

An Awhesyth / The Lark

Several different version of the tune were collected by Rev Sabine Baring Gould from singers at the Falcon Inn at St Mawgan 1891. Various English lyrics were circulated by popular British Broadsides, Cornish translation Merv Davey 1978, published in Hengan, Dyllansow Truran, Redruth 1983.

Em B7 Em Em

Del en - vy ow kerdh-es un myt - tyn yn mys me___ , Y clew - ys mor - en yow - ynk neb
As I was a walk - ing one morn - ing in the month of May, I heard a young dam sel them

4 D Em Em Am Em

ger - yow yn - meth hy; A bup gal - was yn bys ke - kem - mys may___ vo a'n
words did___ say; Of all___ the calling what - ev - er they may be no

7 Em Em B7 Em

ar - a - der - yor nyns yu par___ yn mys___ me yth - o.
life is like___ the ploug - boy___ in the___ month of May.

Del en-vy ow kerdhes un myttyn yn mys me,
Y clewys moren yowynk, neb geryow yn-meth hy;
'A bup galwas yn bys kekemmys may vo,
A'n araderor nyns yu par yn mys me ytho.'

As I was a walking one morning in May,
I heard a young damsel them words did say;
'Of all the calling whatever they may be,
No life is like the ploughboy's in the month of May.'

An awhesyth a dhyfun a'y nythva y'n myttyn,
Y bron gans gluthennow war ayr gwyn del yskyn;
An awhesyth ha'n maw aradar kescana 'yllons y,
Dh'y nythva yn gorthewer mos wardhelergh a-wra hy.

The Lark in the morning awakes from her nest,
And mounts the white air with the dew on her breast;
O the lark and the ploughboy together can sing,
And return to her nest in the evening.

Yth yskynnys un myttyn mar ughel, ogh mar ughel,
Y vyrys orth an le adro hag orth an ebren tewl;
Yth esa hy ow cana yn mSrttyn oll adro,
Nyns yu bewnans avel araderor un mys me ytho.

One morning she mounted so high oh so high,
And looked around her, and at the dark sky;
In the morning she was singing and thus was her lay,
There's no life like the ploughboys in the month of
May.

Pan yu dewedhys oll whel a'n jeth yma dhodho,
Dhe fer po enclledhyans martesen yth ello;
Y'n keth le y whra cana hag ena y whyban,
Wosa henna dh'y gares whek a-dhre ef ryban.

When his day's work is over that he hath to do,
O' then to a fair or a wake he will go,
And there he will whistle and there he will sing,
And then to his fair love a ribbon will bring.

Sowyn dhe maw aradar pypynak may vons-y '
War'n glyn, neb mowes whek kemeres a whrons-y;
Whybana a wrons ha cana, owth eva coref gell,
Moy lowen yu'n tus ma es myghtern po'n gos ughel.

Good luck to the ploughboys wherever they be,
They will take a sweet maid to sit on the knee;
They'll drink the brown beer, they will whistle and sing,
O the ploughboy's more happy than a noble or a king

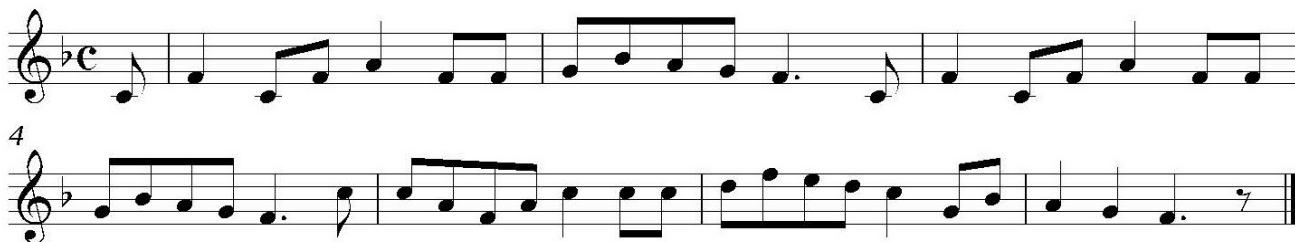
Notes

The lyrics for “The Lark in the Morning” appear in Broadside Ballads from the late 18th century to the mid-19th as well as from oral tradition across Britain, Ireland and beyond.¹ The song is associated with several different melodies. Folk song collector Rev Sabine Baring Gould noted two distinct tunes for this song in Cornwall during visits to the Falcon Inn at St Mawgan in 1891. He was assisted by Rev Frederick W. Bussel who was a skilled musician and the practice was that he would transcribe the music whilst Baring Gould focused on the lyrics. One melody was transcribed from the singing of Sam Gilbert, the publican and the other from John Old who came from St Eval. Neither version of the song was included in Sabine Baring Gould’s “Songs and Ballads of the West”, 1892 or “Songs of the West 1905” edited by Cecil Sharp.

