

1828 , 1 May: MAY DAY! - Thursday being the first of May, was celebrated in this borough by the sweeps with accustomed solemnity. Their black vestments were exchanged for tinsel finery, and their sable visages were bounteously bedaubed with vermillion. Their prescriptive attendant, Jack-in-the-Green, heightened the metamorphose admirably.

The Berkshire Chronicle, 3 May 1828, page 2.

1829, 1 May: Yesterday being "May-day," the chimney-sweeps held their annual gala, and paraded the streets bedizened in all the finery which ribbons and raddle could bestow.

The Berkshire Chronicle, 2 May 1829, page 3

1866, 1 May: The first of May, instead of all sunshine and gladness, was ushered in this year with rain and cold weather. The old custom of the sweeps going about the town, dancing at various places, was observed, but their efforts did not appear to be very much appreciated

The Berkshire Chronicle, 5 May 1866, page 5

1867, 1 May: Wednesday being "May Day" some few individuals in grotesque attire endeavoured to improve the occasion by dancing about in certain parts of the town in the hope that the partially sane portion of the inhabitants would give them sundry spare coppers. The exhibition was a sorry one enough, but it possibly amuses some people.

The Berkshire Chronicle , 4 May 1867, page 5

1893, JACK-IN-THE-GREEN .

No Jack-in-the-Green,
With his customs gay,
This year was seen
First of May.

We have grown too dull in this age of spleen
For the frolic and fun of a Jack-in-the-Green
With the Ibsen boom
Has our life grown grey,
And wrapped in gloom
Is the First of May;
And we haven't the heart for a joyous scene
Or the honest mirth of a Jack-in-the-Green
The puritan ass,
With his solemn bray,
On the First of May:
Has settled, alas!
The First of May;

And girls and garlands have passed, I
ween,
And so have the glories of Jack-in-
the- Green.
No laugh rings out
On the air to-day,
But we've fear and doubt
On the First of May;
And Labour swaggers with threat'ning
mien
Where merrily once danced Jack-in-
the-Green.

The Star, 18 May 1893, (page 1)

This version compiled by Clive Blunt for 1 May 2019

MAY CAROLS



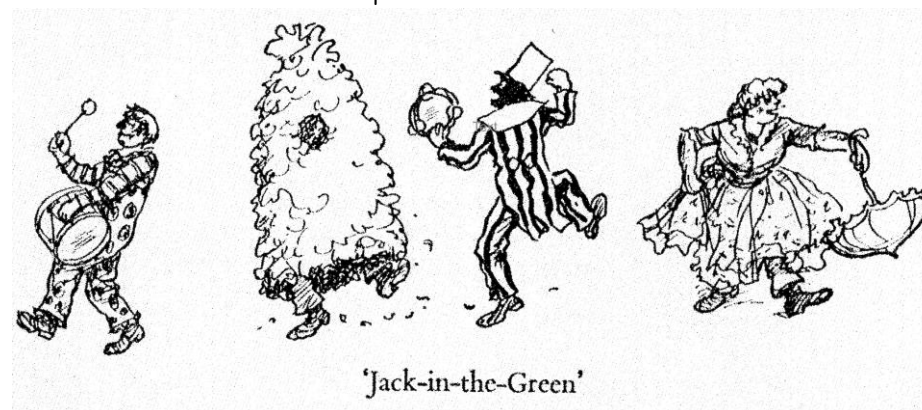
READING CAROL

Summer is a coming in. Loudly sing cuckoo,
Grow-eth seed and blow-eth mead and spring-eth wood anew,
Sing cuckoo.

Ewe now bleat-eth after lamb, low-eth after calf the cow ,
Bullock start-eth, buck now vert-eth,
Merry sing cuckoo.

Cuckoo, cuckoo, well now sing thou cuckoo.
Nor cease thou never new,
Sing cuckoo. Now sing cuckoo!

E H Shepard



MAY DAY CAROL.

