



# Creating a new song cycle from traditional songs

**By Jo Freya**





## ***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.**



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## ***Additional Resources***

A video of the final performance of The Ballad of Mary Dimoline by students from Branston Community Academy, Lincoln, is available for free download from  
[www.efdss.org/resourcebank](http://www.efdss.org/resourcebank)

## Introduction

This pack presents the materials used and developed as an inspiration and starting point for a creative music making and song writing project with Year 9, 12 and 13 students from Branston Community Academy, Lincoln. It also includes the new songs created through the project by the students and performed as a contemporary song cycle based on the local tale of Mary Dimoline, and presented at The Full English national showcase Conference in June 2014.

The project offered Branston Community Academy the opportunity to work with two established folk educators Jo Freya and Liam Robinson. Together, they worked with the Music Department investigating local tunes and songs within The Full English digital archive and other local collections.

The starting point for the project was the traditional song *Rufford Park* which was used as a spring board for telling the story of Mary Dimoline, a local character and thief who was eventually caught and kept at Lincoln Castle before being moved to London and then became one of 180 convicts transported on the *Navarino*, 5 October 1840. The tale of Mary's life was put into song format by Jo Freya. The students then worked with the artists to develop their own song cycle investigating the context and motivation behind Mary's actions, her trial, and imagining her reaction to life on board a transportation ship.

The project illustrated how students can create a song cycle inspired by local characters and events using existing traditional material, and also the potential of exploring around the story to create a piece of music that lasts for 15/20 minutes.

Rob Amey, the Head of Music at Branston Community Academy identified the benefits of the project as follows:

*"For Year 9 students it provided a level of tuition and guidance that is difficult to achieve in a mixed ability class of 30 students. To the more able students it allowed the musicians to extend their musical skills, e.g. compose and improvise music in a supportive environment. For Y12 and 13 students it provided an opportunity to perform music in folk idiom which can be used for performance and composition units on their BTEC level 3 courses."*

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# ***The Musical Process***

When starting this project in a mixed ability group of students, it felt important to strive to find ways to engage all at the level they were capable of whilst also challenging them to engage in a way they might not be used to.

In order for them to feel like they owned the process we wanted them to feel included in all decisions from the start whilst continually referring to our brief of engaging them with The Full English digital archive. The beginning of this process set the scene for all work that followed.

## ***The Beginning***

Due to the time allotted and in negotiation with the staff we were working with at the school, we felt it better to go in with a topic. Had we had more time we could have built in a research element to look up historical matters relevant to their area both within the archive and in other general resources on line etc. However, this was actually done in advance and hence the story Mary Dimoline as she was linked to the prison at Lincoln Castle.

**Stage 1:** we did a story board exercise. We gave them the basic facts about Mary and split them in to small groups. They were asked to flesh out the story and think about why she might have done what she had done.

This led to a beginning, middle and end following the basic steps of:

- Where had she come from?, her background etc.
- What happened? i.e. an explanation of why stealing first began
- How this continued and resulted in her eventual capture conviction and transportation?
- What happened next? Mary gets her revenge and escapes.

**Stage 2:** having fleshed out the story we now had the framework on which to look at song writing. We started this with everybody involved initially and then over subsequent weeks split the group so that those who really wanted to carry on with the song writing could, and those who wanted to begin playing the music could.

**Stage 3:** We decided to use two existing tunes from The Full English digital archive for two of the songs and to allow the students to create their own songs for some of the others. This importantly allowed the mixed abilities to work on a blues cycle that engaged both the younger guitar students through the chord structures and the older students through improvisation etc. The lyric writers and singers learned to massage



the words into the tunes editing them constantly so that they still made sense but could be sung easily.

## **Conclusions**

Where we used the tunes from The Full English digital archive the students still adapted them anyway to their own lyrics. This was gratifying to see as it is exactly what happens within the aural folk traditions, and has done for centuries.

Their favourite pieces were the ones where they had created both the tunes and lyrics. Rather than a reflection that The Full English tunes were not good, it had more to do with the students feeling so proud of being 'allowed' to input on such a scale and comes back once again to them owning the material and the process.



