

2.3 Trelawny/ The Song of the Western Men

Sources

Publications (Book / Album)

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Davies Gilbert, "And Shall Trelawny Die", *Gentleman's Magazine*, November 1827, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/8746404?accountid=10792> accessed 28th Nov 2010.

Robert S. Hawker, *Ecclesia*,(Oxford, T Combe,1840), pp. 91 -93.

William Sandys, *Specimens of Cornish Provincial Dialect Selected And Arranged By Uncle Jan Trenoodle*. (London, J.R. Smith, 1846), p.62.

Louisa T Clare, *The Song Of the Western Men* (London, Weekes and Co, 1861).

Robert Stephen Hawker, *The Cornish Ballads and Other Poems of the Rev. R.S. Hawker*. (Oxford, J. Parker, 1869).

Clark C. Spence, *Mining Engineers and the American West: The Lace-Boot Brigade, 1849-1933* (Yale, 1970), p.313.

Charles Edward Byles. *The Life and Letters of R.S. Hawker (Sometime Vicar of Morwenstowe)* (London; New York, J. Lane, 1905).

Lucy Broadwood, "Come Lets Sit Down and Merry Be" in *Songs Connected With Customs*, *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, Vol. 5, No. 19 (Jun., 1915).

Charles Villiers Stanford, *National Song Book*, (London, Boosey & Hawkes,1905), p.58.

Robert Morton Nance , *The Reason Why Old Cornwall* 1927, p. 38.

Ralph Dunstan, *Lyver Canow Kernow /The Cornish Song Book*,(London, Reid Bros 1929), p.12.

Inglis Gundry, *Canow Kernow*, (St Ives, Fed. of Old Cornwall Societies,1966), p. 54.

Catherine Rachel John, "Letters", *Cornish Scene*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1987, p.20.

Catherine Rachel John "Some notes about the "Trelawny" we usually sing, *Cornish Scene*, Vol. 2, No. 5, 1987, p.19.

Phillip Payton (Writing as Car Dyvresow), "More notes about Trelawny",*Cornish Scene*, Vol. 2. No. 5, 1987, p.20.

Observation: 2005 -2010

- Observed in pub singing sessions across Cornwall
- Part of Cornish repertoire of community choirs such as "The Perraners" and "Cape Cornwall Singers".

- Included in the “Kanow Tavern”, pub song project and song sheets by Cornish organizations such as Old Cornwall Societies.
- It is seen as the Cornish national anthem and there is an expectation that people will expect to stand whilst singing this.
- Part of the song repertoire of Cornish rugby supporters especially the “Trelawny’s Army” supporters club.

Notes

Written by R.S. Hawker (1804-1875) in 1824 and inspired by the expression “Here's twenty thousand Cornish men Will know the reason why”. Although presumed to refer to Sir Jonathan Trelawny, Bishop of Bristol (one of seven bishops imprisoned in the Tower of London by James II in 1687), it is generally taken to represent Cornish dissent and the spirit of the 1497 and 1549 rebellions. It was first published anonymously in a Plymouth Newspaper in 1826. The extent to which Hawker encouraged it to be understood as original and traditional in the first instance is a matter of conjecture but it does fit with the popular image of his eccentricity and mischievousness. It was taken to be an original ballad by Davies Gilbert and republished as such by him. Both Sir Walter Scott and Dickens also acknowledged it as an example of a good traditional ballad. Hawker apparently corresponded with Davies Gilbert to explain his authorship and the background of the ballad. In 1840 he published it in a book of poems called *Ecclesia* and made clear both his authorship, and his delight at the way it had been taken as traditional.

Hawker did not identify a fixed a tune or musical arrangement for the song initially although according to Jenner and Dunstan, “Auld Lang Syne” was a candidate at one stage. It is now difficult to track down exactly when tune as we know it now was first used but it seems to have been established early on if not at the outset. Nance argues that “Wheal Rodney” was already established as a folk song with this melody at the time that Hawker composed “The Song of the Western Men” and contains the common element of “[forty] thousand Cornish boys shall know the reason why”. It was apparently arranged and set to music by Miss Louisa T Clare in 1861 and published by Weekes & Co, but at the time of writing, it has not been possible to locate a copy of this. A letter to Miss Clare from Hawker, [reproduced in Byles’ *The Life and Letters of R.S. Hawker*, p.269)], makes clear that he approved of this arrangement.

