



# Folk Music: A resource for creative music-making Key Stages 3 & 4

**By Rob Harbron**

When I was bound a prentice  
In famous Somerseth shire  
I bound my master truly  
For nearly seven year  
Till I took up to poaching  
as you shall quickly hear  
For tis was my delight on a shing night  
In the season of the year.

As me and my companions  
were setting of a snare  
The gamekeeper was watching us  
But for him we did not care  
For we can smother fight my boys  
Tump on any where  
Till we have got it all

1481  
We threw her across our shoulders  
and waded through the Tonne  
and called into a neighbour's house  
and sold her for a crown  
we sold her for a crown my boys  
But dare not tell you where  
For tis my delight etc

So here's success to poachers  
For I do not think it fair  
Bad luck to every gamekeeper  
That will not sell his deer  
Good luck to every landlady  
That wants to buy a hare  
Tis my delight on a shing night  
In the season of the year.



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## ***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.

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# ***Folk Music: A resource for creative music-making (Key Stages 3 & 4)***

## ***What is English folk music?***

There is a huge wealth of material within the English tradition (not to mention the related traditions of the British Isles, Europe, America, and further afield) – ballads, chorus songs, tunes, dances, customs and folklore – and it has great value as a resource for people with many different interests. Within the English folk scene today the professional performers and artists who draw the attention of the media are vastly outnumbered by amateur participants – people playing tunes in pub sessions, dancing with the local morris side, going to barn dances or folk festivals, and so on. Folk music has always been music for participants, which means it is a great resource for developing practical musical skills, and is a great starting point for creative music-making with young people.

## ***Why use folk music?***

Folk music has always been remembered and transmitted principally by ear, and only in recent years has it been played by a significant number of people with much formal musical training. Consequently there are a huge number of folk tunes and songs that lend themselves to being taught by ear (and/or by basic notation) to a mixed-ability group.

Although there are some songs and tunes by known composers that have entered the traditional repertoire, the vast majority of folk music is composed by *Anon* – we simply don't know who wrote it. A lot of folk music utilises fairly simple structures that can be used as the starting point for original composition.

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## How to find repertoire?

Folk musicians have a range of options to find new material:

- **Sessions:** social gatherings of folk musicians who play and share material 'by ear' (without notation) with one another. Sessions often take place in pubs and at festivals.
- **Recordings:** you can find lots of new material on CDs, on Spotify, on iTunes and other sources. You can find a breadth of performances ranging from 'original' or 'source' musicians recorded decades ago (including some taken from wax cylinder recordings in the early 1900s) through to contemporary folk dance bands and professional concert artists.
- **Publications:** There are hundreds of books available with collections of dance tunes. Again, these range from very specific dances (such as the Playford dances and tunes from 1651) to more general selections. Many manuscript collections of tunes have also been published which often have a more geographical focus (e.g. Joshua Jackson from Yorkshire).
- **Online:** there is plenty of material available across the internet
  - **abcnotation.com:** contains over 400,000 tunes in notation, with midi/mp3 files to listen to of each one too!
  - **The Village Music Project [village-music-project.org.uk](http://village-music-project.org.uk)** – the repertoire of English Social Musicians from C17<sup>th</sup> onwards, available online in ABC format
  - **The Historic Dance and Tune Books** which are also part of the VWML web site - [www.vwml.org/vwml-projects/vwml-historic-dance-and-tune-books](http://www.vwml.org/vwml-projects/vwml-historic-dance-and-tune-books)
  - **The Full English digital archive** ([www.vwml.org](http://www.vwml.org)) is a fantastic resource with over 50,000 entries although there's so much material it can be a bit daunting. It is easier to find something specific if you can narrow down your search parameters. For example, I found the first two songs in this pack when we were about to start working in a school in Hanham, outside Bristol, by just searching for 'Bristol'.

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### *Getting it 'off the page'*

If you're used to using classical music or published sheet music which includes performance directions – phrasing, dynamics, articulation, expression, ornamentation, etc. – then you'll notice the absence of any performance or interpretation instructions in most folk music transcriptions. It's up to each individual player or singer to come up their own interpretation. There is no right or wrong way to do it – what's thought of as the English folk style is really a composite of hundreds or thousands of individual styles of playing or singing. The 'dots' are only the starting point and it's up to each individual player to decide how the music goes.