*Branston Community Academy students final performance at Town Hall, Birmingham  
(photographer: Roswitha Chesher)*

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## Warm Up Rounds

There are three rounds included in the pack. Whilst they are not part of The Full English digital archive they are still traditional and have been chosen as Jo Freya finds them extremely useful in teaching sessions and uses them constantly. With all rounds Jo tries to get participants of all ages to learn by ear and without reference to words.

**Ave Maria:** This has been around for years and Jo learnt it originally as part of the Girl Guides. There are probably other notated versions of this but this is as I remember it. This is particularly useful as the words can be replaced with anything you feel is relevant e.g. 'singing is a pleasure', 'why am I so sleepy' etc. You could ask for suggestions that would scan with the rhythm of the music and change from one to another set of words.

**Pot of tea:** Whilst this is American by origin the fact it's about tea links it nicely to the UK and can be used in conjunction with conversations around stereotypes and whether they are based in truth.

Historically, the use of the 'ticket teller' machine referred to in the song "won't it be just the ticket" (illustrated through actions) refers to the old style ticket machine where the conductor used to roll a printed ticket off which is relevant to modern history and projects about London etc.

This song has actions but is also a useful one to ask them to suggest actions. The use of actions helps people to memorise words and vis versa. As this piece is syncopated and claps occur just before the syncopated vocals it is a good one for getting everyone's brain in gear. Jo uses this predominantly with Key Stages 1 and 2, and also with adults and mixed groups.

The only action they might not suggest is the one illustrated today to show the ticket machine and is a good one to include alongside any they might suggest.

**Pray for Rain:** The origin for this is not known. It relates to drought and could be used as part of discussions on the environment and how environmental change affects different parts of the world resources etc. The vocal range of this song is quite wide and more complicated than most rounds. This is a good one to teach older students particularly if they are part of singing groups. It has a very 'classical' sounding tune that, whilst hard to learn, becomes a fast favourite because of its melancholic beauty.

## Ave Maria

**Pray For Rain**

Unknown. Maybe traditional  
Round starts here

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Pray For Rain'. It is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is presented on a single staff. The lyrics are: 'In summer the flowers wilt\_ the flowers wiit\_ the streams run dry.\_ I pray for rain pray for rain, I pray for rain, I pray for rain, pray for rain, pray for rain.' The score includes a double bar line at the end of the first line of music, indicating the end of a phrase or a section. An arrow points to the beginning of the second line of music, with the text 'Unknown. Maybe traditional Round starts here' above it.

In summer the flowers wilt\_ the flowers wiit\_ the streams run dry.\_ I pray for

rain pray for rain, I pray for rain, I pray for rain, pray for rain, pray for rain.



## Rufford Park

The version used here is the one noted from the singer Joseph Taylor by Percy Granger. Further verses were added to the songs by Patrick O'Shaughnessy, a researcher of Lincolnshire folk song. The extra words were taken from a broadsheet displayed in Mansfield, Nottingham in 1851 detailing the trial of four men for the murder of a gamekeeper.

This song is historically interesting because of the show down between the poachers and the keepers, which was more likely to have been about the enclosure of previously free open land than about poaching itself. Additionally the sentence of transportation and the lengths and realities of those sentences make interesting discussion points when linked to social status and poverty. Many areas of the England will have their own stories of transportations and the crimes that the individuals committed for comparison and development. Local study centres are useful starting points for further information.

For more accurate notation see Journal of the Folk-Song Society No 12, Melody 6, page 186.

117 Rufford Park Poachers Disc 32 B (78 RPM)

Joseph Taylor  
Brigg, 4-2-11

1. They say that forty years hence, they was in a mood, they'd offer them a  
 2. Poacher's ball, as I would, keep up your patient heart, a  
 3. A sickle or two, for  
 4. A sickle or two, for  
 5. A sickle or two, for  
 6. A sickle or two, for  
 7. A sickle or two, for  
 8. A sickle or two, for  
 9. A sickle or two, for  
 10. A sickle or two, for

The next case that of a  
 head-keeper would follow  
 being killed  
 See 18, 19, 20, 21.

