

# St. JOHN ON BETHNAL GREEN

~ 10.12.2022 ~



Shovel Dance Collective  
ORDER OF SERVICE



Shovel Dance Collective are:

Alex Mckenzie  
Daniel S. Evans  
Fidelma Hanrahan  
Jacken Elswyth  
Joshua Barfoot  
Mataio Austin Dean  
Nick Granata  
Oliver Hamilton  
Tom Hardwick-Allan

Joining us tonight are:

Angeline Morrison  
Amardeep Singh Dhillon

Special thanks to:

Anthony of Baba Yaga's Hut, for making the whole night possible, and being so receptive to our ideas for the event. Sabine and Fr. Alan of St. John's, for sharing this beautiful space, and everyone who's supported *The Water is the Shovel of the Shore* so far.

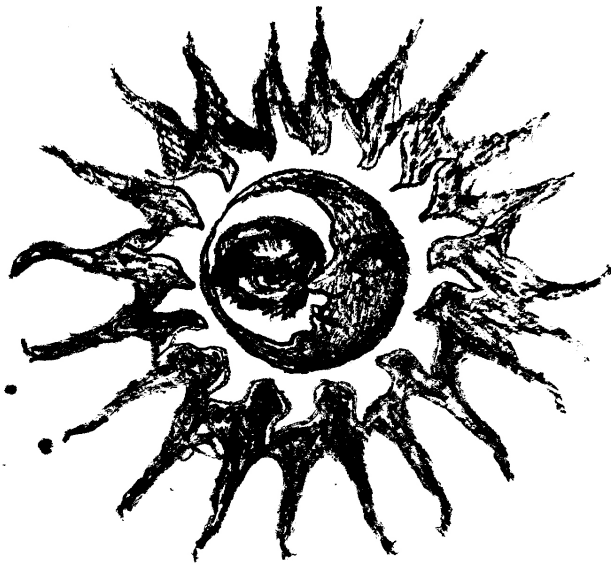
ਪਿੰਨਕਲਾ

ਸਿੰਦਰਾ

*"Long live the revolution"*

# AMARDEEP SINGH DHILLON

Amardeep Singh Dhillon is a queer Sikh journalist and bartender, organising around migrants' rights and trade unionism. They sing Panjabi folk songs of love and resistance.



# ANGELINE MORRISON

Angeline Morrison is a feral folk singer, songwriter and musician, playing both traditional and wyrd folk. Angeline's work is informed by dreams, the unconscious, occult symbolism, and most recently the re-storying of the UK's hidden Black History into folk song.

# ON CHRISTMAS DAY IT HAPPENED SO

An English folk song, first appearing in broadsides of the late 1800s and early 1900s. While some take this as the tale of a spiteful curse bestowed by Christ, we take it instead as a folk defence of festival, mobilising divine threat in their favour. It might date to times when Puritans derided Christmas as ‘Foolstide’ and landowners used the excuse of anti-Papism to wring an extra day’s work out of their labourers, or it might date to the era in which Scrooge and others of his class insisted on their employees working through Christmas – either way, it seems unlikely that the farmer’s ‘need’ is truly his own. The song is a warning for those who would profane the holy holiday with work. We learned it from the singing of May Bradely.

On Christmas day it happened so,  
Down on those meadows for to plough.  
As he was ploughing all on so fast,  
There came sweet Jesus himself at last

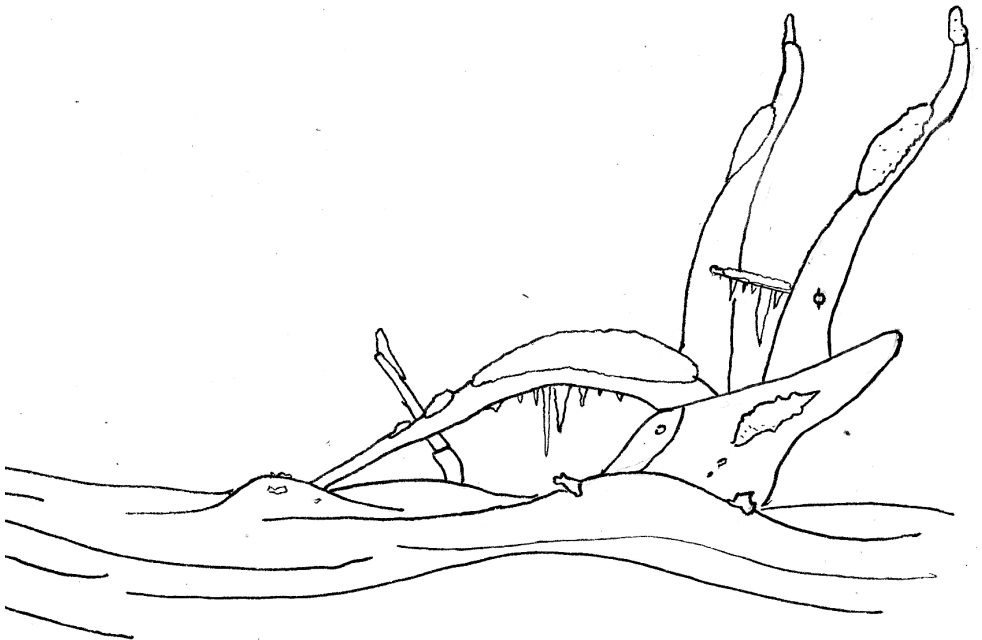
‘Oh man, oh man, why dost thou plough  
So hard upon the lord’s birthday?’  
The man he answered him with great speed,  
‘To plough this day I have got need’

His arms did quaver, through and through,  
His arms did quaver, he could not plough.  
The ground did open and loose him in  
Before he could repent of sin



His wife and children out of place,  
His beasts and cattle almost lost.  
His beast and cattle did die away  
For ploughing on old Christmas day -

His beasts and cattle did die away  
For ploughing on the Lord's birthday.