This can be daunting for a performer new to folk music ... but it's a brilliant opportunity to begin developing individual interpretations, and it's a really helpful and inspiring starting point for young musicians.

### *Using this pack*

The material in this pack grew out of work on The Full English project at Hanham High School, South Gloucestershire. We worked with students at Key Stages 3 and 4 (11-15years) in their music lessons and in after school activity. They played a range of instruments including melodeon, piano accordion and banjo, plus the school's tuned percussion and keyboards. The project ended with a performance as part of The Full English national showcase conference in June 2014.

### *Additional resources*

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

# Poor Old Man

This shanty was collected in several places. I combined two versions that Sharp collected in Bristol and Watchet although in researching this pack I found a different version that was also collected in Watchet, with a slightly more developed structure. The Full English digital archive contains multiple versions of lots of songs, representing the styles and interpretations of the many performers the collectors encountered.

## Poor Old Man / The Dead Horse

Based on following versions: (a) Roud number: 513 (b) Roud number: 3724

(a) Collected from John Scott by Cecil Sharp, 20 April 1914, Watchet, Somerset: [www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2884](http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2884)

(b) Collected from James Tucker by Cecil Sharp, 14 July 1914, Bristol, Somerset: [www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/3015](http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/3015)

Trad. arr. Rob Harbron

A poor old man came riding by,  
And I hope so, and I say so,  
A poor old man came riding by,  
Oh poor old man

And if he lives away we'll ride,  
And I hope so, and I say so,  
And if he lives away we'll ride,  
Oh poor old man

Oh poor old man your horse will die,  
And I hope so, and I say so,  
Oh poor old man your horse will die,  
Oh poor old man

But this old horse is dead and gone  
And we know so, and we say so  
Yes this old horse is dead and gone  
Oh poor old man

If he dies we'll tan his hide,  
And I hope so, and I say so,  
If he dies we'll tan his hide,  
Oh poor old man

The Full English: [www.vwml.org](http://www.vwml.org)  
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Instrumental folk tunes invariably have at least two parts, always known by folk musicians as 'A' and 'B' parts. One thing that drew me to this piece was that it worked either as a song or an instrumental tune so it's really adaptable for teaching situations – but for it to really work as tune it needed a B part, so I wrote one:

## Poor Old Man / The Dead Horse

*with additional 'B' part by Rob Harbron*



**The Full English:** [www.vwml.org](http://www.vwml.org)  
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One adaptable song/tune like this can present endless possibilities for performance, arrangement and composition. This tune is easy to pick up on lots of common instruments – keyboards, guitars, fiddles, flutes, whistles/recorders and tuned percussion, as well as more specialised folk instruments such as melodeons and banjos – so there's a possibility of developing small group arrangements using varied instrumentation. Or you could analyse the structure and use it as the basis for new compositions.

# What Shall We Do With The Drunken Sailor

This is a well-known song, but I've never encountered this tune for it before. It's a reminder that a new tune to an existing set of words, or new words written to an existing tune can also be ways into composition – you don't have to start from a blank page.

## What shall we do with a drunken sailor?

Collected from James Tucker by Cecil Sharp, 14 July 1914, Bristol, Somerset  
[www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/3017](http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/3017)

Roud Number: 322  
Trad. arr. Rob Harbron

What shall we do with a drun - ken sai - lor, What shall we do with a drun - ken sai - lor,

What shall we do with a drun - ken sai - lor ear - ly in the mor - ning?

Way - ay and up she ri - ses Wo - oh and up she ri - ses,

Way - ay and up she ri - ses, ear - ly in the mor - ning.



## Simple Jig - The Ladies Choice

As well as a lot of material in common time, a huge number of folk songs and tunes are in compound time. Tunes in 6/8 are by far the most common and are usually called jigs. There are also tunes in 9/8 (slip jigs) and some parts of Ireland differentiate between jigs in 6/8 and 12/8, playing the 12/8 ones slower and calling them Slides.

