;  
His bowl is seen to skim the green,  
And bound as if right glad  
To hear the cry of victory  
Salute the Collier Lad.

*Chorus— There's not his match, etc.*

When 'gainst the wall they play the ball,  
He's never known to lag,  
But up and down he gars it bowne,  
Till all his rivals fag;  
When deftly—lo! he strikes a blow  
Which gars them all look sad,  
And wonder how it came to pass  
They play'd the Collier Lad.

*Chorus— There's not his match, etc.*



A Collier Lad  
© NCMME

The quoits are out, the hobs are fix'd,  
The first round quoit he flings  
Enrings the hob; and lo! the next  
The hob again unrings;  
And thus he'll play a summer day,  
The theme of those who gad;  
And youngsters shrink to bet their brass  
Against the Collier Lad.

*Chorus— There's not his match, etc,*

When in the dance he doth advance,  
The rest all sigh to see  
How he can spring and kick his heels,  
When they a-wearied be;  
Your one-two-three, with either knee  
He'll beat, and then, glee mad,  
A heel-o'er-head leap, crowns the dance  
Danced by the Collier Lad.

*Chorus— There's not his match, etc.*

Besides a will and pith and skill,  
My laddie owns a heart  
That never once would suffer him  
To act a cruel part;  
That to the poor would ope the door  
To share the last he had;  
And many a secret blessing's pour'd  
Upon my Collier Lad.

*Chorus— There's not his match, etc.*

He seldom goes to church, I own,  
And when he does, why then,  
He with a leer will sit and hear,  
And doubt the holy men;  
This very much annoys my heart;  
But soon as we are wed,  
To please the priest, I'll do my best  
To tame my Collier Lad.

*Chorus— There's not his match, etc.*

*From 'Carols from the Coalfields' (1886)*

# The Miner

**By Sir Leo Chiozza Money  
 (1870-1944)**

I took the lamp and stepped into the cage;  
 For half a mile I plumbed the dreadful dark  
 To learn how miners earned a petty wage.  
 The light I carried was a feeble spark.  
 Far, far I toiled, from pit-shaft to the face,  
 A mile of heat and night, a road in hell,  
 To crouch with hewers in a three-foot place.



Deep, deep I saw them sweat beneath the vale;  
 Above, their wretched homes that mocked the Sun  
 Stood gaunt upon the hill. Here was the tale  
 Of wealth in poverty of life begun.  
 Here, in the fiery mine; her, housed in shame,  
 The miners worked and died for Britain's fame.

*From 'Sonnets of Life' (1932)*



*Illustration from the Report of the 1842 Royal Commission  
 into Children's Employment (Mines) © NCMME*



# Trimdon Grange Explosion

## by Tommy Armstrong

Written following an explosion at Trimdon Grange colliery, Durham in 1882 where 68 men lost their lives.

Let's not think of tomorrow,  
 Lest we disappointed be;  
 Our joys may turn to sorrow,  
 As we all may daily see.  
 Today we're strong and healthy,  
 But how soon there comes a change.  
 As we may see from the explosion  
 That has been at Trimdon Grange.

Men and boys left home that morning  
 For to earn their daily bread,  
 Little thought before the evening  
 They'd be numbered with the dead;  
 Let us think of Mrs Burnett,  
 Once had sons and now has none -  
 With the Trimdon Grange explosion,  
 Joseph, George and James are gone.

February left behind it  
 What will never be forgot;  
 Weeping widows, helpless children  
 May be found in many a cot.  
 Little children kind and loving  
 From their homes each day would run;  
 For to meet their father's coming  
 As each hard day's work was done.

Now they ask if father's left them,  
 And the mother hangs her head,  
 With a weeping widow's feelings,  
 Tells the child its father's dead.  
 Homes that once were blessed with  
 comfort  
 Guided by a father's care  
 Now are solemn, sad and gloomy,  
 Since the father is not there.

