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THE MURDERED SWEETHEART BALLADS:
A DISCURSIVE CATALOGUE & BIBLIOGRAPHY

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THE CRUEL GAMEKEEPER

Roud 1313

(The Staffordshire Tragedy; The Oxford Murder)

INTRODUCTORY SURVEY

Lovers of *traditional* ballads given to dismissing *broadside* balladry as ‘cheap and nasty’ cultural products would find unequivocal support in “The Cruel Gamekeeper” (as it is titled in the most widely distributed form¹). It is ‘cheap’ not merely in the sense applicable to all broadsides, of costing little to acquire: this one also cost very little by way of effort in its composition. Riddled with the verbal commonplaces of the Murdered Sweetheart genre and crime and execution ballads more generally, and with no circumstantial information other than the name of the city where the events are said to have occurred, it tells a thoroughly conventional generic narrative: a farmer’s daughter succumbs to the blandishments of a gamekeeper and becomes pregnant, but when she reveals this as they are walking “in the park” he stabs her to death with a knife, and hides her body in some bushes; it is discovered; he is arrested, and on his way to the gallows laments and repents extravagantly.

In purely quantitative terms this last item goes somewhat further than usual in that the victim’s parents die of grief, adding to the tally of deaths for which the lover laments he is responsible. But that the total specified is not three but four is both quantitative *and* qualitative, the result of the ‘nasty’ element of this song. Having pierced her heart with his knife the murderous lover deliberately cuts open his victim and removes the crying child, placing it in her arms before absconding, its death evidently to be taken for granted. This is admittedly not so much a narrative addition as a materialization of a feature inherent in the Murdered Sweetheart scenario, since the death of a pregnant woman is by definition the death of her unborn child (and this evisceration motif may have deep roots in the traditional sources of the genre).² Nor is it unique in the Murdered Sweetheart Ballads. But in what is manifestly a fictional piece it is gratuitous sensationalism, even should it reflect a more general

¹ Notably in *Victorian Street Ballads*, ed. W. Henderson (London: Country Life, 1937), p. 28, and this is the title of the broadside print with the largest number of surviving copies.

² See my “The Murdered Sweetheart: Child of Print and Panic?” presented to conference, “The Work of Stories”, Media in Transition 4, Communications Forum, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, 6-8 May, 2005 (6 & 7 May), online at https://www.academia.edu/4981485/The_Murdered_Sweetheart_Child_of_Print_and_Panic.

- And then he hid her among some thorns
And laid her babe within her arms.
6. Some people hearing her to cry,
Towards her ran immediately,
And there they found her among the thorns
With her babe crawling in her arms.
7. A neighbor knowing who she was
Unto her father's house he goes.
And told [t]he father and mother dear
Who broke their hearts with sighs and tears.
8. They took the man before 'twas long
And bound in some prison strong
And soon he was condemned to die
Upon a gallows tree so high.
9. And when he to the gallows rid,
He own'd that he the murder did,
Now four⁵ of them in one grave lie
And for the murder I must die
10. O! was it possible they could live,
Ten thousand worlds and more I'd give,
If life again in these would move,
That I might die in peace and love.
11. Be this a warning to mankind
In courtship never to be blind
I promis'd marriage but did not wed,
So this gallows proves my marriage bed.
12. Both young and old a warning take
And thinking upon my wretched fate
And don't in courtship wanton prove
But fill your hearts with truth and love.
- He threw her into a clump of thorns
With the babies squalling all at her heart.
5. Some one near heard the murderer's cry,
And to the place they made their way,
They told her father, her mother dear
Which broke their hearts
with grief and fear.
6. They found the gamekeeper
before 'twas long
They bound him into some prison strong
And now he's curst and condemned to die
All on the gallows beam so high.
7. Young men and maidens a warning take
For you see how it is
when you are too late
Be true and faithful in all your mind
And never be rude to young womenkind.

BROADSIDES

The broadside is available in a long and short version, and since all of the stanzas of the latter occur in the former, the longer version is likely the original. But in a first, minor, complication, this long version was printed in variants comprising, respectively, 12 and 11 stanzas, the difference accounted for by the omission of a somewhat repetitive (and ghoulish)

⁵ Presumably the girl, the child, and her parents.

stanza in which the corpse is discovered with the baby crawling in the woman's arms – both the atrocity and the discovery are adequately reported in, respectively, preceding and following stanzas. All the other stanzas are identical, save a few minor discrepancies in formulation (individual words or phrases) The 12-stanza variant seems to be the source of all later printed versions. Neither variant carries any indication of printer or place/date of printing, but the copy of the 12-stanza variant held by the Bodleian Library⁶ and reproduced in a commercial digital collection is dated in the latter's catalogue to "1795?"⁷ The long version (in both variants) makes an at least token gesture in the direction of authenticity by locating the event "Near Burton town in Staffordshire", given that Burton (on Trent) actually is in Staffordshire, unlike the "... Buxton town in Staffordshire" of the short version (which is in Derbyshire).