Awake, awake, lift up your lives,
And pray to God for grace,
Repent, repent of your former sins,
Whilst you have time and space.

I have been wandering all this night,
and best part of this day,
So now I have come to sing you a song,
And show you a bunch of May

A branch of May I have brought to you,
And at your door it stands,
It is spread about and well budded out,
By the work of our Lords hands.

Man is but a man, but his life is a span,
He is most like a flower,
He's here today and gone tomorrow,
So it's all gone down in an hour.

So now I've sung you my little short song,
And can no longer stay,
God bless you all, both great and small,
And I'll wish you a happy May.

1. Unite and unite and let us all unite,
For the summer is a-come unto day,
And wither we are going, we will all unite,
In the merry morning of May.
2. With a merry ring and now the joyful spring,
For the summer is a-come unto day,
O give to us a cup of ale and the merrier we will sing.
In the merry morning of May.
3. The young men of Padstow, they might if they would,
For the summer is a-come unto day,
They might have built a ship and gilded it all in gold.
In the merry morning of May.
4. The young women of Padstow, they might if they would,
For the summer is a-come unto day,
They might have built a garland with the white rose and the red.
In the merry morning of May.
5. Where are those young men that now here should dance,
For the summer is a-come unto day,
For some they are in England and some they are in France.
In the merry morning of May.

Oh where is Saint George?
Oh, where is he-o?
He's out in his long boat
All on the salt sea-o
Up flies the kite, Down falls the Lark-o
And Ursula Birdhood she had an old ewe,
And she died in her own park-o

6. With a merry ring and now the joyful spring,
For the summer is a-come unto day,
So happy are those little birds and the merrier we will sing,
In the merry morning of May.
Verses 3 & 5 sung by ladies, verse 4 by the men only

Winter time has gone and past-Oh,
Summer time has come at last-Oh,
We shall sing and dance the day,
And follow the old 'Obby 'Oss to bring the May.

Ch. Hail, Hail, the first of May-Oh,
For it is the first summer day-Oh,
Cast your care and fears away,
To follow the old 'Obby 'Oss to bring the May.

Bluebells they begin to ring-Oh,
For true love it is the thing-Oh,
Love on any other day,
Is never quite the same as on the first of May.

Ch.

Never let it come to pass-Oh,
That we fail to raise a glass-Oh,
Drink to those who've gone away,
And left us the old 'Obby 'Oss to bring the May.

Ch.

THE BONNY CUCKOO

My bonny cuckoo, I tell thee true
That through the groves I'll rove with you;
I'll rove with you until the spring,
And then my cuckoo shall sweetly sing.

Cuckoo, sing girls, let no one tell
Until I settle my seasons well.
Don't go away, but tarry here,
And make the season last all the year.

The ash and the hazel shall mourning say,
My bonny cuckoo, don't go away;
Don't go away, but tarry here
And sing for us throughout the year,
Cuckoo, cuckoo, pray tarry here,
And make the spring last all the year.

THE CUCKOO.

Oh the cuckoo she's a pretty bird, she sings as she flies,
She brings us glad tidings, she tells us no lies,
She sucks little bird's eggs to keep her voice clear,
When she cries cuckoo then summer is near.

Ch: Cuckoo in April cuckoo in May,
Cuckoo in June and July flies away.

Oh walking and talking and walking was I
to meet my true lover, she'll come by and by,
to meet her in the morning is all my delight,
then we'll go courting best part of the night.

Ch:

Now courting is a pleasure, but parting's a grief,
An inconstant lover is worse than a thief,
A thief he can rob you of all that you save,
An inconstant lover sends you to your grave.

Ch:

BRING ME SUNSHINE.

Bring me sunshine, in your smile,
Bring me laughter, all the while,
In this world where we live, there should be more happiness,
So much joy you can give, to each brand new bright tomorrow,

Make me happy, through the years,
Never bring me, any tears,
Let your arms be as warm as the sun from up above,
Bring me fun, bring me sunshine, bring me love.