God protect each lonely widow,  
 Help to raise each drooping head;  
 Be a Father to the orphans,  
 Never let them cry for bread.  
 Death will pay us all a visit;  
 They have only gone before.  
 We may meet the Trimdon victims  
 Where explosions are no more.

From '*Song book*' (1930)



© NCMME

## Poetry written by children inspired by a visit to the National Coal Mining Museum for England

### Miners

Down in the deep dark  
underground  
Miners are working hard  
Dangerous things are happening  
to the earth

E Pownall-Brown, age 7 Gilthill  
Primary School

### Shearer

Shearer  
Clawing shiny  
Black lumps

B Dorling, age 7

### The Darkest Moon

It was dark  
Down the mine  
It was like pulling  
The darkness  
Out of the way  
And letting the light through  
The dark was soft  
And shivery  
It felt like the moon was out  
And the stars.  
Things to touch  
Things to feel  
Things you can see  
And things you can't.  
It is dark and gloomy  
All around.

A Bartle, age 7, Hental Primary  
School

### Mining, Mining, Mining!

Miners digging, digging, digging,  
Hammers clinking, clinking, clinking,  
Shovels scooping, scooping, scooping,  
Because this is what we do.

Dynamite blasting, blasting, blasting,  
Coal burning, burning, burning,  
Conveyer belts moving, moving, moving,  
Because this is what we do.

Ponies pulling, pulling, pulling,  
People stroking, stroking, stroking,  
Stable hands grooming, grooming, grooming,  
Because this is what we do.

Trains chugging, chugging, chugging,  
Lights flashing, flashing, flashing,  
Steam drifting, drifting, drifting,  
Because this is what we do,  
Yes, this is what we do!

E Drayton, age 11

### Deep Down

Deep  
Down  
People  
Are  
Digging  
Deep  
For  
Dark  
Dirty  
Dusty  
Coal

C Rhoades, age 8,  
Gilthill Primary  
School

### Coal Mining

Coal mining  
Ordinary people  
Awful conditions  
Little children

Miners descending  
Into darkness  
Noise deafening  
Instruments playing  
No more  
Guiding ponies

C Drayton, age 9

### Darkness

In the mine  
My torch  
Unplugged  
The darkness.  
Cool  
Soft.

E Hutton, age 6  
Hental Primary School



# Poetry taken from an edition of *Coal* (September 1947), a magazine produced for coal miners and their communities by the National Coal Board.

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COAL, September 1947

## Miners' Miscellany

is a Poetry Page this month. Drawings and short articles from readers are also welcome

### TO MY OLD PICK SHAFT

by William Daley

of Oswaldtwistle, Lancs, who worked underground as a drawer, ripper, and hewer for thirty years.

When first I took you down with me  
You looked so straight and brown,  
With sap scarce dry within your veins  
And steel cap for your crown.  
I swung you like a happy boy  
Hopeful of better things—  
(What miner has not felt the joy  
A right good pick shaft brings?)  
We've shared together, you and I,  
Hard knocks and toil and strain—  
Been nearly buried once or twice  
But, somehow, saved again.  
We've helped to lay the secrets bare  
Of ages long ago,  
When now befuddled creatures were  
Disporting in the sun.  
You're worn and bruised and soon must  
break—

Soon you'll be cast aside,  
And I shall follow in your wake  
On Time's relentless tide,  
Without regret, but with the hope  
That, till my Judge shall speak,  
I'll ever be like you in that  
I'll bend not till I break.

### THE FIVE-DAY WEEK

by H. Duncan

of Guidepost, Choppington, Northumberland, for more than twenty years at North Seaton Colliery: can do any job in the mine.