The long version is in four-line stanzas, rhyming aabb, each line with four stresses (the quite common 'long measure' alternative to the ballad quatrain). In the 12 stanza variant the relationship and the murder are covered in sts. 1-5; the discovery, arrest and condemnation in sts. 6-8 (st. 6 omitted in the 11-stanza variant); the murderer's first person lament on his way to the gallows takes up sts. 9-12. While the 11-stanza variant is illustrated by a pretty generic execution scene, the 12-stanza variant is accompanied by a woodcut illustration of a recumbent human figure foregrounded against the backdrop of a large building and trees. The *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* headnote cited above, relying on the smudged Bodleian copy, describes this as "a man lying on the ground with a house and two trees in the background", and since there is no such occurrence in the ballad this would mean (partly explaining the indistinct quality) that the woodcut had been recycled from an earlier broadside. The latter is indeed the case, but the figure has been misconstrued. The same woodcut accompanied an earlier *Murdered Sweetheart* broadside, illustrating a London printing of "The Gosport Tragedy", where the recumbent figure in the foreground could equally well be female.⁸ But the original woodcut was most likely deployed in one of the many printings of yet another *Murdered Sweetheart* ballad, "The Berkshire Tragedy",⁹ where a somewhat clearer reproduction indicates more certainly that it is a woman, and most probably that she is floating in water. This fits the plot of "The Berkshire Tragedy", where the corpse of the murdered sweetheart is thrown into a river and is recovered downstream right by her father's house -- perhaps the large building in the background, by which a figure seems to be standing.¹⁰ (The "Gosport" victim was buried.)

The two broadside printings of the long version of the song had a parallel (and roughly contemporary) manifestation, with the same title, in a compilation of popular songs in chapbook format. The latter's title comprises a list of contents: *Hodge of the Mill; OR An old Woman Clothed in Grey. To which is added. The Staffordshire TRAGEDY. The pleasures of WOOING. The Shepherdess Lamenting her drowned Lover. Entered according to Order.*¹¹

⁶ Harding B 22(273), available online at <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/view/sheet/20990>

⁷ I do not have access to this series, and cite the reproduction in the University of Chicago Library Catalogue <https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/10264682>.

⁸ <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/static/images/sheets/05000/00283.gif>

⁹ <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/31475/album>.

¹⁰ See my Discursive Bibliography for this ballad at https://www.academia.edu/19691399/Murdered_Sweetheart_Ballads_A_Discursive_Catalogue_and_Bibliography_-_The_Berkshire_Tragedy.

¹¹ There may also have been a version of the chapbook without "The Staffordshire Tragedy".

All these songs are in the same verse-form, and share the theme of love or couple-formation. The “Staffordshire Tragedy” here is also 11 stanzas, but this is by virtue of omitting a quite different stanza, one of the two comprising the concluding valediction to young people warning them not to follow the example of the perpetrator. There is no indication of where, when or by whom the publication was ‘entered’, but on their website the National Library of Scotland suggest it was printed in Glasgow in 1790. A Scottish context may indeed be suggested by an interesting textual discrepancy in relation to the broadside, in the narration of the murder (st. 4.3 in each case):

BROADSIDE

Then from his pocket a knife he drew
And pierc’d her heart and body through.

CHAPBOOK

And thus from’s side a *durk* he drew
He pierc’d her tender body thro.

The dirk is “a long thrusting dagger”, “the term ... associated with Scotland in the early modern era” (Wikipedia), and taking it “from his side” rather than the broadside’s “pocket” is conformable to its function as a “sidearm”.¹² Perhaps more interestingly, the chapbook rendition of these lines is altogether redolent of balladry more generally, the two together figuring for example in the traditional ballad, “The Two Brothers” (Child 49; here from a New England version):

6.1. Then he drew his dagger from his side
And he pierced his brother through (Bronson 49.38).

“From his side he drew” may be a ballad formula in its own right, while “pierced her tender body through” occurs in another, early, Murdered Sweetheart ballad, “Rosanna”. Not merely interesting but disconcerting is the circumstance that the short version of the broadside (not to be confused with the shorter variant of the longer versions) will at this line reproduce the “pierced her tender body through” of the chapbook (and agrees with the latter in omitting the last of the perpetrator’s lugubrious lamentation stanzas, the last in the long broadside). Establishing the exact relations between the various printed versions will evidently not be as simple as their small numbers might suggest, and there is even a possibility that there was an English printing of the chapbook.¹³