Bring me sunshine, in your eyes,
Bring me rainbows, from the skies,
Life's too short to be spent having anything but fun,
We can be so content, if we gather little sunbeams.

Be light-hearted, all day long,
Keep me singing, happy songs,
Let your arms be as warm as the sun from up above,
Bring me fun, bring me sunshine, bring me love.

NOW WELCOME SUMMER. *Geoffrey Chaucer*

Now welcome summer with thy sunne soft,
Now welcome summer with thy sunne soft,
That hast this winter's weather overshake,
And driven away the longe nighte's black.

Saint Valentine, that art full high aloft,
Thus singen smalle fowles for thy sake:
Now welcome summer with thy sunne soft,
That hast this winter's weather overshake,

Well have they cause for to gladden oft,
Well have they cause for to gladden oft,
Since each of them recovered hath his make,
Full blissful may they singe when they wake:

Now welcome summer with thy sunne soft,
Now welcome summer with thy sunne soft,
That hast this winter's weather overshake,
And driven away the longe nighte's black.

MORRIS FRAGMENT.

It was on the morn of bright May day,
When nature painted all things gay,
The birds did sing and the lambs did play,
Bedecked the meadows 'round.
Young Jock he 'rose up in the morn,
He gaily tripp-ed o'er the lawn,
His Sunday best the youth put on,
For today it is the fair
And young Jenny would meet him there.

QUEEN OF THE MAY.

Winter is over and summer coming on
And the meadows are pleasant and gay
I met a fair maid, so sweetly sang she
I thought her the queen of the May,
I thought her the queen of the May.

I said 'my fair maid, how come you here
In the meadow so early this morn'
Oh the maid she replied 'to gather some May
for the trees they are now in full bloom,
for the trees they are now in full bloom'.

I said 'my fair maid', 'May I walk with you
In the meadow so pleasant and gay?'
'Oh no', she replied, 'that never can be,
for I fear you will lead me astray,
for I fear you will lead me astray'.

Gently I took her Lilly white hand,
On the green mossy bank we sat down
I planted a kiss on her sweet pretty lips
And the small birds they sing all around,
And the small birds they sing all around.

As we arose, she gave me a smile
And thanked me for what I had done,
I planted a kiss on her sweet ruby lips
And the small birds were singing all around,
And the small birds were singing all around.

Early next morning I made her my bride
And the people had nothing to say,
For the bells they did ring
and the bridesmaids did sing,
as I crowned her the queen of the May,
as I crowned her the queen of the May.

SWINTON MAY SONG.

While in this pleasant evening, together come as we,
For the summer springs so fresh as rain and gay,
We'll tell you of a blossom, and a bud on every tree,
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

Rise up the master of this house, all in your chain of gold,
For the summer springs so fresh as rain and gay,
We hope you're not offended, with your house we'll make so bold,
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

Rise up the mistress of this house, with gold all on your breast,
For the summer springs so fresh as rain and gay,
And if your body is asleep we hope your soul's at rest,
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

Rise up the children of this house, all in your rich attire,
For the summer springs so fresh as rain and gay,
And every hair upon your head shines like a silver wire,
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

We hope the Lord will prosper you, both now and evermore,
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

God bless this house and arbour, your riches and your store,
For the summer springs so fresh as rain and gay,
We hope the Lord will prosper you, both now and evermore,
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

Now we are going to leave you, in peace and plenty here,
For the summer springs so fresh as rain and gay,
We will not sing you May again, until another year,
For to drive you these cold winter nights away.

STAINES MORRIS.

Come you young men, come along,
With your music, dance and song,
Bring your lasses in your hands,
For 'tis that which love commands.

Ch: Then to the maypole haste away,
For 'tis now our holiday,
Then to the maypole haste away,
For 'tis now our holiday,

It is the choice time of the year,
For he violets now appear,
Now the rose receives its birth
And the pretty primrose decks the earth

Ch:

Here each bachelor may choose,
One that will not faith abuse,
nor repay, with coy disdain,
Love that should be loved again.

