

Old Songs and Sugar Mice: The Story of the Remarkable Miss Mason

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Abstract

In 1877, Marianne Harriet Mason published *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*, a collection of songs obtained orally from her family and from people around her. She was in contact with several of the early folk song collectors and was a friend of both Sabine Baring-Gould and Lucy Broadwood. As well as being the first woman to collect and publish traditional songs, she was a pioneer in many other ways. This article looks at her life, her song collection, and her part in the Victorian folk song revival.



Figure 1 Marianne Mason
Photo courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives
(DD/716/58/2)

Marianne Harriet Mason (1845–1932) was by any standards a remarkable woman (Figure 1). There were many ways in which she excelled. She was the first female inspector in the Civil Service (and thus the first senior female civil servant), a plant collector and expert on alpine gardening, a knowledgeable collector and restorer of old furniture, a psychical researcher, a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and a well-regarded painter of South African wild flowers, whose collection of paintings was presented to the nation. But, and in this context most importantly, she was the first woman to collect traditional songs; and her book, *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* (1877), was the first collection of traditional songs obtained orally, and presented with piano arrangements intended for the drawing room, to be made available to the public.¹

Her book has been described as ‘the swallow that ushered in the summer’ – that

is to say, the late Victorian folk song revival.² Although she moved on to other activities, she never lost her interest in traditional song. She met a number of the other Victorian folk song collectors and was a friend of Sabine Baring-Gould and of Lucy Broadwood. This article will examine her life and work, describe and analyse her collection of songs, and consider its importance as a pioneering work of folk song publication. Previously unpublished details of her life have been found in articles written by her and from the autobiographical memoir, *A Pioneer Life*, that she left in manuscript.³ This, she tells us, was based on the personal diaries that she kept from her teenage years and on the extensive records that she kept of her work as a government inspector.⁴

Biography

Marianne Mason was born in Marylebone, London, on 19 February 1845. Her father, George Mason, was a lawyer, and her maternal grandfather, Colonel Joseph Mitford, came from the aristocratic Northumbrian family of that name. She was the eldest of seven children, of whom three have entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.⁵

When Marianne was aged four, the family moved to live with her mother's parents at Laugharne, Carmarthenshire, where she enjoyed an idyllic childhood by the sea, exploring the beaches and the surrounding coastline. It was there that she heard many of the songs that she would later include in her book. She wrote:

Our nurses had good voices and sang well naturally. Our donkey-boy sang with them when they walked beside the donkey which carried two of my brothers in a Spanish saddle, while I, being the eldest, sat on a pad strapped behind. Thus I learned Welsh folk songs, such as 'The Cutty Wren', 'Sally, and the Sailor', 'The Seeds of Love' and others, some of which I published in 'Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs' in 1877.⁶

She describes her mother as a singer with 'a lovely mezzo soprano voice of touching quality', while her grandmother was 'a thorough musician' who taught her the rudiments of music.⁷ Her father, by contrast, could not carry a tune and, she says, only knew when 'God Save the Queen' was being played because people stood up. Under her grandmother's direction she became a promising pianist. Sadly, when she was placed under the care of a governess, a Miss Richardson, all that work was undone because she would not allow Marianne to play unless she was present, and then never from memory. As a result, she never reached a high standard of playing. We also learn from the memoir that Miss Richardson physically abused her, and that this continued into her teens, until the governess was found out and dismissed. This circumstance may have influenced Marianne Mason's later interest in child protection issues.

Miss Richardson could not, however, prevent Marianne (Figure 2) from singing whenever she was out walking, or in private moments at home. As she grew older, she was allowed singing lessons: 'From the time I was a small child my one great desire was to become a professional singer. Anyone nowadays would jump at such a gift as I had, but in those days it was not thought proper for ladies to take up any profession, and my father and mother would not hear of it. "We don't want you to earn your living," they said.⁸ Opportunities to sing were, nonetheless, grasped eagerly. Her repertoire



Figure 2 Marianne Mason aged about fifteen
Photo courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives
 (DD/716/58/1)

would have comprised largely classical and drawing-room material. She did, however, have another encounter with traditional music which made a lasting impression when, in 1874, she visited Ballaghaderreen in Ireland (now in County Roscommon, but then in County Mayo).⁹ While she was there, she immersed herself in the local culture, including traditional music and dance. She describes going to a dance in a barn where ‘the performer of the evening was a very small boy, Michaelleen, who danced the most elaborate and quick steps with bare feet, on a door taken off its hinges, with a pad of hay under each corner’. She also sang at a concert in the town. At this time she tells us that she always wore green, because it suited her, and she wrote that ‘the Irish didn’t know which they admired most – the swateness of me singing, or the swateness of me fayters’.

When she was thirty-two she damaged her voice by singing too hard while she had a cold, and her singing voice

progressively left her. She wrote: ‘It was, and still is, like losing half oneself. To feel the song inside one, and to fail in bringing it out is like trying to run with a broken leg.’¹⁰ This was the time when she compiled her collection of songs – pressed, she says, by her family, who did not want them to be lost. It seems likely that they intended this to help her overcome her grief at losing her voice, but one cannot help but wonder whether, for Mason herself, this was not a way of drawing a line under her musical ambitions.

The family had moved to George Mason’s home county of Nottinghamshire, where he built Morton Hall, near Retford, completed in 1869 (Figure 3). While the house was under construction the family spent two years in Switzerland where Mason became interested in alpine plants, on which she became an authority. Her main occupation now, however, was the welfare of needy children. She became the voluntary supervisor of the Poor-Law Boarding-out Committees in Nottinghamshire. ‘Boarding out’ was the policy of taking orphaned and deserted children out of the workhouse and placing them with foster parents. In 1885, after producing a report on ‘boarding out’ nationally for the Local Government Board, she was appointed Inspector of Boarded-out Children for England and Wales. This was the first appointment of a woman to a senior post in the Civil Service.

Mason continued in this role for twenty-five years, travelling all over England to visit three or four hundred children each year, often in isolated country locations or in the



Figure 3 Morton Hall, c.1910 *Photo courtesy of Bassetlaw Museum, Retford*

poorer parts of towns. She would inspect each child carefully, insisting on their removing their shoes and socks, since she believed the feet revealed much about the treatment the child had received. She was also alive to the tricks of foster parents who dressed children up for the inspection or who moved them temporarily out of substandard accommodation. She kept notes on each of the children she visited. Every child was rewarded with a sugar mouse. These she bought directly from the manufacturer by the gross, in three colours, white, pink and brown, with string tails. She stayed in contact with many of the children into adulthood, often helping them to find work and housing in later life.

Although many voluntary societies, such as Dr Barnado's and the Waifs and Strays Society, as well as the local boards, were active in this field, Mason believed that inspection by officials from central government was essential to securing proper treatment for the children. At this time many children were boarded out privately by individuals, mostly unmarried mothers or those who had befriended them, or by voluntary societies. In these circumstances the foster parents were poorly inspected and registration was allowed on quite flimsy grounds. There were some horrific cases of 'baby farming', notably that of Amelia Dyer of Reading, who disposed of her charges in the river until 'Father Thames himself refused to conceal any more of these foster children'.¹¹

Poor girls who fell down from the straight path of virtue,
 What could they do with a child in their arms?
 The fault they committed they could not undo,
 So the baby was sent to the cruel baby farm.

chorus:

The old baby farmer, the wretched Mrs Dyer
 At the Old Bailey her wages is paid
 In times long ago we'd have made a big fire
 And roasted so nicely that wicked old jade.¹²

Dyer was executed in June 1896. That same year, Mason gave evidence to the committee that had been appointed to look into child protection in consequence of this and other cases. She proposed that, in future, foster parents should be required, under penalty, to notify the authorities if they had more than one child in their care. Her proposals were put into law and she wrote: 'I never see a printed notice of warning to this effect posted up in a church porch or elsewhere without feeling glad that I have done that, at least.'¹³

Mason had a number of interests that she managed to fit around her work. She had an eye for good furniture and, for a while, operated a profitable sideline in buying and restoring antiques. She also became a member of the Society for Psychical Research and published a number of articles on thought reading and the charming of warts. As the pressure of work grew, however, her interest in plants and in botanical painting became the only diversions for which she had time. When she was able to take a holiday she would paint the flowers she saw and make extensive notes about them. She wrote on all these topics and had a number of articles published in various magazines.¹⁴

Mason's social life was very active and her memoir is peppered with the names of people she met and stayed with, many of them titled. She did not write much about her contacts with the Broadwood family, though we know that she was on friendly terms with them. Initially she was closer to Bertha Broadwood who, as we will see below, suggested to her that some of her uncle John Broadwood's songs should be included in her book. The two women corresponded and had a shared interest in social work.¹⁵ Her friendship with Lucy Broadwood seems to have developed later. Lucy Broadwood's diary records a number of occasions when the two women met.¹⁶

Mason retired in 1910 and soon afterwards went to stay with her brother, Canon George Edward Mason, who had moved to South Africa in 1908 to become the principal of St Bede's College for Native Clergymen at Umtata (Mthatha) (Figure 4). A visit that had been planned to last six months was extended to two years, spent travelling extensively through southern Africa. Her lifelong interest in flowers now came to the fore and she made a number of watercolour sketches and paintings, and collected plants which she sent home to England, including three new varieties that now bear her name.¹⁷ When she returned to England in 1912, her paintings were exhibited in Retford and then in London. The collection of more than four hundred of her paintings was eventually given to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.¹⁸

Mason's London home was in Vincent Square, five minutes from Lucy Broadwood's home at Carlisle Mansions. After her return from South Africa there were a number of occasions on which Broadwood visited her for lunch or tea, and Broadwood's diary entries often record that Miss Howard, Mason's companion, was present.¹⁹ On one such visit, on 24 March 1913, Broadwood records in her diary: 'In aftn to Mitty Mason [. . .]