The tune can certainly be understood as coming from a broad European melting pot of melodic folk motifs and Broadwood identifies a relationship with a Welsh song “Y Blotyn Du” and a tune she collected in Leicestershire to a song / game about coal dust as well the French “Le Petit Tambour” and the nursery rhyme “Grand Old Duke of York”. (*Songs Connected With Customs* Journal of the Folk-Song Society, Vol. 5, No. 19, Jun., 1915, page 219)

Participant observation demonstrates that it is currently well embedded in the repertoire of Cornish tradition and this would seem to have been the case since the late nineteenth century. Trelawny is, however, a good example of the folk process in action and interesting to follow its trajectory and the interpretations laid upon it since Hawker’s time. Although published verses may have anchored the words to a definitive version that continues to be sung there have nevertheless been spin offs as part of the process or oral folk tradition. Not the least of which was the version Hawker himself penned for a parliamentary election.

R S Hawker 1824 / 1826 and 1840

“The Song Of The Western Men”, *Ecclesia*,(Oxford, T Combe,1840), pp. 91 -93:

When Sir Jonathan Trelawny, one of the seven Bishops, was committed to the Tower, the Cornish men rose one and all and marched as far as Exeter in their way to extort his liberation.

A GOOD sword and a trusty hand !
A merry heart and true !
King James's men shall understand
What Cornish lads can do !
II.
And have they fix'd the where and when?
And shall Trelawny die ?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will see the reason why !
III.
Out spake their captain brave and bold,
A merry wight was he,
" If London Tower were Michaels hold,
Well set Trelawny free !"
IV.
We'll cross the Tamar, land to land,
The Severn is no stay,
All side by side and hand to hand,
And who shall bid us nay !
V.
And when we come to London Wall
A pleasant sight to view.
Come forth, come forth ! ye cowards all
To better men than you !

VI.
Trelawny he's in keep and hold,
Trelawny he may die.
But here's twenty thousand Cornish bold
Will see the reason why !

With the exception of the chorus, contained in the two last lines, this song was written by me, as an imitation of the Old English Minstrelsy, and was inserted in a Plymouth Paper in 1825 (sic). It happened to fall into the hands of Davies Gilbert, Esq. who did me the honour to reprint it at his private press at East Bourne, under the impression that it was the original ballad. I have been still more deeply gratified by an unconscious compliment from the critical pen of Sir Walter Scott. In a note to the 4th volume of his collected poems, page 12, he thus writes of the Song of the Western Men :—

" In England, the popular ballad fell into contempt during the 17th century ; and although in remote counties* its inspiration was occasionally the source of a few verses, it seems to have become almost entirely obsolete in the Capital."

* *A curious and spirited specimen occurs in Cornwall, as late as the trial of the Bishops before the Revolution. The President of the Royal Society of London, Mr. Davies Gilbert, has not disdained the trouble of preserving it from oblivion.*" (pp 91 -93)

William Sandys, 1846

Specimens of Cornish Provincial Dialect Selected And Arranged By Uncle Jan Trenoodle. (London,1846. J.R. Smith)

The next song was made when Sir Jonathan Trelawny Bart, then Bishop of Bristol (afterwards of Winchester) was committed to prison with other prelates in 1688, for his defence of the Protestant religion; it is printed in D. Gilbert's parochial History of Cornwall. (p6)

The words given on page 62 are the same as Hawkers version

Sabine Baring Gould, 1891

Baring-Gould, Rev. Sabine, and Rev. H. Fleetwood Shepherd. *Songs and Ballads of the West: A Collection Made from the Mouths of the People* (London: Methuen & Co, 1891).

