

Cumbrian Poetry

John Pearson, the author of “Golf at Silloth 1890–2000” and many other books has sent this Cumbrian dialect poem about wedding celebrations in Abbeytown and Skinburness. As there are 49 verses we will be serialising it over several issues.

It was written by John Stagg, the blind bard from Burgh, and published in 1808.

The introduction is reproduced below, the unfamiliar words are true to the original!

Poems on several occasions

THE BREYEDWAIN

The subject of the following poem, with many of the incidents it contains, may perhaps, to some of our remoter countrymen, appear rather romantic andicrous, whilst others may be disposed to object entirely to the verity of such a narrative; but to those who are more intimately acquainted with the rural manners and simple customs of the county of Cumberland, I am confident of their acknowledging every circumstance that has been introduced; nay, even what may appear the fanciful embellishments of this pastrol. It is a fact well known to the inhabitants of this county; that when a youthful couple conceive a disposition to venture on the voyage of matrimony, with perhaps more of the assurances of the blind god, than the blind goddess, or in plain English, with more love than money, the bridegroom generally engages two or three of his companions to assist him in canvessing round ten or a dozen of the adjacent parishes, where they invite all, indiscriminately, to assemble on such a day, to assist in solemnizing the nuptials.

On the day appointed, which is generally a week or fortnight after the day of invitation, the country people, for many miles round, repair to the house of the young couple, or place where the marriage is to be celebrated, where is witnessed a scene of truly rural festivity; the exercises and various entertainments which aid in beguiling this day of convivial merriment, are what chiefly occupy the subsequent verses.

A' you ' at smudge at merry teales,
Or at devarshon sheyle,
Or goff and gurn at tuolliments,
Now lend your lugs a wheyle;
For sec an Infair I've been at,
As bes but seldom been,
Whar was sec wallopin' an ' wark,
As varra few hey seen
By neeght or day.

Bit furst I'll tell ye how an why
This parish bout begun,
An' when an' whar, an' whea they war,
'At meade a' this feyne fun;
Furst, you mun ken, a youthfu' pair,
By frugal thrift exceyted,
Wad hev a breydewain, an' of course
The country roun' inveyted
Agean that day.

At S-b-n-s, ith' Abbey Holme,
This weddin' it was hauden,
But or the teyme arriv'd, some friens
An' neybor's furst war caw'd on;
Wi' them in council grave they fixt,
What methods to proceed on,
An' a' the busness there an' than,
Was finally agreed on,
Clean thro' that day.

Neist day a dizzen lish young lads,
Wi'naigs weel graith'd an hearty,
Wi'whup an'spur, thro' stenk an' stoore,
Set off, a jolly party;
Frae town to town leyke weyld they flew,
Or house, whare'er they spy'd yen,
An' ivry lad or lass they met
I'th house or out, to th' breydewain,
They bade that day.

Note: S-b-n-s is used throughout and refers to the village of Skinburness

Silloth Football Club Div 1 League Cup Winners



What, not this year surely - of course not. The season was 1989-1990, only sixteen years ago. Do you remember these brave lads, have they really changed so much? As usual, some have, some haven't.

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Thro' oth' Holme parish furst they ruode,
Frae th' Auld Kiln to Kurkbreyde,
To Aikton, Bowness, Banton, Bruff,
An' roun' oth' country seyde;
An' mony a harlin reace they hed,
Owr pasture, hill an' deale,
An' monnie a cowpan' kaik they gat,
An' monnie a tift o' yell,
Ith' rwoad that day.

An' some ruode east, an' some ruode west,
An' some ruode fast an' far,
An' some gat sae mislear'd wi' drink,
They ruode the de'il kens whar.
Now th' auld guid fwokes that staid at heame,
As thropweyfe they war thrang,
An' meat an' drink, an'ither things,
Reight moider'd war amang,
Thro' a' that day.

Now a' their bidden owr an' duone,
Reight tir'd they beamward speed,
But some at th' Abbey, owr a quart,
Theirsells to slocken 'greed;
Then great Job Bruff gat on a thruff,
An'rais'd a fearfu' rout,
'At some day suon at S-b-n-s,
They'd hev a parish bout
O'th' bredyewain day.

At last this sizlin pack consent
When dark, towards heame to draw,
Then down to th' Cwoate, for t'other slwote,
They gallop yen an' a';
This neeght, the cheerfu' breyde-pot's drunk,
Wi' dances, sangs, an murth,
An' mebbly some sma' jobs are duone,
That bissness may ca' furth,
Some other day.