The short version survives in three printings, all entitled “The Cruel Gamekeeper”, but there is some variation in the precise stanzas they retain of the original.¹⁴ That of the London printer Such, which survives in several copies, has six stanzas, but since they all occur in the seven stanza version printed by Sefton of Worcester (surviving in a single Bodleian copy), the latter is presumably intermediary between the long version and the Such printing. This would conform to the respective chronologies of the two printers, as Sefton was active 1834 – 1856, Such 1863-1885 (Roud Index in both cases). The short version preserves a complete and

¹² There are no other Scotticisms in this ballad or in the others in the chapbook.

¹³ The Roud index refers to a catalogue of the production of the nineteenth-century York printer, J. Kendrew, who specialized in chapbooks.

¹⁴ There may have been others, the Roud index suggesting it was published by Cadman of Manchester.

coherent narrative while omitting inessential stanzas from the two narrative segments and the perpetrator's lament, Sefton including a stanza on the discovery of the body (half of which repeats the details of the disposal of the body) which Such excises. The printing included by W. Henderson in his *Victorian Street Ballads* (1937) agrees with Sefton in including this stanza, but differs from both in omitting the last remaining of the 'warning' stanzas, so the ballad now ends with the lover's death-sentence. Henderson does not specify his source, but from his introductory remarks to the volume juxtaposed with the Roud index it can be pinned down as the print (not seen by present writer) in the Sabine Baring-Gould Broadside Collection (British Library).

Within the material retained in the short version the major adjustment is a moderate exacerbation of the central horror: Where the long version has the lover pierce "her heart and body" through with his knife (4.4) and "cut her open" (5.1), in the short version it is "her tender body" (3.4), and "He ripp'd her up ..." (4.1). And while in the long version he "laid her babe within her arms" (5.4) in the short version we have the ghastly "...the baby crawled into her arms" (4.4).

The woodcuts accompanying the short version of the ballad differ between the three printings (and from that of the long version): Such has a generic gamekeeper posing at a fence; the print reproduced by Henderson similarly a walking man in broad-brimmed hat carrying a rifle (at the ready), with dog; Sefton has an indistinct image of a recumbent female with a monstrous silhouette looming aggressively behind it.

PERFORMANCE TRADITION

This song has been recovered from performance tradition exclusively in southern England, namely the (contiguous) counties of Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, and Somerset, and textual comparison permits identifying which broadside version was the source of the song tradition known to the respective singers (both the long and short versions are represented).

Most recordings were the result of the folk song collection undertaken in this area in the first three or so decades of the twentieth century (in the present connection by Cecil Sharp, George Gardiner, and Alfred Williams), but chronologically they are outdistanced by the quotation of a fragment from the ballad in John Yonge Akerman's "Giles Chawbacon", one of the excruciating dialect pieces in his *Wiltshire Tales* of 1853. Arriving in the town of Highworth on the day of a hiring fair Giles passes "the tap-rooms of those inns in which the idle and dissolute, who had come to let themselves out for the year ..." were indulging in ale and tobacco. "Within these dens of low debauchery were heard snatches of ale-house songs", among them "something more pathetic":

He drowed her in among the thorns
Wi' the leetle babby all in her arms.¹⁵

¹⁵ John Yonge Akerman, *Wiltshire Tales* (London: J.R. Smith, 1853), "Giles Chawbacon", pp. 30-62, at pp. 36-7; online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hnp1pr;view=1up;seq=53>. Williams himself confirms the significance of such locations and circumstances for song performance (*Folk Songs of the Upper Thames*, p. 14ff.).

