



SONG RESOURCES ON THE WEB

6TH EDITION

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TRADITIONAL SONG FORUM

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SONG RESOURCES ON THE WEB

The first version of this list was developed at the 'Forum Focus' session at the TSF meeting of 30th November 2002 entitled 'Song Resources on the Web'. The reason for compiling it was to give people who want to find out more about folk songs some sites that would help them in their quest. In this, the 6th edition of the document, I have, again, checked all the existing links and added some new ones. Several sites have changed or disappeared since the last edition. And some sites have not moved on with the technology, sometimes because the original creator has died. All those that have been retained on the list have, I believe, something to offer.

This is a list of places on the Internet to go to look for texts of songs and for other things useful to singers or writers who want to know more about folk song. It does not, with a few important exceptions, give links to individual recordings, books or articles. Neither does it, though again there are a couple of exceptions, point towards commercial sites. It has been compiled from an Anglo-centric viewpoint but there are many links to sites in other countries that have resources of interest to English speaking folk song enthusiasts and researchers.

Inclusion on this list is not a guarantee of quality – this is not a folkish Tripadvisor, though I have, sometimes, commended on a site because of its excellence. I have, occasionally, suggested that an organisation could have done better. There is no guarantee that a site will still be there tomorrow. I don't claim that this list is comprehensive – but it is an extensive sample of the sites that are available to explore traditional song and its cousins. If you come across any broken links please tell me, particularly if you know where a site has moved to. And if you know of any sites that you think should be included, please let me know.

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www.vwml.org

The most useful site of them all!

The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML) Digital Database has been in a constant state of development since it was launched as a separate entity by the English Folk Dance and Song Society in 2013. The library's digital archive now contains the manuscripts from many of the folk song collectors who have worked in England since the last decades of the 19th Century. As well as manuscript material the site now includes printed matter and audio recordings and additional material and new features are still being added. The site is of unparalleled value for researchers interested in English traditional song. Other features of the site now include:

- Full search (in several ways) of the manuscript collection. A growing number of the songs now have transcriptions of the tunes (which can be played as midi files) and the texts.
- Cecil Sharp's Appalachian Diaries (with Transcripts by Chris Bearman) – were added to the site to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Sharp's birth.
- Cecil Sharp's photographs and diaries – images of the singers from whom he collected songs.
- The Roud Index – Steve Roud's immensely valuable listing of references to songs that have been collected and where they can be found - and it is still growing
- Study Guides – including the *English Folk Song Bibliography* (2006), a listing of the most significant books about folk songs from the Nineteenth Century onwards. Also the *English Folk Song Discography* (2003), a listing of significant source recordings of folk singers and their songs.
- And lots more.

STREET LITERATURE:

There are now many sites with collections of broadside ballads, most of them with images of the original ballads, some with facsimile texts that may be easier to read. Broad-sides are a valuable source of song texts as well as being interesting as physical objects. It has been suggested that more than 90% of the songs heard by the early folk song collectors appeared on broadsides. Several of them (Baring-Gould, Broadwood, Sharp, Vaughan Williams, and Alfred Williams for example) had private collections which they used to fill gaps in songs for publication – for the same reason, they are a valuable resource for today's singers.

<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>

Broadside Ballads Online (Bodleian Library) – Browse their 30,000 broadside ballads or search by Roud number. As well as images of the sheets the site includes basic information about the individual collections and gives (very approximate) dates and publishers for most of the ballads. The site also catalogues the illustrations printed on the broadsides. This is a very useful site and should be the first port of call when looking for broadsides.

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/ballads>

British Library, **Collection Guide: Ballads and Broadsides** – The British Library has a number of important collections of street literature. They have published a collection guide to explain these and this includes some links to material that I was not aware of, such as a complete scan of the Crampton Ballads. Unfortunately, it suffers from the all-too-frequent slap-dash treatment that the British Library displays, as the link that promises access to all 7 volumes displays one, unidentified volume with no clue as to how to access the rest. This is a useful page – but could be so much more so.

<http://speccoll.library.kent.edu/music/ballads/streetballads.html>

Street Ballads of Victorian England – A collection of 175 broadsides in the library at Kent State University, Ohio. Since the last issue of this document the process of scanning the broadsides has been completed and the mechanism for viewing them works better than the majority of similar sites. Though the selection of ballads is relatively small it contains some very interesting items and is worth spending an hour or so looking through it.