Figure 4 Marianne Mason with her brother, George Edward Mason

Photo courtesy of Lydia Lambert

involved in organizing a concert to raise funds for Belgian musicians and soldiers who had taken refuge in England.²⁴

Once the war was over, Mason returned to South Africa. She built a house there, near Cape Town, which she named 'Morton' after the family home in Nottinghamshire. She died there on 7 April 1932. Organized to the end, and worried about the prospect of being buried alive, she had made the stipulation: 'I direct that a bottle of Chloroform be placed in my hands as soon after my death as practicable and before closing my coffin.'²⁵

Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs (1877)

Marianne Mason's manuscript autobiography, *A Pioneering Life*, contains a brief account of her work on folk songs (see Appendix 1), the result of which was *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*, first published in 1877 by Metzler and Co. (Figure 5). Her account begins: 'It was in 1887 [*sic*] that I first published my collection of "Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs". I called it this because "Folksongs" did not seem to me to be proper English.'²⁶ She goes on to say of the collection: 'I was made to publish them by people

to see her very clever paintings of African flowers & scenes. Had tea w. her.'²⁰ Broadwood's use of Mason's family pet name 'Mitty' – confirmed by living family members – indicates that their relationship was close, but this does not come across from Mason's own records.²¹

Mason was in England during the First World War and undertook the organization of women to help in gathering the harvest during 1914 after so many of the men had gone off to fight.²² She was not afraid to exert her influence with the authorities. During the Boer War she had badgered Lord Roberts about the availability of wire-cutters following an incident in which a number of troops had been trapped in wire and shot at Magersfontein. Now she used her connections to help Lucy Broadwood with her campaign for the proper provision of cooking facilities for soldiers.²³ Broadwood's diary also records that in February 1915 they were both

who had heard me sing them, especially by the family, who did not want them to be lost; and I was taken by some of them to Mr. Metzler with some specimens. He accepted them at once, and agreed to publish them as something quite new.' This seems to indicate that she was pushed (though not, I believe, unwillingly) into publication by her family. It is possible, as suggested above, that this might have been regarded as a sort of therapy for the disappointment of her no longer being able to sing as she had done in the past. Setting out and arranging a book of fifty-eight songs is not a trivial task and must have engaged her attention for some considerable time. The 1877 volume is illustrated with simple line drawings by Edith Scannell (1852–1921), then aged

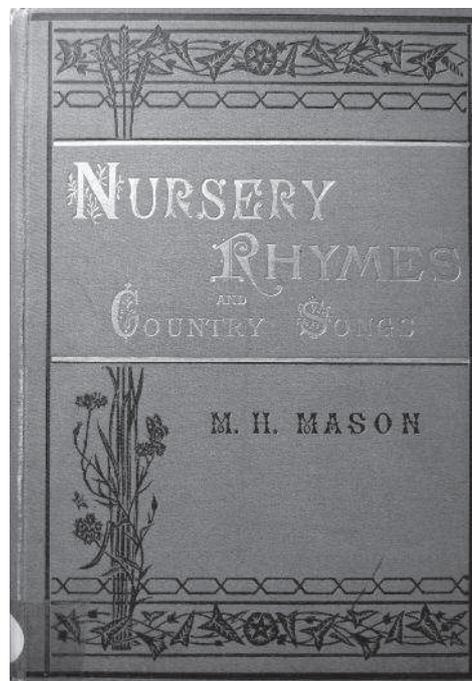


Figure 5 *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*
Courtesy of EFDSS



Figure 6 Illustration by Edith Scannell in
Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs
Courtesy of EFDSS

twenty-five (Figure 6). In later years, Scannell illustrated a number of books, often those written by her sister, Florence. Her paintings are nowadays regarded as collectable; her speciality was pictures of children.

The preface to the 1877 edition is short. Here, Mason explains that her intention was to rescue the songs from oblivion and that, although some well-known favourites were included, they had not been taken from other collections. She also makes the further point that, while many of them can indeed be found elsewhere, the versions she gives had been learned 'from persons to whom they had been handed down by oral tradition', among whom she included family members. The arrangements are all her own work and they are, she says, 'very simply arranged, the words being given,

as far as possible as they were sung'. In *A Guide to English Folk Song Collections*, Margaret Dean-Smith makes clear her feelings about the book: 'The arrangement for pianoforte, the prettification by illustrations to please a lay-public, or purchasers of children's books seems to be applied here to folk song apart from carols for the first, but unfortunately not the last time.'²⁷ She does, however, recognize that some of the songs included, such as 'Lay the bent to the bonny broom' and 'Go no more a-rushing', are of value.

The book was advertised for sale in December 1877 as 'containing upwards of Sixty Country Songs and Rhymes. Collected and arranged by Miss M. H. Mason. Illustrated by Miss C. [sic] M. Scannell'.²⁸ The selling price was 3 shillings for the paper-covered version or, for 5 shillings, you could buy the book 'handsomely bound in cloth'. *The Graphic* greeted the publication warmly, if somewhat patronizingly: 'Our little folks will be glad to hear of a new and merry edition of "Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs", collected and arranged by M. H. Mason, with a few pretty illustrations by Miss E. M. Scammell [sic]. Therein will be found many old friends and some new, all adapted to easy tunes, which the youngest singer can sing.'²⁹ This firmly places the book in the genre of children's literature – not, perhaps, what Mason had originally hoped for. It misses completely the fact that it contains more than just children's songs. Indeed, some of them might have been considered unsuitable for children, or even adults of a certain temperament. Mason noted in *A Pioneering Life*: 'Some people told me that some of my ancient ditties were vulgar, and one Clergyman was much shocked at one which tells how the devil went off with the little tailor.'³⁰

In 1908, a new edition of *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* was published.³¹ In the preface to this edition, Mason tells us that, although her collection had been out of print for some years, 'I have delayed republishing it because I wished to add to it, and to insert some further footnotes. But since 1885 I have been inspector of the Boarding-out of Poor Law Children, under the Local Government Board, and my official duties, including a very heavy amount of writing, have left me no time for any private work.' She adds that, in the course of her duties, she has visited a large number of schools and has found children singing traditional rhymes in preference to modern songs, and has sometimes found teachers who were teaching traditional songs orally, without any book: 'It is in answer to their request, and that of my friends in the Folk Song Society and others, that I am re-printing this collection just as it stands, and without any revision or additions.'³²

The new edition appears to have made use of the original engraved plates for the body of the book. There are, nevertheless, some changes, which give helpful guidance to the origins of the songs. The most significant of these is the addition of the word 'Mitford' at the head of those songs that were considered to be part of the family heritage. So we learn that thirty-three of the fifty-eight songs came from Mitford sources. Previously, there had been no specific indication of which songs were from family members. In addition, Mason now asserts in her introduction, 'Most of the songs are Northumbrian, traditional in my mother's family, the Mitfords of Mitford, Northumberland.' She adds, however, that she is not claiming that they are distinctly Northumbrian in character.

There are some further small changes to the footnotes, some of which have been lengthened, but the only song to have been altered is 'The Carrier Pigeon', which is increased in length to four stanzas. The second stanza has been replaced with new stanzas, but the first stanza, which is given as underlay to the music notation, is retained. Edith Scannell's illustrations, however, are omitted from the 1908 edition, probably because they were out of fashion by that time; this was easily achieved since the illustrations were all on single pages tipped in to the book and were not paginated.