Baring Gould provides unwitting testimony to the popularity of “Trelawny” when he cites it, along with “Widdecombe Fair”, as one of the few widely recognised folk songs when he was first started his collecting work. He dismisses it as “a ballad reconstructed by the late Rev. R. Hawker, Vicar of Morwenstowe, the tune of which is merely “Le Petit Tambour,” and therefore not Cornish at all”.(Preface, p vii). This dismissal is ironic in that Baring Gould himself was subsequently criticised for presenting his own work as traditional in *Songs and Ballads of the West*.

Clarke C Spence – Boer War

I stumbled across that ‘Trelawny’ reference I mentioned when last we met. The source is Clark C. Spence, *Mining Engineers and the American West: The Lace-Boot Brigade, 1849-1933* (Yale, 1970), p.313. it refers to John Hays Hammond, a prominent US mining engienner who went to South Africa and was involved in the Jameson Raid. Captured by the Boers, he was sentenced to death – although later reprieved. The catch-cry in America was:

‘And shall Hays Hammond die?
And shall Hays hammond die?
There’s twenty thousand Yankee boys
Will know the reason why!’

Best Wishes,

(Correspondence Philip Payton 29th June 2011)

Robert Morton Nance 1927

“The Reason Why” *Old Cornwall* 1927 Vol 1 no6 page 38

In 1927 plans the Celto-Cornish movement was developing momentum and plans were afoot to establish the Cornish Gorseth and reassert links to the wider Celto world, Wales and Brittany in particular. Part of this involved a Cornish version of the Breton and Welsh “Land of my Fathers” – “Bro Goth Agan Tasow”, becoming the Cornish national anthem. Trelawny was already a well established national anthem for Cornwall and it is interesting that it was not incorporated into the Gorseth ceremony. Although one might have expected Jenner’s Catholicism to have affected this in actual fact he was able to place a more royalist spin on the story by connecting it to Bishop Jonathon Trelawny’s Grandfather who was imprisoned for contempt of Parliament in the reign of

King Charles 1st. It is probably simply that Trelawny represented the strong identity of industrial 19th Century Cornwall and this had yet to merge with the Celticism of the 20th Century.

Nance does however explore the roots of Hawker's words in some detail and shows the connection with the song "Wheal Rodney" :

We have always been led to believe that R. S. Hawker's "Song of the Western Men," with its "twenty thousand Cornish men will know the reason why," was based on a traditional refrain in which we find the number increased:- "And shall Trelawny die? And shall Trelawny die? Then thirty thousand Cornish boys will know the reason why!" and this we are told the miners varied to "Then thirty thousand underground will know the reason why!"-a line which with the same substitution of "twenty" for "thirty" we find in Hawker's first version of his song. That this refrain was traditional seems to rest on the word of Hawker, whose ingenious fabrication of legends and facts brings all his statements under suspicion of being "picturesque amplifications of actuality." He seems even to have been pleased to have the whole of his "Song of the Western Men" accepted as a genuine old ballad by Scott and Macaulay, and also by Win. Sandys ("Jan Trenoodle ") who put it as such into his *Specimens of Cornish Provincial Dialect*, 1846.

Such a Trelawny refrain may have existed since Bishop Trelawny's imprisonment in 1688, or even since 1628, when John Trelawny was the captive, but there is no record of it, and the only proof that the whole refrain, too, was not Hawker's invention is the fact that we have an earlier line, in an anonymous song to the same air, in which we are told that "forty thousand Cornish boys shall knawa the reason why,"-and this has nothing to do with Trelawny, but is a song against Bonaparte, written evidently in 1807, the date of the invasion of Poland, while Hawker's ballad was first printed in 1832. [sic] In this, "He summonsed forty thousand men, to Polland they did go," is said of "Boney Peartie," and the "forty thousand Cornish boys" of this song are here the natural rejoinder to the number raised by Napoleon.

