

BLECKELL MURRY NEET



THE CUMBRIAN DUO
ED HESLAM ~ guítar
JEAN ALTSHULER ~ harp



BLECKELL MURRY NEET

THE CUMBRIAN DUO

ED HESLAM ~ *guitar*

JEAN ALTSHULER ~ *harp*

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Melony Jigg | 3:18 |
| 2. | What Ails This Heart of Mine | 6:01 |
| 3. | Slates Away, Time to Play | 6:42 |
| 4. | And Ye Shall Walk in Silk Attire | 3:52 |
| 5. | Silly Andrew | 3:51 |
| 6. | Geordie Gill | 4:11 |
| 7. | Bleckell Murry Neet | 9:01 |
| 8. | Appleby Election Hornpipe | 3:59 |
| 9. | Alice Gray | 7:58 |
| 10. | Hughie the Graeme | 6:33 |
| 11. | My Dearie, if Thou Die | 5:14 |
| 12. | Andrew Carey | 2:48 |
| 13. | The Howk Reel | 3:30 |
| 14. | Tears That Must Ever Fall | 3:52 |

TOTAL TIME: 70:52

Recorded at 24-bit 192KHz

Recorded in St John's Church, Keswick UK on 8th & 9th October 2020

Design: Fiona Heslam, Ed Heslam & Willowhayne Records

Recording Engineering, Production & Editing: Mark Hartt-Palmer

Publishers: Willowhayne Publishing

© & © 2020, Willowhayne Records Ltd, Funtley, Hampshire, UK

<https://willowhaynerecords.com>

MELONY JIGG



Melony Jigg comes from a manuscript assembled by George Malecot of Whitehaven in 1778 (there is a further date of 1779 in the back of the book). Malecot died in 1782, but little else is known of his life. The MS now resides in the University of New Hampshire, USA, where researchers can purchase a copy for a fee.

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

The main theme on which this is based comes from the manuscript of John Rook of Waverton (1840), but that tune was, itself, taken from a song by Susanna Blamire of Dalston (1747 - 1794). In the early 1790s Haydn took Susanna's words and combined them with a folk tune to create the song, while on a trip to Scotland.

SLATES AWAY, TIME TO PLAY

A medley of old playground songs; the melodies are taken from an article included in the North Lonsdale Gazette from the late 19th century. The magazine gave descriptions of the games associated with each song as well as the words to the songs themselves.

The music begins with the school bell signalling the beginning of playtime. The children rush out into the playground and organise themselves into a number of

games. We hear *Oh What a Pretty Little Girl You've Got - Wallflowers, Wallflowers - Uncle Tom is Sick in Bed* (European tune, adopted by the English song, later becoming the melody for *Yankee Doodle*) - *Poor Mary Sits A-Weeping - The Green Leaves Are Falling - Round About the Village*.

The children playing this last game are a mischievous bunch and charge around the playground intruding on the other games. Just as the situation descends into chaos, the school bell rings and the children run back into the school building. The music ends with the children standing behind their chairs waiting for the command to sit down.

AND YE SHALL WALK IN SILK ATTIRE

An arrangement of a song by Susanna Blamire. The words of the song were set to music by several composers, but the version by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop, composed after Susanna's death, appears to have been the most popular. The song is mentioned in Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

SILLY ANDREW

An adaptation of a song by Robert Anderson (1770 - 1833). According to the song, Andrew was a young farmer with good prospects, who was unable to find a woman willing to be his wife. Anderson's songs are generally kind and generous to their subjects, who mostly tend to be the local people that he knew well. This is the one exception where he directly pokes fun at the unfortunate individual.

GEORDIE GILL

Geordie Gill features the melodies of two songs by Robert Anderson, with *Rossler Fair* making up the middle part of the music. In 1906 the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams travelled to Carlisle to hear Mr Carruthers sing a number of old Cumbrian songs, with the intention of recording on paper what he heard. Vaughan Williams wrote down the melodies, but not the words and it appears that he struggled to understand the local dialect, as sung and spoken by Mr Carruthers. This piece is

based on the two melodies written down by Vaughan Williams.

The tune for *Geordie Gill* was taken by Robert Anderson from an older Scottish song, *Andro and His Cutty Gun*. This is a simple and well-known song, but it bears only a passing resemblance to the tune sung by Mr Carruthers in 1906. It appears that, in the hundred years following Robert Anderson first publishing his song, the melody, passed on within the local oral tradition, evolved into a completely new tune.