The Songs

Like many collectors and writers on folk songs, Mason had her problems with the definition of folk song, writing:

It is, of course, most difficult to say for certain what is traditional, that is, that no author is known, and it sometimes happens that a tune turns out to be only a corruption of something else. Of traditional songs, the best definition that can be given is that their source is unknown, and that as far as one can tell, they have been handed down orally, as the many different versions of them show.³³

The book contains fifty-eight items, which can be roughly classified into nursery jingles (12), children's songs (13), 'country songs' (24), children's games (2), dialect songs (7). The 'country songs' include versions of four Child ballads, as well as a number of other songs found widely by later collectors (see Appendix 2).³⁴

Mason was keen to ensure that the songs she included did not have known authors, and she sought advice on this from William Chappell, compiler of *Popular Music of the Olden Time*.³⁵ Many of the songs had, of course, appeared in previous printed collections, but she believed that her versions were unique. Her version of 'The Cutty Wren', for example (see Appendix 3, no. 1), while of the same family as other, widely spread wren-hunting songs, stands apart from them. The last six songs in the book were reprinted from the collection published for private circulation by Lucy Broadwood's uncle, the Rev. John Broadwood, in 1847.³⁶ Mason had been given this book by Bertha Broadwood, Lucy's elder sister, with the suggestion that she might like to make some of the songs collected by her uncle available to a wider audience.³⁷ A footnote to the first of these songs, 'A Sweet Country Life', acknowledges Mason's debt to Henry Fowler Broadwood, Bertha and Lucy's father, for permission to include them. In her memoir, she writes of having included 'the best' of John Broadwood's songs.

There are some small changes to John Broadwood's songs as they appear in Mason's book. The song he calls 'The Poacher's Song' has become 'In Thorney Woods', with the scene relocated from Buckinghamshire to Nottinghamshire and a note to the effect that 'Thorney Wood Chase was formerly a part of Sherwood Forest' – a display of local knowledge on Mason's part, perhaps? There are also a few minor alterations to the words of the songs. For example, in the second stanza of 'A Sweet Country Life', 'No fiddle, no flute, no hautboy, or spinet / In nothing can compare with the lark or the linnet' becomes 'No fiddle, no flute, no hautboy, or spinet / Can ever compare with the lark or the linnet'.

The most significant difference between the two publications, however, is that the

accompaniments composed by G. A. Dusart for Broadwood's book have been dropped in favour of new ones by Mason herself. The question of accompaniments for traditional songs in Victorian and Edwardian folk song publications is an interesting one, which has not yet received much attention. John Broadwood's songs acquired a third set of accompaniments when Herbert Birch Reynardson, with Lucy Broadwood's assistance, published them again in 1890.³⁸ As we will see below, Lucy Broadwood included some of Mason's songs in her *English County Songs*, replacing the accompaniments with her own compositions.

Sources of the Songs

It was noted above that thirty-three of the songs in *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* came from the Mitford branch of Mason's family, and that she regarded them as Northumbrian, though only six of the thirty-three are specifically described as 'sung in Northumberland'.³⁹ The next publication to focus on Northumbrian songs would be Bruce and Stokoe's *Northumbrian Minstrelsy*, which followed in 1882.⁴⁰ Rather surprisingly, there is no duplication of songs between the two publications. In her dedication to both editions of her book, Mason attributes the majority of the songs to her grandmother, Anne Mitford.⁴¹ In addition, in the section headed 'Folksongs' in *A Pioneer Life*, she names her mother, Marianne Atherton Mason, as a source and influence.⁴²

The claim that the songs are of Northumbrian origin deserves some scrutiny, however. Mason's grandmother was a Mitford only by marriage and had been born, as Anne May, in Wiltshire. At the time of her marriage, she was living in Leominster, and she then went to India with her husband who was serving in the East India Company's army. That was where Marianne Atherton Mason was born.

When and where would Anne Mitford have had the opportunity to accumulate so many Northumbrian songs from the Mitford repertoire? A partial answer to this question can be found in another section of *A Pioneer Life*, where Mason is writing again about her grandmother and says that 'it was from her and my grandfather that I learned most of the old Northumbrian folk songs which I published in 1887 [*sic*]'.⁴³ This is the only reference to Joseph Mitford's contribution to the collection. Since he was born at the family home at Mitford, in Northumberland, and spent his childhood there, he would have had the opportunity to hear the songs. If, as it appears, he sang to his granddaughter, then it is probable that he would also have been disposed to sing to her mother when she was a child, thus enabling her to add some Northumbrian songs to her repertoire. Joseph and Anne Mitford lived with their daughter and her family at Morton Hall in their final years. Joseph died in 1875, but his wife, who was by then blind, lived on until December 1878, so she would have been able to help Mason with any of the songs that her granddaughter might have forgotten.

Mason refers in her memoir, and in *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*, to her two Welsh nurses as the source of a number of the songs she heard as a child in Laugharne. One of them can be confidently identified as Margaret Herbert. She is listed in the 1851 census as a nurse, born in Laugharne. She also appears in the 1861 census, when the family had moved to Nottinghamshire, described as a lady's maid, a change of role to

which Mason refers a number of times in *A Pioneer Life*.⁴⁴ She is not to be found in the censuses of 1891 or 1901, years in which Mason herself remains as yet unidentified. I believe that Margaret Herbert went as Mason's maid when the latter left Morton Hall to live in London. In 1911, when she was aged eighty-two, Margaret Herbert had returned to Laugharne and was living with two of her nephews, having, presumably, retired from Mason's service.

The identity of the other woman is less certain. Susannah Lancaster, who was listed as the other nurse in 1851, was from Derbyshire, not from Wales, and so fails on one of the main criteria. In 1861, there was another young woman, Sarah Wilkins, living in the household as a nursery maid. She had been born in Laugharne, and it is possible that she was engaged to replace Susannah Lancaster while the family was still living there.

If we broaden the criteria, however, there is another possible candidate in Mary Wilkins, who was a housemaid at Laugharne in 1851 and had been born in the town. She is not listed as being with the family at Morton Hall in the census of 1861, but she reappears in 1871 as a domestic servant, suggesting that she may have been with Mason's grandparents during the intervening years.⁴⁵ By 1891, she was the housekeeper at Morton Hall, in which role she continued for William Mason after his father's death. She was no longer in his service in 1911 and cannot, at present, be located in that year, when she would have been aged eighty-six if she were still alive. In *A Pioneer Life*, Mason writes that Mary Wilkins and Margaret Herbert were lifelong friends and shared a room at Morton Hall.⁴⁶

Only two of the songs in *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* are actually attributed to the two nurses. When they are added to the thirty-three songs from family members, that still leaves twenty-three songs whose singers are unrecorded. It would be another decade before Sabine Baring-Gould instituted the practice of recording the names of the singers from whom songs were collected.

Marianne Mason and Other Collectors

Mason records in her memoir that, at the time of publication, her collection brought her into contact with 'all of those then interested in the subject'.⁴⁷ William Chappell has already been mentioned as one whom she consulted when preparing her book, though no written record of their discussions has been discovered. The others whom she mentions specifically in this context are Frank Kidson and Sabine Baring-Gould. Neither of these two men would have been considered as an authority on traditional song in the 1870s, so their relationship probably commenced after *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* had been published.

Although Kidson is identified as one of her contacts, there is no clear indication of what passed between them, and no correspondence between the two has been identified. The interaction with Baring-Gould, however, is documented in the manuscripts of both parties. Mason records: 'I kept up the friendship with Mr. Baring-Gould, until official work, and afterwards the war, left me too little time for much else.'⁴⁸ There must, certainly, have been correspondence between Mason and Sabine Baring-Gould, although this has not survived among their papers. Baring-Gould does not

mention *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* in any of the notes to the songs in the preface to the first part of *Songs of the West*, published in 1889, so it is probable that he had not seen Mason's collection at that time or, at least, had not started to look in it for versions of songs he had collected.⁴⁹ By 1891, when the fourth part of *Songs of the West* was printed with its new preface and notes, he was aware of the book (though he records the author as 'Mrs. Mason') and refers to the collection in relation to four songs, 'The Silly Old Man', 'Blue Muslin', 'Poor Old Horse', and 'The Everlasting Circle'.

An article about Mason published in *The Queen* in March 1890 credits her with 'a valuable service by arranging and adapting the old melodies for Mr. Baring-Gould's *Songs of the West*'.⁵⁰ This statement is not accurate and she had no hand in the arrangements in Baring-Gould's book. It does, though, suggest that she had been in contact with him by then – and if she had not, that statement would surely have sparked a discussion between them. Mason records that she visited Baring-Gould's home at Lewtrenchard, in Devon, in 1892, making her the first of his fellow folk song collectors to visit him there. She wrote: 'In 1892, I spent some delightful days with him and his family at Lew Trenchard when official work brought me near. Mr. Baring Gould's singing of his *Songs of the West* was worth hearing.'⁵¹ That Baring-Gould held a good opinion of Mason's book we can be certain, since he commended it to Francis James Child in 1893 and offered to lend him his copy. In the event, because he was in France at the time, Baring-Gould wrote to Mason, asking her to send Child a copy of her book.⁵²