The fact that this song was intended to be sung to the air of "Trelawny" or "A-mumming we will go," the same as that used for the old miner's song "Wheal Rodney" (Old Cornwall No. 2, p. 25), is disguised a little by the way in which it is printed in J. O. Halliwell's Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words, 1847, for there the whole is run into one verse. Halliwell presumably found it so on a ballad-sheet or in a manuscript copy, but here I have taken the liberty of restoring it into three four-line verses with the fourth as a chorus. I have also run in a few extra syllables (in italics) which may have dropped out accidentally, and print "knaw" for "knawa"; otherwise it is untouched.....

.....It is clear that this old song sung to the same air as the "Song of the Western Men", and containing its "forty thousand Cornish boys shall knawa the reason why" must have had quite twenty years in which to become "traditional" before Hawker wrote his ballad.

Contrary to Nance's reasoning, the fact that this song refers to the invasion of Poland in 1807 does necessarily prove it was a contemporaneous composition but it certainly allows for the possibility. What it does show, however, is that this particular tune and the verbal motif of "twenty thousand / forty thousand Cornishmen shall know the reason why" was well embedded in oral folk tradition in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Ralph Dunstan, / Henry Jenner 1929

Lyver Canow Kernow /The Cornish Song Book, Reid Bros 1929 pp,12 +18 Cornish Words by Henry Jenner

"The Long received traditional account of this song, corrected Is as follows: Sir Jonathon Trelawny, Bishop of Bristol (and afterwards Exeter) a model of whose pastoral staff is preserved in the Church of Pelynt, near Looe, was one of the "seven bishops" committed to the Tower of London in 1688 by James II, for petitioning against the Declaration of Indulgence. It is said that Trelawny's brother Cornishmen rose in his behalf, and that a large number of miners started to March to London to demand his release, singing the following song. (It is said that they reached Exeter before the welcome news came of the acquittal of the seven bishops.) Except the refrain, the exact original words of the song were lost. Those given here

are based on a “restoration” written (c 1835) by the Rev R S Hawker of Whitestone, Near Stratton who died in 1875. In 1688, the Trelawny Song is said to have “resounded in every house, in every highway, and in every street of Cornwall”. (p.18).

Mr Jenner tells me, however, that the chorus originated when Bishop Trelawny’s grandfather was imprisoned in the Tower for contempt of the House of Commons in the reign of Charles I. The origin of the tune is obscure. Mr Hawker at first suggested that his verses might be sung to the tune of “ Auld Lang Syne”. Subsequently he approved of the melody now generally associated with the words. The earliest known English use of the tune is in connection with a humorous skit on the military incompetency of Frederick Augustus, Duke of York (1763 – 1827). Sometime in the first half of the Nineteenth Century the “Trelawny Quickstep” appeared and was adopted by all the Volunteer and Regimental Bands of Cornwall. There is also a little French song , “Le Petit Tambour” very similar to much of the “Trelawny Quickstep” But there are marked differences of style; the Cornish tune owns a dignified simplicity almost absent from the flowery “Le Petit Tambour”. Personally I am inclined to think that both owe their origin to the “Duke of York” tune. (p. 12)

Phillip Payton / Rachel Catherine John 1987

Letters to the Editor, *Cornish Scene*, vol 2, No 4, 1987 p19

“Some notes about the Trelawny we usually sing”, *Cornish Scene*, vol 2, No 4, 1987 p19

More Notes about Trelawny, *Cornish Scene*, vol 2, No 4, 1987, p.20.

In 1987 the origin, authenticity and appropriateness of “Trelawny” as a national anthem for Cornwall was debated in the pages of *Cornish Scene*. Rachel Catherine John initially expressed unease about the tone of the words: “Is a mood of defiance a sign of weakness? And do we want to abuse others when we are asking for respect for ourselves ? ‘Come forth come forth ye cowards all’ – remember the Blitz?”. She made the case for using alternative words written by Hawker as an election song for Sir Salisbury Trelawny in 1832 which incorporated the words “Tre Pol and Pen” from the traditional rhyme “By Tre, Pol and Pen ye shall know Cornishmen”. John went on to

challenge the “establishment history” of religious intolerance represented by James II imprisonment of Jonathon Trelawny.

