



“Shadrach ‘Shepherd’ Hayden (1829-1916). Born the son of an agricultural labourer in Lyford, Berkshire, in 1829, Shadrach Hayden (there are variant spellings) acquired many fine songs over the course of decades of singing. Moving around an area encompassing the fertile Vale of the White Horse and the northern foothills of the Berkshire Downs, Hayden spent much of his working life labouring on the land.

By 1881 he had found employment as a shepherd, an occupation which generated the nickname by which he was widely known. During the 1880s he relocated to the Thames Valley hamlet of Weald, adjacent to the much larger town of Bampton, where Morris dancing has been carried on annually for at least a couple of centuries.

It was Sharp's interest in the Morris tradition which led to his first encounter with Hayden, in August 1909, fiddler William 'Jingy' Wells pointing him in the right direction. A rapport must have been instantly established, for Sharp talked with him on five further occasions during the following three weeks, and again in June 1914, just prior to the outbreak of war and his prolonged stay in America.

In all, twenty-seven songs were noted, including several fine ballads. Sources of items from his repertory are unknown, but we may observe that he had at least a handful in common with his neighbour of a quarter century, Bampton Morris dancer and singer Charles 'Cocky' Tanner, who lived only a hundred yards away; while another of Sharp's singing informants, Henry Radband, lived in similar proximity.

Alfred Williams, who also collected from him, during the early days of the first war, claimed that when it came to repertory Hayden 'preferred the strong and formal order.' Life reflected art (he was married to the same woman for more than sixty years), and two years prior to his death in December 1916, Hayden was, according to Sharp, “a little deaf [but] in full possession of his faculties and is physically very active.” Quote from Keith Chandler, 16 January 2003. The sound recording of his life story lasts 49 minutes.

There was three men came out of the west
Their fortune for to try
And these three men made a solemn vow
John Barleycorn should die.
They ploughed they sowed they harrowed him in
Threw clots up on his head
And these three men made a solemn vow
John Barleycorn was dead.

Then they let him die for a very long time
Till the rain from heaven did fall
And little Sir John sprung up his head
And soon amazed them all
They let him stand till midsummer
Till he seemed both pale & wan
And little Sir John grewed with a long beard
And so he became a man.

An they hired men with the scythes so sharp
To cut him off at knee
And the malter served him worse than that
He served him most barbarously
They hired men with the sharp pitch forks
Who pricked him to the heart
And the loader he served him worse than that
For he bound him to the cart.

They wheeled him round & round the field
Till they came unto a barn
And then they made a solemn xxxx mow
Of poor John Barleycorn.
They hired men with the crabtree sticks
To cut him skin from bone
And the miller he served him worse than that
For he ground him between two stones

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Here's little Sir John in a nut brown bowl
And brandy in a glass
And little Sir John in a nut brown bowl
Proved the strongest man at last

And the huntsman he can't hunt the fox
Nor so loudly blow his horn
And the tinker he can't mend kettles or pots
Without a little of Barleycorn.

Shepherd Hayden (83) at Bampton in the Bush
Aug. 31st 1909

Hayden, Shadrach

Also known as: Shepherd Haden

Singer

Collection date: Aug 1909

Area: [Oxfordshire](#)

[View records on the VWML website for Hayden, Shadrach](#)

Shadrach Hayden at Bampton: Sharp initially wrote 'Haden' but all records indicate 'Hayden'. He was always known as 'Shepherd' Hayden and sang 27 songs over several visits commencing 31 August 1909. His most enduring song is 'John Barleycorn' (FT2333) because it is very different from the other 15 versions collected by Sharp and because it is the version which was published in the Penguin Book of English Folk Songs (1959). It was then picked up by Stevie Winwood and Traffic in 1970 and became a 'standard'. All the other versions are drinking songs with a simple refrain 'to my right fol dol etc'. Sharp had already published versions by Robert Pope and John Stafford (Folk Songs from Somerset vols 3,4). Hayden's version has no such refrain and tells a complete and satisfying tale.

Shadrach Hayden was born c1829* at Lyford, 8 miles E of Faringdon. Lyford used to be in Berkshire but was transferred to Oxfordshire in 1974. Shadrach was the son of John Hayden, agricultural labourer and his wife Mary.

In October qr 1849 he married Jane Neale (Faringdon reg 6 369). According to Sharp's notes to 'The Rambling Sailor' (FT2289) the couple were both aged 20 at the time of the wedding. They had a son (Henry) and a daughter (Annie). Henry married and moved 40 miles away but Annie stayed much closer. Her first marriage was to Henry Wiltshire in 1874 but he died in 1880, leaving her with 3 infants. Shadrach and Jane took them all into their house at Pusey (1881 census). Annie was then remarried to George Brown in 1883 and moved away but her son Harry Wiltshire stayed

on with Shadrach into adulthood, even after his marriage in 1898. By then Shadrach was living at Weald, a hamlet just outside Bampton in Oxfordshire. So, when Shadrach met Sharp in 1909, his house was full with 4 great grandchildren.

Photo is probably his great-granddaughter Ivy, aged 3. Sadly his wife Jane died in May 1910 and Shadrach himself passed away in December 1916 (buried at Bampton church, age given as 91).

*All censuses from 1841 to 1891 suggest a birth date of 1829 (ages 12, 22 etc) but in his final years Shadrach appears to have added a few extra years to his age. In 1901 he said he was 75 and he told Sharp he was 83 in 1909 with his birthday in April (i.e. birth date 1826).