This will be recognized as the culmination of the atrocity account discussed above, in the light of which it is evident the lines are more likely to derive from the long version of the broadside (5.3-4, where the foetus is placed in the dead girl's arms).¹⁶

We are alerted to the existence of this fragment from the song and reference to a performance context (but without quotation or discussion) in Alfred Williams's headnote to the version of the song he published in his *Folk Songs of the Upper Thames*,¹⁷ and while the story is fictional the whole manner of writing suggests that Akerman had indeed heard the song performed in the convivial context described, perhaps even, as Williams suggests, at Highworth. Meanwhile the version published by Williams himself, and its accompanying headnote, have a good deal more by way of information and insight to offer. Following the reference to Akerman's *Wiltshire Tales*, he observes: "By chance I stumbled upon the piece at Blunsdon [also Wiltshire], where it was still remembered by an old woman, named Hancock, who told me she learnt it of her father, when a girl". There is no more about the singer, but local research on the Williams collection has identified her as Mrs. Emma Hancock (née Eggleton), born ca 1835 in Blunsdon where she lived all her life, except for a few years prior to her marriage in 1856 (to an agricultural labourer) as a household servant in nearby Swindon.¹⁸

We are also fortunate in that Williams's folk song material was deposited with the local authorities, and is now curated by the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre. The latter has put online transcripts of the songs and Williams's annotations,¹⁹ and the same material is also available, as unedited photographic reproductions, at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library digital Archive. This material includes Alfred Williams manuscript text of the song, together with a draft of the headnote, which offers a good deal more information than the severely curtailed printed version.²⁰ It is contextually interesting that here Williams refers to Mrs. Hancock as "a dear and cultured old woman", but technically more significant that the recorded text was the achievement of many performances:

I was quite six months in getting this song, as my informant was so very forgetful, and could only tell me two or three lines at a time. In the end I obtained it complete, with the exception of the first two lines of the "warning".

While depressing (on the vigour of the tradition recorded), this may not be all that unusual (I have heard it from other collectors), but a final insight provided is quite striking, suggesting

¹⁶ I take the "drowed" of the first line quoted to represent a dialect pronunciation and form of "threw": another version from performance tradition (Wright 4.3) has "He threw her into ...".

¹⁷ Alfred Williams. *Folk Songs of the Upper Thames*. London : Duckworth, 1923; repr. Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968, pp. 259-260.

¹⁸ https://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/getfolkbio.php?collect_from=Hancock,%20Emma%20Mrs. (copy-paste may be required for access).

¹⁹ For this song see <https://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/getfolk.php?id=799>.

²⁰ <http://www.vwml.org/record/AW/4/9>. This looks very much like Williams's copy of the song, with the headnote draft squeezed in along the top and down the right hand margin. The transition is revealed in an intermediary document which reproduces all of the MS headnote in type, but has been severely corrected (mainly by deletion) to produce the version eventually printed in *Folk Songs of the Upper Thames*. (<http://www.vwml.org/record/AW/6/195>). This latter document may comprise the proofs for the book or perhaps for the earlier publication in the *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard* (1915-1916).

perhaps some kind of friction between the singer and the collector with regard to the evisceration atrocity. At the point in the text where the (short) broadside has “He ripp'd her up and there was by”, Mrs. Hancock sang “He *picked* her up ...”, suggesting the birth was independent of interference. It is hard to judge if this is a result of mishearing in the course of transmission, or reluctance to confront the atrocity, and in the latter case what were the respective roles of singer and collector. Change in the recording process is clearly documented in the manuscript version of the broadside’s formulation of the girl’s plea, “For I am big with child by you” (3.4): “by you” is retained, but over an erasure corresponding in length to the original lines, Williams has inserted, “I’ve lost my liberty ...” (2.4). Less drastically, in the first line, where the location is specified, over an erasure that could easily correspond to the (short) broadside’s “Buxton”, Williams has inserted “Bottom”. Specific formulations in Mrs. Hancock’s version indicate it is ultimately derived from the short broadside, and more particularly the text printed by Sefton of Worcester.

Alfred Williams’ final contribution is to offer a glimpse (more properly an echo) of another version of the song from Wiltshire performance tradition. His headnote to this song in *Folk Songs of the Upper Thames* concludes with the remark that “A Brinkworth version had, in the fourth verse – ‘with her baby sprawling in her arms’” (rather than Mrs. Hancock’s, “With her pretty baby in her arms” (4.4. – the last line of the murder scene). This is evidently not a reference to the two-line fragment, quite probably from Brinkworth tradition, quoted in Akerman’s *Wiltshire Tales*, and cited earlier: the latter includes this line, but with a quite different formulation. Again there is more evidence in the manuscript draft of Williams’ headnote. After explaining his difficulties in obtaining a full version from Mrs. Hancock, which even then lacked “the first two lines of the ‘warning’”, Williams continues: “I had decided that I should not get them, but by and by I called to see another dear old woman, also considerably over eighty, named Dickson,²¹ and the first thing she told me was the warning verse of ‘The Gamekeeper’ – she had forgotten everything else!” This is immediately followed (and contradicted) by the statement about the fourth verse variant in the “Brinkworth version” just discussed (and retained in the published text). This should mean that we have in all one line and one complete stanza from Mrs. Dickson’s performance, but of the four lines in the “warning” stanza of the conglomerate version, only the first is plausibly derived from the broadside.