Noo list me lads, and list to me,  
And think hard while aa speak,  
That dream's cum true  
For me and you,  
And that's the five-day week.  
The neet shiftman, on Setorday neet,  
Can sleep his fears away,  
Nee alarm to hear, nee sleep to loss,  
About his double pay.  
There's still some men, hard tee impress,  
Thor vary stupid indeed,  
They ether got nee brains ti think,  
Or thor's watter in thor heed,  
They think they'll lose a lot of bobs,  
Including thor double pay.  
But what is wealth, if you gain in health?  
That's all a've got ti say.  
Thor's other level-headed men  
Show wisdom when they speak,  
They bless the day, which was in May,  
That begun the five-day week.  
Shinwell says, me lads aa want  
Two hundred million tun.  
Aa hope ye miners divvent think  
A'm saying this for fun.  
So backs ti the wheel, and pull yor wight,  
And let the Tories see,  
Yor as gud noo, as ivver yi war,  
And help the N.C.B.  
So think afor yi loos a shift,  
The harm that it may dee,  
So work the five, and dee yor best,  
To help the N.C.B.  
So peg away until the sweet  
Is rowlin doon yor cheek,  
For this is sure th' only way  
We'll keep the five-day week.  
And if wi fail, and spoil wor gain,  
And let th' Government doon,  
Wi niver dissarve ti rise agen  
Froth poverty, strife and roon.  
For that's wat it means if wi loose this fight,  
And divvent produce the coal,  
We'll put the men whose dun us well  
In such a terrible hole.  
So, cross yor hart, and pledge yor vow,  
You'll work till yor back aches,  
It's coal they waan't, and coal they'll get,  
And we knaa waat it takes.



So up with production, up and up  
Until it reaches its peak,  
And show the world yi meen ti keep  
This lovely FIVE-DAY WEEK.

### DIALECT

by R. Dalton Davison

pit-head bath attendant at Dawdon Colliery, Seaham, an author in his spare time.

Greet men say words in clivor ways;  
Arl dialects is wrang they says,  
If thoo tarkt like us Durham men  
O' field and pit,  
They say 'tis wrang. Ah dinna ken  
The wrang in it.

There's ne hairm in thi cross-grained mooth  
If thoo tarkt sense and tells the truth.  
So dinna fret or thy words prune  
We swanky airt;  
Tak's mair than tongues t' mak' a tune—  
It tak's thi hairt.

### THE SPIRIT OF BRITAIN

by Joseph Wood

of Mapperley (Derby) Councillor, employed at Mapperley Colliery.

The Britisher, when all seems lost,  
Has always shown his grit,  
And muddled on, despite the cost,  
To do his little bit.

Through troubled times our people rise,  
However great the test,  
While all the world in mute surprise  
Sees Britain at her best.

The spirit which sustained us through  
The horrors of Dunkirk,  
Shall guide us still as hitherto  
In unremitting work.

The promise of the blood and tears,  
Of irksome toil and sweat,  
The tragedy of wasted years,  
We never can forget.

We always know the darkest hour  
Was just before the dawn,  
Must Britain lose Her pride and pow'r?  
No! She shall be re-born.

From each according to his strength,  
To each unto his need,  
Then shall this nation be at length  
A happy land indeed.

The birth pangs of the coming age,  
The death throes of the past,  
Are symptoms of a transient stage,  
Which has not long to last.

This nation which has stood alone,  
A fearful world to save,  
Shall rise to heights before unknown,  
The symbol of the brave.

### QUIZ SOLUTION

ALL SQUARE	WHAT A GAME
C I O D	L A C R O S S E
F O T	I H H F I O E
S R A I	F O O T B A L L
D C I L	E T P R T M O A

### TWOSOMES

W A L T E R M A M M  
O N D C R I C K E T

## Introduction to Rapper Dance



Photos of Earsdon Rapper side, 1912, demonstrating 'Rose' and 'Fixy' moves. (Vaughan Williams Memorial Library)

Rapper sword dance is from North East England, originating in the region's mining communities. Five dancers are linked by rapper swords – short, flexible metal strips with wooden handles on both ends. This dance is traditionally performed indoors on wooden floors.