Ch:

And when you well reckoned have,
What kisses you your sweetheart gave,
Take them all again, and more,
It will never make them poor.

Ch:

When you thus have spent your time,
And the day is past its prime,
To your beds repair at night,
And dream there of your days delight.

Ch:

WHEN SPRING COMES IN

When Spring comes in the birds do sing,
The lambs do skip and the bells do ring
While we enjoy their glorious charm so noble and so gay.

Chorus (repeated after each verse):

The primrose blooms and the cowslip too,
The violets in their sweet retire, the roses shining through the briar,
And the daffadown-dillies which we admire will die and fade away.

Young men and maidens will be seen
On mountains high and meadows green,
They will talk of love and sport and play
While these young lambs do skip away.
At night they homeward wend their way, when evening stars appear.

The dairymaid to milking goes her, blooming cheeks as red as a rose,
She carries her pail all on her arm so cheerful and so gay,
She milks, she sings, and the valleys ring.
The small birds on the branches there sit listening to this lovely fair.
She is her master's trust and care, she is the ploughman's joy.

ONE MAY MORNING EARLY

One May morning early I chanced for to roam
And strode through the fields by the side of a grove.
It was there that I did hear the harmless birds sing.
And you never heard so sweet, you never heard so sweet,
You never heard so sweet as the birds in the spring.

At the end of the grove I sat myself down
And the song of the nightingale echoed all around.
Their song was so charming, their notes were so clear,
No music, no songster, no music, no songster,
No music, no songster could with them compare.

All you that come here the small birds to hear
I will have you pay attention so pray all draw near.
And when you are growing old you'll have this to say:
That you never heard so sweet, you never heard so sweet,
You never heard so sweet as the birds on the spray!

THE FIELDS IN MAY

William Allingham

What can better please,
When your mind is well at ease,
Than a walk among the green fields in May?
To see the verdure new,
And to hear the loud cuckoo,
while sunshine makes the whole world gay:

When the butterfly so brightly
On his journey dances lightly,
And the bee goes by with business-like hum;
When the fragrant breeze and soft
Stirs the shining clouds aloft,
And the children's hair, as laughingly they come:

When the grass is full of flowers,
And the hedge is full of bowers,
And the finch and the linnets piping clear,
Where the branches throw their shadows
On a footway through the meadows,
With a brook among the cresses winding near .

THE MAY-POLE

Robert Herrick 1591 - 1634

The may-pole is up
Now give me the cup;
I'll drink to the garlands a-round it:
But first unto those
Whose hands did compose
The glory of flowers that crowned it

A health to my girls
Whose husbands may Earles
Or Lords be (granting my wishes)
And when that ye wed
To the bridal bed,
Then multiply all, like to fishes.

SUMMERS' IN

Cuckoo's call the evening to still,
The sky went down and the nightbird's wing
Falls over, the last day of Spring.

Chorus:

For Summer is in,
Everyone sing
Ah, ah, ah,
Let us begin!

The other day, it being warm
We walked beside the fresh green corn,
Gathered flowers in a garland to deck the day.

Friends and neighbours gather near,
Come drink with us a brew of beer?
And share in our fortune that the sun does bring.

The king and the queen one morning in May
Played chess in the valley to see who could stay,
The stream in its travels laughing away.

We've sung in the markets, the pubs and the fair,
We made no money, but what do we care?
We'll sleep in a haystack and be on our way.

We've gathered our feast along the seashore,
Cockles and mussels, enough for us all.
We'll eat in the sand dunes and then go back for more.

Scattered around us, where we lay,
Are the bones of million years away,
Bleached by the sunshine in the past few day.

Think of the ages blown in the sand,
Think where an ancient people did stand,
And think of your fortune to be child of this land.