# THE BOLD FISHERMAN



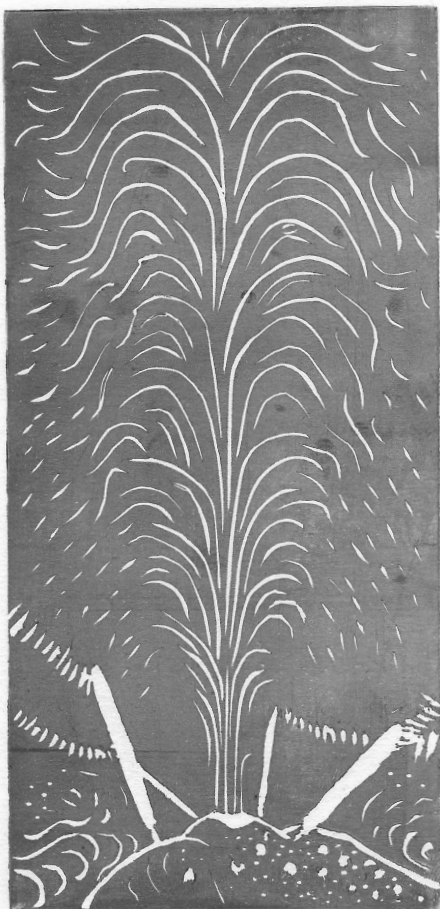
The first in a four part medley.

An instrumental setting of a song from the repertoire of the Copper Family of Rottingdean, traditionally performed unaccompanied. The words tell of a woman courted by a lord who she initially takes for a common fisherman. The folklorist and singer A. L. Lloyd has a theory that the song plays on the symbolism of early Christian mysticism (the Royal Fisherman, the three Vestures of Light, the Recognition and Adoration, and the House of the Father). This might be a bit far-fetched - but either way it's a great song, and a wonderful tune when allowed to stand on its own.

# THE WEARY WHALING GROUNDS

A song lamenting the terrible conditions on board a whaling ship. There are many of a similar ilk, where often the narrator expresses adamantly that they will never go whaling again, before running out of money and leaving for Greenland once more. We are reminded of the model of work that was created on board these private vessels that still exists today: the priority of profit over safety and comfort, the almost comically low pay for the most terrible work, and the abuse of the notion of ‘what happens at sea, stays at sea.’ The whale changes, but the captains have very much remained the same. During a

band trip to the Deptford foreshore, Nick and Mataio realised they both knew the song, and thought it fitting that they sing it there (being so close to a ‘Deptford pub’), providing the impetus for the creation of *The Water is the Shovel of the Shore*.



If I had the wings of a gull, my boys,  
I would spread ‘em and fly home.  
I’d leave old Greenland’s icy grounds  
For of right whales there is none.

And the weather's rough and the winds do blow  
And there's little comfort her.  
I'd sooner be snug in a Deptford pub,  
A-drinkin' of strong beer.

Oh, a man must be mad or want money bad  
To venture catchin' whales.  
For we may be drowned when the fish turns around  
Or our skulls be smashed by his tail.

Though the work seems grand to the young green hand,  
And his heart is high when he goes,  
In a very short burst he'd as soon hear a curse  
As the cry of: "There she blows!"

"All hands on deck now, for God's sake,  
Move briskly if you can."  
And he stumbles on deck, so dizzy and sick;  
For his life he don't give a damn.

And high overhead the great flukes spread,  
And the mate gives the whale the iron,  
And soon the blood in a purple flood  
From the spout-hole comes a-flying!

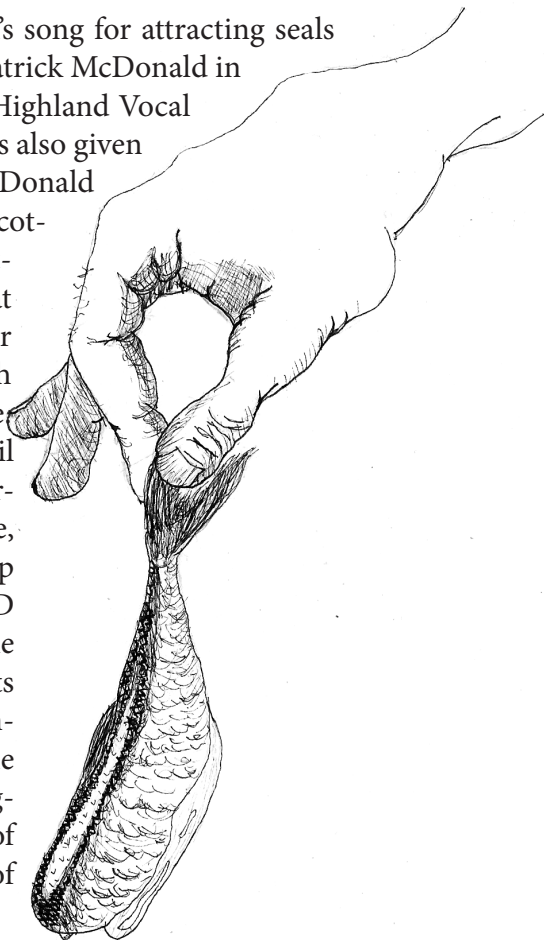
Well, these trials we bear for nigh four year,  
Till the flying jib points for home.  
We're supposed for our toil to get a bonus of the oil,  
And an equal share of the bone.