Besides referring to four of Mason's songs in the notes to *Songs of the West*, Baring-Gould has copies of thirteen songs from Mason's book in his Personal Copy manuscript (see Appendix 4). He also includes tunes for two other songs, 'The Saucy Sailor' and 'The Seeds of Love', credited to Mason but that are not in *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* – although the latter is mentioned in Mason's memoir as one of the songs she heard as a child. The significance of these last two items is that Mason must at this time have had a record of songs that she had heard but had not published. Baring-Gould notes that these two tunes were 'taken down at Langhane [sic], Carmarthenshire' (Figure 7).⁵³ We cannot now say whether Mason sent the songs to Baring-Gould by post or else dictated them to him during her visit to Lewtrenchard in 1892. Baring-Gould's misspelling of the place name Laugharne might suggest a written source since, if she had been speaking to him directly, she would have given the customary pronunciation of Laugharne, which rhymes with 'yarn' (and perhaps spelled out the word for him). Mason's handwriting can be hard to read.⁵⁴

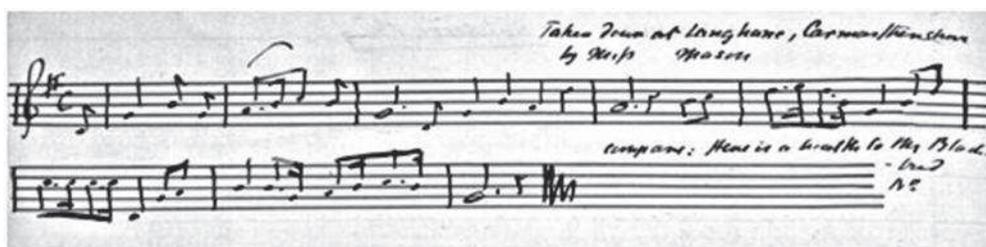


Figure 7 'The Seeds of Love', Baring-Gould MSS, Personal Copy
 Courtesy of Wren Music/Baring-Gould Corporation

Lucy Broadwood also visited Lewtrenchard in September 1892, where she had long discussions with Baring-Gould about songs at the time when she was working, with J. A. Fuller Maitland, on *English County Songs*, which was published the following year.⁵⁵ If she were not already in contact with Mason, she evidently became so, since five items in *English County Songs* were reprinted from *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*, with new accompaniments. These are:

- ‘There Was a Lady in the West’, as a Northumberland song (pp. 6–7)
- ‘There Was a Pig Went Out to Dig’, as a Lancashire song (p. 28)
- ‘The Spider’, as a Derbyshire song (pp. 48–49)
- ‘Little Sir William’, as a Lincolnshire song, on account of its setting rather than because it was collected there (p. 86)
- ‘The Tree in the Valley’, as a Devonshire song (pp. 174–75).

The majority of the new accompaniments were provided by Broadwood in her own style; these are more complex than Mason’s accompaniments and include a musical introduction to the melody (see Appendix 3, no. 3). An exception is ‘Little Sir William’, which has an accompaniment by Fuller Maitland, which is much more in Mason’s style.

In addition, Broadwood and Fuller Maitland refer to Mason’s book for a variant of ‘Robin-a-Thrush’ (p. 93); and they compare Mason’s tune for ‘The Goose and Gander’ with their ‘Twanky-dillo’ melody (p. 139). Moreover, as the first of four variants of ‘The Derby Ram’, there appears a version from ‘Miss Mason, Morton, near Retford’ (pp. 44–45).⁵⁶ This song is not in *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* and we can assume that Mason gave Broadwood, like Baring-Gould, access to additional material.

English County Songs also contains some new information about ‘The Spider’. In *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*, this is described as taken down from the singing of a Derbyshire peasant; but the note in *English County Songs* states: ‘The words, taken down from a peasant, were disentangled and partly re-written by the Rev. Canon Edward Mason.’ This was George Edward Mason, Marianne’s brother, who was then rector of Whitwell, in north-east Derbyshire. This is another small insight into the way in which she had involved her family in the compilation of her folk song book, and suggests that this involvement probably continued even after the first publication.

Conclusion

The old gatehouse to Morton Hall can now be seen as a flash of Victorian brickwork as you rush past the Retford turn-off on the A1. The house itself is gone, torn down in the 1960s after irreparable damage following military occupation during the Second World War. It has been replaced with a more practical, modern house. There is a touch of Marianne Mason’s hand to be felt here, though. Walking down the lawns behind the house, you turn a corner and find yourself suddenly in the centre of the rock garden that she created in the 1890s. After the war, the area was completely overgrown and it was only when the cultivator hit rock that the owners realized they had rediscovered this hidden gem. The restored garden, with the hundreds of tons of stone that were brought there to make it, stands as dramatic testimony to the energy and vision of this remarkable woman.

Marianne Mason (Figure 8) was one of those women who came from the upper middle classes of Victorian England and, denied the opportunity to develop a career in the way that was possible for men, chose instead to eschew the conventional path of marriage and a family of her own to do something different. Lucy Broadwood was of the same ilk. Mason was reluctant to call her songs ‘folk songs’. The majority were songs that were sung in her own family, and many of the rest came from people close to the family. Baring-Gould and other collectors were likewise given songs by men and women from the upper middle classes, who recalled them from their childhood. A parallel to the Mason/Mitford family collection is provided by the Waring sisters – Edith, Lady Lethbridge, and Eleanor Emma Waring, who became Sister Emma of the Community of St John Baptist, Clewer – who gave songs and nursery rhymes they had learned within their own upper-middle-class family to Baring-Gould and Cecil Sharp, respectively. Coincidentally, many of their songs were of Northumbrian origin, from the Rankin family, having entered the Waring family repertoire via the sisters’ grandparents.⁵⁷

The country gentlemen who sat around the table with Baring-Gould and persuaded him to start his quest for the songs of Devon and Cornwall were prompted by the desire to recapture the songs that they had sung in their youth.⁵⁸ The songs ‘belonged’ to them just as much as they did to the wider public. Neither should the Mason/Mitford and Waring/Rankin families be denied a sense of ownership of their songs. Mason’s reluctance to use the term ‘folk song’ exposes the difficulty that we face when looking at songs from such families. It is sometimes claimed that class and context exclude such songs from being designated folk songs. Mason’s version of ‘The Cutty Wren’ might be so designated because we know that it was learned orally from working-class women. Sister Emma’s version of ‘Long Lankin’ (which is probably the version sung most frequently nowadays) might not, even though we know it had been sung to her great-grandmother by her nurse in the eighteenth century – the argument being that, although orally transmitted, the singers were not working-class and the song was not being sung in its ‘original context’.⁵⁹ The definitional difficulty that Mason faced remains unresolved.

Mason’s reputation rests on her achievements as a botanist and as a social worker. Folk music was just one of a portfolio of interests and activities. In the preface to the 1908 edition of *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*, she writes: “This may be said to have been the earliest serious attempt to collect what are now called “folk songs”, with



Figure 8 Marianne Mason, by Minna Tayler (1921)

Reproduced by kind permission of the Director and Board of Trustees, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (ref. 4.1921)

the old nursery rhymes and traditional tunes, and thus attempt to save them before they were entirely forgotten.' When *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* was published in 1877, there was not yet any public interest in folk song. Mason did not play a significant role in building public awareness of folk song in the way that Baring-Gould, Broadwood, and Kidson were to do a decade later. Because of her devotion to her public duties, Mason was not to be a major force in that movement, although she helped where she could.

This was not the first collection of folk songs made orally. For England, that distinction should be awarded to John Clare who made an extensive collection in the 1820s, though his projected book remained unpublished at his death. John Broadwood went into print with an orally derived collection in 1847, but since he only gave copies of his book to family and friends the songs were not available to the public until Mason published her selection. It is not even the first collection of nursery rhymes made orally and presented with accompaniments. That honour rests with Edward Rimbault.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, Mason's collection of traditional songs was the first made and published by a woman in England. In the study of folk music, Marianne Mason is a bit-part player, one of the many shadowy figures that have been overlooked on a stage where the spotlight falls on the leading man. That does not diminish her claim to have led the way, and her achievements deserve to be remembered. I hope that this essay will bring her out of the shadows and enable us to applaud the achievements of her 'pioneer life'.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to a number of people for their help in compiling this article. Particular thanks are due to the following: the staff at Nottinghamshire Archives, for their help in finding the Mason family papers and, particularly, Marianne Mason's unpublished autobiography; the enthusiastic staff at the Bassetlaw Museum, Retford, who have allowed me the use of their photograph of Morton Hall and searched their files for further information about the Mason family; Gillian McMaster of Morton Nurseries, whom I first met at the BBC Gardening Show, for showing me Miss Mason's rockery and for helping me contact Mason's great-nieces, Sandra Martin and Lydia Lambert, to whom I am indebted for additional information about Marianne Mason and for the lovely photograph of her and her brother Edward; Jenny Auton and her colleagues at the Royal Horticultural Society's Lindley Library at Wisley, for setting me on the trail of Mason as a botanist; and Julia Buckley and her colleagues at the Library and Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, for sight of Mason's botanical paintings, as well as articles and letters written by her. I am particularly grateful to have been allowed the use of the delightful painting of her by Minna Tayler, which is in their collection.