MAY DEW

Come pretty fair maids a secret to hear
Through parsley, rosemary and thyme
Spring time it is the sweet of the year
Come gather your May dew to keep your face fine.
Come gather your May dew to keep your face fine
Come rise in the morn at the break of the day
Through parsley, rosemary and thyme
And the fields they are graced with the dew of the May
Come gather your May dew to keep your face fine
Come gather your May dew to keep your face fine

Pretty maids that live in the heart of the town
Through parsley, rosemary and thyme
Oh they have fine jewels and many a fine gown
But never the May dew to keep their face fine
But never the May dew to keep their face fine

Oh sweethearts they're true as I've heard people say
Through parsley, rosemary and thyme
When pretty maids use the dew of the May
Tis there a last charm to keep their face fine
Tis there a last charm to keep their face fine

(repeat first verse)

"About the Maypole we dance all round,
and with garlands of pinks and roses are crowned.
Our little tribute we merrily pay,
to the gay Lord and bright Lady o' the May,"

from Playford's "Choice Songs and Ayres" of 1673 - visitors made presents -

COME LASSES AND LADS.

Come, Lasses and Lads, take leave of your Dads and away to the Maypole hie;
For ev'ry fair has a sweetheart there and the fiddler's standing by.
Then Willie shall dance with Jane and Johnny has got his Joan,
And every maid shall trip it, trip it, trip it up and down.
(Repeat last line)

Let's start, says Dick, Aye aye, says Nick and I prithee, fiddler, play
Agreed, says Hugh, and so says Sue, for this is a holiday.
Then every lad did doff his hat unto his lass,
And every maid did curtsy, curtsy, curtsy on the grass.

Begin, says Matt, Aye aye, says Nat we'll lead up Packington's Pound
No, no, says Nolly, and so says Dolly we'll first have Sellenger's Round
Then every man began to foot it round about
And every girl did step it, step it step it in and out.

You're out, says Dick, Not I, says Nick 'twas the fiddler play'd it wrong
'Tis true, says Hugh, and so says Sue and so says every one
The fiddler then began to play the tune again
And every maid did jig it, jig it, jig it to the men.

Let's kiss, says Jan, Aye aye, says Nan and so says every she
How many says Matt, Why three, says Nat for that is a maiden's fee
The men, instead of three did give them half a score
And the maids in kindness, kindness, kindness give 'em as many more.

Well there they did stay for the whole of the day and they tired the fiddler
quite
With dancing and play, without any pay from morning until night.
They told the fiddler then that they'd pay him for his play
And each a twopence, twopence, twopence give him, and went away.

Good night, says Harry, Good night, says Mary good night, says Pol to John;
Good night,' says Sue to her sweetheart Hugh, good night says every one
Some walked, and some did run some loitered on the way
And they bound themselves with kisses twelve to meet next holiday.

SEARCHING FOR LAMBS

As I walked out one May morning,
One May morning betime,
I met a maid, from home had strayed
Just as the sun did shine.

"What makes you rise so soon, my dear,
Your journey to pursue?
Your pretty little feet they tread so neat,
Strike off the morning dew."

"I'm going in search of my father's flocks,
His young and tender lambs,
That over hills and over dales
Lie bleating for their dams."

"O stay, o stay, you handsome maid,
Rest but one moment here.
For there is none save you alone
That I do love most dear."

"How gloriously the sun do shine,
How pleasant is the air.
I would rather rest on my true love's breast
Than any other where."

"For I am thine and thou art mine,
No man shall uncomf'ort thee.
We'll join our hands in wedded bands
And married we will be."

THE WINTER IT IS PAST Arr. Burns

The winter it is past, and the summer's come at last
And the small birds are singing in the trees,
Now everything is glad, oh but I am very sad,
For my true love is parted from me.

The rose upon the briar, by the water running clear,
May have charms for the linnet and the bee;
Their little loves are blest, ah their little hearts at rest,
But my true love is parted from me.

And all you who are in love and cannot it remove
I pity all the pain that you endure
For experience lets me know
That your hearts are full of woe
It's a woe that no mortal can cure.

My love is like the sun
And the firmament does run
Forever is constant and true
But his is like the moon
It wanders up and doon (doon-down)
And is every month changing anew.