But we go to the agent to settle for the trip,  
And we've find we've cause to repent.  
For we've slaved away four years of our life  
And earned about three pound ten.


# FISHERMAN'S SONG FOR ATTRACTING SEALS / THE FULL RIGGED SHIP

A tune-set comprising two jigs – the first from the Scottish Highlands, and the second from Shetland.

The wonderfully named Fisherman's song for attracting seals was first notated by the Reverend Patrick McDonald in 1784 for his book 'A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs with Country Dances', where it's also given the Gaelic title Maol dònaidh. McDonald was one of the earliest collectors of Scottish traditional music, and apparently took an approach to the work that prized simplicity over tidying up or embellishment – a quality which perfectly suits this quite stark tune. Jacken learned it from Cath and Phil Tyler. The Full Rigged Ship apparently used to be played in freer time, rolling and diving like a swaying ship under sail – in his early 1980s PhD thesis 'The Fiddle Tradition of the Shetland Islands' Peter Cooke lists it as a slow air. Today it's more commonly played in the stricter jig time that we use for it, though our ringing and creaking around the edges of the tune perhaps recall something of these origins.



# MY HUSBAND'S GOT NO COURAGE IN HIM



A song collected in and around Dorset in the nineteenth century, but likely to be much older, it is one of many pro-feminist folk songs which warn fellow women of the patriarchal entrapment implicit in the institute of marriage. Eighteenth and nineteenth century records of female subjects discussing their sexual agency, or lack thereof, is very rare outside folksong. Most other accounts are mediated through patriarchal anxieties or fantasies regarding female sexuality. The song's humour belies the extremity of the situation for working class women in the eighteenth and nineteenth century since divorce was only available to the very wealthy, requiring an Act of Parliament. The song's protest rings true to this day given that normative male sexuality is still privileged by society and, for many women, marriage is still a space of fear, violence, abuse, oppression, and unpaid labour. A lot has changed since *The Husband With No Courage In Him* was first sung hundreds of years ago, and yet the world is still not rid of gendered oppression.

*Oh dear oh*  
*Oh dear oh*  
*My husband's got no courage in him*  
*Oh dear oh*

As I rode out one may morning  
Down by the riverside  
There I beheld three maidens fair  
And one of them her hands was ringing.

*Oh dear oh etc.*

My husband he can dance and sing,  
Do anything that's fitting for him,  
But he cannot do the thing I need  
Because he's got no courage in him.

*Oh dear oh etc.*

There's many things I'm cooking for him,  
Anything that's fitting for him,  
Oyster pies and rhubarb too  
But still it won't put courage in him.

*Oh dear oh etc.*

Oh seven long years I've laid beside him,  
And seven long years I've made his bed,  
But this morn I awoke with my maidenhead  
Because he's got no courage in him.

*Oh dear oh etc.*

I wish to God that he was dead  
And in his grave I'd quickly lie him.  
And I'd go and find another to wed  
And hope he had some courage in him.

*Oh dear oh etc.*

So all you girls come listen to me:  
Better try a man before you marry  
For if you don't you'll end up like me  
When you find he's got no courage in him.

*Oh dear oh etc.*



~

# THE HERRING'S HEAD / W THE ROLLIN

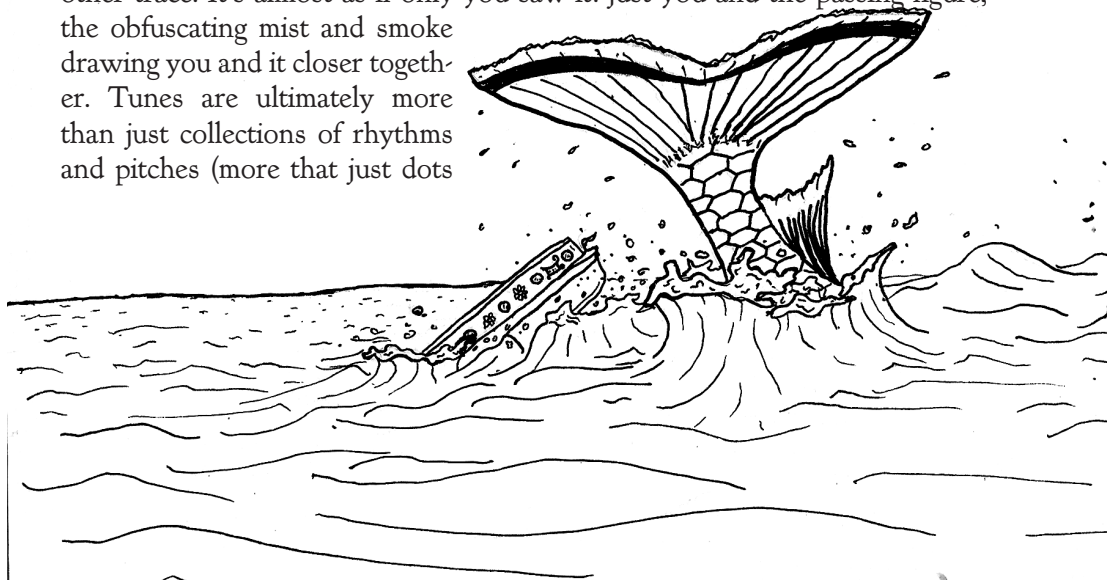
A three part medley, drawing on work from *The Water is the Shovel of the Shore*.