The Gilbert family were folk song enthusiasts in their own right and continued to send songs to Cecil Sharp in the early 20th century. Sam Gilbert’s son, William, helped the Celtic revivalist Henry Jenner with his contribution to the Celtic Song Book published in 1928.² The Lark may well have been heard at the Falcon Inn during the first decades of the 20th century but we do not see it again until it appears in Gordon Hitchcock’s “Folk Song of the Westcountry” in 1974³ and also an album recorded by the Breton Group Lyonesse⁴ in the same year. A Cornish version of the lyrics was published in Hengan 1983⁵ and as a tune it was noted by the Racca: Cornish session tunes project 1995/7.⁶

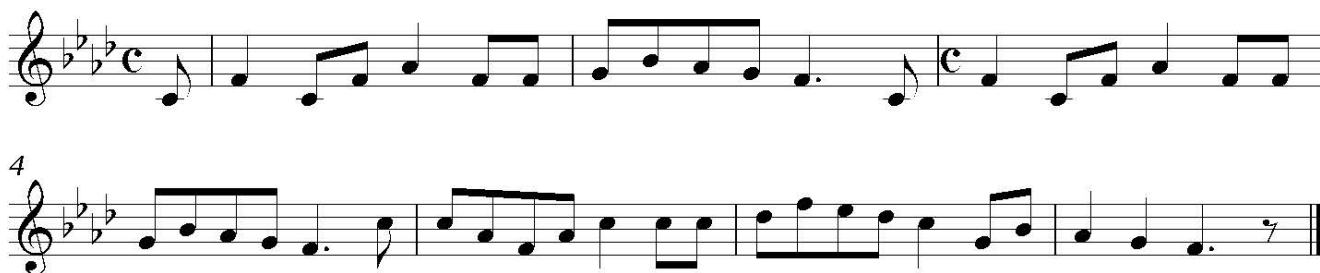
John Old’s melody is particularly haunting and it is interesting to follow its trajectory of change from Baring Gould’s rough notes to his personal copy and on through Hitchcock’s arrangement to present day use including the acquisition of a Cornish name – An Awhesyth (The Lark). It is a good example of folk tradition as a process of change.

In his rough copy manuscript Baring Gould notes John Old’s tune with just one flat.



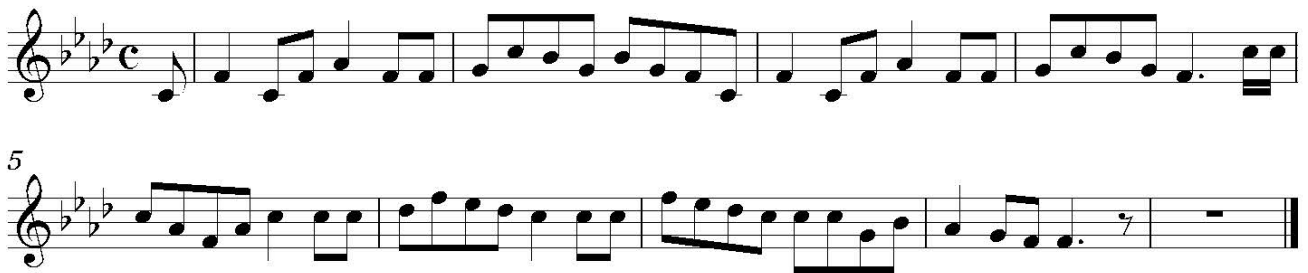
Wren Trust, Rough Copy manuscript, Fiche no. 12, Vol. 10, page 3

In Baring Gould’s Personal copy- "A", "D" and "E" have effectively been flattened by changing key signature to A flat from F. It is not clear whether Baring Gould was simply correcting the key signature in the rough copy, whether he changed it to better reflect his memory of the tune or if he was simply being creative. It should be remembered that folk song collectors like Baring Gould were not ethno-musicologists but saw themselves as capturing something beautiful from the past and saw no problem in mediating and enhancing what they collected.



*Wren Trust, Personal Copy manuscript, Vol 2, Fiche 10, p. 258 Song no. 255
See also URL: <http://www.uwml.org/record/SBG/3/1/877>*

In "Folk Songs of the West Country" Gordon Hitchcock extended and arranged the tune to fit the lyrics and also sharpened the "B flat" to "A" further altering the modality of the tune He describes this melody as Sam Gilbert's although it is fact ascribed to John Old in Baring Gould's manuscript.