The dance is fast and compact; each dancer linked to the next by their swords, forming patterns and shapes above the dancers' heads. During the dance the swords are interlinked and displayed to the audience before the furious whirling and weaving movement resumes. The rapid movements are punctuated by percussive footwork – step dancing.

Periodically, and especially at the end, a star or lock is made by interlinking the swords, which are then held high to demonstrate its symmetry and strength.

Sometimes the dance is preceded by a short *calling on song* introducing the performers.



Photos of Maltby Phoenix 'Betty' with sword lock, 2012 (Brian Slater/Youth Dance England) and The Full English at Shawlands Primary School, 2014 (Frances Watt)

The costumes are simple shorts called hoggers, or short skirts, and shirts with hard-soled shoes.

Jumps and flips are often executed whilst maintaining the link to the other dancers.

There is often a *Tommy & Betty* (usually a man dressed in woman's clothing) who introduce the dances and entertain the audience.

Originally it was danced in the winter months, when the mines would have been shut for the winter and would have provided extra money for the dancers and their families. The teams were a focus for community pride, some pit owners would even give the dancers days off work so that they could perform.

The *swords* used for Rapper dance are now made especially for dancing, however it is likely that in the past a range of suitable items were used from mining tools to steel bed lats (which supported the mattress).

#### Links:

- Rapper Online: <http://www.Rapper.org.uk/>
- Newcastle Kingsmen Sword Dancers: <http://www.kingsmen.co.uk/Rapper/>
- Dancing England Rapper Tournament: <http://www.sworddanceunion.org.uk/events/dert/>



Photo of Stone Monkey Sword Dancers (Sue Swift)



Photo of Maltby Phoenix (Brian Slater/Youth Dance England)

## Sue Bousfield

Sue Bousfield has over 35 years' experience in classroom teaching – mainly primary and mostly Key stage 2. During that time she has used folk song, dance, drama, music, stories and crafts with children both inside and outside the classroom to enhance creativity and to foster an enjoyment of the activities.

She has been a Folk Singer for over 40 years mainly as part of the female duo *Scolds Bridle* appearing at folk clubs and festivals - nationally and internationally. Working with local historians Sue has researched local history and used folk song to enhance productions for theatre, radio documentaries (Radios, 2, 4, and Lancashire) and lectures. She has toured nationally with a presentation called *We Are the Women Left on the Shore*, a lecture about the lives of deep sea fishermen's families combined with songs written by a local historian, Ron Baxter.

Sue is an undefeated Clog Step Champion Dancer in the Lancashire and Cheshire Style having competed, performed and taught at many major events and is also a regular Morris Dancer in the Singleton Cloggers North West Morris Team.

Sue has worked, in schools, for the English Folk Dance and Song Society on both the Take Six and The Full English projects and was a contributor on the *Fun with Folk* website.



## Bryony Griffith

Bryony Griffith is a musician and singer with over 20 years of experience researching folk material, and devising innovative ways of presenting it for use in performance and education work with children, young people and adults. Bryony's skills and enthusiasm encompass solo performance, duo and band work, and also extensive experience of playing for folk dancing. Bryony is an experienced folk educator in school settings, including education work linked with the National Coal Mining Museum. Bryony is in much demand by festival organisers to lead music and singing workshops, including the Folkworks Summer Schools, Shepley and Whitby folk festivals.

As a performer, Bryony works as a solo artist, and also in a duo with melodeon player and dancer Will Hampson. Over the last ten years, they have both been key members of the award-winning Demon Barbers. Their partnership started in the acclaimed ceilidh band Bedlam in their early teens which took them all over the UK festivals and gave rise to the formation of the young Cotswold side, Dogrose. They later joined the celebrated Newcastle Kingsmen. Bryony was also a member of the *a cappella* group The Witches of Elswick.

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





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