'The Herrings Head' is one of a series of ritual king-killing songs, such as 'the Cutty Wren', 'John Barleycorn', 'the Derby Ram', found throughout England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, whereby the king (here the king of the sea) is ritually slain and its small body unfolded and shared on an impossible scale. We see these strange, often comical, totemic, magical songs as anthems for revolutionary change.

Oh what will we do with old herring's head?  
We'll make it in loaves and sell 'em for bread!  
That's herring's head and loaves of bread and all such things as that.

*[Well of all the fish that live in the sea the herring is the fish for me!]*

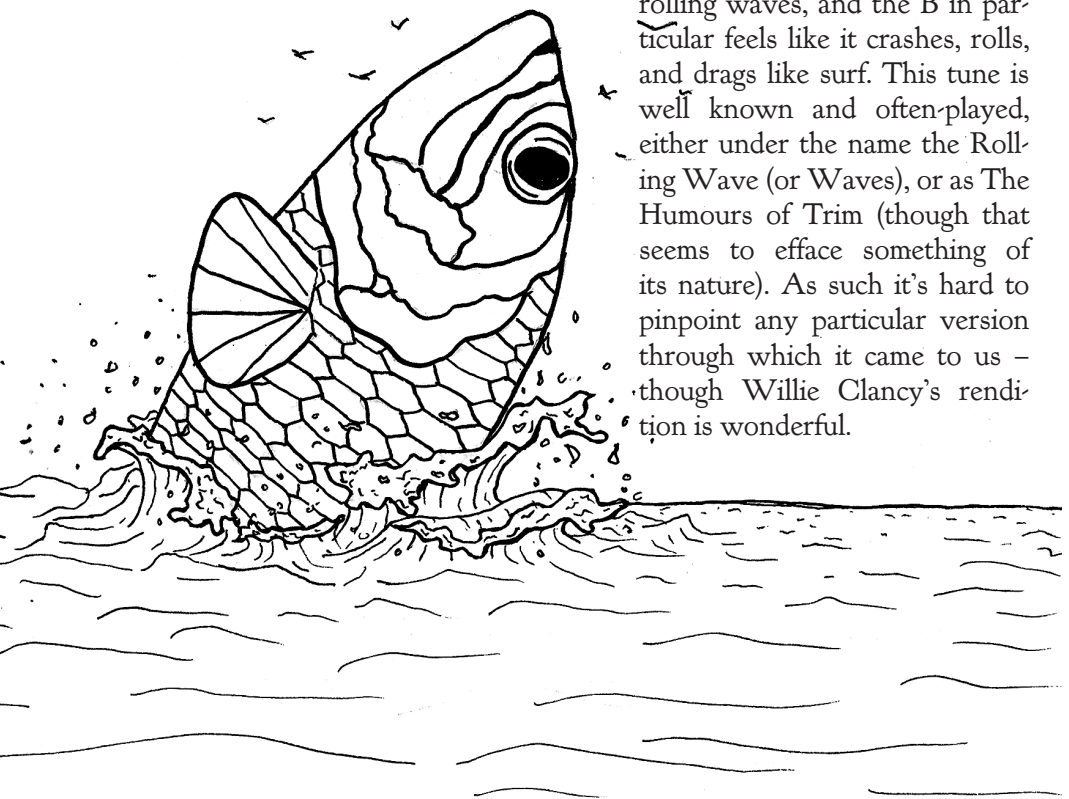
Waves on the Shore: Sometimes a tune just comes to you, played by someone you know, heard from a distance, told the name in passing. Like a ship crossing the horizon through a window of grey fog, seemingly without an origin or any other trace. It's almost as if only you saw it: just you and the passing figure, the obfuscating mist and smoke drawing you and it closer together. Tunes are ultimately more than just collections of rhythms and pitches (more that just dots



# WAVES ON THE SHORE / ROLLING WAVE

on a page, a tight grid to be stuck to in order to be 'legitimate') they have a spirit all of their own. They are something even if not codified, or researchable or even understandable. This bricolage of sound is what folk melody can be: broken, contorted and smashed apart like sand on the beach. Our Waves on the Shore is much like that, cries through a noisy background, the incidental moment of melody smashed into a million tiny pieces. You don't ever have to be told, or even heard, just to listen.

The Rolling Wave: Usually the titles of Irish tunes don't seem to have any connection to the actual content, but this one really does have the feel of rolling waves, and the B in particular feels like it crashes, rolls, and drags like surf. This tune is well known and often-played, either under the name the Rolling Wave (or Waves), or as The Humours of Trim (though that seems to efface something of its nature). As such it's hard to pinpoint any particular version through which it came to us – though Willie Clancy's rendition is wonderful.



