'Aive down your prong and stamp along': Festivals, feasts, and fairs

> Here's one, two, three jolly lads, all of one mind,
> We have come a pace-egging and we hope you'll prove kind.
> We hope you'll prove kind with your eggs and strong beer,
> For we'll come no more nigh you until the next year.
>
> Pace-egging song (aka Heysham Peace-egging song)

SUCH IS THE hold on the popular imagination of the term 'the Industrial Revolution,' that it is commonplace to see England in the third quarter of the eighteenth century as an essentially rural-based customary society and economy. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, critics from both the left and right of the political spectrum created a myth of a pre-lapsarian, untainted people with a culture characterised by custom rather than commercialization. There undoubtedly, was a traditional, customary calendar, celebrated with music and dancing, which was an important part of local identity, but it co-existed with more commercialised music-making. There were tensions and, particularly in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, certain customs were either abandoned or suppressed, but many survived into the mid-nineteenth century.

The customary calendar

When mummers, pace-eggers, plough-bullocks and wassailers, not to mention catterners and clemmers, made their way

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through the streets and lanes, their music and song brought both colour and meaning to the lives of the inhabitants of England's villages and towns in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[1] Pace-egging groups around Blackburn, for example, were 'dressed in various fantastic garbs, and wearing masks – some of the groups accompanied by a player or two on the violin – [who] go from house to house singing, dancing, and capering.'[2] Elsewhere, morris dancers, including 'Old Toss Pot,' performed a St. George and the Turk play, which also managed to praise both Lord Nelson and Lord Collingwood. And everywhere 'the extent and exertion of the dance!'[3] These were among several collective, often processional, celebrations that reinforced parochial identity. Many of the rituals and accompanying songs were concerned with alms-giving in money or kind.[4] Soulers sang for 'an apple, a pear, a plum or a cherry,' while pace-eggers hoped to be rewarded with 'eggs and strong beer,' with the emphasis on the responsibilities of the wealthy, the legitimacy of the request for a dole and a reminder of penalties that might follow from failing to comply.[5]

Mummers were to be seen on many occasions, especially at Christmas and Easter, but also on dole days and at local feasts and wakes. The plots of their plays were simple (combat, cure, and a request for alms!) but the spectacle was enhanced by highly decorative, often outlandish, costumes and the highly stylized performances. Many villages had itinerant troupes of dancers whose performances were part of parochial rivalries.[6] Much has been made of the different styles of morris dancing – and no-one would confuse north-western clogdancers with Cotswold morris men, while the Abbotts Bromley horn dancers were unique – but many morris tunes, perhaps with minor local variation, were to be found in different parts of the country. 'Greensleeves' was ubiquitous and both 'Shepherd's Hey'* and 'Old Woman Tossed Up' were widely played.

There was a nation-wide culture, as musicians and their tunes travelled across the four countries that were to comprise the United Kingdom.[7] Titles may have been changed to give greater topicality and the notes may have been tweaked (or simply misheard, misremembered or mis-transcribed) but

* See Appendix for a version of this tune.

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the underlying tune remained essentially the same[8]. Customs varied in time and form, not least because of differences in the local economy. Sheep-shearing was celebrated in the Cotswolds and on the South Downs; harvest-home in the arable districts of Dorset and Wiltshire and Norfolk and Lincolnshire. Occupational identity was also important. The feast of St. Blaise (3 February) was celebrated by woollen combers in town and country. Likewise, St. Crispin's day (25 October) by shoemakers and St. Clement's day (23 November) by blacksmiths.[9] Celebrations of the harvest or sheep-shearing were more than a recognition of the economic significance of the event. They were an opportunity to stress communal interdependence, common interest, and social cohesion. 'Here there is no distinction of person but masters and servants sit at the same table … and spend … the night in dancing, singing, etc' wrote John Brand of harvest-home in 1813.[10] However, there is a danger of romanticizing harsh realities in an ever-more commercial world of capitalist agriculture.The 'jolly boys' who went 'together with our masters to shear the lambs and yowes' in one of the Copper family's sheep-shearing songs, praised 'our master [who] will bring us beer whenever we do lack' but also recognized that they worked 'hard … until our backs do break.'[11] On the surface, songs celebrating harvest and sheep-shearing were full of praise for the farmer and his wife, but there was something calculative about the sentiments:'our master's very kind … and our mistress is always as good as good,' in the words of one North Wiltshire harvest song, but one would hardly expect other in a communal song.[12] But, as writers as varied as John Clare, Thomas Hardy and Flora Thompson noted, social cohesion was weakening, if not broken.[13] Other customs were coming under pressure. Pace-eggers and plough-bullocks were viewed with growing concern, especially by church and chapel and the 'respectable' local press, from the 1820s onwards. [14] The last Bishop Blaise Fair in Bradford, combining masters and workers in marching, feasting and drinking was held in 1825.[15]