Rosler Fair refers to the livestock market that used to take place in the tiny hamlet of Rosley (on the road between Wigton and Sebergham). This fair was given a charter by Charles II and grew to be the biggest livestock market in the country. Rosley was at the junction of major drovers' routes and a convenient place for the fair, but, with the coming of the railways and movement of animals by train, the market gradually began to decline. It ceased to function in the early twentieth century, but groups of gypsies, who had a tradition of horse-trading at the fair, continued to meet at the location well into the 1950s.

BLECKELL MURRY NEET (featuring the voice of Tommy Coulthard)

Loosely based on a song by Robert Anderson. The song refers to a party, or merry night, in the Theak't Cott pub at Blackwell, formerly called Blackhall and now a suburb of Carlisle. Anderson describes, in vivid detail, the revellers and their antics and the song became a local favourite during the 19th century. When the pub was demolished in 1904 many people were upset at the loss of an important piece of Cumbrian heritage and the severing of the close link to Robert Anderson.

APPLEBY ELECTION HORNPIPE

This hornpipe commemorates the election of 1820, when the people of Appleby rose up in a riot against the rigged elections that always favoured the interests of the main local landowners. The electors of Appleby were entitled to return two Members of Parliament, despite the fact that there were only 100 people with the right to cast a vote in the constituency. It appears that each one of these electors

was a tenant of either the Thurstons or the Lowthers and consequently these families were always able to control the outcome of the vote and have their own people returned to Parliament at each election. This type of rigged constituency became known as a rotten borough (or pocket borough) and the Lowther family controlled nine such boroughs in the region, helping them to protect their business interests in enterprises such as trading in enslaved people.

The caption at the bottom of the drawing reads '10 Dec 1832. First Reform Election at Ambleside. Mr Barhams defeat.' John Foster Barham was the defeated Liberal candidate in an election where the Lowther family continued to hold sway in the region. The Lowthers were no doubt helped by a voting system that continued to exclude women and the poor and where influential writers, such as William Wordsworth, actively continued to defend the status quo.



ALICE GRAY

Alice Gray features two tunes from old Cumbrian manuscripts. The *Elterwater Hornpipe* is a dance tune composed by William Irwin in the 1840s. Irwin was a violin player, born in Keswick, who moved to Langdale to work as a cooper at the gunpowder factory in Elterwater. The title tune is taken from the manuscript of John Rook, who probably copied it from one of the popular music magazines of the period. **Alice Gray** was actually composed by Vertue Millard in 1823. She wrote music under her married name, Mrs P Millard, and was widely published as a song writer in music magazines in both Britain and America.

HUGHIE THE GRAEME

This musical arrangement develops an idea from an old traditional borders song. The ballad describes how Hughie, while out riding on the moor, was captured and charged with horse stealing. He was taken off to Carlisle Assizes and tried before

a judge who found him guilty. Despite his friends and family pleading for mercy, Hughie was duly hanged.

The Hughie the Graeme story should be set against the historical context of what happened to the Graeme (Graham) clan and other troublesome border reivers following the death of Elizabeth I and the accession of King James.

Based in an area to the north of Carlisle that became known as the Debatable Land, two families, the Armstrongs and the Graemes, terrorised the border region for generations. The situation became intolerable after the death of Elizabeth and, with the new King's blessing, an army was dispatched to deal with the problem. Previously, in 1601 Elizabeth sent an army under Robert Carey into the Debatable Land where they surrounded the Armstrongs at



Tarras Moss. The Armstrongs were routed and, while many of them managed to flee the battle, the main ringleaders were captured. In 1605 King James decided that it was now the turn of the Graemes and he had 150 of the men associated with the Graeme Clan rounded up and deported to The Netherlands. This was no permanent solution, however, and many of the men returned within a short space of time. A solution was found in the form of Sir Ralph Sidley, owner of a large estate at Roscommon in the north of Ireland. He was given a sizeable sum of money to relocate the Graemes to his estate. The men, and a year later their families, were duly transported from Workington.

Things did not go well for the deported families. Part of the money given to Sidley was supposed to go to the families to help them settle in, but Sidley pocketed

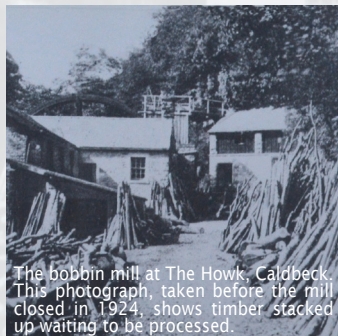
all of the cash and disappeared for a few months. The locals at Roscommon distrusted the new arrivals, especially as some of them had been forced out of their homes to make room for the Graemes and, in any case, the newcomers could not speak Gaelic and were unable to communicate. The Graemes were no farmers and struggled to make a living from the new piece of land. Meanwhile back in the Debatable Land the poor farmers who had previously suffered under the yoke of the Graeme clan, made a roaring success of their new situation.