Compared to this the situation is radically simpler with the version of “The Gamekeeper” collected by George Gardiner from the singing of a “Mr. Wright” of Hampshire (see full text above; location not further specified) in 1907, although its “warning” stanza is also aberrant and indeed according to a note by the collector derives from a quite different song, “The Sailor’s Tragedy”. The preceding six stanzas are evidently selected from the long broadside version, “The Staffordshire Tragedy”, including formulations differing from, and lines omitted in, the short broadside. In relation to the source significant innovations are the setting of the events “In foreign parts near Staffordshire” (1.1), and the already mentioned doubling of the infanticide (4.2: “...in her body two babes lie”).

²¹ Identified by local researchers as Mrs. Elizabeth Dixon (sic), the wife of a Brinkworth navy; she died in 1922 at the age of 87. https://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/getfolkbio.php?collect_from=Dixon,ElizabethMrs.

With the Lockyer brothers of Middlezoy, Somerset, complexity returns, although it might in part be self-inflicted, the present writer having been tardy in appreciating that there actually were two individuals involved, James and William Lockyer, each of whom was recorded by Cecil Sharp, confusion in part prompted by Sharp attributing to William the age of James at the time of recording, taken to suggest they were the same man (a James William Lockyer).²² But no: genealogical fora indicate that James Lockyer was born in Middlezoy in 1819, while his elder brother, William Lockyer, was born there in 1814.²³

Consultation of the Roud Index and the VWML database shows that Cecil Sharp recorded this song from James Lockyer on 15 August, 1906, producing two documents: the full text,²⁴ and the melody accompanied by the text of the first stanza (its formulation identical to that of the full text, including the unusual variation, st. 1.4, that the damsel “pitched” her mind on a game-keeper).²⁵ Both indicate (correctly) that the singer was 87.

Thereafter he returned to Middlezoy in 1907 and on 7 September recorded William Lockyer, again producing both a full text²⁶ and a notation of the melody accompanied by one stanza.²⁷ Here too the latter corresponds to the first stanza of the full text, the damsel now said, more conventionally, to have “fixed” her mind on a gamekeeper. Both documents carry a note stating that the singer was 88, which he wasn’t (but which would have been true for brother James).

Both versions associate the events with Oxford, which is nonetheless still “near” (James) or even “in” (William) “Staffordshire” (1.1. in both cases), and both agree that the victim was pregnant with twins (5.1), so the perpetrator mourns five deaths (9.4). Otherwise they are very close to the long “Stafford Tragedy” broadside, reproducing (in the same order) 11 of its 12 stanzas (more indeed than does the short broadside version), or rather achieving 11 stanzas by selecting (the same) lines from the Lamentation section and reducing its length from four to three stanzas (broadside sts. 9-12 versus 9-11 of the performances).

This latter process has also involved a classic instance of verbal repetition produced by internal contamination, when material from one point in the text is substituted for original material elsewhere, but also retained (more or less) in its original position (here James Lockyer’s version can stand for both):

²² Others have had the same problem. On 15 August 1906, when Sharp collected our ballad from James Lockyer, he also recorded the songs “Locks and Bolts” (Roud 406) and “Hunting the Hare” (Roud 1181). Each song was documented both as a transcript of the full text, and a notation of the melody accompanied by the text of the first stanza. In the case of the former, the Roud Index and the annotations on the documents agree that the singer was James Lockyer (<https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1050>; <https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1047>), but with regard to the music, while the document annotations ascribe the performance to William Lockyer, the Roud Index identifies the singer as James (<https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1027>; <https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1025>).

²³ They are both sons of a Richard Field Lockyer. https://www.ancestry.co.uk/genealogy/records/richard-field-lockyer_201989547.

²⁴ <https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1040>.

²⁵ <http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1018>.

²⁶ <http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1350>.

²⁷ <https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1472>.

BROADSIDE

9. ~~And when he to the gallows rid,
He own'd that he the murder did,
Now four of them in one grave lie
And for the murder I must die ...~~
11. ~~Be this a warning to mankind
In courtship never to be blind
I promis'd marriage but did not wed,
So this gallows proves my marriage bed.~~
12. ~~Both young and old a warning take
And thinking upon my wretched fate
And don't in courtship wanton prove
But fill your hearts with truth and love.~~

LOCKYER

9. Come all you men a warning take
And think all on my wretched state
There's five of them in the grave doth lie
And for their murder I must die....
11. Come all young men a warning take
And think all on my wretched state
I promised marriage but didnt wed,
So the gallus proves my marriage bed.