The old ways were changing in other ways. There were commercial opportunities. As early as the 1740s, 'the famous Bath Morris-Dancers' appeared at St. Bartholomew's fair.[16] By the late eighteenth century morris dancers were appearing at fairs and even in the new indoor venues in London, such as the

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Pantheon in Oxford Street, where 'a set of Morrice Dancers from the North, gave an excellent display of the Cumberland Sword dance.'[17] For many performers, custom and commerce were complementary. For others custom was unequivocally commercial. 'Whistling Billy,' interviewed by Mayhew, in the mid-nineteenth century, is a case in point. An itinerant dancer and tin-whistle player, his best times were during the three or four weeks of harvest-time, with the opportunity to play for coppers while harvesters were working in the field, and, more important, at the harvest suppers. There was good money to be made: 'the farmer himself would give me 4s 6d or 5s the night, beside my quart of ale. Then I'd pick up 6s or 7s in the ha'pence among the men.'[18] Moving from farm to farm, he played 'two harvest suppers a week for three weeks or a month.'[19]

Fairs, travelling theatres and menageries

By the mid to late-eighteenth century, popular music was increasingly itinerant and commercialized. Fairs, many dating back centuries, played an important role in this process. While still retaining a range of important economic functions – hiring, wholesaling and retailing – they were becoming more leisure-oriented.[20] This in itself aroused fears, at a time when the boundaries of acceptable behaviour were being redefined. A number of fairs disappeared. Much attention was focussed on London, where the highest profile loss was Southwark fair, which succumbed in 1762 Others – Bow, Stepney and Tothill – eventually disappeared in the 1820s, after many years campaigning; but some, notably Greenwich survived, while new fairs appeared at Battersea, Deptford, and King's Cross. In the country at large, several smaller, rural fairs were abandoned but others, notably Oxford's St. Giles' Fair, Nottingham Goose Fair and the Pack Monday Fair at Sherborne, recreated themselves.[21]

At a time when, outside the cities and large (or very fashionable) towns, there was insufficient demand to justify investment in permanent buildings, the fair and its associated panoply of itinerant performers, was an important source of popular leisure, of which music was a central component. At St. Bartholomew's fair about 40 per cent of licensed stalls were devoted to music booths, theatres, menageries, and 'circus' acts,

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all of which had important musical elements.[22] The component parts of Victorian music hall were already in evidence and making money for the new entrepreneurs of leisure in late-Georgian England. The fair, which generated its own cautionary ballads, such as 'The Countryman's Visit to Bartholomew's Fair' (c.1810), provided an opportunity for the aspiring (or indigent) local musician and ballad-singer. Nightingale, the ballad-singer, immortalized in Johnson's *Bartholomew's Fair* was not a figment of the author's imagination.[23] William Hone, writing about Greenwich fair, was appalled by the 'never to be forgotten orgy of noise, swings, dancing booths, oil lamps, fried fish, fat women, giants, dwarfs, gingerbread nuts, unappreciated actors, jugglers and acrobats, mud, dirt, drink, gin, beer and skittles.'[24] A more sympathetic opinion was given by Charles Dickens, who saw the fair as no more than 'a spring rash, a three days' fever' after which 'the old habits of plodding industry' were resumed.[25] Among the many amusements, 'the grandest and most numerously-frequented booth' was "The Crown and Anchor," a large, temporary ball-room and a scene of boisterousness that 'beggars description. The noise of the various instruments, the orchestra, the shouting, the "scratchers" and the dancing is bewildering.'[26]