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# ***The Ballad of Mary Dimoline***

**By Jo Freya, 2014**

*This song was sung to the tune of 'Rufford Park' as a demonstration of how to use existing material and massage it for another use.*

A watch, two knives, a table cloth  
Some feathers for our bed  
Silk handkerchiefs, some money too  
Or so the masters said

Chorus        So women all, do hear my call  
                 And watch those dear to you  
                 For some of them tell stories tall  
                 Let's hope it's but a few

Forced on hard times I stole one day  
My husband said I should  
He'd hurt his back and couldn't work  
Although I thought he could

My husband fled and left me here  
My son denied his part  
My daughters too they would not come  
Oh how it broke my heart

I know I stole I cannot lie  
It was not out of greed  
I had to find a way to cope  
My family to feed

If they'd prove kind and stand by me  
I'd gladly go in peace  
To help them live I'd take the sting  
For seven years at least

Chorus 2      So let me tell you from my cell  
                 It isn't worth the pain  
                 Fourteen years of living hell  
                 And treated with disdain

# Horkstow Grange

Collected from George Gouldthorpe of Barrow on Humber 1906 by Percy Grainger  
[www.vwml.org/record/PG/5/195](http://www.vwml.org/record/PG/5/195)

In Horkstow Grange there lived an old miser  
You all do know him as I've heard say  
It's him and his man that was named John Bowlin  
They fell out one market day

Chorus: Pity them what see him suffer  
Pity poor old Steeleye Span  
John Bowlin's deeds they will be remembered  
Bowlin's deeds at Horkstow Grange

With a Blackthorn stick old Steeleye Struck him  
Often's had threatened him before  
John Bowlin turned round al in a passion  
He knocked old Steeleye into the floor

Phonograph 288. "John Bowlin" song by Mr. George Gouldthorpe.  
With by Percy Grainger. Discs 152, 37B (1906) at Glegg, Lincs, 28. 7. 06.

John Bowlin was a foreman at a farm at Horkstow; &  
John Steeleye Span was waggone under him. They fell out,  
& J. S. Span made these verses:

(Song in A) 5/4

① In Horkstow grange there lived an old miser, you all do know him as I've heard say  
It's him & his man they was called, John Bowlin, (names) (they) (names) (they)  
(names) (they) (names) (they) (names) (they)  
Came by then who was in right, pity poor old Steeleye Span, John Bowlin's deeds they will  
be remembered, Bowlin's deeds at Horkstow grange (names) Blackthorn stick old Steeleye  
Struck him, often's had threatened him before, John Bowlin turned round al in a passion  
He knocked old Steeleye into the floor. Chorus as before.

② It happened to be on a market day  
Old Steeleye swore with all his vengeance  
he would swear his life away. Chorus as before.

On another occasion  
Mr. P. Gouldthorpe sang  
"that" here.  
J.S. another time  
"remained"



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# ***A Hundred and seventy years ago***

Devised by students of Branston Community Academy, Lincolnshire, April 2014

Melody: Horkstow Grange

A hundred and seventy years ago  
A Girl born poor married a farmer  
They lacked money and fertile land  
Which caused great stress, no one could calm her

Chorus:  
Pity them that see her suffer  
Pity Mary Dimoline  
For stealing she will be transported  
Crimes too large for just a fine

Her husband he was weak and feeble  
He was selfish and angry too  
Mary was at the peak of anger (the peak of peak of anger)  
She had nothing else to do

Chorus....

Her husband he came down with a fever  
Mary choice was made quite clear  
To starve or rob was her decision  
Poverty her greatest fear

No Chorus

## 170 Years Ago

Branston Community Academy students/Traditional

1

A hun-dred and sev-en - ty \_\_\_ years a go, a girl born poor mar-ried

5

a farm-er, He had no mon-ey or fer-tile land it caused her stress no - one could calm her.

10

Pi - ty them that see her suf - fer, Pi - ty Ma - ry \_\_\_ Dim - o - line, For

14

steal - ing she will be trans - por - ted, Crimes too large for just a fine.