I am also grateful to Malcolm Taylor and his colleagues at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, for their practical help and advice; the staff of the Surrey History Centre, for help in locating items in the Lucy Broadwood papers; Steve Roud, David Atkinson, Roy Palmer, Matthew Edwards, Vic Gammon, and several others for their advice on various aspects of the article; and Shan Graebe for allowing me to conduct my three-year affair with Marianne Mason, for enduring four trips to Nottinghamshire in terrible traffic and worse weather, and for endless support and encouragement.

Appendix 1. Marianne Mason on Folk Songs

'Folksongs' is the third subheading in Chapter 9 in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire Archive, DD716/51, M. H. Mason, *A Pioneer Life*. The manuscript is typed, but there are numerous alterations and corrections made by hand (Figure 9). The revisions are dated October 1925. The text below is given as corrected, but the original wording is given within pointed brackets where it is of interest. This passage explains the circumstances that surround the compilation and publication of *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* (1877).

FOLKSONGS.

It was in 1887 [*sic*] that I first published my collection of 'Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs'. I called it this because 'Folksongs' did not seem to me to be proper English <because 'Folksongs' even then seemed to be too German>.

With the exception of some little books of children's Nursery Rhymes only, it was thus the first book published of the kind, now so popular. All my songs and rhymes were traditional, and most of them learned orally from my mother and grandmother Mitford as a child. I was made to publish them by people who had heard me sing them, especially by the family, who did not want them to be lost; and I was taken by some of them to Mr. Metzler with some specimens. He accepted them at once, and agreed to publish them as something quite new. The last edition is still selling as a Standard collection of the kind.

The Mitford and Northumbrian songs are the best; but I learned some very good ones including the 'Cutty Wren' from my Welsh nurses, and I set about collecting others in Nottinghamshire and elsewhere to add to them. Miss Bertha Broadwood also gave a very interesting collection made and printed for private circulation by one of her uncles, in Surrey and Sussex, and I added the best of them at the end of my book. They have since been dealt with by Miss Lucy Broadwood, Editor to the Folk Song Society <Chairman of the Folksong Society, and for a long time Editor of its Journal> <for many years Honorary Secretary>. She has had more time than I have since to devote to the subject, and the Society was formed long after my book was written.

My collection brought me into touch with all those then interested in the subject, notably with Mr. William Chappell, Mr. Baring Gould and Mr. Kitson [*sic*]. I kept up the friendship with Mr. Baring Gould, until official work, and afterwards the war, left me too little time for much else, and in 1892, I spent some delightful days with him and his family at Lew Trenchard when inspections brought me near. Mr. Baring Gould's singing of his 'Songs of the West' <especially of 'The Three Drunken Maidens'> was worth hearing.

Mr. William Chappell, who did more than anyone else to revive the knowledge and love of old English printed songs and Ballads, helped me most kindly in the negative search of seeing that no author was known of anything I published as traditional. For though some of my Nursery Rhymes had been printed before, I took none of them from any book or collection <but learned them all orally>. It is, of course, most difficult to say for certain what is traditional, that is, that no author is known, and it sometimes happens that a tune turns out to be only a corruption of something else. Of traditional songs, the best definition that can be given is that their source is unknown, and that as

far as one can tell, they have been handed down orally, as the many different versions of them show.

Pioneers have to contend with difficulties even in as small a matter as this. For some people told me that some of my ancient ditties were vulgar, and one Clergyman was much shocked at one which told how 'the devil went off with the little tailor'.

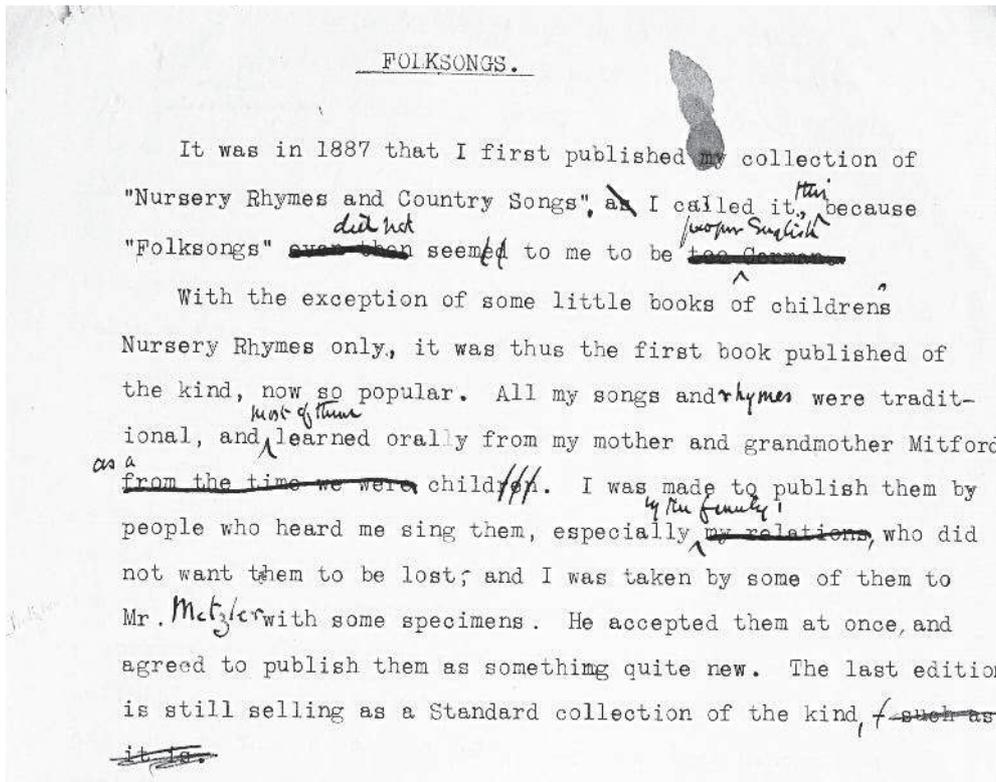


Figure 9 M. H. Mason, *A Pioneer Life*
 Courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives

Appendix 2. *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*

Page no.	Title	Roud no.	Source	Notes
3	Pat-a-Cake	6486	Mitford	
4	Robertin Tush	117	Mitford	
4	Dickery, Dickery, Dock	6489	Mitford	
5	Goosey, Goosey, Gander	6488	Mitford	
6	The Little Market Woman	3740	Mitford	
7	King Arthur's Servants	130	Mitford	
8	The Frog's Wooing – 1st tune	16	Mitford	
9	The Frog's Wooing – 2nd tune	16	Mitford	This tune was composed by Dr. Samuel Arnold, to the doggerel verses, 'Amo, amas, I love a lass' about the middle of the eighteenth century.
10	Old King Cole	1164	Mitford	
11	See-Saw	13028	Mitford	
12	Looby Light	5032	Mitford	
13	Nancy Dawson	6485	Mitford	The tune best known as 'The Mulberry Bush'. The history of 'Miss Dawson's Hornpipe' is to be found in Mr. Chappell's 'Popular Music of the Olden Time'.
14	There Was a Little Dog, Sitting by the Fireside	6483	Mitford	
15	Hush-a-bye, Baby, Pussy's a Lady	6484	Mitford	
16	Wing Wang Waddle, O!	469	Mitford	
16	The Goose and the Gander	1094	Mitford	
17	Little Bo-Peep	6487	Mitford	
18	I Had a Little Moppet	6482	Mitford	
19	There Was an Old Woman Tossed Up in a Basket	1297	Mitford	
20	Whose Little Pigs Are These?	6481		From Nottinghamshire.
21	Have You Seen my Love?	6491		Learned in Carmarthenshire from my Nurses
21	Rosy Apple (A game of choosing)	6492		From Whitwell, Derbyshire.
22	The Babes in the Wood	288	Mitford	
23	A Paradox – 1st version	330		This paradox, or riddle, is of Anglo-Saxon origin.
24	A Paradox – 2nd version	330		
25	There Was a Pig Went Out to Dig	1369		This tune is sung in Lancashire. There are no words, properly speaking, beyond the first verse, but rhymes were invented according to the pleasure of the singers. The melody is that of an old Christmas Carol, 'There were three ships came sailing by'.
26	The Tree in the Valley	129		Sung in Devonshire.