Nor were large-scale celebrations confined to the capital. By the mid-nineteenth century leisure had become the major function of the Nottingham Goose Fair. Local civic dignitaries took part in the opening ceremony and each year 'all kind of strollers, beggars, gypsies, singers, dancers, players on harps, Indian jugglers, Punch and Judy exhibitors, and similar wandering artists and professors' made their way there.[27] On a smaller scale, Huddersfield Fair saw 'the usual scene of bustle and gaiety' especially in certain parts of town, such as 'King-street and the bottom end of Ramsden-street [which] were literally crammed with stools, booths and caravans and the usual attendants at a fair ground.'[28] Furthermore, in the smaller villages nearby – Honley and Holmfirth in particular – the annual feasts were similarly well attended as hospitality for returning family as well as visitors, combined with conviviality. Local landlords 'hired singers, fiddlers, piano-players etc and during the day-light music, song singing, fiddling and even dancing was indulged in.'[29] Similarly, in Lancashire the wakes

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were important events. Bamford describes the Middleton rush carts with their 'banners and garlands, and silver ornaments and morrice bells, and other music, quite joyous and delightful.'[30] As in other villages, 'musicians are also secured … a fiddler for the chamber dancing always, and never less than two fifers and a drummer to play before the [rush] cart.' Further, funds permitting, 'a set of morrice dancers … some score or two of young men, with hats trimmed and decked out [who] precede the [cart] drawers, dancing in couples …[and even] a band of instrumentalists,' though, as Bamford conceded, they were 'often a sorry affair certainly, but still a "band" to swear to.'[31] Wakes remained popular in north west and central England and resisted efforts to civilize them until the mid-nineteenth century when the celebrations were rationalised in terms of their timing and nature.[32] Until then, as arch-reformer, Josiah Wedgewood was forced to admit: 'Our men have been to play 4 days this week, it being Burslem Wakes. I have rough'd and smoothed them over, & promised them a long Xmass, but I know it is all in vain, for Wakes must be observed though the World was to end with them.'[33]

Although variety was of the essence in fairground entertainment, the dancing booth was one of the central attractions. As one observer noted in 1844, 'the grand feature of [Greenwich] fair was, as usual, Algar's Crown and Anchor, an enormous dancing booth;' another declaring it 'the most splendid thing in its way in Europe.'[34] Booths in other parts of the country were praised for their size and brightness.[35] Nor were they restricted to fairs or feasts. Algar provided a booth in Hyde Park as part of Queen Victoria's wedding celebrations, another was to be found at the Royal Agricultural Society's show at Southampton. Other events, notably at various race meetings across the country, boasted a dancing booth. Some of the earliest entrepreneurs sought to attract a respectable, genteel clientele. William Darby's 'dining and dancing booth' at Bury fair offered 'admittance free to all respectable Persons until Dancing commences' and, even when it did, gentlemen paid 2s and ladies 1s, at least on Wednesdays and Saturdays – on other days gentlemen merely paid 1s.[36] Respectability did not guarantee profitability; and by the mid-century its doors had been thrown open more widely, so that, as the *Leeds Times* observed, 'the