The discrepancies between the versions of James and William Lockyer are generally of the limited order already illustrated by “near” versus “in” Staffordshire and “pitched” versus “fixed” her mind, and others include “throwed” versus “placed” for putting the body in the thorns (5.3), and the telling of the dreadful news to “her parents dear” versus “her parents’ ears” (7.3 – James cited first in each instance). With regard to adherence to the broadside honours are shared between the brothers in such instances, but this is not the case with the one major discrepancy, in which James, briefly but strikingly from a gender perspective, narrates the seduction in the voice of the sweetheart: “Three years or more *I’ve* courted been, / At length *I’m* proved with child by him” (2.2). William Lockyer retains the broadside’s more conventional third person narration, to which James reverts immediately after, “Which caused *her* sad discontent”. And in their following conversation, when all three versions give the words of the sweetheart, while William follows the broadside in having her say “... you know that I’m with child by you”, James has the more girl-oriented and intense “*I* know that I’m ...” (3.4 in all cases), in so doing making this the moment when, fatefully, she reveals her condition.

A NOTE ON MUSIC

As these remarks indicate, this is one of the half dozen or so of the in all 50 English Murdered Sweetheart Ballads which (on the basis of available documentation thus far) achieved the transition from broadside to singing tradition. The others, which have been, or will be, covered in this Discursive Catalogue are two of the songs on the Maria Marten case (Roud 215: “The Murder of Maria Marten”; Roud 18814: “The Suffolk Tragedy”), “The Berkshire Tragedy” and its derivatives (Roud 263: “The Cruel Miller”, etc.), “The Downfall of William Grismond” (Roud 953: “Willie Graham”), “The Gosport Tragedy” (Roud 15: “The Cruel Ship Carpenter”), songs in the “Ann Williams” (Roud V41960)/“Betsy Smith” (Roud: V6818)/“Mary Thomson” (Roud 2458) cluster (the ‘same’ song applied to several cases), to which we might add “James Macdonald” (Roud 1412: “The Longford Murder”) originating in Ireland.²⁸

²⁸ For the current state of this work in progress see:

https://www.academia.edu/36450285/Tom_Pettitt_Papers_and_Publication_Ballads_and_Folk_Songs.

The broadside prints of our ballad have no indication of melody, except for the chapbook version of “The Staffordshire Tragedy”, which is headed, unhelpfully, “To its own proper Tune”. Of the collectors to whom we are indebted for the versions from singing tradition, Alfred Williams showed little interest in the musical aspect of folk song. George Gardiner, who recorded the words of the song from a Mr. Wright at an unspecified location in Hampshire in 1907, specified that it was sung to the tune of “The Dark-eyed Sailor” (presumably Roud 265), a song evidently popular among both traditional and revival singers.²⁹ It is evident that in many performances of the latter, the first phrase (lexical and musical) of the last line of each stanza is repeated, its verbal structure (a strong caesura) suitable for this division. I see no symptoms of this repetition in any of the texts of “The Cruel Gamekeeper” surveyed here, or in Cecil Sharp’s musical notation from the Lockyer brothers; nor am I qualified to determine whether the tunes are the same. But while ballad scholars are obliged to engage with whatever they encounter in a given project, it is to be hoped that no performer would now seriously consider including this cheap and nasty song in their repertoire.

CATALOGUE OF VERSIONS

BROADSIDES

THE LONG VERSION: 12 STANZAS

The Staffordshire Tragedy

print with no indication of printer, date or place

woodcut with man beside house between two trees and what looks like a recumbent figure in foreground (see discussion above: the figure is a murdered woman in a river, the woodcut originating with “The Berkshire Tragedy”).

Oxford. Bodleian Library. **Harding B 22(273)**

Broadside Ballads Online from the Bodleian Libraries

<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/view/sheet/20990>

Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Cengage Gale, 2009.

cited:

University of Chicago Library Catalogue

<https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/10264682>

Reproduction of original from Bodleian Library (Oxford).

English Short Title Catalog, T195780

ditto National Library of Australia Catalogue

<http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4868630>

²⁹ For the former, in addition to the Roud Index (currently at 488 entries), see for example <http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/39104/1>; for the latter, e.g. <https://mainlynorfolk.info/peter.bellamy/songs/thedarkeyedsailor.html>.

Cambridge. University Library. **Madden Collection**.
Slip-Songs O-Y

Cengage-Gale: *Madden Ballads: Reel Listing*.

