

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Robin Hood's Birth & Breeding

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KIND gentlemen, will you be patient awhile?
Ay, and then you shall hear anon
A very good ballad of bold Robin Hood,
And of his man, brave Little John.

In Locksly town, in Nottinghamshire,
In merry sweet Locksly town,
There bold Robin Hood he was born and was bred,
Bold Robin of famous renown.

The father of Robin a forester was,
And he shot in a lusty long bow,
Two north country miles and an inch at a shot,
As the Pinder of Wakefield does know.

For he brought Adam Bell, and Clim of the Clugh,
And William a Clowdesle
To shoot with our forrester for forty mark,
And the forrester beat them all three.

His mother was neece to the Coventry knight,
Which Warwickshire men call Sir Guy;
For he slew the blue bore that hangs up at the gate,
Or mine host of The Bull tells a lye.

Her brother was Gamwel, of Great Gamwel Hall,
And a noble house-keeper was he,
Ay, as ever broke bread in sweet Nottinghamshire,
And a squire of famous degree.

The mother of Robin said to her husband,
My honey, my love, and my dear,
Let Robin and I ride this morning to Gamwel,
To taste of my brothers good cheer.

And he said, I grant thee thy boon, gentle Joan,
Take one of my horses, I pray;
The sun is a rising, and therefore make haste,
For to-morrow is Christmas-day.

Then Robin Hoods fathers grey gelding was brought,
And sadled and bridled was he;

God wot, a blew bonnet, his new suit of cloaths,
And a cloak that did reach to his knee.

She got on her holiday kirtle and gown,
They were of a light Lincoln green;
The cloath was homespun, but for colour and make
It might a beseemed our queen.

And then Robin got on his basket-hilt sword,
And his dagger on his tother side,
And said, My dear mother, let's haste to be gone,
We have forty long miles to ride.

When Robin had mounted his gelding so grey,
His father, without any trouble,
Set her up behind him, and bad her not fear,
For his gelding had oft carried double.

And when she was settled, they rode to their neighbours,
And drank and shook hands with them all;
And then Robin gallopt, and never gave ore,
Till they lighted at Gamwel Hall.

And now you may think the right worshipful squire
Was joyful his sister to see;
For he kist her and kist her, and swore a great oath,
Thou art welcome, kind sister, to me.

To-morrow, when mass had been said in the chappel,
Six tables were coverd in the hall,
And in comes the squire, and makes a short speech,
It was, Neighbours, you're welcome all.

But not a man here shall taste my March beer,
Till a Christmas carrol he sing:
Then all clapt their hands, and they shouted and sung,
Till the hall and the parlour did ring.

Now mustard and braun, roast beef and plumb pies,
Were set upon every table:
And noble George Gamwel said, Eat and be merry,
And drink too, as long as you're able.

When dinner was ended, his chaplain said grace,
And, 'Be merry, my friends,' said the squire;
'It rains, and it blows, but call for more ale,
And lay some more wood on the fire.

'And now call ye Little John hither to me,

For Little John is a fine lad
At gambols and juggling, and twenty such tricks
As shall make you merry and glad.'

When Little John came, to gambols they went,
Both gentleman, yeoman and clown;
And what do you think? Why, as true as I live,
Bold Robin Hood put them all down.

And now you may think the right worshipful squire
Was joyful this sight for to see;
For he said, Cousin Robin, thou'st go no more home,
But tarry and dwell here with me.

Thou shalt have my land when I dye, and till then
Thou shalt be the staff of my age;
'Then grant me my boon, dear uncle,' said Robin,
'That Little John may be my page.'

And he said, Kind cousin, I grant thee thy boon;
With all my heart, so let it be;
'Then come hither, Little John,' said Robin Hood,
'Come hither, my page, unto me.

'Go fetch my bow, my longest long bow,
And broad arrows, one, two, or three;
For when it is fair weather we'll into Sherwood,
Some merry pastime to see.'

When Robin Hood came into merry Sherwood,
He winded his bugle so clear,
And twice five and twenty good yeomen and bold
Before Robin Hood did appear.

'Where are your companions all?' said Robin Hood,
'For still I want forty and three;'
Then said a bold yeoman, Lo, yonder they stand,
All under a green-wood tree.

As that word was spoke, Clorinda came by;
The queen of the shepherds was she;
And her gown was of velvet as green as the grass,
And her buskin did reach to her knee.

Her gait it was graceful, her body was straight,
And her countenance free from pride;
A bow in her hand, and quiver and arrows
Hung dangling by her sweet side.