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company, *as might be expected*, was "quite promiscuous."'[37] The men or women behind these enterprises are largely unknown – Algar and his daughter are exceptions. There are several references to gypsy families, but most commonly local publicans were the driving force. The profitability of the ventures is impossible to establish, but there were considerable hazards. Poor weather could reduce attendances and thus income; worse, storm could destroy both tent and fittings. A widely-reported "whirlwind" in August 1848 in Brighton wreaked havoc on a number of entertainment booths while, five years earlier, Hart's dancing-booth (as well as Wild's theatre) was unroofed and destroyed at the annual October fair in Hull.[38] In addition, dancing-booths were seen to be a particularly problematic aspect of a wider problem of criminality and immorality. Thefts and assaults were commonplace, the illegal sale of beer and spirits not infrequent and very occasionally there was a manslaughter case that arose out of a dancing-booth brawl. Local ruling elites were often extremely critical, though, in most instances, not enough to stop income-generating activities.[39] But there were exceptions. In Portsmouth, it was alleged that 'in 1820 the introduction of a drinking and dancing booth called "Crown and Anchor" led to others of a like character, thus converting a mercantile fair into a saturnalia of vice and profligacy.'[40] For a decade from the mid-1830s a campaign was mounted to abolish the fair, only for reformers to fall foul of ancient statute. Finally, having agreed to abandon these ancient rights, reformers triumphed when the local Improvement Act included a clause that made possible the abolition of the fair. Equally long running, and more personalized, was a dispute in Bury St Edmunds. Between 1835 and 1843 there was an ongoing clash between members of the town corporation, who opposed the erection of 'a dancing, singing and drinking booth' on Angel Field at the annual fair by a local publican, Mr. King. The critics condemned 'the perfect nuisances [and] immorality occasioned by such places.' King repeatedly ignored the corporation, which retaliated by ordering the booth to be pulled down and he successfully sued for damages; and, as matters came to a head in the early 1840s, he prosecuted the mayor for trespass. The corporation claimed that it had the right in law to ban King's dancing booth. The case was eventually argued before the full Court of Queen's

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Bench in 1843. To the dismay of reformers, the court decided that the byelaw in question could not be sustained. King appears to have disappeared from the scene but the following year the corporation was still attempting – and still failing – to prevent Ellwood's dancing-booth appearing at the annual town fair.[41] Entrepreneurial determination and popular support sustained the dance-booth in Bury, but such was the growing confidence in the local police that within a matter of years, councillors had no qualms in licensing dance-booths.[42]

Travelling theatre companies and menageries also had a strong musical component. Among the earliest and most famous was Richardson's, whose large, garishly-lit booth offered 'a melodrama (with three murders and a ghost), a pantomime, a comic song, an overture, and some incidental music, all done in twenty-five minutes.'[43] Captured in paint by Rowlandson, Richardson's was closely associated with St Bartholomew's Fair, but this was part of a much wider circuit in the south of England. In 1826 the company appeared at sixty-six fairs. Many were in or around London, but others were as far south as Dover, Bristol, and Portsmouth and as far north as Cambridge, Ipswich, and Bury St Edmunds. There were other less well-known travelling showmen and their companies. In the north-east of England and southern Scotland, Billy Purvis was the outstanding figure. Starting as a 'drummer extraordinaire' in Newcastle, he developed a range of theatrical skills, including dancing, gymnastics, and dialect renditions of Shakespeare. In the early 1830s, as an itinerant musician (he was adept on the Northumbrian pipes) and comic, he played in a variety of locations – fairs and pubs for the most part – before achieving a breakthrough at Newcastle races in 1834. Two years later he opened the timber-built Victoria theatre but he still toured with his company, offering music and melodrama into old age until he died 'broken in body, spirit, and fortune' in 1853.[44] Further south, James Wild, commonly referred to as 'Old Wild' was known as 'the Yorkshire Richardson's.' The company started in the late-eighteenth century and continued, under Wild's son, until the mid-nineteenth. Music – 'the dancing and the singing, and the downright rollicking fun' – was integral to their entertainment. Wild senior was 'passionately fond of music and an excellent player on the clarionet. [*sic*]' In his teens he joined Cleckheaton Old Band, quickly becoming its leader,

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before joining Kite and Morris's Circus Band as its conductor. The band, with four members as its core – two Kent bugles, a trumpet and a trombone – promenaded the streets of the cities, towns and villages of the West Riding and south Lancashire to drum up trade. Their number was augmented by 'amateur musicians who lived locally [and] came after their daily labours were over' and even, occasionally 'Germans – those delightful discoursers of music, who, during the day, go out "busking" in the villages.' Such was the younger Wild's commitment to 'a good band' that in 1856 he 'engaged as leader Mr. John Hope, formerly bandmaster of Her Majesty's 98th Regiment of Foot, India.'[45]

