

The Ballad Printers of Worcester, *by Roy Palmer*

Under this heading in 1990-91 I published a series of five articles in what was then the *Somers Journal*. These have now been revised and re-written in the light of further information, some of which is published in my book, *The Folklore of Worcestershire* (Logaston Press, 2005).

1. John Butler

Worcester's first ballad printer was probably John Butler, who was in business from 1750 until his death in 1796. His premises were at 10 High Street until 1793, when he moved to Garden Market (now St Nicholas Street). Only one item survives with the latter imprint. Sarah Butler, perhaps John's widow or daughter, took over in 1796, as a printer, bookseller and stationer, and continued in business until 1835. She issued no ballads but she may have continued to sell stock produced in earlier years.

This included '**Histories, Old and New Songs, Patters, Carols, Godly Books, &c.**', but only certain songs and carols have survived. Like most ballad printers, John Butler supplied 'Country Dealers and Travellers' on wholesale terms, and he had other agents: in his case, both in Worcester (G. Lewis, A. Gamidge and J. Grundy) and further afield (S. Hazel, Gloucester, and J. Cooper, Kidderminster). He published both eight- and six-page booklets, and also single sheets, usually with several items, but in one instance, one only.

Some of his '**Old Songs**' were indeed old, or at least old-fashioned. At least one, '**The Spanish Lady's Love to an English Gentleman**', was written by Thomas Deloney, who died in 1600. Another concerned a dragon, and a third was entitled '**The Wandering Prince of Troy**'. A full list is appended. All are drawn from the national ballad corpus, and most of the newer songs seem to be metropolitan in origin. '**The Frisky Girls**' (see below), for example, clearly has a London setting. Only one item can be called local: '**Robin Hood's Hill**', a celebration of the beauties of what is now called Robinswood Hill, which overlooks the Severn near Gloucester. It is the sole sheet with this imprint: '**Worcester: Printed and Sold by J. Butler, near the Packhorse Inn, Garden-market**'. It must have been issued between 1793 and 1796, yet the copy preserved in Worcestershire Record Office bears the manuscript name of Elizabeth Oakley, who is known to have bought a batch of ballads in 1808.

The Frisky Girls

I'll lay a groat unto a shilling,
I'll lay a guinea to a crown,
There's never a girl in Covent Garden
That shall pull my courage down.
 We'll be there at the fair;
 If you meet a girl that's frisky,
 Stick a fairing in her hair.

Give my service to the young man
That is cloathed all in black;
Tell him that I will be with him,
For his name is Paddy Whack.
 We'll be there, &c.

Here's your buy-men from St Giles's,
Here's your flash-men from Fleet-Lane,
Here's your flashy girls of all sizes,
They are fit for the game.

*buy-men [buz-men: pickpockets]
flash-men [pimps]*

We'll be there, &c.
Tell me, tell me, tell me truly,
Tell me all you girls that know,
If a girl is fit for kissing
She must wear the ribbon bow'd.
 We'll be there, &c.

I kiss'd her once, I kiss'd her twice,
I kiss'd her three times in a day;
I kiss'd her once, I kiss'd her twice,
I kiss'd her maidenhead away.
 We'll be there, &c.

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List of Ballads printed by John Butler

Items known to me. I'd be very interested to hear of others.

Locations are abbreviated as follows:

- BB: ballad collection, **Bodleian Library** (now available on-line at www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads)
BR: **Birmingham Reference Library**, ref. 119932, fol.25
HB: Harding Collection, **Bodleian Library**
IP: Fraser-Mackintosh Collection, **Inverness Public Library**
JJ: John Johnson Collection, **Bodleian Library**
MC: Madden Collection, **Cambridge University Library**
NY: **New York Public Library**, broadsides, box 2
WR: Broadsheets 70:1, **Worcestershire Record Office**
YU: **Yale University Library**, ref. 4^o By 6 1705

- The Bristol bridegroom; or, The ship-carpenter's love to the merchant's daughter BB; copy HB
A choice pennyworth of wit; or, [A] clear distinction between a virtuous wife and a wanton harlot BB; copy JJ
A collection of carols, part the first: 1. God's dear son without beginning 2. God rest you merry gentlemen
3. Oh! Fair Jerusalem! HB
A collection of carols, part the second: 1. Now when Joseph and Mary 2. Awake, awake sweet England
3. Joseph was an old man HB
A collection of carols, part the third: 1. Let all good Christian people here 2. God bless the master of this house
3. When Jesus Christ was twelve years old HB
A collection of carols, part the fifth: 1. My master, your servants & neighbours, &c.
2. A virgin most purely, &c. 3. Remember, O thou man 4. Let Christians now with joyful mirth HB
A collection of songs containing 1. Sweet Susan 2. Farewell dear heart, &c.
3. How blest is the soldier, &c 4. The pilgrim HB
A collection of new songs containing 1. Saunders's ghost 2. The golden glove 3. The banks of the Dee
4. Plato's advice 5. A hunting song WR
A collection of new songs: The sycamore shade; The jolly gipsies; The charms of Jenny; The shepherd's
holiday; The three things MC
A collection of new songs 1: A favourite Irish song; Molly's courtship to sweet William; The ladies defence of
their high heads; A new hunting song MC
A collection of new songs 2: A favourite Scotch song, sung by Mrs Hillier, at the Theatre in Worcester; The
damsel's wish that wars were all over; Labour in vain; The frisky girls; Contentment MC
A collection of new songs [a different edition of the previous item]: A favourite new song; The damsel's wish that
the wars were all over; Labour in vain; The new guardian angels; The milk-maid; A Baccanalian *[sic]* song
BB; copy HB
A collection of new songs 3: Guardian angels; The answer; A new hunting song; Molly and William; A song in
the padlock BR, IP, MC
An excellent ballad of a most dreadful combat, fought between Moore of Moore-hall, and the dragon of
Wantley BB; copy JJ
The famous flower of serving-men YU
A lamentable ballad of the tragical end of a gallant lord and virtuous lady BB; copy HB
Love in a barn; or, the country courtship NY
A pleasant ballad of Tobias BB; copies HB and JJ
Robin Hood's Hill WR
The Spanish lady's love to an English captain BB
The Temple wedding; or, The fortunate maid BB; copy HB
The three Indian kings' garland BB; copy HB
The twenty-ninth of May: or, The restoration of King Charles II IP; MC
The wandering prince of Troy BB; copy HB
The weaver's garland; or, A Christian's patience BB
The Windsor lady BB; copy JJ
Young Baker [Lord Bateman] MC