# THE MERRY GOLDEN TREE

There are many different versions of this old song. In England it is known variously as 'The Golden Vanity' and the 'Sweet Trinity', in Scotland as the 'Sweet Kumadee' and 'The Golden Victory', in Wales as 'The Green Willow Tree', and in Ireland as 'Sailing for the Lowlands Low'. In each version the enemy is different: sometimes they are Turkish, sometimes Spanish, in this case they are British pirates. The British enemy points to the American origin of these particular lyrics. The song is a Child Ballad (collected with the English names, 'The Sweet Trinity/The Golden Vanity') and has its origins in a song, first collected in the 17th century, 'Sir Walter Raleigh Sailing in the Lowlands'. The 'lowland sea' in the song could refer either to the North Sea off the coast of Holland or to the Mediterranean Sea, this, together with the ever-changing enemy ship, reflects shifting British involvement in various imperialist conflicts from the Anglo-Dutch Wars, to the French Revolutionary Wars and the related Anglo-Spanish Wars of the 18th century. In all versions, the lowly cabin boy is the hero of the tale and saves the titular ship from the enemy ship by sinking the latter. In most versions he is betrayed by the captain who first offers him great riches and marriage to his daughter, and then drowns him rather than keep his promises. In the versions with Raleigh, he keeps some of his promises to the cabin boy but does not permit marriage to his daughter. The tale laments the expendability of lower class crew and demonstrates how the officer class are always ready to endanger the lives of ordinary workers to save their own skins. Shirley Collins learned 'The Merry Golden Tree' in America while collecting folk songs with Marxist ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax. We have used her lyrics but altered the melody of the second and third lines of each verse according to our own composition. This song is part of a vast, watery, trans-Atlantic culture which carried workers' songs from these islands to the Americas as a by-product of processes of colonisation and imperialism.

There was a little ship and it sailed on the sea  
The name of the ship was the merry golden tree  
Sailing on the low and lonesome low  
Sailing on the lonely lowland sea

They hadn't been out scarce two days or three  
Until they sighted the British Robbery  
Sailing on the low and lonesome low  
Flaunting the Jolly Roger on the lowland sea

Up jumped the captain a ringing of his hands  
He cried "Oh Lord now what shall we do?  
They'll sink us in the low and the lonesome low  
They'll sink us to the bottom of the lowland sea"

Up and spoke the little cabin boy  
Saying "what will you give me if I then destroy?  
If I sink 'em in the low and the lonesome low  
Sink 'em to the bottom of the lowland sea"

"Well I'll give you gold and I'll pay you fee  
My youngest daughter and she will marry thee  
If you sink 'em in the low and the lonesome low  
Sink 'em to the bottom of the lowland sea"

So he turned on his back and away swam he  
Until he came to the British Robbery  
Sailing on the low and lonesome low  
Flaunting the Jolly Roger on the lowland sea

Where some was playing cards and some were at the dice  
And some were taking their best friends advice  
Sailing on the low and lonesome low

Flaunting the Jolly Roger on the lowland sea

Well he had a little tool just right for the use  
He bore nine holes just to let in the juice  
Sailing on the low and lonesome low  
Flaunting the Jolly Roger on the lowland sea

Well some threw their hats and some threw their caps  
But they could not stop those salt water gaps  
Sailing on the low and lonesome low  
Flaunting the Jolly Roger on the lowland sea

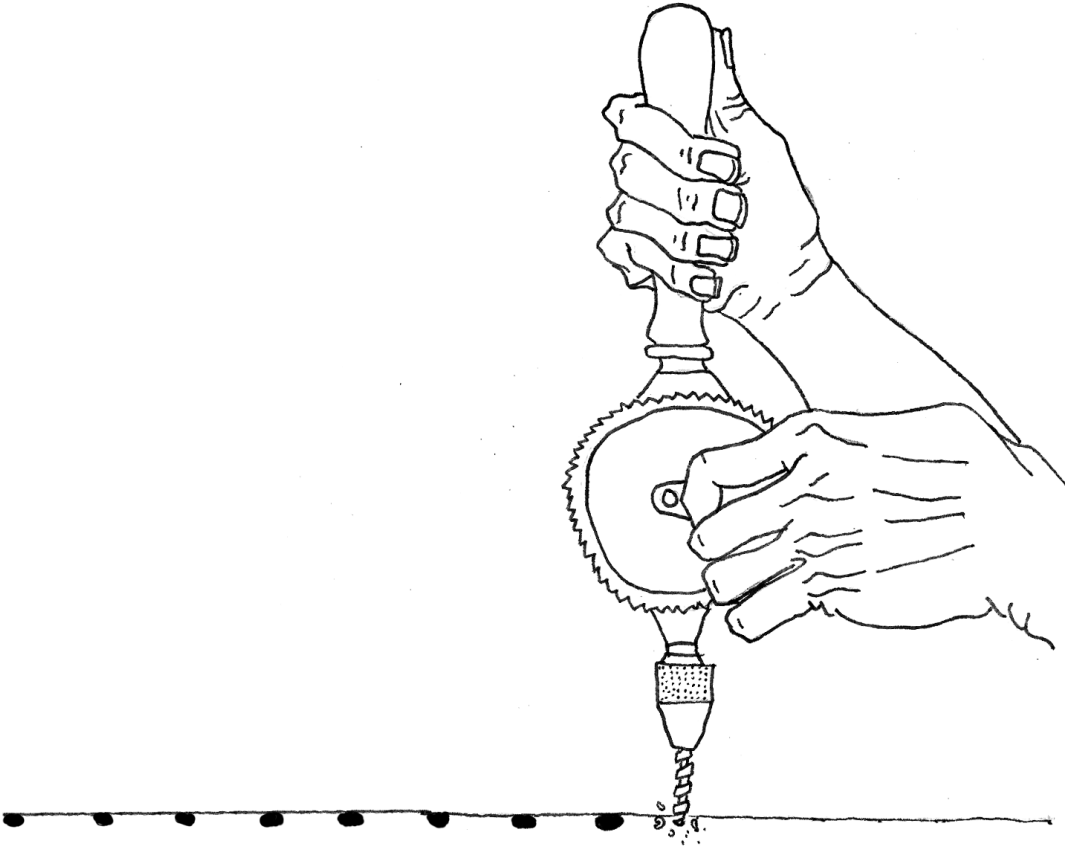
Well he turned on his back and away swam he  
Until he came to the Merry Golden Tree  
Sailing on the low and lonesome low  
Sailing on the lonely lowland sea