Her eye-brows were black, ay, and so was her hair,
And her skin was as smooth as glass;
Her visage spoke wisdom, and modesty too;
Sets with Robin Hood such a lass!

Said Robin Hood, Lady fair, whither away?
O whither, fair lady, away?
And she made him answer, To kill a fat buck;
For to-morrow is Titbury day.

Said Robin Hood, Lady fair, wander with me
A little to yonder green bower;
There sit down to rest you, and you shall be sure
Of a brace or a lease in an hour.

And as we were going towards the green bower,
Two hundred good bucks we espy'd;
She chose out the fattest that was in the herd,
And she shot him through side and side.

`By the faith of my body,' said bold Robin Hood,
`I never saw woman like thee;
And comst thou from east, ay, or comst thou from west,
Thou needst not beg venison of me.

`However, along to my bower you shall go,
And taste of a forresters meat:'
And when we come thither, we found as good cheer
As any man needs for to eat.

For there was hot venison, and warden pies cold,
Cream clouted, with honey-combs plenty;
And the sarvitors they were, beside Little John,
Good yeomen at least four and twenty.

Clorinda said, Tell me your name, gentle sir;
And he said, 'Tis bold Robin Hood:
Squire Gamwel's my uncle, but all my delight
Is to dwell in the merry Sherwood.

For 'tis a fine life, and 'tis void of all strife.
`So 'tis, sir,' Clorinda reply'd;
`But oh,' said bold Robin, 'How sweet would it be,
If Clorinda would be my bride!'

She blusht at the motion; yet, after a pause
Said, Yes, sir, and with all my heart;
`Then let's send for a priest,' said Robin Hood,
`And be married before we do part.'

But she said, It may not be so, gentle sir,
For I must be at Titbury feast;
And if Robin Hood will go thither with me,
I'll make him the most welcome guest.

Said Robin Hood, Reach me that buck, Little John,
For I'll go along with my dear;
Go bid my yeomen kill six brace of bucks,
And meet me to-morrow just here.

Before we had ridden five Staffordshire miles,
Eight yeomen, that were too bold,
Bid Robin Hood stand, and deliver his buck;
A truer tale never was told.

'I will not, faith!' said bold Robin: 'Come, John,
Stand to me, and we'll beat em all:'
Then both drew their swords, an so cut em and slasht em
That five of them did fall.

The three that remaind calld to Robin for quarter,
And pitiful John beggd their lives;
When John's boon was granted, he gave them good counsel,
And so sent them home to their wives.

This battle was fought near to Titbury town,
When the bagpipes bated the bull;
I am king of the fiddlers, and sware 'tis a truth,
And I call him that doubts it a gull.

For I saw them fighting, and fidld the while,
And Clorinda sung, Hey derry down!
The bumpkins are beaten, put up thy sword,Bob,
And now let's dance into the town.

Before we came to it, we heard a strange shouting,
And all that were in it lookd madly;
For some were a bull-back, some dancing a morris,
And some singing Arthur-a-Bradly.

And there we see Thomas, our justices clerk,
And Mary, to whom he was kind;
For Tom rode before her, and calld Mary, Madam,
And kist her full sweetly behind.

And so may your worships. But we went to dinner,
With Thomas and Mary and Nan;
They all drank a health to Clorinda, and told her

Bold Robin Hood was a fine man.

When dinner was ended, Sir Roger, the parson
Of Dubbridge, was sent for in haste;
He brought his mass-book, and he bade them take hands,
And he joynd them in marriage full fast.

And then, as bold Robin Hood and his sweet bride
Went hand in hand to the green bower,
The birds sung with pleasure in merry Sherwood,
And 'twas a most joyful hour.

And when Robin came in the sight of the bower,
'Where are my yeomen?' said he;
And Little John answered, Lo, yonder they stand,
All under the green-wood tree.

Then a garland they brought her, by two and by two,
And plac'd them upon the bride's head;
The music struck up, and we all fell to dance,
Till the bride and the groom were a-bed.

And what they did there must be counsel to me,
Because they lay long the next day,
And I had haste home, but I got a good piece
Of the bride-cake, and so came away.

Now out, alas! I had forgotten to tell ye
That marryd they were with a ring;
And so will Nan Knight, or be buried a maiden,
And now let us pray for the king:

That he may get children, and they may get more,
To govern and do us some good;
And then I'll make ballads in Robin Hood's bower,
And sing em in merry Sherwood.

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