Philip Payton countered this showing that very complex religious history surrounding not only Jonathon Trelawny and the “Glorious revolution” of 1688 but also that Hawker’s own Anglo-Catholicism was not reflected in contemporary understanding of what the song represented. He challenged the need to be apologetic about the tone of the words: “the song is perhaps just a trifle too violent, a hint of anti-English, a little critical of London but that is hardly an argument; we should not be embarrassed by or apologetic, for the depth of Cornish patriotism, and it goes without saying that national anthems should be ‘stirring stuff.’” Payton also took a more postmodern position pointing out that “the popularity of the song extended beyond the educated middle classes to the great mass of Cornish working folk who, even if they had no idea who “Trelawny” might have been, recognised a patriotic song when they saw one and were certainly prepared to sing Cornwall’s praise.” He makes an important point that “Trelawny” was a song embodying Cornish distinctiveness and identity that was seized upon by both the Cornish Diaspora and those remaining in Cornwall from quite early in the nineteenth century.

Lyrics and Music

Participatant observation 2005 – 2010 – melody as per An Daras project “Sengen Fiddee”

Trelawny



good sword and a trusty hand, a merry heart and true
King James men shall understand, what Cornish men can do
And have they fixed the where and when, and shall Trelawny die
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men will know the reason why
And shall Trelawny live, And shall Trelawny die
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men will know the reason why

Out spake the captain brave and bold, a merry sight was he
Though London towers Michael's hold we'll set Trelawny free
We'll cross the tamar land to land the severn is no stay
Then one and all and hand in hand and who shall bid us nay
And shall Trelawny live, And shall Trelawny die
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men will know the reason why

And when we get come to London wall, a pleasant sight to view
Come forth, come forth ye cowards all, here's better men than you
Trelawny he's in keep and hold Trelawny he may die
But twenty thousand Cornish men will know the reason why

And shall Trelawny live, And shall Trelawny die
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men will know the reason why

Hawkers 1832 adaption for Lord Salisbury Trelawny's election

Catherine Rachel John, *Cornish Scene*, vol 2, No 4, 1987, p.19.

And do they scorn Tre ,Pol and Pen?
And shall Trelawny die?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!
The former spirit is not fled
Where Cornish hearst combine
We bow before the noble dead
And laud their living line!

And shall Trelawny Live
Or Shall Trelawny die
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why

And do they scorn Tre ,Pol and Pen?
And shall Trelawny die?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!
Be chainless as you rushing wave
Free as your native air
But honour the good and brave
And homage to the fair
And shall Trelawny Live
Or Shall Trelawny die
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why

Up with your hearts Tre ,Pol and Pen?
They bid Trelawny die?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!
Think on the warrior's waving hand
The patriots lasting fame
And follow o'er the Rocky Land
The old Trelawny name
And shall Trelawny Live
Or Shall Trelawny die
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men

Appendix 2.3 Trelawny / Song of the Western Men *(See contents page for link to mp3 audio clip of song)*

Will know the reason why

Robert Morton Nance , *The Reason Why Old Cornwall* 1927 page 38

Wheal Rodney

A CORNISH SONG.

I.

Come all ye jolly Tinner boys, and listen *unto* me ;
I'll tell ee of a storie *as* shall make ee for to see,
Consarning Boney Peartie, the schaames which he had maade
To stop our tin and copper mines, and all our pilchard traade.

Chorus—

Hurea for tin and copper, boys, and fisheries likewise !
Hurea for Cornish maidens—Oh, bless their pretty eyes !
Hurea for our ould gentry, and may they never faale !
Hurea, hurea for Cornwall ! Hurea, boys, “ one and ale ! ”

2.

He summonsed forty thousand men, to Polland they did goa,
All for to rob and plunder there, you very well do knaw ;
But ten thousand were killed and laade *all* dead in blood
and goare,
And thirty thousand runned away, and I cante tell where,
I'm sure.

3.

And should that Boney Peartie have forty thousand still,
To maake into an army *for* to work his wicked will,
And try for to invaade us, if he doen't quickly fly—
Why forty thousand Cornish boys shall knaw the reason why.