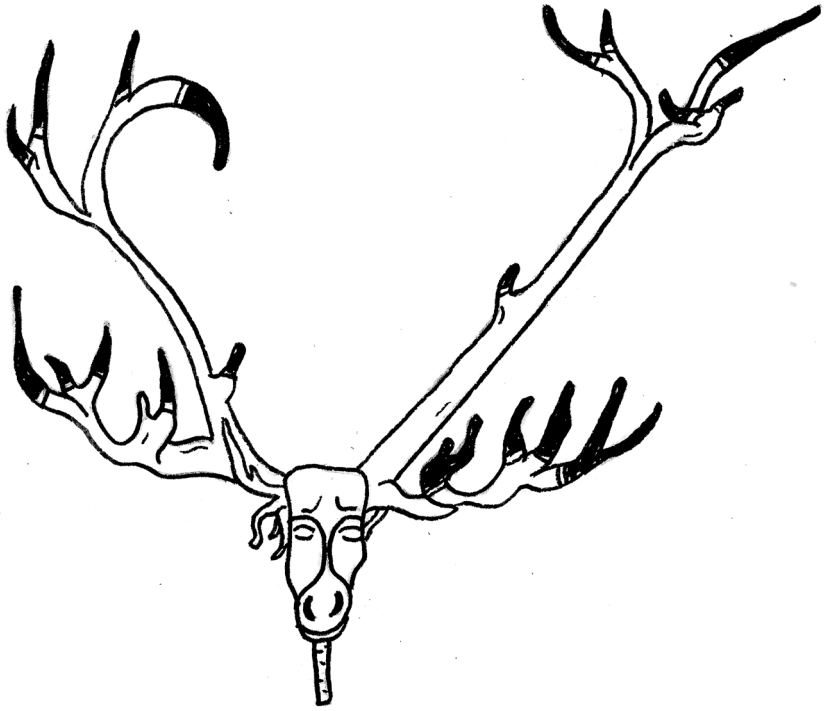
“Captain oh captain take me onboard  
You’ll do unto me just as good as your word  
For I sank ‘em in the low and the lonesome low  
I sank ‘em to the bottom of the lowland sea.”

“I’ll not pay you gold nor yet pay your fee  
My youngest daughter she’ll never marry thee  
I’ll sink you in the low and the lonesome low  
Leave you to drown in the lowland sea.”

“If it wasn’t for your daughter nor yet for your men  
I’d do unto you just as I did to them  
I’d sink you in the low and the lonesome low  
Sink you to the bottom of the lowland sea”

But he turned on his back and away swam he  
“Farewell to you, you Merry Golden Tree  
I’m drowning in the low and the lonesome low  
I’m drowning in the lonely lowland sea.”



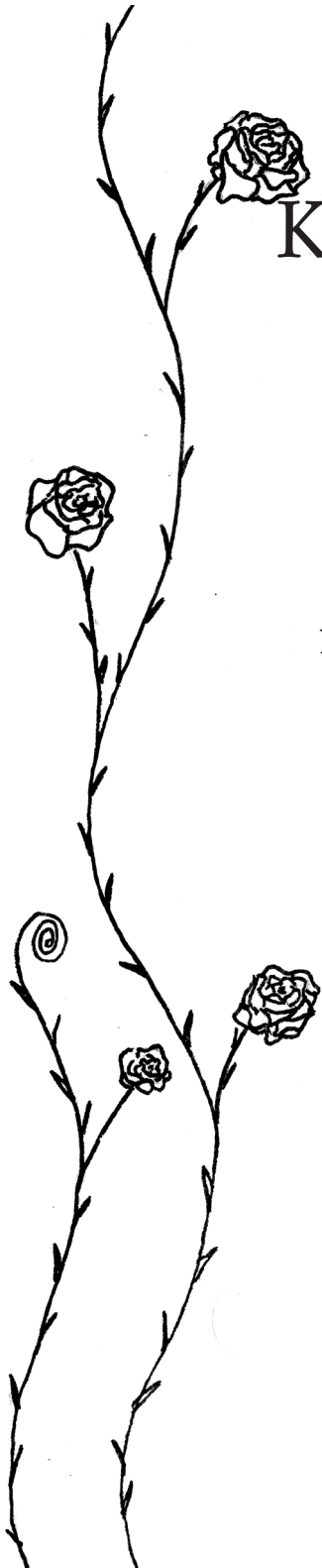




# ABBOTS BROMLEY HORN DANCE

This tune is named after a traditional dance of the same name. The annual event - which happens every Wakes Monday in the small village of Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire - involves several dancers and musicians performing in procession through the village, visiting farms, houses and (most importantly) pubs as they go. A central prop is the use of large reindeer antlers which date back to the 11th century. The namesake horns feature alongside other archetypal characters: a hobby horse, a fool and Maid Marian. Some historical sources note that the dance was performed at Christmas, New Year and Twelfth Day although it has now been confined to a single day every year since the 1600s.

