





John Kirkpatrick and Sue Harris

Shreds and Patches

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THE GIPSY LADDIE

More than a hundred versions are known of this favourite ballad of the lady who forsook her lordly husband, her babes and her fine feather bed to go off with the wild gypsies. Some say it all happened in 1643, and the roaming lady was Jean, wife of the sixth earl of Cassilis. Indeed, Robbie Burns was so convinced that he got the name of Cassilis inserted into a printed copy of the ballad, and so it has stuck in many versions, including the one sung by Harry Cox in vol. 5 of *The Folk Songs of Britain*. Alas; there's no basis for the legend; attractive idea, though. The tune here is based on a version collected from gypsies in Shropshire by Charlotte Burns about a century ago.

THE TAILOR AND THE LOUSE

Perhaps because tailoring is not among the robust trades, tailors are often a laughing stock in folk songs, especially when it comes to heroics. Twenty four tailors were frightened when a snail put out its horns. A timorous tailor fought a duel with an insect, using his needle as a fencing foil. In the present case, the song originally concerned an epic battle between tailor and louse in which, for once, the tailor gained the victory. The words have got a bit run down, but the tune is a beauty. H. E. D. Hammond collected it from a farm-worker, G. Udal of Halstock, Dorset, about midway between Yeovil and Beaminster.

LITTLE SIR WILLIAM

For fifteen hundred years, from Syria in AD 419 to the *Protocols of Sion* in our own time, Jews have been accused of the ritual murder of Christian children, on no better grounds than hearsay and bigotry. In 1225, in Lincoln, a boy named Hugh was supposed to have been tortured and murdered by Jews. A pogrom ensued, and Little Hugh was not only made a saint, but a ballad was composed about him, which has lasted doggedly up until our own time. 'Saint' Hugh has become 'Sir' Hugh or even 'Sir William', but the ballad is still the same old bit of anti-Semitism. The version here sung by Sue was collected in Lincoln more than a century ago by Miss M. H. Mason - a distant relative of Unity Mitford's, by the way.

THE GAME OF ALL FOURS

"All Fours" is a card game similar to "Pope Joan", with a high "Matrimony" signifying the king and queen of trumps in the same hand, and a low "Intrigue" of knave and queen, and the "Game" which is the pool that is scooped by the first player to get rid of all his cards. Along with its title, the game lends itself to sexy symbols, as in this song. It was a favourite of old Sam Lerner's, who used to say: "She liked it, didn't she? She liked playing cards! Everyone do. That's human nature, ent it? Course a man, he want his necessaries, don't he". The tune here is one used by the gypsy singer Levi Smith on the Topic album *Songs of the Open Road*. The words have been put together from sundry versions more complete than Levi's.

JOHNNY SANDS

There are two forms of this song. In the older form, the wife has her husband eat marrowbones in the hope of making him blind (she is told that “When he’s sucked all the marrow out, he won’t see nothing at all”). He professes not to be able to help her when she accidentally falls in the water. In that shape the song circulated for several centuries. The later form of the song, similar to the one John sings here, dispenses with the blindness bit. It is probably the work of an American singer-entertainer, John Sinclair, who published it in 1842. So many stage comedians and singing groups took it up that it became extraordinarily current throughout the United States, Britain and Ireland during the remainder of the nineteenth century, and has lingered on in the memory of country singers, alongside the “marrowbones” version. John’s version was sung to the blind folk song collector Fred Hamer, by a Shropshire singer named Saunders.

OAKHAM POACHERS

Particularly during the latter half of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth, the business of fencing-off commonland and turning it over to private landlords was speeded up. Poor people who were used to helping out the household with an occasional rabbit or pheasant bitterly resented the process, and particularly in the Midlands something like a guerilla war developed between gamekeepers and so-called poachers. This song, located in Rutland, is one of many such in which all sympathy is on the side of the alleged lawbreakers. It appeared on several broadsides, London, Midland and Northern. John’s tune is one collected by George Gardiner in Hampshire in 1908, from a singer named Goliath Cole. The words are partly Goliath’s, and partly taken from the version of a gipsy singer, Wiggy Smith, on the Topic record *Songs of the Open Road*.

WATERMAN’S DANCE

The tune was popular both as a song and for dancing to, at the turn of the 17th-18th centuries. Thomas Durfey set rumbustious words to it, about boozy rollicking shearers, and it appeared in *The Merry Musician, or a Cure for the Spleen* (1716) and again in *Pills to Purge Melancholy, vol. II* (1719-20). A few years earlier, a version had been published under the title of *Old Spand Hornpipe* in Thomas Marsden’s *Collection of Original Lancashire Hornpipes, Old and New* (London, 1705). There are no firm grounds for associating the tune with Lancashire, but the chances are strong that it was originally a bagpipe melody, and Lancashire was lively bagpipe country in the seventeenth century and for some time after.

PEG HUGLESTONE’S HORNPIPE

Early in the eighteenth century, John Walsh had an important instrument-making and music-publishing business in Catherine Street, Covent Garden. Among other influential collections of dance melodies, he published a version of “Most celebrated Jiggs, Lancashire hornpipes, Scotch and Highland lilt, Northern frisks, morris’s and Cheshire rounds, with hornpipes in the bagpipe manner”. *Peg Huglestone’s Hornpipe* comes from Book III of “Most celebrated Jiggs, etc.”, published about 1730.

WHITEFRYER'S HORNPIPE

The hornpipe is another interesting tune from John Walsh's "Most celebrated Jiggs, etc." Some would say it's in 3/2 time, though 12/8 might describe it better; anyway it's a rare rhythm nowadays, more's the pity, though common enough in dance music a couple of hundred years ago, particularly in Lowland Scotland and the North of England.

Whitefryer's Hornpipe is interspersed with **Shreds and Patches**, one of John's own tunes, as also are **Nipper**, composed to sooth his eldest son in his baby days and **Bread and Jam Waltzer**, used to the same purpose for his youngest son. And, lastly is **Mr Gubbins's Bicycle**, a tune inspired by a bicycle dealer in Pershore where John bought a bicycle.

Playing dulcimer with Pennie Harris led Sue to write **Apple Core** and **Penny for Them**

Sue Harris plays oboe, hammered dulcimer and piano.

Pennie Harris plays the second hammered dulcimer on **Apple Core** and **Nipper**, and **Penny for Them**.

John Kirkpatrick plays Anglo concertina, bass concertina, melodeon and button accordeon.

Tufty Swift plays 4-stop one-row melodeon on **Apple Core** and **Nipper**, and **Bread and Jam Waltzer** and **Mr. Gubbins's Bicycle**.

Derek Pearse plays banjo, bass drum and percussion all at once.

Geoff Harris plays guitar all at once.

A note from John and Sue:

Thanks to Geoff and Pennie for playing with us, to Tufty for making the dulcimer and to him and Derek for being the other half of Umps and Dumps so magnificently. Thanks to Geoff for making the hammers and to Pennie for being inspiring.

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