Page no.	Title	Roud no.	Source	Notes
27	Madam, I Present You with Six Rows of Pins	573		A variety of 'The Little Market-Woman,' and 'Mrs. Bond', &c; I have printed it for the sake of the words.
28	I Love a Sixpence	1116		Learned from Americans.
29	The Jacket and the Petticoat	6480		From Nottinghamshire.
30	The Baker's Wife	6479	Mitford	
31	There Was a Lady in the West	161	Mitford	Sung in Northumberland.
32	Johnny Pringle	746	Mitford	Sung in Northumberland.
33	There Was an A'd Man Cam' over the Lea	362	Mitford	Sung in Northumberland.
34	Green Grow the Leaves upon the Hawthorn Tree	2121	Mitford	Sung in Northumberland.
36	As I Was a-Going Tweedside	6478	Mitford	Sung in Northumberland.
37	Dance to thy Minnie	2439		Sung in Northumberland.
38	Dance to your Daddie	2439	Mitford	Scotch.
38	When I Hae a Saxpence under my Thumb	6493	Mitford	
39	There Was a Haggis in Dunbar	6477	Mitford	Scotch.
40	The Monyplies	6476	Mitford	
41	The Robin's Last Will	3900	Mitford	
42	When I Was a Maiden	894	Mitford	
43	The Silly Old Man	2640		Sung in Devonshire. For another version see Mr. Dixon's 'Ballads and Songs of the Peasantry of England', where it is called 'Saddle to Rags', to be sung to the tune of 'The Rant', not its original tune.
44	Spencer the Rover	1115		This and 'The Spider,' were taken down from the singing of a Derbyshire Peasant.
45	The Spider	1372		[See note to preceding item.]
46	Giles Collin	147		
46	Little Sir William	73		For the same story, differently told, see Percy's Reliques, Vol. I, 'The Jew's Daughter'.
47	The Cutty Wren	236		Learned from my Welsh nurses, in Carmarthenshire. It was an ancient custom in South Wales for two or four men to go about on St. Stephen's Day carrying a wren fastened on two poles slung on their shoulders, groaning under its supposed weight, and singing this song. There is another tune sung in Pembrokeshire, with slightly different words.
48	The Carrier Pigeon	22632		

Page no.	Title	Roud no.	Source	Notes no.
49	The Old Horse –A Christmas Play	513		[A lengthy note on the play is given. The first item is the calling-on song; the second is a variant of 'Poor Old Horse.']
49	The Old Horse – 2nd Song	513		[See note to preceding item.]
51	A Sweet Country Life	2406	Broadwood	I am indebted for this and the following songs to Henry Broadwood, of Lyne, Surrey, Esq., who most kindly placed at my disposal a collection made in Surrey and Sussex by his brother, the late Rev. John Broadwood, who learned them from hearing them sung every Christmas by the 'Wassailers', and on occasions such as Harvest Homes. This collection was printed for private circulation only.
52	'Tis of a Noble Lord	6473	Broadwood	
53	The Privateer	1000	Broadwood	
55	The Rosebuds in June	812	Broadwood	
56	'Tis of a Young Damsel	901	Broadwood	[Broadwood called this 'Gipsy Song' and Mason has given it a new title. It is more usually known as 'The Lost Lady Found'.]
57	In Thorney Woods	222	Broadwood	Thorney Wood Chase was formerly a part of Sherwood Forest. It was enclosed in 1790, but that part of the country still retains the name.

Appendix 3. Examples from *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*

Example 1. 'The Cutty Wren' (Roud 236)

"O, where are you going?" says Mil-der to Mal-der "O, I can-not tell," says Fes-tel to Fose. "We're
go-ing to the woods," says John the Red Nose, "We're go-ing to the woods," says John the Red Nose

'O, where are you going?' says Milder to
Malder;
'O, I cannot tell,' says Festel to Fose;
'We're going to the woods,' says John the Red
Nose,
'We're going to the woods,' says John the Red
Nose.

'O what will you do there?' says Milder to
Malder;
'O, I cannot tell,' says Festel to Fose;
'We'll shoot the Cutty Wren,' says John the Red
Nose,
'We'll shoot,' &c.

'O, how will you shoot her?' says Milder to
Malder;
'O, I cannot tell,' says Festel to Fose;
'With arrows and bows,' says John the Red
Nose,
'With arrows,' &c.

'O, that will not do, says Milder to Malder;
'O, what will do then,' says Festel to Fose;
'With cannons and guns,' says John the Red
Nose,
'With cannons,' &c.

'O, how will you bring her home?' says Milder
to Malder;
'O, I cannot tell,' says Festel to Fose;
'On four strong men's shoulders,' says John
the Red Nose,
'On four' &c.

'O, that will not do,' says Milder to Malder;
'O, what will do then,' says Festel to Fose;
'In waggons and carts,' says John the Red
Nose,
'In waggons,' &c.

'O, what will you cut her up with?' says Milder
to Malder;
'O, I cannot tell,' says Festel to Fose;
'With knives and with forks,' says John the
Red Nose,
'With knives,' &c.

'O, that will not do,' says Milder to Malder;
'O what will do then,' says Festel to Fose;
'With hatchets and cleavers,' says John the Red
Nose,
'With hatchets,' &c.

'O, how will you boil her?' says Milder to
Malder;
'O, I cannot tell,' says Festel to Fose;
'In kettles and pots,' says John the Red Nose,
'In kettles,' &c.

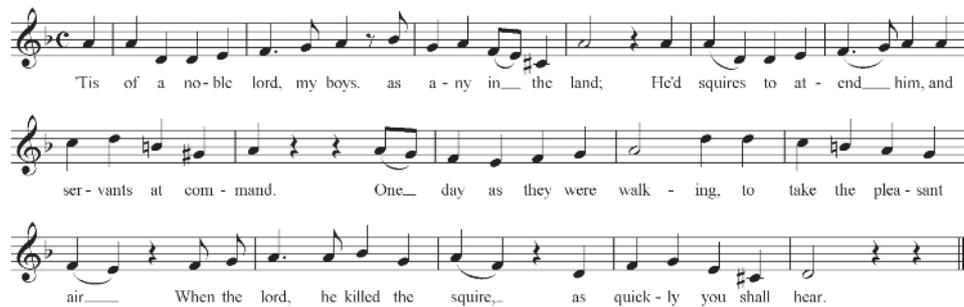
'O, that will not do,' says Milder to Malder;
'O, what will do then,' says Festel to Fose;
'In cauldrons and pans,' says John the Red
Nose,
'In cauldrons,' &c.

'O, who'll have the spare ribs?' says Milder to
Malder;
'O, I cannot tell,' says Festel to Fose;
'We'll give them to the poor,' says John the
Red Nose,
'We'll give them,' &c.

'Learned from my Welsh nurses, in Carmarthenshire. It was an ancient custom in South Wales for two or four men to go about on St. Stephen's Day carrying a wren fastened on two poles slung on to their shoulders, groaning under its supposed weight, and singing this song. There is another tune sung in Pembrokeshire, with slightly different words.'

In 1939, this text was married to the tune to 'Green Bushes' that Cecil Sharp had collected from Lucy White and Louie Hooper in September 1903, for an early recording made by the Topic Singers (Topic TRC-7). It is likely that this was done by A. L. Lloyd, but it is also possible that it was the work of Una Brandon-Jones. The record label described it as a '14th-century song', paving the way for its inclusion in Lloyd's *The Singing Englishman* (1944), where it is described as a medieval protest song. This has become an accepted idea and the song has been presented in this light by many performers, but there is no evidence for Lloyd's assertion.

Example 2. 'Tis of a Noble Lord' (Roud 6473)



Tis of a noble lord, my boys, as any in the land; He'd squires to attend him, and
 ser- vants at com - mand. One day as they were walk - ing, to take the plea - sant
 air. When the lord, he killed the squire, as quick - ly you shall hear.

'Tis of a noble lord, my boys, as any in the land;
 He'd squires to attend him and servants at command.
 One day as they were walking, to take the pleasant air,
 When the lord, he killed the squire, as quickly you shall hear.

The lord, he killed the squire, a witness standing by,
 'Twas brought in wilful murder, condemned he was to die;
 Condemned he was to die indeed, – sentence upon him passed, –
 But beyond expectation, a friend there came at last.

'Tis of as poor a servant girl as any in the land,
 She borrowed rings and jewels and servants at command;
 She borrowed rings and jewels, and a footman with her came;
 Just like any noble lady, all in her birth and fame.

And when she came before the judge, she on her knees did fall,
 'O pardon him! O pardon him!' for pardon she did call,
 'Take pity on a virgin and grant to me my love,
 And the heavens may reward you with great blessings from above.'

The judge he said, 'Fair lady, your love's condemned to die.'
 She wrung her hands and tore her hair and bitterly did cry,
 Saying 'If one of us must die, pray let it fall on me!
 I'll give my life to save him, and set his lordship free!'

The judge he says, 'Fair lady, I'll pardon him for your sake.'
 She took him by the lily-white hand, a journey for to take,
 And as they walked together, across the pleasant plain,
 Says he 'Dear honoured lady, pray tell to me your name.'

'Indeed I am no lady; these clothes they are not mine;
 They are my mistress' daughter's, the truth you soon shall find;
 They are my mistress' daughters, and that you soon shall know;
 Which I borrowed to prevent them from proving your overthrow.'

'O, if you are no lady, ten thousand pounds I'll give,
 Or you shall be my wedded wife as long as I do live;
 We'll live and love together, and you shall be my bride,
 For I've more cause to love you than all the world beside.'

This fair maid soon consented to be his lawful bride,
 And then they went into the church, and there the knot was tied:
 So now they live in pleasure, for they have gold in store;
 This young lord and his lady each other do adore.

