

The Lochmaben Harper

Trad/E.Smith

A very old ballad about a Lochmaben man who played the harp. There are many different versions - this one dates back to the 1500s. The Lochmaben Harper was invited to travel to England and entertain King Henry. Little did the King realise that the harper had hatched a cunning plan with his wife to steal the king's very best horse, the 'wanton broon', from under his nose! Only the first few verses have been recorded here as it is such a long ballad. Children could learn sections in small groups or learn the story to retell at a performance. For a full recorded version please refer to the Emily Smith album, 'A Difference Life'. Schools can request a free copy by contacting White Fall Records (PO Box 7910, Thornhill, DG3 5WX). There is an alternative version (with different lyrics and melody) on the album 'Macmath: The Silent Page' by The Macmath Collective.

Oh heard ye o' a sil-ly har-per lived long in Loch-ma-ben toon? How

4 he did go tae fair En-gland to steal king Hen-ry's wan-ton broon But

7 first he gaetae his guid-wife wi a' the speed that he could thole This

10 task said he will ne-ver work with - oot a mare who has a foal___ Sing

13 fad - den dil - ly, fad - den dil - ly, fad - den dil - ly dee-dle dan

Listen to Track 22

Lyrics

Oh heard ye o' a silly harper lived long
in Lochmaben toon?
How he did go tae fair England to steal
King Henry's wanton broon
But first he gaed tae his guidwife wi a'
the speed that he could thole
This task said he will never work
withoot a mare who has a foal
Sing fadden dilly, fadden dilly, fadden
dilly deedle dan

She said you have a guid grey mare
that'll run o'er hills baith low and high
Gae tak the grey mare in yer hand and
leave the foal at hame wi me
Then tak a halter in your hose, of your
purpose dinna fail
But wap it o'er the wanton's nose and
tie it tae the grey mare's tail
Sing fadden dilly, fadden dilly, fadden
dilly deedle dan

Syne ca' them oot at yon back yett o'er
moss and muir and ilka dale
And she'll ne'er let the wanton bite, til
she gets hame to her ain foal
So he is doon tae England gone o'er
moss and muir and ilka dale
Until he's reached King Henry's yett
and o' his purpose not tae fail
Sing fadden dilly, fadden dilly, fadden
dilly deedle dan

Come in come in you silly harper, o'
your harpin' let me hear
Oh by my sooth then said the harper I'd
rather hae stablin' for ma mare
So the king looked o'er his left shoulder,
said unto his stable groom
Gae tak the silly auld harper's mare
and tie her 'side my wanton broon
Sing fadden dilly, fadden dilly, fadden
dilly deedle dan

Then aye he harped and aye he carped
til a' the lords gaed through the floor
They thought the music was sae sweet
that they forgot the stable door
An' aye he harped and he carped til a'
the lords were soon' asleep
Then quietly took aff his shune and
softly doon the stairs did creep
Sing fadden dilly, fadden dilly, fadden
dilly deedle dan

He took the halter frae his hose and o'
his purpose didna fail
But wapped it o'er the wanton's nose
and tied it tae the grey mare's tail
Syne ca'd them oot at yon back yett
o'er moss and muir and ilka dale
An' she's ne'er let the wanton bite but
held her still gan' at her tail
Sing fadden dilly, fadden dilly, fadden
dilly deedle dan

The grey mare was right swift o' fit and
didna fail tae find the way
For she wis at Lochmaben yetts fu'
lang three 'oors 'er it wis day
And when she reached the harper's
door there she gave mony a nicker and
snear
"Oh rise, oh rise you lazy lass let in the
master and his mare"
Sing fadden dilly, fadden dilly, fadden
dilly deedle dan

So up she rose, put on her clothes and
lookit oot through the lock hole
"Oh by my sooth" then said the lass
"oor mare has gotten a braw big foal!"
"Come haud the peace you foolish lass
the moon's but glancing in yer e'ee"
"I'll wadge ma hail fee 'gainst a groat
it's bigger than e'er oor foal will be"
Sing fadden dilly, fadden dilly, fadden
dilly deedle dan

Then in the morn at fair daylight when
they had ended a' their cheer
King Henry's wanton broon was stawn
an' eek the poor auld harper's mare
"Alas! Alas!" then said the harper, "Alas!
Alas! that I cam here,
In Scotland I've a braw cowte foal and
here they've stawn my guid grey mare!"

"Come haud the peace you foolish
harper o' your alasin' let me be
For ye shall get a better mare and weel
paid for your cowte foal be"
Sing fadden dilly, fadden dilly, fadden
dilly deedle dan
Sing fadden dilly, fadden dilly, fadden
dilly deedle dan

Words

toon - town
tae - to
gaed - went
guidwife - wife/lady of the house
withoot - without
guid - good
baith - both
dinna - don't
syne - then
ca - call
oot - out
yett - gate
ilka - every
thought - thought
shune - shoes
lookit - looked
haud - hold
e'ee - eye
stawn - stolen
cam - came
cowte - young