<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/ballads/>

'**Sixteenth Century Ballads** - A work in progress' – this is a subset of the web-site of the Society of Creative Anachronism (www.sca.org) produced by Greg Lindahl. Though the site is not beautifully designed or user friendly, it remains a valuable source of links to information about Sixteenth Century ballads.

<http://digital.nls.uk/broadsides/>

The Word on the Street – This is the National Library of Scotland's collection of images of broadsides, which has now grown to include 1,800 broadsides, dating from 1650 to 1910. The ballads are browsable by subject or title and can be viewed as original print, pdf or transcription. Some very interesting items, particularly useful for Scottish researchers.

<http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/teach/ballads/index.html>

Glasgow Broadside Ballads (**The Murray Collection**) – This small collection was put together by the University of Glasgow Library as part of its 'Special Collections' web site. While it remains available it is, effectively, a zombie that is not being maintained. The ballads are presented as thumbnails that you can click to view a good image of the original printed sheet.

<http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/>

English Broadside Ballad Archive (University of California, Santa Barbara) – This collection now contains more than 8,700 ballads, beautifully presented as facsimiles and transcriptions. I have said in every previous edition of this document that I wish I understood this site better and, after several years of looking, I still can't find a way to use it effectively. If you know what you are searching for, then you stand a chance of finding it, if it is there. But there is no way of browsing the collection. Immensely frustrating! There has to be a better way.

<http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/lib/libcollections/collections/special/flanders>

Helen Hartness **Flanders Ballad Collection** – Helen Hartness Flanders collected songs in Vermont and New England more widely which she gave to Middlebury College Library. She also made a collection of more than 600 broadsides. This website is rather quirky, but worth persevering with. Much of the collection is available on a page of the [Internet Archive](#) which, as well as images of the broadside ballads and other items from the Middlebury College Library collection, includes the field recordings made by Flanders.

TRADITIONAL SONGS AND SINGERS

<http://folkopedia.efdss.org/Song>

Folkopedia – this site has not achieved all that was hoped for it. Entries are still being made by some die-hard enthusiasts, notably Lewis Jones, and there is a lot of useful information here. But it is very patchy. This link takes you to the song pages, with information about songs, singers, collectors and a load of other stuff.

<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk>

Tobar an Dualchais – Kist o Riches. – contains over 40,000 oral recordings made in Scotland. An amazing site and a remarkable record of the wealth on song in Scotland.

<https://sussextraditions.org>

Sussex Traditions (sub-titled 'Folklife and Lore') is a growing site with a wide range of material from Sussex. Contains a lot of printed articles as well as recordings of Sussex singers, such as Gordon Hall, who tells some lovely anecdotes. Lots to explore.

www.glostrad.com

Gloucestershire Traditions is another large site offering the songs and tunes of Gloucestershire, gleaned from a number of collections and presented with meticulously researched notes on the original singers. The site is nicely put together and material is still being added.

<http://www.yorkshirefolksong.net/>

The **Yorkshire Garland** – a fine regional collection of 128 songs from Yorkshire as texts and as sound files. There are also, as you would expect from any project involving Steve Gardham, excellent notes on the provenance of the songs.

<http://www.folknortheast.com/>

Folk Archive Resource North East (**FARNE**) – A collection of material from the North-East of England, with songs and a great deal besides. Searchable, listenable and with pictures – but click-heavy and slow to navigate.

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/folksongsintro.php>

Wiltshire folk songs – The work of Chris Wildridge, this collection on the Wiltshire Libraries site gives texts and other information about songs collected in Wiltshire by Alfred Williams and others. Williams didn't record the tunes that he heard the songs sung to but some of the other collectors, such as George Gardiner and Geoffrey Hill, did, and for those songs the tunes are given. There is also a section on folk plays and a calendar of folk customs. Though Williams's songs are on the VWML Database, there is additional information here.

<http://www.csufresno.edu/folklore/BalladIndexTOC.html>

The Ballad Index. This website has been around for a long time and its design reflects its age. Nonetheless, this is a resource that I use frequently for information about the earliest versions of songs and other useful notes. Can be searched by Roud Number.

<http://tinyurl.com/bluegrass-ballads>

The lyrics section of the **Bluegrass Messengers** website has an outstanding section on Child Ballads which merits exploration. Includes texts of the ballads as well as a collection of articles about Child and his ballads.

