

Island stories, tales, yarns, sayings, rhymes and other beasts

(This will be a lifetime's project! So very rough notes. The full stories are on scraps as yet to print out!)

The Isle of Wight could have been called story island. Telling stories was an island pastime. It attracted many poets and story writers. Often the old books contain full or parts of stories. Some of these stories are also in the form of poems or songs / lays. The story teller would embellish the story with regard to their audiences and so on. Also they would join a few short sections together to make a longer tale.

References:

The Isle of Wight Bedside Anthology. Hugh Noyes 1951 (see bibliography for more references)

Dictionary of Isle of Wight Dialect. W.H.Long 1886

Back of Wight Fred Mew 1934 (lost my copy!)

John Oglander 1585 1655 born Nunwell. Diary kept. Oglander Memoirs.

<https://archive.org/details/oglandermemoirs00oglagooq>

Sir Richard Worsley History of the Isle of Wight 1781

https://books.google.fr/books?id=wOZWAAAACAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=fr&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Plus various other resources e.g. Early Island Newspapers. P is for page

Indexes

A selection from Noyes. These are just the titles.

Brother Hardekyn Goes Poaching P2 Quarr Abbey Tale

Fair Handsome Women of the Island P25

The Tythes of Bonchurch P39

The Charming Behaviour of the Island's Ghosts P40

The Premature Resurrection of Smuggler Mussel P52

Etc

Selection from Dictionary of IOW Dialect. These are just the titles and an idea of what it is about. Full stories to follow!

Stories

Bargan Zadderday P4 3 Saturdays before Old Michaelmas day Oct 11th. Hiring for farmworkers.

Chock Dog P11 Hard IOW cheese. See food section

Clem P12 Nov 23rd St Clements Day. Saint of Blacksmiths

Devil's Dancen Hours P16 Midnight in Newport

Draa P17 Whit Monday Fair. To draw into pubs with a tasty piece of cheese. Newport.

Flick P20 Attempt. Skittles. Brading

Hobnails P28 Cracknels?

Mariner's P38 Nine Man's Morris

Lor a Marsey P36 Lord have mercy. Planets and stars story.

Nutton P45 A donkey

Overner P46 A person whose home is over the water.

Pitchen Prong P48 Pitchfork

Pollard P49 Trunk of tree with top cut off. Story of a bull.

Queal In P To go to bed

Razzer P55 Story of the knife grinder

Rice P56 Story of supple branch

Big Our P58 Hoax

Rudder P 59 Shake one's head

Screech Owl P61 Long witch story

Show Huckle (Churry Cat)P65 Hurdle Shell P30

Snoach P70

Splaa P72

Spudgel P72

Stanvurder P74 A quarrel turnpike story

Sterrup Ile P74 Cobbler Story

Swizzlw P Small bee.r Billygoat the unpleasant farmer

Tember Britches P79

Trig up P88 Going to Nippert

Twickerd Our P8

Vull Butt P88

War'nt P89 To warn

Whup P91 To tell horses to stop

Whithybed P91 Long yarn France or Freshwater!

Yellow Bwoys P93 Guineas

Yoppul P98 Useless Talk

Bufflehead Tales

Jolterhead P32 (Suck Bull) Nonuthen P33 Maamouth P37 Maagotty P38 Muddle P42

Mumchance P42 Puddenheaded P51 Queer as Dick's harband 53 Slaaback P68 Slackumtrance P68

Sea (very few references)

Luck P37 a rock pool

Lugworms P37 worms used for bait fishing

Ore weed P45 Seaweed washed on shore

Sturtle P76 Lifeboat, oranges and lemons washed ashore

Teeren P78 Great haste like man o' war

Withybed P91 Freshwater to France also in stories

Voreright P87 Headstrong smuggling

Nursery Rhymes and Jingles

Dreshel P17 Duckstoam P18 Mumpoker P42 Snakee's Stang P70 (has a rhyme) Sowse (old song) P71

Tissick P80 Turmets P84 Wag P89 Wex P90 Sluggard's Guise P69

Note

Jest about P32 Hornpipe danced in the 5 Bells pub

Food Stories

So much good food on the island.

Others

My First visit to Newport

My First Visit to the Mainland

SUPERSTITIONS (from?)

A loaf baked on Good Friday was put by to serve, with other things, for looseness in calves.

The death of the master or mistress was announced to the bees.

A robin pecking at the window was supposed to foretell a death in the family.

The flight of magpies to the right or to the left, and the number of the birds, foretold good or bad luck, and happy or disastrous events.