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## ***It All Began***

Devised by students of Branston Community Academy, Lincolnshire, April 2014

It all began in the light of the day  
I saw potatoes and stole them away  
It wasn't my fault I couldn't resist  
I stole and stole I had to persist

When I was young I felt it felt good  
Stealing and stealing I felt I should  
Controlling my habit was too hard for me  
Whatever I did I couldn't break free

It became so hard for me  
Stealing and stealing it led me to greed  
I felt the pressure was mounting on me  
Because I have four mouths to feed

My daughters wanted more than we had  
It led to me to do something mad  
To keep them safe I'd rob or kill  
I didn't do it just for the thrill

## It All Began

Branston Community Academy students

Bm G

It all be-gan in the light of the day\_ I saw the po-ta-toes and stole them away\_ It

6 Em F #

was-n't my fault I could-n't re-sist I stole and stole I had to per-sist\_ It

10 Bm G

all be-gan in the light of the day\_ I saw the po-ta-toes and stole them a-way\_ It

all be-gan in the

14 Em F #

was-n't my fault I tried to re-sist I stole and stole I had to per-sist

light of the day

## It All Began

Branston Community Academy students

Bm G

It all be-gan in the light of the day\_ I saw the po-ta-toes and stole them a- way It

6 Em F#

was-n't my fault I could-n't resist I stole and stole I had to per- sist\_ It

10 Bm G

all be-gan in the light of the day\_ I saw the po-ta-toes and stole them a- way\_ It

14 Em F#

was-n't my fault I tried to re- sist I stole and stole I had to per- sist\_ light of the day

## Mary's Crime - blues progression in A

Devised by students of Branston Community Academy, Lincolnshire, April 2014

She was arrested on suspicion of theft  
She had a watch box and a Vinaigrette

Repeat refrain

She was tried in the ancient keep

Just to add to that, she stole coins and seals  
This started long ago when she stole potato peel

She was tried in the ancient keep

Two ounces of feathers of which she had no need  
For all of these things she was tried in the ancient keep

She was tried in the ancient keep.

### The Ancient Keep

Branston Community Academy students

She was ar - res - ted on sus - pi - cion of theft. She had a watch box and

a vinaigrette. She was tried

in the ancient Keep.

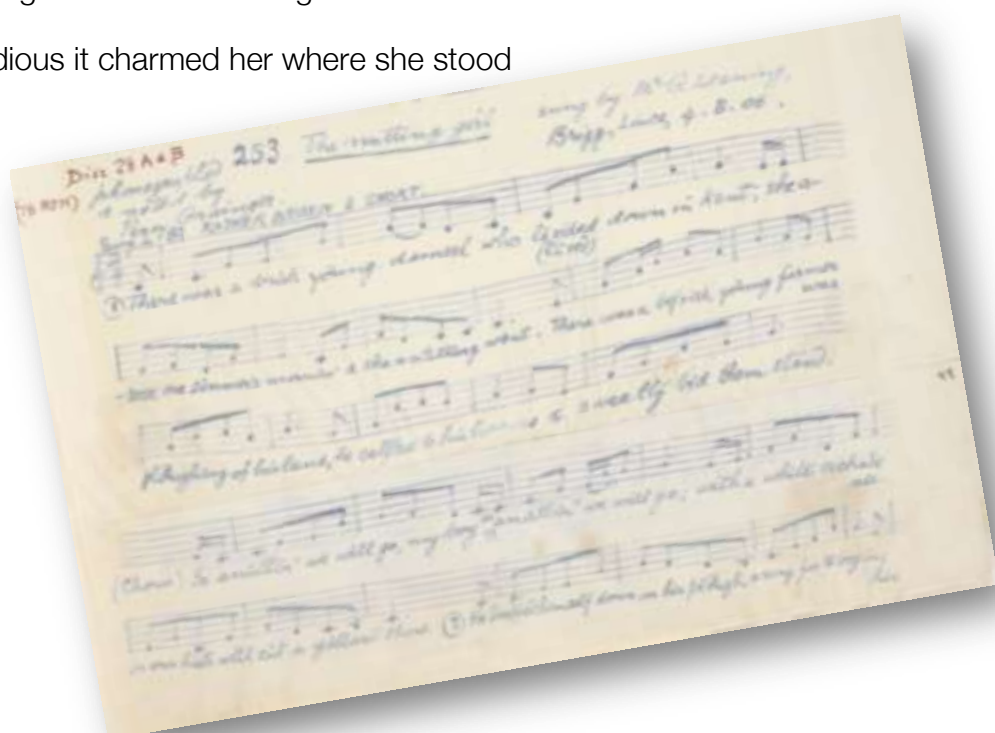
# The Nutting Girl

Collected from George Leaning by Percy Grainger of Barrow on Humber 1906  
[www.vwml.org/record/PG/5/160](http://www.vwml.org/record/PG/5/160)