SONG COLLECTORS:

<http://www.sbgsongs.org>

Sabine Baring-Gould: Songs of the West – My own site, with background information on Baring-Gould and his song collection, including a number of songs.

<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/carpenter/>

The **James Madison Carpenter** collection – This is the online index to this important collection, made in Britain during the 1920s and 1930s. This site provides the data about the collection, but not the songs and the recordings of them which are to be found on the VWML website - <https://www.vwml.org/archives-catalogue/JMC>.

<https://novascotia.ca/archives/creighton/>

The **Helen Creighton** Collection –A good presentation of the work of Helen Creighton in Nova Scotia which includes background information, photographs and sound recordings (though I have never managed to get these to work).

<http://maxhunter.missouristate.edu/>

The **Max Hunter** Folk Song Collection - A fine collection of songs from the Ozarks, recorded between 1956 and 1976. 1594 songs for you to listen to including a separate section on Child ballads. The playback is directly from the page and works well.

<http://web.lyon.edu/wolfcollection/ozarks.htm>

The **John Quincy Wolf** Collection – A wonderful resource at Lyon College, Arkansas, based on the work of John Quincy Wolf who collected songs in the Ozarks in the 1940s. There is a great list of songs for which texts can be viewed. For many it is also possible to listen to the original singers - including the wonderful Almeda Riddle.

<http://www.folktrax-archive.org/>

Peter Kennedy's folktrax website, archived as it was left when he was died. Though it is not possible to buy recordings from this site, the information here is of great value in understanding his collection.

POPULAR SONG

<http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu>

The **Lester S Levy Collection** – a large collection (29,000 images) of American sheet music from 1780 to 1980 at Johns Hopkins University. A nicely designed site with clickable images of the whole of the piece.

<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/sheetmusic/>

Historic **American Sheet Music** - another sheet music collection, this time at Duke University. Contains 1800 American broadsides and song sheets from the 19th Century. These can be searched, but not browsed – which makes it less useful than it could be.

<http://www.nla.gov.au/music/>

This collection of **sheet music from Australia** has changed considerable since the last edition of this list. I-Pad users can get a free app with the sheet music on, otherwise, you can search for items in the Library catalogue. Many of the songs are actually transnational so this can be a useful source in searches related to the UK.

<http://www.musicallcds.com>

Windyridge CDs site – actually a catalogue of CDs for sale of music hall and variety performers but also includes useful background, pictures and biographies of music hall performers.

<http://www.monologues.co.uk>

Song Lyrics – originally this site was just a nice collection of monologues, but it now has a separate section which includes more than 2600 music hall and variety lyrics – great stuff!

ORGANISATIONS:

<http://www.loc.gov/>

Library of Congress - The Library of Congress website has a number of song resources, and it is worth a good, long look. The most relevant section is the American Folklife Center - <https://www.loc.gov/folklife/> where there is a lot to explore. I enjoy their blog (Click in the top right of the Folklife web page). One thing I will point you towards is the collection related to Alan Lomax's time in Britain 1950 – 58. Otherwise, seek and you will (eventually) find.

<http://www.itma.ie>

Irish Traditional Music Association (ITMA) web site. This site has grown considerably in recent years and contains some wonderful digital resources – pictures, sound and print. Allow time for a long visit!

<http://blpc.bl.uk>

The **British Library** public catalogue - search for publications and find out about other services. This is an awfully big website and it is, frankly, very hard to find anything! You might be interested to know about the British Library Sound Archive, which holds a number of recordings of folk song made by 20th Century collectors. You can access this area of the website at <https://sounds.bl.uk/World-and-traditional-music>. The collection also includes the historic wax cylinders which came from EFDSS. The recordings were made at the beginning of the 20th Century (including some from Cecil Sharp) – here is a link directly to them <https://sounds.bl.uk/World-and-traditional-music/Ethnographic-wax-cylinders>.

<http://www.tradsong.org>

Traditional Song Forum – an informal organisation for those interested in finding out more about folk song. This list was a product of one of their meetings.

ENTHUSIASTS SITES:

<http://mudcat.org>

The Digital Tradition - hard to classify, since it has grown so far beyond Dick and Susan Greenhaus' original vision for a digital collection of songs. The database is a very useful resource and the associated discussion group is, at its best, a great way to get information.

<http://ingeb.org/folksong.html>

German and international songs - part of Frank Petersohn's amazing compilation. Contains a mix of songs, some folkier than others as well, as midi files of many of the tunes. Worth exploring on a rainy day.