This is one of the songs collected by John Broadwood in Kent and published privately in 1847. It has been found by only one other collector, Charles Gamblin, who had a version from Alfred Oliver of Axford, Hampshire, and passed it to George Gardiner.

Example 3. 'There Was a Lady in the West' (Child 1; Roud 161)

There was a la - dy in the West, Lay the bank with the bon - ny broom She had three daugh - ters
of the best, Fa lang the dil - lo, Fa lang the dil - lo, dil - lo, dee

There was a lady in the West,
Lay the bank with the bonny broom,
She had three daughters of the best,
Fa lang the dillo, Fa lang the dillo, dillo dee.

There came a stranger to the gate,
And he three days and nights did wait.

The eldest daughter did ope the door,
The second set him on the floor.

The third daughter she brought a chair,
And placed it that he might sit there.

(To first daughter)

'Now answer me these questions three,
Or you shall surely go with me.'

(To second daughter)

'Now answer me these questions six,
Or you shall surely be Old Nick's.'

(To all three)

'Now answer me these questions nine,
Or you shall surely all be mine.'

'What is greener than the grass?
What is smoother than crystal glass?'

'What is louder than a horn?
What is sharper than a thorn?'

'What is brighter than the light?
What is darker than the night?'

What is keener than an axe?
What is softer than melting wax?

'What is rounder than a ring?
To you we thus our answers bring.'

'Envy is greener than the grass,
Flattery, smoother than crystal glass.'

'Rumour is louder than a horn,
Hunger is sharper than a thorn.'

'Truth is brighter than the light,
Falsehood is darker than the night.'

'Revenge is keener than an axe,
Love is softer than melting wax.'

'The world is rounder than a ring,
To you we thus our answers bring.'

'Thus you have our answers nine,
And we never shall be thine.'

Mason identifies this as one of the songs from Mitford family sources and states that it was sung in Northumberland. Lucy Broadwood included it in *English County Songs* (1893), with her own accompaniment. The arrangements are shown below for purposes of comparison.

Marianne Mason's arrangement

There was a la - dy in the West, Lay the bank with the bonny broom, She had three daughters
rall. of the best, Fa lang the dil-lo, *a tempo.* Fa lang the dil-lo, dil-lo, dee.

Lucy Broadwood's arrangement

There was a la - dy
Andante e legato
mf in the West, Lay the bank with the bonny broom, She had three daugh - ters of the best.
rit. *a tempo.*
mf
f
rit.
 Fa lang the dil-lo, Fa lang the dil-lo, dil-lo, dee.

Appendix 4. Songs from Marianne Mason's collection in the Baring-Gould MSS

Mason's title	Roud no.	Baring-Gould's title	Baring-Gould MSS reference
Robertin Tush	117	Robin a' Thrush	P3, 374 (-) Tune and brief note only
A Paradox (1st version)	330	I Had Four Sisters	P3, 372 (-) Tune and brief note only
A Paradox (2nd version)	330	Don't Go a' Rushing	P2, 2 (115) Text (3 stanzas) and tune
The Tree in the Valley	129	The Everlasting Circle	P1, 208 (104) Text (8 stanzas) and tune
Madam, I Present You with Six Rows of Pins	573	Blue Muslin	P1, 61 (22) Text (9 stanzas) and tune
I Love a Sixpence	1116	The Jolly Shilling	P3, 332 (-) Text (4 stanzas) and tune
The Silly Old Man	2640	The Silly Old Man	PC 1, 52 (18) Tune only
Giles Collin	147	Giles Collins	P3, 362 (-) Tune and brief note only
Little Sir William	73	Little Sir William	P3, 364 (-) Tune and reference only
The Old Horse – A Christmas Play	513	Poor Old Horse	P1, 163 (77) Text (4 stanzas) and tune, with copy of MHM's note
The Privateer	1000	The Bold Privateer	P2, 147 (189) Text (5 stanzas) and tune
The Rosebuds in June	812	Rosebuds in June	P2, 440 (384) Text (1 stanza) and tune
'Tis of a Young Damsel	901	The Lost Lady Found	P2, 446 (387) Reference only [not in <i>Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs</i>]
	3	The Seeds of Love	P2, 296 (279) Tune only [not in <i>Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs</i>]
	531	The Saucy Sailor	P1, 59 (21) Tune only

Note: The system used to refer to songs in the Baring-Gould MSS is designed to overcome difficulties that arise from errors that Baring-Gould himself introduced when numbering the pages and songs. The reference number includes: the identifier for the manuscript, followed by the volume number; page number; song number assigned by Baring-Gould (in parentheses). For example, the first song in the Personal Copy Manuscript is "Twas There by Chance", which has the reference P1, 1 (1). The system has also been extended to allow for references to songs in the other Baring-Gould song manuscripts. More detail about the Baring-Gould MSS collection can be found at <www.sbgssongs.org/>.

Notes

- ¹ M. H. Mason, *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs, both tunes and words from tradition* (London: Metzler, [1877]). The date is sometimes given as 1878, but the preface is dated October 1877 and it was advertised for sale in December 1877.
- ² David Gregory, *Victorian Songhunters: The Recovery and Editing of English Vernacular Ballads and Folk Lyrics, 1820–1883* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), p. 359.
- ³ Nottingham, Nottinghamshire Archives, DD716/51, M. H. Mason, *A Pioneer Life*, typescript autobiography, incompletely paginated and heavily corrected by hand. The date of the typescript is not given, but the sections are marked as having been revised in 1925. The document is divided into numbered sections, probably intended to be chapters in the projected book. These correspond, though not completely, to a list of chapter headings with the manuscript.
- ⁴ Mason's will bequeathed her diaries (which she kept throughout her life), as well as the notebooks in which she recorded every inspection of a child, to her friend Sir William Chance, 'to be published by him or not, or otherwise dealt with at his discretion'. Sir William died in April 1935 and no trace of the diaries and notebooks has yet been found. If they ever do turn up, the notebooks will comprise an important sociological record.
- ⁵ Katherine Field, 'Mason, (Marianne) Harriet (1845–1932)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn (May 2010) <www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48847> [accessed 10 March 2013]. Her sister, Frances Agnes Mason, and her brother, Arthur James Mason, also have entries.
- ⁶ *A Pioneer Life*, section 2, 'Childhood – Laugharne', p. 36. Of the three songs mentioned, only 'The Cutty Wren' was included in *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*. She later gave the tune to 'The Seeds of Love' to Sabine Baring-Gould; it is in his Personal Copy MS, P2, 296 (279).
- ⁷ *A Pioneer Life*, section 1, 'Preliminary and Family History', p. 13.
- ⁸ *A Pioneer Life*, section 4, 'Painting – Music', p. 4. The last sentence is crossed out.
- ⁹ *A Pioneer Life*, section 8, 'Ireland'.
- ¹⁰ *A Pioneer Life*, section 4, 'Painting – Music', p. 5.
- ¹¹ *A Pioneer Life*, section 29, 'Evidence before Commissions and Committees'.
- ¹² I first saw this song, under the title 'Mrs Dyer, the Baby Farmer', in Francis and Vera Mendel, eds, *The Weekend Book*, music ed. John Goss (London: Nonesuch Press, 1924). In later editions, the song is attributed to E. J. Moeran, but Roy Palmer has confirmed that the song was actually collected by Peter Warlock from William Bushell of Begbroke, Oxfordshire (personal communication). I have not yet found a broadside copy.
- ¹³ *A Pioneer Life*, section 29, 'Evidence before Commissions and Committees'.
- ¹⁴ I have identified more than twenty pamphlets and articles written by Mason for various magazines, including *Macmillan's Magazine*, the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, the *Geographical Journal*, and the *English Review*. There are a number of articles published in the *Nineteenth Century and After* and in the *Guardian* (the Anglican newspaper, not the Manchester publication) that have yet to be located and listed. They include many of her articles on alpine plants and gardening, and some on old furniture. There are also the official reports that she compiled for the Local Government Board over more than twenty-five years. I have not yet discovered anything further written by her about folk song.
- ¹⁵ For example, Woking, Surrey History Centre, Broadwood Papers, 2185/BMB/6/27/7, letter of Marianne Mason to Bertha Broadwood, Morton Hall, 3 January [no year]. This letter refers to the illness of Mason's grandmother, thus dating it before December 1878, when Anne Mitford died.
- ¹⁶ For the earliest noted date of such a meeting, see Woking, Surrey History Centre, Lucy E. Broadwood Diaries and Notebooks 1882–1929, 6782/10, Lucy Broadwood Diary, 13 February 1894, when Broadwood wrote 'M. Mason to lunch'.
- ¹⁷ *Crocasmia masoniorum*, *Indigofera masoniae*, and *Watsonia masoniae*.
- ¹⁸ The collection includes 110 large paintings of flowers and of landscapes in the Transkei. There are also five small books of plant studies. The larger paintings were on permanent exhibition in Cambridge Cottage at Kew for many years. All of the paintings are now stored in the Herbarium and Library at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.
- ¹⁹ Miss Howard remains something of an enigma. She is not mentioned in Mason's memoir and no reference to her has yet been found in census or other public records.
- ²⁰ Surrey History Centre, 6782/25, Lucy Broadwood Diary, 24 March 1913.
- ²¹ Mason's pet name 'Mitty' was confirmed by Sandra Martin, her great-niece, who told me that she was referred to in the family as 'Aunt Mitty' (personal communication, June 2012).