<http://microformguides.gale.com/Data/Download/3033000R.pdf>

Cengage-Gale Reel 03, Frame 1873

<https://www.vwml.org/record/RoudBS/B84333>

VWML mfilm no. 73, item 1753

LONG VERSION: 11 STANZAS

The Staffordshire Tragedy

-- omits st. 6 of the above

generic woodcut of an execution scene with body hanging from gallows, hangman (presumably) standing at foot of gallows, and tumbrel whose driver is flourishing his whip.

Madden Collection. University of Cambridge Library

Slip-Songs O-Y

Cengage-Gale: *Madden Ballads: Reel Listing*.

<http://microformguides.gale.com/Data/Download/3033000R.pdf>

Cengage-Gale Reel 03, Frame 1874

<https://www.vwml.org/record/RoudBS/B84334>

VWML mfilm no. 73, item 1754.

LONG VERSION: CHAPBOOK

Hodge of the Mill; OR An old Woman Clothed in Grey. To which is added. The Staffordshire TRAGEDY. The pleasures of WOOING. The Shepherdess Lamenting her drowned Lover. Entered according to Order. 8pp. (pp. 4-6).

-- nls (see below) suggest Glasgow, 1790.

Harvard College Library

William Coolidge Lane. *Catalogue of English and American Chap-books and Broadside Ballads in Harvard College Library*. Cambridge MA: Library of Harvard University, 1905). internet archive: p. 78. No. 1369. (Roud)

National Library of Scotland

facsimile of whole text

<http://digital.nls.uk/104185658>

plus transcript (automatic – requires correction):

[http://digital.nls.uk/chapbooks-printed-in-](http://digital.nls.uk/chapbooks-printed-in-scotland/archive/108728778?mode=transcription)

[scotland/archive/108728778?mode=transcription](http://digital.nls.uk/chapbooks-printed-in-scotland/archive/108728778?mode=transcription)

cf. <https://www.vwml.org/record/RoudFS/S191283>

A Collection of the Publications of J. Kendrew of York and Others
(BL 1870 c 2) [No.212]

-- see also <https://www.vwml.org/record/RoudBS/B53204>
-- catalogue ref. to chapbook in Robert White Collection, Newcastle University Library, 6.23.

THE SHORT VERSION

SEFTON OF WORCESTER

The Cruel Gamekeeper

together with "The Wanderer".

7 stanzas

indistinct woodcut; may be a corpse in foreground; Bodleian notes seem irrelevant

Worcester: H.F. **Sefton**, Printer, Broad Street

Roud says active **1834-1856** (but doesn't have this issue in Index)

Oxford. Bodleian Library. **Firth c.17(204)**

Broadside Ballads Online from the Bodleian Libraries

<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/view/sheet/14840>

-- not a particularly distinct image: evidently a female lying on the ground, over which there looms a monstrous silhouetted figure in an aggressive posture.

SUCH

The Cruel Gamekeeper

together with "The Squire and Thrasher".

London:-- H.P. **Such**, Printer and Publisher, 177 Union Street, Boro.

1863-1885.

white-letter

woodcut of man in front of a low fence holding rifle (muzzle in left hand; butt on ground) and gesticulating with right arm.

6 stanzas

London. Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Broadwood Ballad Sheet Collection, p. 57.

Permanent URL: <http://www.vwml.org/record/LEB/9/20/2>

London. Vaughan Williams memorial Library. Frank Kidson Broadside Collection, vol. 6, p. 80. (with facs.)

Permanent URL: <http://www.vwml.org/record/FK/14/81/2>

-- there is also a copy (the same) registered as in Frank Kidson Manuscript Collection (FK/19/85/2).

Permanent URL: <http://www.vwml.org/record/FK/19/85/2>

Oxford. Bodleian Library. **Harding B 11(3637)**

Broadside Ballads Online from the Bodleian Libraries

<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/view/sheet/17198>

Oxford. Bodleian Library. **Johnson Ballads 1198.**

Broadside Ballads Online from the Bodleian Libraries

<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/view/sheet/17199>

The Cruel Gamekeeper

[imprint not supplied]

woodcut of walking man in broad-brimmed hat carrying rifle (at ready), with dog.

6 stanzas

pr. *Victorian Street Ballads*. Ed. W. Henderson. London, 1937, p. 28.