Structurally, this tune is just about the simplest jig I've ever learned, comprising two four-bar parts, each of which includes a 'theme' bar which is appears twice. It's included here because it's easy to learn on various instruments and as well as being an example of compound time, it can also be the basis for practical performance, arrangement and composition.

### The Ladies Choice

*Collected in the William Winter Manuscript, Somerset  
(NB: not part of The Full English digital archive)*

Traditional



It's also an example of a tune which is not in the Full English archive! Comprehensive though the archive is, there is a huge amount of useful and valuable material that isn't in it – those original collectors covered an awful lot of ground but they didn't get everywhere. In particular, The Full English digital archive doesn't contain many dance tunes – I've found only a few dozen so far, yet there are hundreds of tunes in common currency today, and hundreds more in manuscripts and fiddlers tunebooks waiting to be rediscovered. If you're interested in exploring further, some starting points are listed on pages 3 and 4.

# The Poaching Song

This is a very well-known English folk song which you may even remember learning at school. Although people often divide folk songs into two categories – solo narrative songs or chorus songs of work or celebration – this song is both things, a narrative song with a great chorus. But you don't have to use it in this form – it's great as an instrumental tune, or the tune would be ideal to set new words to. Or you could try the tune in a different rhythm – it works well in 3/4, 4/4 or even 5/4 with only minor tweaks.

## The Poaching Song

Collected from Elizabeth Smitherd/Smithers by Cecil Sharp,  
10 April 1908, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

Tune: [www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1627](http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1627)      Words: [www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1480](http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1480)

Roud Number: 299  
Trad. Arr. Rob Harbron

When I was bound a - pren - tice in fa - mous Som - er - set - shire, I  
served my mas - ter tru - ly for near - ly se - ven year, Till  
I took up to poach - ing as you shall quick - ly hear, For twas  
my de - light of a shi - ny night in the sea - son of the year.

The Full English: [www.vwml.org](http://www.vwml.org)  
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## The Poaching Song

*Collected from Elizabeth Smitherd/Smithers by Cecil Sharp*

*10 April 1908, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire*

*Tune: [www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1627](http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1627) Words: [www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1480](http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1480)*

Roud Number: 299

When I was bound apprentice in famous Somersetshire  
I served my master truly for nearly seven year  
Till I took up to poaching as you shall quickly hear  
For it's my delight on a shiny night in the season of the year

As me and my companions were setting of a snare  
The gamekeeper was watching us but for him was did not care  
For we can wrestle and fight my boys, jump over anywhere  
For it's my delight on a shiny night in the season of the year

As me and my companions were setting for a line  
In taking of them up again we caught a hare alive  
We popped him in the bag my boys and through the woods did steer  
For it's my delight on a shiny night in the season of the year

We threw her over our shoulders and wandered through the town  
And called into a neighbour's house and sold her for a crown  
We sold her for a crown my boys but dare not tell you where  
For it's my delight on a shiny night in the season of the year

So here's success to poachers for I do not think it fair  
Bad luck to every gamekeeper that will not sell his deer  
Good luck to every landlady that wants to buy a hare  
For it's my delight on a shiny night in the season of the year

## Where to learn more...

Folk music has always been participatory music, passed on by ear, so the best thing you can do to get more ideas is to listen as widely as possible and have a go at learning and playing yourself!

### Rob Harbron

**Rob Harbron** is a sought-after multi-instrumentalist, composer and producer and one of the country's leading players of the English concertina.

He performs and records with numerous artists including Leveret, Fay Hield and the Hurricane Party, Emma

Reid, Jon Boden and the Remnant Kings, Kerr Fagan Harbron and Fieldfare. He was Musical Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2013 production of *The Winter's Tale*, and he has recently been commissioned to write music for the British Silent Film Festival, the English Folk Dance and Song Society and the Royal Geographical Society. He is a popular teacher and workshop leader, directs the English Acoustic Collective Summer School and has been a tutor for the National Youth Folklore Troupe of England. [www.robertharbron.co.uk](http://www.robertharbron.co.uk)







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