- ²² Noted in *The Times*, 31 August and 1 September 1914.
- ²³ Surrey History Centre, 6782/25, Lucy Broadwood Diary, 2 November 1914. The entry reads: 'Mitty Mason kindly went with me to the War Office for me to see Ld. Kitchener's private secretary, Sir George Arthur. As we went in Ld. K. came out in uniform, looking rather impressive. I put in my plea to Sir G. Arthur for more cooking schools & inspection of camp-cookery in home-camps. He was very kind & asked if I am related to the two generals of my name etc.'
- ²⁴ Surrey History Centre, 6782/25, Lucy Broadwood Diary, 16 and 17 January, 12 February 1915.
- ²⁵ This was reported in a number of newspapers: for example, the *Nottingham Evening Post*, Wednesday, 25 August 1932, p. 1, col. 4. Her request prompted a number of newspaper articles over the next few days concerning premature burial and the precautions that could be taken. The use of chloroform was one of the recommendations of the Society for the Prevention of Premature Burial and was adopted by a number of their members.
- ²⁶ *A Pioneer Life*, section 9, 'Folksongs', [unpaginated]. The date is an error and should read 1877.
- ²⁷ Margaret Dean-Smith, *A Guide to English Folk Song Collections 1822–1952* (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1954), p. 27.
- ²⁸ Advertisement in *The Standard* [London], Tuesday, 11 December, 1877, p. 8.
- ²⁹ 'New Music', *The Graphic*, Saturday, 19 January, 1878, p. 59.
- ³⁰ *A Pioneer Life*, section 9, 'Folksongs', [unpaginated].
- ³¹ M. H. Mason, *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* (London: Metzler, 1908). As with the first edition, there is some confusion over the date of publication. The revised preface is dated 1908, but some sources give the date of publication as 1909. In this preface, Mason adds to the confusion by referring to the first edition as having been published in 1878 and then including her earlier preface, dated 1877.
- ³² Despite the comment about pleasing her 'friends in the Folk Song Society', Mason does not appear to have been a member. As she pointed out in her memoir, 'the Society was formed long after my book was written.'
- ³³ *A Pioneer Life*, section 9, 'Folksongs', [unpaginated].
- ³⁴ The Child ballads are 'There Was a Lady in the West' (Child 1), 'Giles Collin' (Child 42/85), 'Little Sir William' (Child 155), and 'The Silly Old Man' (Child 283).
- ³⁵ William Chappell, *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, 2 vols (London: Chappell, 1859).
- ³⁶ [Rev. John Broadwood], *Old English Songs, as now sung by the peasantry of the Weald of Surrey and Sussex* (London: Balls, for private circulation, [1847?]). This book is sometimes seen as the first 'modern' collection of folk songs. Unlike Mason's collection, however, it was not made available to the general public.
- ³⁷ *A Pioneer Life*, section 9, 'Folksongs', [unpaginated].
- ³⁸ Herbert Birch Reynardson [and Lucy E. Broadwood], ed., *Sussex Songs (Popular Songs of Sussex)* (London: Lucas & Weber, 1889 [1890]).
- ³⁹ The songs identified as of Northumbrian origin are 'The Baker's Wife', 'There Was a Lady in the West', 'Johnny Pringle', 'There Was an A'd Man Cam' over the Lea', 'Green Grow the Leaves upon the Hawthorn Tree', 'As I Was a-Going Tweedside', 'Dance to thy Minnie' (*Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs*, pp. 30–38).
- ⁴⁰ J. Collingwood Bruce and John Stokoe, eds, *Northumbrian Minstrelsy: A Collection of the Ballads, Melodies, and Small-Pipe Tunes of Northumbria* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1882).
- ⁴¹ The dedication reads: 'To Mrs. Mitford, from whom most of these songs were learned, this book is affectionately dedicated by her granddaughter.'
- ⁴² *A Pioneer Life*, section 9, 'Folksongs', [unpaginated].
- ⁴³ *A Pioneer Life*, section 1, 'Preliminary and Family History', p. 13.
- ⁴⁴ Margaret Herbert is identified by name in E. Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, and F. Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living*, 2 vols (London: Society for Psychological Research, 1886), 1, 322–24. She had (reluctantly) signed as witness to a dream that she and Miss Mason had both had, and which was cited as an example of thought transference. She is described there as 'a matter of fact, middle-aged woman who has lived nearly all my life in my family and was my nurse'. This account is also in *A Pioneer Life*, section 9, 'Psychical Research', [unpaginated].
- ⁴⁵ I have not succeeded in finding Joseph and Anne Mitford in the 1861 census, and so cannot confirm that Mary Wilkins was in their service. By 1871, they had moved into their son's new house, Morton Hall, Retford, where Wilkins is also listed in the census as a general servant.
- ⁴⁶ *A Pioneer Life*, section 9, 'Psychical Research', [unpaginated].

- ⁴⁷ *A Pioneer Life*, section 9, 'Folksongs', [unpaginated].
- ⁴⁸ *A Pioneer Life*, section 9, 'Folksongs', [unpaginated].
- ⁴⁹ S. Baring Gould and H. Fleetwood Sheppard, *Songs & Ballads of the West* (London: Methuen, [1889–91]), pp. x–xvi.
- ⁵⁰ 'Miss M. H. Mason', *The Queen*, 29 March 1890, pp. 437–38.
- ⁵¹ *A Pioneer Life*, section 9, 'Folksongs', [unpaginated].
- ⁵² Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Eng 863, Baring-Gould, S. (Sabine), 1834–1924, collector, Ballads and songs chiefly in Devonshire: manuscript transcript, 1890–1893, Appendix no. 11, letter of Sabine Baring-Gould to Francis James Child, 23 November 1893 <pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/22250626>. See also Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Am 1922, Francis James Child papers, letter of Sabine Baring-Gould to Francis James Child, 19 December 1893. In the first of these letters, Baring-Gould says he will ask his daughter to send Child his own copy of the book. The second letter reports: 'I wrote from France to Miss Mason to ask her to send you a copy of her book, as I feared my daughter would hardly find mine in my library.'
- ⁵³ Exeter, Devon Record Office, deposit no. 7960, Sabine Baring-Gould MSS, Personal Copy, P2, 296 (279).
- ⁵⁴ The *Pioneer Life* typescript has the same error in places. But another possibility is that Baring-Gould was copying the tune from a rough note and misread his own handwriting.
- ⁵⁵ Lucy E. Broadwood and J. A. Fuller Maitland, eds, *English County Songs: Words and Music* (London: Leadenhall Press; Cramer; Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1893).
- ⁵⁶ Though these are included, quite reasonably, under 'Derbyshire', the four variants include one each from Nottinghamshire, and Northumberland and two from Yorkshire. The fact that Broadwood treats 'Morton' as if it were a place suggests that, at this time, she did not know Miss Mason well.
- ⁵⁷ The story of the Waring sisters and their folk songs, a collaborative research venture by Matthew Edwards and Martin Graebe, has not been recounted in full, but a large part of it is told in Valerie Bonham, *A Joyous Service: The Clewer Sisters and their Work*, new edn (Cuddesdon: CSJB Books, 2012), Appendix 2, 'Sister Emma and her Songs'. My study of Mason's life and work was prompted by the observation of this Northumbrian connection and the fact that seven of the songs in the Waring sisters' repertoire are also found in Mason's collection. After looking for points where the lives of the three women and their families might have crossed, I believe, at present, that this is no more than a coincidence. Work continues on the Waring sisters.
- ⁵⁸ S. Baring-Gould, *Further Reminiscences 1864–1894* (London: Bodley Head, 1925), p. 184. Many of Baring-Gould's friends were professional and 'self-made' men; several came from artisan or commercial backgrounds.
- ⁵⁹ Sister Emma's version of 'Long Lankin' was collected by Cecil Sharp on 27 February 1909. An article published half a century earlier, M. H. R., "'Long Lankyn" Ballad', *Notes and Queries*, 2nd ser., 2 (1856), 324–25, gives the ballad as 'derived by tradition from the nurse of an ancestor of mine who heard it sung nearly a century ago in Northumberland'. Matthew Edwards has identified 'M. H. R.' as Michael Henry Rankin, uncle of Sister Emma. The 'ancestor' was Anne Cole, Michael Henry Rankin's grandmother, and thus the great-grandmother of the Waring sisters. This is a remarkable demonstration of the survival of a song in the repertoire of a family of a certain class.
- ⁶⁰ Edward F. Rimbault, *Nursery Rhymes, with the tunes to which they are still sung in the nurseries of England, obtained principally from oral tradition* (London: Cramer, Beale [1846]).