The winter is past, and the summer's come at last
And the small birds are singing in the trees,
Their little loves are blest, oh their little hearts at rest,
But my true love is far away from me.

My true love is far away from me.

OAK AND ASH AND THORN (A TREE SONG) Kipling/Belamy

Of all the trees that grow so fair, Old England to adorn,
Greater are none beneath the sun, Than Oak and Ash and Thorn,
Sing Oak, and Ash, and Thorn, good sirs, (All of a Mayday morn!)
Surely we sing of no better thing, In Oak, and Ash and Thorn!

Oak of the Clay lived many a day, Or ever Aeneas began.
Ash of the Loam was a lady at home, When Brut was an outlaw man.
Thorn of the Down saw New Troy Town (From which was London born);
Witness nearby the ancientry of Oak, and Ash, and Thorn!

Ch:

Yew that is old in churchyard-mould, He breedeth a mighty bow,
Alder for shoes do wise men choose, And Beech for cups also.
But when ye have killed, and your bowl is spilled, And your shoes are
clean outworn, Back ye must speed for all that ye need, To Oak, and Ash, and Thorn.

Ch:

Ellum she hates mankind, and waits 'till every gust be laid,
To drop a limb on the head of him that anyway trusts her shade:
But whether a lad be sober or sad, or mellow with ale from the horn,
He will take no wrong when he lieth along 'neath Oak, and Ash,
and Thorn.

Ch:

Oh, do not tell the Priest our plight, or he would call it a sin:
But we've been out in the woods all night, a-conjuring Summer in!
And we bring you news by word of mouth, good news for cattle and corn,
Now is the Sun come up from the South, with Oak, and Ash, and

Thorn!

Sing Oak and Ash and Thorn, good sirs,
(All of a Mayday morn!)
England shall bide 'till Judgement Tide
By Oak and Ash and Thorn!

HELSTON.

Take the scorn to wear the horn,
It was the crest where you were born,
Your father's father wore it,
and your father wore it too.

Ch: Hal an tow, jolly rumble-o
We were up long before the day-o
To welcome in the summer,
To welcome in the May-o,
For summer is a coming in,
And winter's gone away-o.

John the bone was marching on,
When he met Sally Dover,
He kissed her once, he kissed her twice,
He kissed her three times over.

Robin Hood and Little John,
They've both gone to the fair-o,
And we will to the merry green woods,
To see what they did there-o,
And for the chase-o,
To chase the buck and hare-o.

Where are the Spaniards?
That made so great a boast-o,
For they shall eat the grey goose feather,
And we shall eat the roast-o,
In every land-o,
The land where'er we go-o.

God bless Aunt Mary Moses,
With all her power and might-o,
And send us peace in merry England,
Both by day and night-o
In every land-o,
The land that e're we go-o.

As for St. George-o,
St. George he was a knight-o,
Of all the knights in Christendom,
St. George he has a right-o,
In every land-o,
The land that e're we go-o.

But to a greater than St. George,
Oh Helston has the right-o,
St. Michael with his wings outspread,
The Archangel so bright-o,
Who fought the fiend-o,
The foe of all mankind-o.

MAY SONG. BEDFORDSHIRE.

Good morning Lords and Ladies this is the first of May
We hope you view our garland, it is so bright and gay,
For it is the first of May, Oh it is the first of May,
Remember Lords and Ladies, it is the first of May.

We gathered them this morning all in the early dew
And now we bring their beauty and fragrance all for you,
For it is the first of May, Oh it is the first of May,
Remember Lords and Ladies, it is the first of May.

The cuckoo comes in April to sing its song in May,
In June it changes tune, in July it flies away,
For it is the first of May, Oh it is the first of May,
Remember Lords and Ladies, it is the first of May.

And now you've seen our garland we must be on our way,
So remember Lords and Ladies, it is the first of May.
For it is the first of May, Oh it is the first of May,
Remember Lords and Ladies, it is the first of May.