Travelling menageries, a great novelty of the early and mid-nineteenth century, also added to musical life. The most famous, Wombwell's, started modestly in 1804.[46] By 1810 he had taken to the road with a fifteen-wagon travelling menagerie and, more pertinently, a brass band. Wombwell's was famed for its 'fine band of musicians in their beef-eater costumes.'[47] '[N]ot the least attraction was the band which accompanied the menagerie, the gentlemen of which performed some favourite pieces in a very excellent manner.'[48] There was an interesting flow into and out of the band. For aspiring young musicians, joining the menagerie band could be the first step in a performing career; conversely, enticing an experienced band member to give up life on the road could be a big fillip to a local town band.

Pleasure gardens

Pleasure gardens provided another venue for dancing and other delights. Entrepreneurs like Jonathan Tyer and music directors such as James Hook, Louis Emanuel and William Moncrieff were pioneers of mass entertainment – and mass catering – but initially, and particularly in London, there was an emphasis on social exclusivity. Entry charges, not least season tickets, were intended to exclude. Further, the music itself was more elite than popular. However, their social exclusivity was lost in the nineteenth century and, as their clientele changed, the entertainment became more popular. Vauxhall, Ranelagh and the Cremorne attracted considerable attention but among the sixty or so pleasure gardens in London there were smaller gardens, such as Cuper's or the 'Dog and Duck' St. George's Field that

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offered leisure opportunities for the middle- and working-classes. Similarly, across the country, pleasure gardens, such as the various Vauxhall gardens in towns like Boston and Great Yarmouth, attracted a diverse audience. Music, including popular song, was an increasingly central component in the entertainment 'packages' of the day. The gardens provided a venue for a two-way transmission of songs with 'hit' songs from the latest operas being sung, and popular ballads incorporated into 'high' art. The popularity of ballad operas in the middle decades of the eighteenth century contributed significantly to this musical melange. *The Beggar's Opera* was the greatest success – in no small measure due to the audacious dancing of Nancy Dawson – but Coffey's lesser known *The Devil to Pay* or *The Wives Metamorphos'd* (1731) came close to rivalling it. The opera contained sixteen songs set to well-known airs. 'Come Jolly Bacchus, God of Wine' was set to the air 'King Charles of Sweden'* and 'O Charming, Cunning Man' to 'Within a Furlong.'

Similarly, John O'Keefe's *The Poor Soldier* (1783), a comic opera centring on the return of British soldiers from the American War of Independence, utilized several popular tunes, notably 'Pease Upon a Trencher'† and 'The Little House Under the Hill,' as well as some O'Carolan tunes, such as 'Planxty John O'Connor.'‡ In addition, the emergent popular musical culture provided considerable commercial opportunities for the printers and publishers of songsters such as *The Songs, Trios, Glees, etc, etc as sung by Mr Dignum, Master Welsh, Mr Denman, Mrs Franklin, and Mrs Fountain, This Season at Vauxhall*, 1797, which will be explored later.

Some concluding observations

The years between the 1770s and 1840s saw profound socio-economic and cultural changes in England but the resilience and adaptability of 'traditional' musical culture was striking. There was coexistence with and, more importantly, cross-fertilization between the customary and the commercial. Undoubtedly there were tensions and conflicts between old and new, but they

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* See Appendix for this tune.

† See Appendix for this tune.

‡ See Appendix for this tune.

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are easily overstated. Agriculture was in *relative* decline, but it grew in absolute terms until the mid-nineteenth century and many customs retained meaning and popularity. Urbanization could strengthen, rather than weaken, the appeal of village feasts, while improvements in transportation made it easier for 'friends and families' to return for the annual celebrations. The commercialization of leisure gave new life to old tunes and provided new opportunities for 'traditional' performers. Morris dancers like the men from Bath who appeared at St. Bartholomew's Fair in the 1740s showed that there was no clear-cut distinction between custom and commerce. John Clare was no admirer of enclosure and its consequences, but his collection of tunes showed that he was already part of the same modern world. Even the growing moral concern with 'uncivilized' recreations had less impact than contemporary reformers and some later historians have suggested.