A set of tunes opened with a song. Kissing's Nae Sin is a short exposition on the blessed nature of an amorous and affectionate gesture, which came to us via Ewan MacColl. Newcastle and Portsmouth are both dance tunes published in Playford's *Dancing Master* in the 1600s. The words to Newcastle seem to have been added within a century of its publication. The words to 'Portsmouth' were added by us, taken from the Portsmouth song 'Come come my brave boys,' collected from merchant seaman Fredrick Fennemore in the Portsmouth workhouse in 1907. The song hasn't been collected anywhere else and is likely to be of Fennemore's own creation. The tune of 'Come come my brave boys' is less agreeable than that of Portsmouth and we thought the latter tune more accurately conveys the sense of joy at seeing the familiar Hampshire coastal waters around the Isle of Wight, Spithead, and Southsea after a long voyage - and knowing pay is soon to be on its way!



# KISSIN'S NAE SIN

Some say that kissing's a sin

But I think it's least of all

For kissing has wandered this world

Ever since there was two.

If it wasn't lawful  
Lawyers wouldn't allow it.

If it wasn't holy  
Ministers wouldn't do it.

If it wasn't modest  
Maidens wouldn't have it.

If it wasn't plenty  
Poor folk wouldn't get it.

# *NEWCASTLE*

Come you not from Newcastle  
Come you not there away?  
Oh met you not my true love  
Riding on a bonnie bay?

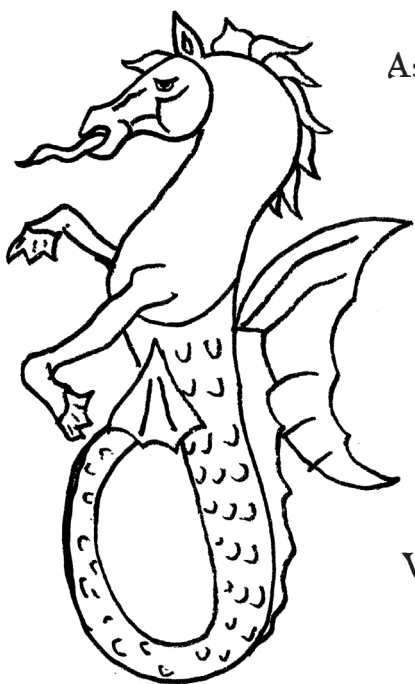
Why can I not love my love?  
Why can my love not love me?  
Why can I not speed after him  
If love to all is free?

In spite of all blame and danger  
With Willie I'll roam,  
His arms my safe depender  
His breast my happy home.

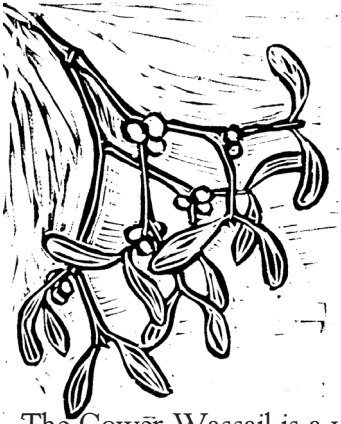
Why can I not love my love?  
Why can my love not love me?  
Why can we not together roam  
If lover to all is free?



# PORTSMOUTH



Come come my brave boys  
Never mind how she rolls  
As soon as the gale is over we'll sling a fresh bowl  
While straight across our masthead it blows a  
sweet gale  
We'll soon see the Isle of Wight if we clap on  
more sail  
  
We have arrived at Spithead, and we are at our  
ease  
We'll pipe hands to skylark and do just as we  
please  
While no more cries our Captain: it blows a  
sweet gale  
We'll soon take our whack if the bank it do not  
fail



# THE GOWER WASSAIL

The Gower Wassail is a very old song, which we heard from the singing of Shirley Collins and Phil Tanner, the Gower Nightingale. The song's popularity stretched from Somerset and the West Country into the Gower peninsula. The song is part of a lively wassail tradition found in these islands. This is a centuries old practice of organised class transgression whereby peasants and workers would insist on gifts or booze from their lords in exchange for a song and/or more booze from the wassail bowl. Phil Tanner would prepare his wassail bowl a week before the wassailing commenced with his own home-brewed ale made to a secret recipe, elderberry wine, fruit cake, ginger, and spices. During the wassailing, the recipe would be enhanced with whiskey or brandy or any such alcohol. Although it was not the case in Tanner's time, the wassailing often involved a kind of threat to the gentry who were traditional participants. Some wassail songs make it clear that wassailers are not 'beggars' but rather friendly neighbours demanding their rightful share in the wealth of the land. One might see this tradition, as with many others in agrarian England, as a form of organised class chaos: a way of the system of class oppression 'letting off steam' in a performative and symbolic way in order for the gentry to avoid actual revolution. However, some of the peasants parading through the village with farmyard weapons may have had different ideas. The rich and dark, almost threatening melody of the Gower Wassail points, we believe, to this more radical history of revolutionary threat, and also to the dark richness of the wassail drink!

A-wassail, a-wassail throughout all this town,  
Our cup it is white and our ale it is brown.  
Our wassail is made of the good ale and cake,  
Some nutmeg and ginger, the best we can get.