<http://www.thecopperfamily.com>

The Copper Family – originally compiled by Gary Gillard, now run by the family themselves. News, merchandise and transcriptions of several of their songs.

<http://www.lukehistory.com/resources/ballads.html>

Blackletter Ballads - A resource designed for 17th Century re-enactment enthusiasts, this section gives as part of the background a small collection of 17th Century black letter ballads.

<http://www.contemplator.com/folk.html>

The Contemplator (Lesley Nelson-Burns) has assembled this collection of folk music of England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and America. This has been redesigned since I last saw it and the major improvement, as far as I'm concerned, is that the music doesn't play automatically. Songs in various categories (Child Ballads, Love, Sea, War, America etc.) as well as some useful links.

<http://songbook1.tripod.com>

Songs collected by **Donagh McDonagh** - Niall McDonagh's compilation of the texts over 300 Irish songs from his father's collection as sent in to him as a result of his programme 'Ireland is Singing' on Radio Eirann. No tunes are given and the sources are not well documented but the site is indexed and there are some unusual variants here.

<http://www.csufresno.edu/folklore/Olson/>

The late **Bruce Olsen's web site** - his motto quoted at the end of the index page was 'keep at it, muddling through always works'. Well, this site is a glorious idiosyncratic muddle with a lot of good stuff on ballads and folk song touched by wisdom. It is being maintained in original its form as an archive, but several of the links are outdated.

ON-LINE MAGAZINES:

<http://www.mustrad.org.uk>

Musical Traditions – Rod Stradling's magnum opus. Now contains more than 320 articles on folk-related topics.

"OTHER":

<http://www.afolksongaday.com/>

Folk Song a Day – Jon Boden's remarkable project, performing a new song every day and putting all 365 of them on-line with notes. Brilliant idea from this innovative musician.

<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/ravenscroft/>

The Music of Thomas Ravenscroft – Another useful piece of work by Greg Lindahl who has put together a site dedicated to Thomas Ravenscroft with facsimiles of Pammelia, Deuteromelia, Melismata and a great deal besides. A very useful reference for early music. Also, a number of other links to explore.

<https://folkplay.info>

Folk Play Research - A wonderful collection of material about traditional plays from the Traditional Drama Research Group. The site includes about 230 play texts as well as images, 2500 links to relevant sites and lots more laid out in an exemplary fashion. A very active and well maintained site.

<http://www.copac.ac.uk>

COPAC – The National, Academic, and Specialist Library Catalogue is a search engine for the online catalogues of many of the largest university research libraries in the UK and Ireland plus the British Library. The article you are looking for may be among the 36 million records they have on this site.

<http://www.familysearch.org>

Family history – free site operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints with family history, family tree, and genealogy records and resources from around the World. Searchable on-line version of the 1881 census as well as other useful material for tracking down singers. With the coming of other genealogical sites, such as Ancestry which can be accessed free in public libraries or through a subscription, this site is less valuable – but still good for a quick check.

BOOKS ON LINE:

There are a number of sites where it is possible to read and download the full texts of major folk song collections. Three of them are:

<http://books.google.com/>

Google Books – It is hard to love this site with its ‘snippet views’, ‘no previews’ and partial texts – just occasionally it redeems itself, but it is an awful site. Google could definitely do better, but show no sign of wanting to do so. And working out which books you can actually open on the site is very difficult. There! I’ve got it off my chest. But some people seem to like it so I will leave it on the list.

<http://www.gutenberg.org>

Project Gutenberg – transcriptions of books (which are well done), rather than images of texts. There are not so many books on this site, but it is definitely worth a look. Lewis Jones regularly highlights new material of interest.

<http://www.archive.org>

The Internet Archive – probably the second most useful site for folk research on the Internet. Contains a large number of scanned books, including most of the major folk song collections from the 19th and early 20th Century. Scans on this site are generally of a high standard though some that have been made by Google are incomplete and erratic. The online reader is excellent and has a very good search facility with a clever visual indicator ribbon. A text only version is available but the OCR transcriptions tend to be poor. Books can be downloaded in pdf, Kindle or other formats to read off-line. There are also a number of other folk related recordings and videos as well as archived websites. I visit this site most days when I’m doing research – brilliant!

http://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page

IMSLP Petrucci Music Library – is a source for all sorts of music texts. Several folk collections here as well as a few issues of the *Journal of the Folk Song Society*.



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