There was much that was 'new' in the popular music of the mid-eighteenth century and much that was 'old' about the mid-nineteenth century. In particular, the old tunes that were printed in (and in some cases predated) Playford were still being played and old customs were still being celebrated. Popular culture was more than a reflection of developments taking place elsewhere, but was part of that wider, contested process of adaptation and change. However, the balance was shifting in favour of the new. In the mid-eighteenth century there was a (relatively) high propensity to consume and entrepreneurs willing to respond to this demand for (among other things) leisure. This intensified as the economy grew, and the expanding population became more urban. There was now less need to bring entertainment to its audience. The more concentrated populations of the burgeoning towns and cities presented opportunities for the development of various forms of fixed-site entertainment. Music-hall might be set to become the dominant culture, but its day had yet to come in the early years of Victoria's reign.

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Endnotes

1 Commonly associated with labourers, there is evidence to suggest the involvement of the 'middling sort' of people. See J Wooders, '"With Snail Shells instead of Bells": Music, Morris Dancing and the 'Middling Sort' of People in Eighteenth-Century Berkshire,' *Folk Music Journal*, 10 (5), 2015, pp.550-74

2 J Harland & T T Wilkinson, *Lancashire Folk-Lore*, London, Frederick Warne & Co., 1867, pp.229 at www.gutenberg.org/files/41148/41148-h/41148-h.htm

3 Harland & Wilkinson, *Lancashire Folk-Lore*, p.231 and p.236. Dancing was 'to a fiddle, playing a jig in double-quick time.' The songs and tunes are not named. There is an editorial reference to J Harland, *Ballads and Songs of Lancashire*, London, George Routledge & Sons, 1875 for song details. This extensive collection includes a wide range of lyrics, both old and new, but does not specify when and where they were sung.

4 Dole days were concentrated in the winter months and included All Souls' Day (2 November) and especially St. Thomas's Day (21 December).

5 Plough-bullocks, young men of the village, were known to plough up the dunghills of the miserly, while on Shrove Tuesdays Lent crockers expressed their disapproval of miserliness by throwing broken crockery at the doors of those who failed to meet their demands and fulfil their responsibilities. There were also 'lawless' days, such as Pack Monday at Sherborne and Furry Day at Helston. when the social order was inverted.

6 This was clearly seen in Oldham around the turn of the nineteenth century when rush carts and attendant morris dancers from different parts of the town and outlying villages came together – often violently, much to the disgust of 'respectable' citizens. See R Poole, 'Oldham Wakes' in J Walton & J Walvin, eds., *Leisure in Britain, 1780-1939*, Manchester University Press, 1983, pp.72-98.

7 This is discussed in detail in chapter 3.

8 There is a further complication of 'crooked' playing, including the addition of an extra beat to a bar to fit the dance for which the tune was being played.

9 For more detail see Bob Bushway, *By Rite. Custom, Ceremony and Community in England, 1780-1880*, London, Junction Books, 1982 and Steve Roud, *The English Year*, London, Penguin, 2008. Plough Monday was the Monday following Epiphany Sunday; catterners and clemmers went out of the dole days associated with St. Clement (23 November) and St. Catherine (25 November); pace-eggers went out at Easter and wassailers at Christmas.