Our wassail is made of the elderberry bough,  
And so my good neighbour, we'll drink unto thou,  
Besides all on earth, we have apples in store,  
Pray do let us come in for it's cold at the door.

We know by the sky that we are not too high,  
And we know by the moon that we are not too soon.  
We know by the stars that we are not too far,  
And we know by the ground that we are within sound.

Lol-dee-dol, lol-dee-dol-dee-dol,  
Lol-dee-dol-dee-dol, lol-dee-dol-dee-dee,  
Fol-dee-derol, lol-dee-der-dee,  
Sing too-ra-li-doh.

Now master and mistress here's a health to you we give,  
And pour our jolly wassail as long as we live.  
And if we do live till another New Year,  
Then perhaps we may call and see who do live here.

A-wassail, a-wassail throughout all this town,  
Our cup it is white and our ale it is brown.  
Our wassail is made of the good ale and cake,  
Some nutmeg and ginger, the best we can get.

Lol-dee-dol, lol-dee-dol-dee-dol,  
Lol-dee-dol-dee-dol, lol-dee-dol-dee-dee,  
Fol-dee-derol, lol-dee-der-dee,  
Sing too-ra-li-doh.

# THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE WASSAIL

One of the most common Wassail songs, having been collected by Cecil Sharpe in Pembridge, Herefordshire in 1909 and published in the Oxford Book of Carols. The Gloucestershire Wassail falls into the second category of wassail songs - an opportunity to impose petty demands on one's betters. Alongside carolling, pace-egging, souling (and later, trick-or-treating), there is a rich history of calendar celebrations being turned to this purpose. Sometimes these traditions are gentle, and sometimes (like Plough Monday at the end of wassailing season) they're backed up with active threat. The Gloucestershire Wassail contains an amazing evocation of the motley wassailing crew, a threat against parsimonious butlers, and a celebration of the conspiratorial maid who eventually lets them in.

## *Chorus:*

*Wassail, wassail all over the town!  
Our toast it is white and our ale it is brown;  
Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree;  
With the wassailing-bowl we'll drink to thee!*

So here is to Cherry and to his right cheek!  
Pray God send our master a good piece of beef,  
And a good piece of beef that we all may see;  
With the wassailing-bowl we'll drink to thee!

And here is to Dobbin and to his right eye!  
Pray God send our master a good Christmas pie,  
And a good Christmas pie that we may all see;  
With our wassailing-bowl we'll drink to thee!

## *Chorus*



So here is to Broad May and to her broad horn!  
May God send our master a good crop of corn,  
And a good crop of corn that we may all see;  
With the wassailing-bowl we'll drink to thee!

And here is to Fillpail and to her left ear!  
Pray God send our master a happy new year,  
And a happy new year as e'er he did see;  
With our wassailing-bowl we'll drink to thee!

*Chorus*

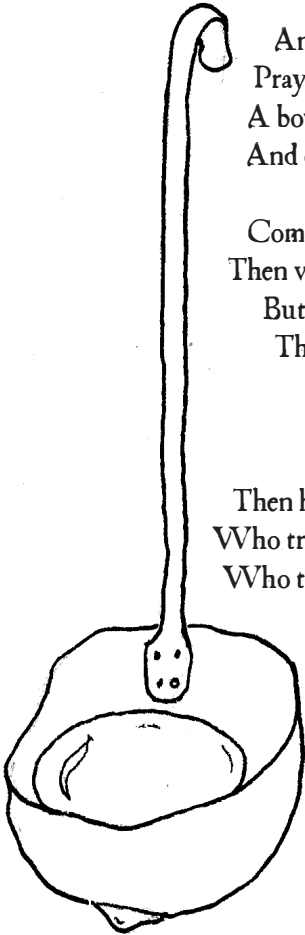
And here is to Colly and to her long tail!  
Pray God send our master he never may fail.  
A bowl of strong beer; I pray you draw near,  
And our jolly wassail it's then you shall hear.

Come, butler, come fill us a bowl of the best,  
Then we hope that your soul in heaven may rest;  
But if you do draw us a bowl of the small,  
Then down shall go butler, bowl and all!

*Chorus*

Then here's to the maid in the lily-white smock  
Who tripped to the door and slipped back the lock;  
Who tripped to the door and pulled back the pin,  
For to let these jolly wassailers in.

*Chorus x2*



# JOY, HEALTH, LOVE AND PEACE

A blessing as much as a song, invoking the benisons of its first line to be all here in this place, and then looking outward in its last: great joy to the new. The King in question is the wren: king of the birds and symbol of winter. The song originates in Pembrokeshire, where this winter king was traditionally hunted on St Stephen's Day and paraded house to house – a defeat of the cold and dark after the passing of the longest night. That canon and ball are necessary for the killing of this diminutive king puts the song in tradition with myriad other surreal king-killing fantasies, while the theme of warmth and hope in the darkness of winter perfectly captures our wish for Christmas.

Joy, health, love, and peace be all here in this place  
By your leave we will sing concerning our king

Our king is well dressed in the silks of the best  
In ribbons so rare, no king can compare

We have travelled many miles over hedges and stiles  
In search of our king, unto you we bring

We have powder and shot to conquer the lot  
We have cannon and ball to conquer them all

Old Christmas is past, Twelfth Night is the last,  
And we bid you adieu, great joy to the new