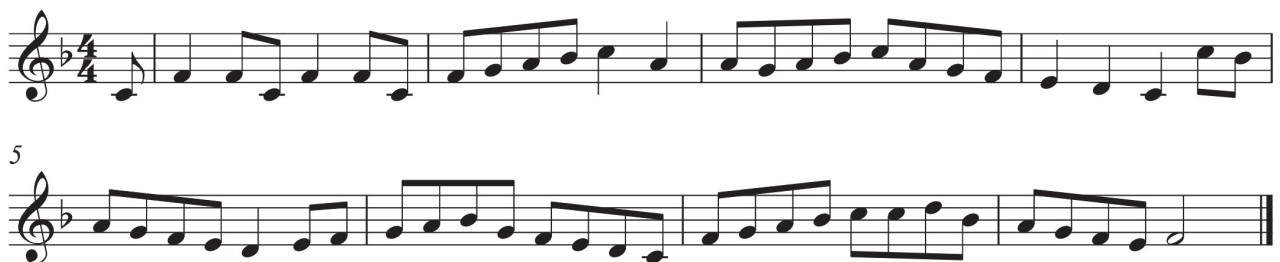
Gordon Hitchcock, Folk Songs of the West Country. 1974

As *An Awhesyth* the melody was recorded by the Racca Cornish Session tunes project 1995/7 and by the 2007 was being used as a 32 bar dance tune. he melody had become re-established within Cornish music tradition and influenced by both Baring Gould's personal copy version and Hitchcock's. Changes like this in melodies, whether by accident or creative design are a natural part of the "Folk Process"



Pris Ton – Cornish Session tunes 2007

Sam Gilbert sung a quite different tune for FW Bussel and S Baring Gould in 1891:



*Wren Trust, Sabine Baring Gould Personal Copy manuscript , Vol 2, Fiche 10 page 258.
See Also URL: <http://www.vwml.org/record/SBG/3/1/877>*

The Lark and Broadside Ballads

The advent of the printing press and gradual increase in literacy gave rise to the Broadside Ballad sometimes described as street ballads, stall ballads or slip ballads. Simple woodcut prints provided news, gossip and storytelling in the form of verse. The Broadside Ballads provided no music, but the verse was written to fit popular melodies which the vendor might sing for the purchaser. There were no copyright issues for the broadside writers, and they copied verse and stories and themes indiscriminately as well as being creative themselves.

The broadside era lasted from the 16th century to the late 19th and some ballads made appearance at the hands of many printers. The broadsides drew upon and fed into the repertoire of traditional folk songs and it is not always known whether a given song started life as the composition of a Broadside Balladeer or was derived originally from oral tradition. The Lark in the Morning is a case to point.

Broadside lyrics for the *Lark* published by Swindells of Manchester between 1896 and 1853.

1. As I was a walking one morning in may
I heard a young damsel those words for to say,
Of all the calling whatever they may be,
No life is like the ploughboy all in the month of may
2. The' lark in the morning awakes from her nest,
And' mounts the white air with the dew on her breast,
Like the pretty ploughboy she'll whistle and she'll sing,
And at night she'll return to her nest back again.
3. When his' day's work is done that he's for to do,
Perhaps some country wake he will go,
There with his sweetheart he'll dance and sing,
And then he'll return with his lass back again.
4. And as the return from the wake unto town
The meadows mown and the grass cut down
If they chanced for to tumble all on the new mown hay
Let me go your bold deceiver this damsel did say
5. When twenty weeks were over and gone
Her mammy ask'd her the reason why she look'd so pale and wan
It was the pretty ploughboy, the damsel did say
That caused me to tumble on the new mown hay
6. Come all you pretty maidens wherever you be
You may trust a ploughboy in any degree
They're used so much to plowing their seed for to sow
That in the green meadows it is sure for to grow
7. So good I luck to the plough boys wherever be,
Who will take a pretty lass to sit on their knee,
And with a jug of beer they will whistle and sing,
For a plough boy's as happy as a prince or a king.

¹ E.g. Bodleian Library Harding B 25(1070) Re Bod 16725 printed Swindells, Manchester between 1896 and 1853; and Harding B 11(2060) Bodleian Library: J.O.Bebbington, Printer, 20 Goulde Street, Oldham Road, Manchester and sold by John Beaumont, 176 York Street Leeds

² Alfred P. Graves, *The Celtic song book, being representative folk songs of the six Celtic Nations*, (London, E. Benn, 1928), Limadie, p.259

³ Gordon Hitchcock, *Folk Songs of the West Country* (Newton Abbot, David & Charles-Keith Prowse Music Publishing Co, 1974). pp70 - 72

⁴ Lyonesse, *Lyonesse* (LP). Label: PDU, Catalogue: *Pld A 5093*, Italy, 1974. Track B1.

⁵ Merv Davey, *Hengan*, (Redruth, Dyllansow Truran, Redruth, 1983) p 25:

⁶ *Racca 2: Cornish Tunes for Cornish Sessions*, (Calstock, Racca Project, 1997) No 81

⁷ *Prys Ton-Cornish Session Tunes*, An Daras Cornish Folk Arts Project – Lowender Peran Celtic Festival Outreach 2007