<<transcribed

-- editor says (p. 159) that all his material is taken from "British Museum collections", and states elsewhere (p. 20) that "About half" of his items are from the Sabine Baring-Gould collection

-- so probably Roud's Baring-Gould Broadside Collection Vol. 5, No. 187, his only instance of a BL source (doesn't provide text)

<https://www.vwml.org/record/RoudFS/S172715>

The Cruel Gamekeeper

Cadman of Manchester

-- ref. in a sale catalogue

<https://www.vwml.org/record/RoudBS/B5441>

PERFORMANCE TRADITION

-- no versions of this song in Carpenter Collection

[John Yonge Akerman]

no title or singer

referred to by Williams in headnote (see below), p. 259.

John Yonge Akerman. *Wiltshire Tales*. London: J.R. Smith, 1853.

"Giles Chawbacon", pp. 30-62, at p. 36.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hnp1pr;view=1up;seq=52>

actual quotation:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hnp1pr;view=1up;seq=53>

Mrs. Emma Hancock

"The Gamekeeper"

Blunsdon, Wiltshire

-- sts. 1-6 and st. 7.3-4

-- st. 7.1-2 (and a variant of 4.4) from **Mrs Dickson**, Brinkworth, Wiltshire.

coll. Alfred Williams.

-- for her biography from official sources see:

https://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/getfolkbio.php?collect_from=Hancock,%20Emma%20Mrs.

Alfred Williams.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard, 8th January, 1916, p 2, Part 13, No. 5

<https://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/getfolk.php?id=799>

Alfred Williams.

Folk Songs of the Upper Thames. London : Duckworth, 1923; repr. Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968, pp. 259-260.
Text of 7 stanzas with headnote referring to other versions.

Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre. Alfred Williams Manuscript Collection (AW/6/195).

Permanent URL: <http://www.vwml.org/record/AW/6/195>

VWML Full English calls it a “newspaper cutting” but evidently proofs for the book (headnotes heavily corrected).
followed by “Aboard the Resolution” likewise with corrected headnote, which is indeed the next song in the book (p. 262).

Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre. Alfred Williams Manuscript Collection (AW/4/9)

Permanent URL: <http://www.vwml.org/record/AW/4/9>

song transcr. tp

-- evidently MS draft of prec. : text fills page; headnote inserted above and down right margin.

also at:

<https://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/getfolk.php?id=799>

Hedges, William

“The Oxford Murder”

(Chipping Camden, Gloucestershire)

Collected Cecil Sharp, 10 September 1909.

TUNE ONLY

London. Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Cecil Sharp MSS.

Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs. Ed. Maud Karpeles. 2 vols. London, 1974, No. 66B (p. 299).

Mr. Wright

“The Gamekeeper”

(Hampshire)

Collected George Gardiner, June 1907

London. Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. George Gardiner Manuscript Collection (GG/1/12/701)

Permanent URL: <http://www.vwml.org/record/GG/1/12/701>

James Lockyer

“The Oxford Murder”

Collected Cecil Sharp, **15 August 1906**, Middlezoy, Somerset

says performer was 87 (which he was)

Cecil Sharp Manuscript Collection (at Clare College, Cambridge) (CJS2/10/1018)

VWML Full English: Permanent URL: <http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1018>

music + ONE STANZA ONLY

In Oxford town near Staffordshire
there lived a farmer’s daughter dear
And on a game-keeper we find
This lovely damsel pitched her mind

“The Oxford Murder”

Collected Cecil Sharp, **15 August 1906**, Middlezoy, Somerset

says performer was 87 (which he was)

Cecil Sharp Manuscript Collection (at Clare College, Cambridge) (CJS2/9/1040)

Permanent URL: <https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1040>

-- cross ref. to 1018 (which is correct)

TEXT

William Lockyer

“In Oxford Town”

Collected Cecil Sharp **7 September 1907**, Middlezoy, Somerset

7 September 1907

says singer was 88 (which he wasn't; James was)

Cecil Sharp Manuscript Collection (at Clare College, Cambridge) (CJS2/10/1472).

VWML Full English: <https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/1472>

music + ONE STANZA ONLY

In Oxford Town in Staffordshire
There lived a farmer's daughter dear
And on a gamekeeper we find
This lovely damsel fixed her mind.

“In Oxford Town”

Collected Cecil Sharp **7 September 1907**. (Middlezoy, Somerset)

Cecil Sharp Manuscript Collection (at Clare College, Cambridge) (CJS2/9/1350)

says singer was 88 (which he wasn't; James was)

VWML Full English:

Permanent URL: <http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/9/1350>

-- cross ref. to 1472 (correct)

pr. *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*. Ed. Maud Karpeles. 2 vols. London, 1974, No. 66A (pp. 298-9)

TEXT

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