

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Rookshope Ryde

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ROOKHOPE stands in a pleasant place,
If the false thieves wad let it be;
But away they steal our goods apace,
And ever an ill death may they die!

And so is the men of Thirlwa 'nd Williehaver,
And all their companies thereabout,
That is minded to do mischief,
And at their stealing stands not out.

But yet we will not slander them all,
For there is of them good enough;
It is a sore consumed tree
That on it bears not one fresh bough.

Lord God! is not this a pitiful case,
That men dare not drive their goods to t' fell,
But limmer thieves drives them away,
That fears neither heaven nor hell?

Lord, send us peace into the realm,
That every man may live on his own!
I trust to God, if it be his will,
That Weardale men may never be overthrown.

For great troubles they've had in hand,
With borderers pricking hither and thither,
But the greatest fray that eer they had
Was with the 'Men' of Thirlwa 'nd Williehaver.

They gatherd together so royally,
The stoutest men and the best in gear,
And he that rade not on a horse,
I wat he rade on a weil-fed mear.

So in the morning, before they came out,
So well, I wot, they broke their fast;
In the forenoon they came unto a bye fell,
Where some of them did eat their last.

When they had eaten aye and done,
They sayd some captains here needs must be:

Then they choosed forth Harry Corbyl,
And `Symon Fell,' and Martin Ridley.

Then oer the moss, where as they came,
With many a brank and whew,
One of them could to another say,
`I think this day we are men anew.

`For Weardale men is a journey taen;
They are so far out-oer yon fell
That some of them's with the two earls,
And others fast in Barnard castell.

`There we shal get gear enough,
For there is nane but women at hame;
The sorrowful fend that they can make
Is loudly cries as they were slain.'

Then in at Rookhope-head they came,
And there they thought tul a had their prey,
But they were spy'd coming over the Dry Rig,
Soon upon Saint Nicholas' day.

Then in at Rookhope-head they came,
They ran the forest but a mile;
They gatherd together in four hours
Six hundred sheep within a while.

And horses I trow they gat
But either ane or twa,
And they gat them all but ane
That belanged to great Rowley.

That Rowley was the first man that did them spy;
With that he raised a mighty cry;
The cry it came down Rookhope burn,
And spread through Weardale hastyly.

Then word came to the bailif's house,
At the East Gate, where he did dwell;
He was walkd out to the Smale Burns,
Which stands above the Hanging Well.

His wife was wae when she heard tell,
So well she wist her husband wanted gear;
She gard saddle him his horse in haste,
And neither forgot sword, jack, nor spear.

The bailif got wit before his gear came

That such news was in the land;
He was sore troubled in his heart,
That on no earth that he could stand.

His brother was hurt three days before,
With limmer thieves that did him prick;
Nineteen bloody wounds lay him upon;
What ferly was't that he lay sick?

But yet the bailif shrinked nought,
But fast after them he did hye,
And so did all his neighbours near,
That went to bear him company.

But when the bailiff was gathered,
And all his company,
They were numberd to never a man
But forty or under fifty.

The thieves was numberd a hundred men,
I wat they were not of the worst
That could be choosed out of Thirlwa 'nd Williehaver,
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But all that was in Rookhope-head,
And all that was i Nuketon Cleugh,
Where weardale men oertook the thieves,
And there they gave them fighting eneugh.

So sore they made them fain to flee,
As many was `a" out of hand,
And, for tul have been at home again,
They would have been in iron bands;

And for the space of long seven years,
As sore they mighten a had their lives;
But there was never one of them
That ever thought to have seen their 'wives.'

About the time the fray began,
I trow it lasted but an hour,
Till many a man lay weaponless,
And was sore wounded in that stour.

Also before that hour was done,
Four of the thieves were slain,
Besides all those that wounded were,
And eleven prisoners there was taen.

George Carrick and his brother Edie,
Them two, I wot, they were both slain;
Harry Corbyl and Lennie Carrick
Bore them company in their pain.

One of our Weardale men was slain,
Rowland Emerson his name hight;
I trust to God his soul is well,
Because he 'Fought' unto the right.

But thus they sayd: `We'll not depart
While we have one; speed back again!'
And when they came amongst the dead men,
There they found George Carrick slain.

And when they found George Carrick slain,
I wot it went well near their 'Heart;'
Lord, let them never make a better end
That comes to play them sicken a 'part!'

I trust to God, no more they shal,
Except it be one for a great chance;
For God wil punish all those
With a great heavy pestilence.

Thir limmer thieves, they have good hearts,
They nevir think to be oerthrown;
Three banners against Weardale men they bare,
As if the world had been all their own.

Thir Weardale men, they have good hearts,
They are as stif as any tree;
For, if they'd every one been slain,
Never a foot back man would flee.

And such a storm amongst them fell
As I think you never heard the like,
For he that bears his head so high,
He oft-times falls into the dyke.

And now I do entreat you all,
As many as are persent here,
To pray for the singer of this song,
For he sings to make blithe your cheer.

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LMP