10 John Brand, *Observations on Popular Antiquities*, London, Reeves & Turner, 1813, vol.1, p.439 at www.archive.org/details/cu31924027937949/

11 Bob Copper, *A Song for Every Season*, St. Albans, Granada, 1971, p.257

12 A Williams, *Folk Songs of the Upper Thames,* London, Duckworth, 1923, p.56 and cited in Bushway, *By Rite*, p.125. Other Wiltshire songs collected by Williams clearly reflect a sense of injustice among labourers. For example, 'The Wiltshire Labourers,' Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Alfred Williams Collection Bundle 4: Wiltshire Songs, AW/4/128 at www.vwml.org/archives-catalogue/AW

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13 John Clare, *The Parish*, published posthumously, was a biting critique of the new generation of farmers in and around Northamptonshire, who 'view old customs with disdainful eyes.' (Line 154) Hardy, in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, set in the 1840s, is more gentle in his critique of Bathsheba Everdene's social distancing (chapter 36), while the generally sympathetic Flora Thompson condemned the local farmers who paid starvation wages throughout the year but provided one good meal at harvest time.

14 Plough-bullock traditions in the Nottingham district survived into the third quarter of the nineteenth century and even experience a revival in the 1880s and 1890s. P Millington, ''Plough Bullocks' and related Plough Monday Customs in the Nottingham Area, 1800-1930', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 2005, pp.127-37 at www.eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/1204/1/MillingtonThoroton2005.pdf . See also R Greig, 'The Plough Play in Lincolnshire,' Tradition Today, 3, December 2013, www. centre-for-english-traditional-heritage.org/traditiontodayal.html. The tradition was strongest in the midlands and eastern counties of England and survived in attenuated form into the early twentieth century. In Bedfordshire in the 1920s local agricultural labourers, men and boys, still walked the streets in disguise 'singing and shaking tins and saying – "Give the poor ploughboy a halfpenny or a penny." They knock on doors, and on being admitted, sing and sometimes dance, and expect money and beer or wine.' Taken from *Folklore*, 1926.

15 The next celebration never occurred, suppressed by the employers who feared it because of the tensions and animosity of the times.

16 *Daily Advertiser*, 22 August and 10 September 1743. Cited in M Heaney, 'Folk Dance and Theatrical Performance in the Eighteenth Century,' *Folk Music Journal*, 11 (2), pp.6-16 at p.8

17 Heaney, 'Folk Dance and Theatrical Performance' p.12. The report in the *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser,* 2 February 1788, refers to a team of 14, including Bessey, Fiddler, Songster and Interpreter. Among other examples see Surrey Zoological Gardens anniversary celebrations, which featured morris dancers among other entertainments. *The Age*, 22 June 1834. The troupe would then dance its way home, performing to raise money on the way.

18 'The Whistling and Dancing Boy,' *Mayhew's Characters*, edited P Quennell, London, Spring Books, 1951, p.280

19 'The Whistling and Dancing Boy,' *Mayhew's Characters*, p.280

20 There were also links with travelling circuses and, from the late-eighteenth century onwards, menageries. For brief introductions see J Walvin, *Leisure and Society, 1830-1950*, London, Longman, 1978, pp.114-5, H Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, London, Croom Helm, 1980, pp.33-7 and J M Golby & A W Purdue, *The Civilization of the Crowd: Popular Culture in England, 1750-1900*, London, Batsford, 1984, pp.38-40 and 68-9. For more detailed information see L Smith, *The Greatest Shows on Earth: A History of the Circus*, London, Reaktion Books, 2014, C Grigson, *Menagerie: A History of Exotic Animals in England, 110-1837*, Oxford University Press, 2016, and H Cowie, 'Elephants, education and entertainment: travelling menageries in nineteenth-century Britain,' *Journal of the History of Collections*, 2013, 15(1), pp.138-54. See also K Marius, 'Astley's Amphitheatre and the early circus in

England, 1768-1830,' unpublished D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1995 and C J S Plumb, 'Exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain,' unpublished Ph.D., University of Manchester, 2010. The University of Sheffield National Fairground and Circus Archive has much valuable information including a Brief History of Circus at www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/researchandarticles/circus history and www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/projectsmenagerieshistory

21 M Judd, ''The oddest combination of town and country.' Popular culture and the London fairs,' in Walton & Walvin, *Leisure in Britain*, pp. 12-30. R W Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, H Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, London, Croom Helm, 1980 and Bushway, *By Rite*.

22 Gingerbread-sellers accounted for about a third of all licensed stallholders, while toy (that is, trinket) sellers accounted for a further quarter.