There was a brisk young damsel, she lived down in Kent  
She arose one summer's morning and she a nutting went  
There was a brisk young farmer, was ploughing of his land  
He called to his horses and sweetly bid them stand

Chorus      A nutting we will go my boys, a nutting we will go  
With a white cockade all in our hat we'll make a gallant show

He dropped himself down on his plough a song for to begin  
His voice was so melodious it made the valleys ring  
Now then the brisk young damsel was nutting in the wood  
His voice was so melodious it charmed her where she stood





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# Mary's Revenge

Devised by students of Branston Community Academy, Lincolnshire, April 2014

Melody: Based on The Nutting Girl, collected Mr George Leaning of Barton upon Humber by Percy Grainger 4th Aug 1906

As the ship sails for a new land  
These chains are holding my hands  
I haven't got a friend to my name  
All alone I feel my shame  
But now I've got myself a plan  
I'll fight as hard as any man  
My revenge I will take  
And a new life I will make

Chorus        I'll fight for my life and a life worth living  
                 I'll fight as hard as I can  
                 I'll fight for my life and a life worth having  
                 I'll fight like any man

The Captain made me scrub the deck  
So I went and broke his neck  
A guard he threatened me with a sword  
So I threw him overboard  
They made me carry the toilet pale  
So I scratched them to death with my finger nails  
The guard he threatened to take my life  
So I stabbed him with a stolen knife

Now I'm in complete control  
I won't do as I'm told  
To be in charge it feels so good  
Who would have thought I could  
Once I was a farmer's wife  
Now in charge of my own life  
Finally I'm totally free  
With the open sea in front of me

## Mary's Revenge

Branston Community Academy students/Trad

As our ship sailed for a new land these chains are hold-ing my hands. I have-n't got a

6 friend to my name, all a - lone I feel my pain. But now I've got my self a plan, I'll fight as hard as

12 any\_\_\_ man, My revenge I will take And a new life I will make. I'll

17 fight for me life and a life worth living\_ I'll fight as hard as I can. I'll

21 fight for me life and a life worth having I'll fight like any\_\_\_ man.

## Jo Freya

Jo Freya is a highly experienced musician, composer and workshop leader working throughout the UK and in mainland Europe. She is a multi-instrumentalist and singer, specialising in saxophone which, when she began, placed her as a maverick in the Folk music world but ensured that she developed her own style of Folk Sax and the ability to specialise in multi-instrumental folk ensemble workshops.

As a keen collaborator, Jo formed *Freyja* a European women's band designed to raise the profile of women in instrumental music. She went on to have collaborations with a mixed British/Breton project *Belen* and with Dutch band *Maalstroom*. Keen to innovate and develop as a composer Jo has been mentored by Master of the Queen's Music, Judith Wier.

A team player with a unique range of skills that means she has inspired dancers, instrumentalists and singers she can currently be seen with *Blowzabella*, *Moirai* and in Christmas shows with Michael Morpergo.



## Liam Robinson

Liam Robinson is a musician, singer, educator and organiser. He is based in Lincolnshire but works throughout the UK and has appeared in North America and a host of European countries. He plays Melodeon and Concertina as well as singing, calling dances and leading workshops. Liam's primary interest is in the music and songs of Lincolnshire and he has released two CD's of songs and music from Lincolnshire. Liam's knowledge and enthusiasm, as well as his desire to get people involved have helped him build up a great reputation in all he does.



[www.minimorris.co.uk](http://www.minimorris.co.uk)

<https://www.facebook.com/TheLiamRobinsonDanceBand>

<http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZKjZwRTs2HRFqOZi12UbdQ>



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