ANDREW CAREY

This piece uses a melody from the manuscript of Robert Harrison (1770 – 1834). Harrison was the vicar of the local church in Temple Sowerby.

THE HOWK REEL

The Howk is a riverside walk in the village of Caldbeck. It is the location of an old ruined bobbin mill.



The bobbin mill at The Howk, Caldbeck. This photograph, taken before the mill closed in 1924, shows timber stacked up waiting to be processed.

TEARS THAT MUST EVER FALL

Inspired by a melody found in the John Rook manuscript, the original tune was probably composed by Haydn during his stay in Scotland. He wrote a large collection of songs that married together existing folk tunes with Scottish (and sometimes English) verse and occasionally created new melodies to fit the words, as is the case here. This arrangement transforms the rhythm of the tune from the classical-style, common-time theme, to a more lilting melody in the manner of a *siciliana*.

© 2021, Ed Heslam

ED HESLAM is a composer and classical guitarist who worked for many years as Head of Music in several West Country schools, first in Devon then later in Bristol. During this time he wrote and produced many musicals and composed music for contemporary dance projects. Has was a member of an early music consort and a folk dance band. He made a number of arrangements of traditional folk melodies. After retiring from teaching Ed moved back to Cumberland, the county of his birth, where he started researching old local music manuscripts. He found a great deal of interesting, unpublished material in the tunebooks of 18th and 19th century fiddle players and a wealth of old songs long forgotten in the county (except by a few aficionados). Initially, he created arrangements for solo guitar, then guitar/harp duets after teaming up with Jean Altshuler. These first arrangements of old Cumbrian music were an attempt to recreate something akin to the original performance style of the music. Latterly, he has taken the view that the old melodies can be developed into new music and set into a new context. He has arranged many of the songs of Susanna Blamire (1747 – 1794) and Robert Anderson (1770 – 1833) and created new compositions inspired by the Cumbrian landscape and the stories of its people.





JEAN ALTSCHULER has been playing the harp since she was seven. She attended Music and Art High School in New York and graduated from Oberlin Conservatory on a harp scholarship. After many years as principal harpist with several American orchestras she moved to the Lake District where she now lives. She is a founding member of Harps Northwest and has taught workshops on early music and Eastern European tunes arranged for lever harp.

She met classical guitarist Ed Heslam in January 2016 after seeing an anthology of his music beside the unique and extraordinary musical stones at the Keswick museum of local history. Since then she has enjoyed learning and playing Ed's arrangements of tunes from Cumberland and Westmorland. They have performed at venues throughout the North of England and Scotland.

THE INSTRUMENTS used on this album are a guitar by Carrillo of Madrid and a Lyon and Healy harp. Cumbrian music of the 18th and 19th centuries seems to have been played on a variety of instruments. In rural areas the violin was the dominant instrument in public performances, although there are records of other instruments being used. In Whitehaven the wealthier locals were treated to orchestral concerts and keyboard music on the piano and pipe organ. There are records of guitars being played in Cumberland at the beginning of the 19th century and it seems likely that this may have been the influence of travelling virtuosi such as Spanish guitarist Fernando Sor, who played concerts in England. The last Earl of Derwentwater (1689 - 1716) is said to have played the guitar, which he almost certainly learned during his stay in France while accompanying the exiled James II.

© All arrangements by Ed Heslam
Sheet music published by Willowhayne Publishing

Historical research by Fiona and Ed Heslam

Thanks are due to Alan Cleaver and Lesley Park for doing the research on playground games which ultimately resulted in the music for *Slates Away, Time to Play*.

We are indebted to the very helpful staff at Carlisle Archive, Carlisle Library, Whitehaven Archive, The Armit Museum in Ambleside and the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

Finally, we are grateful to Tommy Coulthard for helping to keep alive the Cumbrian dialect and for agreeing to recite a verse from Anderson's ballad, *Bleckell Murry Neet*.

Cover Picture: this is a late 19th century photograph of The Theak't Cott, otherwise known as the White Ox pub. This was the setting for Robert Anderson's ballad, Bleckell Murry Neet, written in 1803.