23 His repertoire included 'The Ferret and the Coney,' 'St. George that O! did break the dragon's heart,' 'A Caveat for Cutpurses,' and 'The Windmill blown down by the Witch's Fart.'

24 W Hone, *Every-day Book*, London, T Tegg, 23 May at http://honearchive.org/etexts/edb/day-pages/143-may23.htm

25 C Dickens, 'Greenwich Fair,' *Sketches by Boz*, London, Walter Scott, 1884, pp.82-8, at p.88

26 Dickens, 'Greenwich Fair,' p.88. For similar sentiments see, for example, *Standard*, 24 May 1836, *Northampton Mercury*, 28 May 1836 and *London Dispatch*, 21 May 1837

27 W Howett, *Rural Life of England*, 1844, reprinted Shannon, Irish University Press, 1971, p.498

28 *Leeds Times*, 21 May 1836 and *Leeds Intelligencer*, 17 May 1851

29 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 26 September 1868

30 S Bamford, *Passages in the Life of A Radical,* 1st published 1848/9, chapter 4 at https://minorvictorianwriters.org.uk/bamford/c_radical_(1).htm

31 Bamford, *Passages* as above

32 See Poole, 'Oldham Wakes'

33 Cited in Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p.45. See also B Dolan, *Josiah Wedgwood: Entrepreneur to the Enlightenment*, London, HarperCollins, 2005.

34 *Standard*, 9 April 1844 and *London Dispatch*, 21 May 1837

35 See for example *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 10 September 1836 (St. Gile's fair), *Leeds Times*, 12 November 1842, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 22 April 1843 (Stepney fair) and *Morning Post*, 4 September 1845 (Hoxton). Actual dimensions are rarely given but a dancing booth at Bury St Edmunds was 96 feet long by 22 feet wide (*Bury and Norwich Post*, 5 August 1835) while one sold at Portsmouth was 82 feet long by 32 feet wide with 60 feet of dancing boards. (*Hampshire Telegraph* 8 April 1848). The sale advert also referred to two gross of lamps.

36 *Bury and Norwich Post*, 4 October 1826. The following year he decided to introduce comic singing between the dances though 'none but persons of respectability will be admitted.' *Bury and Norwich Post*, 12 September 1827.

37 *Leeds Times*, 12 November 1842. Italics added.

38 The original article in the *Brighton Herald* was reproduced in numerous

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provincial papers including the *Liverpool Mercury*, 11 August 1848. The Hull fair disaster was reported in *Hull Packet*, 13 October 1823. Fire was also a problem. The Stepney-field conflagration that saw the destruction of several booths including Jerrold's dancing-booth and Turner's dancing-booth. *Northampton Mercury*, 22 May 1847

39 Typical was Northampton town council, where it was proposed to set rates of three guineas per day for theatrical, wrestling or conjuring booths but five guineas per day for drinking and dancing booths. *Northampton Mercury*, 7 October 1848.

40 *Hampshire Advertiser*, 17 July 1847

41 *Ipswich Journal*, 1 August 1835 and 15 November 1845, *Bury and Norwich Post*, 5 August 1835, 18 October and 20 December 1843, 3 January 1844, 3 July 1844 and *Norfolk Chronicle*, 15 June 1844

42 *Bury and Norwich Post*, 6 February 1866

43 Cited in Cunningham, *Civilization of the Crowd*, pp.30-3

44 J P Robson, *The Life of Billy Purvis, the extraordinary, witty and comical showman*, 1875 edition reprinted by Frank Graham, Newcastle, 1981

45 *The original, complete and only authentic story of "Old Wild's"*, edited by "Trim", London, G Vickers, 1888, reprinted by The Society for Theatrical Research, 1989

46 Wombwell spent £75 on two boa constrictors, which he exhibited with surprising success in the taverns of London.

47 Howett, *Rural Life*, p.499

48 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 18 May 1850, describing Honley fair, referred to their 'first-rate band, who perform some of the best selections of music during the afternoons and evenings of each day.' *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 February 1851.

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