Ravens are birds of ill omen ; and their presence near dwellings presage death. The acute sense of smell in these birds may attract them to diseased persons. My sister-in-law told me that previous to the death (from fever) of one of her children at Landguard two ravens sat daily in the lime trees near the house, and did not leave until the child was buried.

Rising before the sun on St. Patrick's day, and sowing seed, would make the flowers double.

The key and bible divination to discover a thief has descended to the present generation; and the same with the belief in " cunning men," supposed also to have the power to discover concealed money.

Belief in witches still lingers here and there. A friend writes : " There was a legend of an old woman, who lived about Hale Common or Arreton, for a frolic turning herself into a hare ; and when close run by the hounds of Mr. Thatcher of Wackland, made her escape through the keyhole of the door." It was at Wackland a story was told of a witch coming to the door in the form of a black cat, when the cook, who was frying pancakes, threw a spoonful of boiling lard upon it, which caused the cat to run off crying with pain. The reputed witch was afterwards known to have had a great sore on her back.

The belief in supernatural influences at the erection of churches is of very early origin, and it appears to point to the period of transition from paganism to Christianity. That connected with Godshill church is, that when the materials for building were collected in a field below, they were removed, at night, to the elevated spot on which the church now stands. The field from which the building stones were removed is called the Devil's Acre.

Watching the corpse at night was a general custom ; usually by a couple of men, who often told of what they had seen or heard of the supernatural.

In Fairies and Night Mares there yet lingers a belief. The former, in one version of the building of Godshill church, are prominent actors ; to them are ascribed the circular growths of fungi upon the downs, the fossil echini, etc. The Night Mare not only visits the bed-chamber, but also the stables. On one occasion, noticing that a particular horse was in profuse perspiration, I was told that probably the old hag (hags and witches are usually old) had been riding it in the night. Horse-shoes are everywhere nailed in proximity to stables as a protection against evil influences.

Ladies in white, not of earthly mould, were once supposed to be seen, at certain times, in a long yew and box walk which reached from Landguard to Hook's Hill, towards Shanklin ; and one of Miss Johnson's sonnets 1 is an Invocation to a spirit said to haunt Wroxall Down, upon which are ancient tumuli. Upon the Down of St. Boniface adjoining is a Wishing "Well, a relic of pagan superstitious practices of which so much has been recorded and so much yet survives. Here the popular belief is, that

if the well be reached without once looking back, any wish formed while drinking the water will certainly be granted. The story goes that the lads and lasses of the neighbourhood used to resort to the well to deck it with garlands of flowers ; and that vessels were wont to lower their topmasts as they passed in view of the sacred spot.

The Pied Piper of Newtown, Isle of Wight

As if we didn't disagree enough with our German friends - wars, world cup goals, economics - there is the Pied Piper legend to throw in for good measure. Everyone knows the Hamelin version, of course. But is it the original? Newtown on the Isle of Wight has some claims to the contrary.

The Hamelin Piper story is traditionally given the date 1284, but it first appears in a document dated two centuries later. The Isle of Wight version relates to incidents in the 14th century, i.e. earlier than the written source for Hamelin's story. No less a figure than W.H. Auden wondered if the Newtown tale was the original. We may never know. Maybe mysterious Pied Pipers were ten a penny.

The Norman settlement of Francheville - the previous name for Newtown - on the North west coast of the island was on a fine natural harbour; it had wonderful natural oyster beds to feed its people; there were thick woods behind the settlement to provide firewood aplenty and fodder for their pigs; there was even a very productive saltpan to season local food and provide a very marketable commodity shipped from the port. Everything a medieval town could wish for. And in the mid-14th century the place was indeed prosperous, far more so than Newport .

Yet in 1377 when the French, playing a return leg of the Hundred Years War on English soil, ransacked and ruined the town, there were only men of middle years and their elders to defend it. What happened to the young of Francheville?

Rats and magic. Along with its prosperity Francheville had a rat problem. Cats imported to deal with the plague provided a tasty snack for the giant rodents; traps couldn't keep them down; rat-catchers seemed to have jobs for life. The town's mayor and his aldermen offered a reward, the princely sum of £50, to anyone who could rid the place of the infestation.

Who should appear but a strangely dressed musician, a piper, who said he would cleanse the town in just a day. He marched through every corner of the place - Gold Street, Silver Street, Quay Street and the rest - playing his pipe, though what emerged was a rather stranger sound than mere music. And the rats ran out of barrels and byres and barns; they poured from houses, hayricks and hostelryes. Rats in their tens of thousands.

The piper led the vermin down to the harbour, where he boarded a boat which he rowed to the mudflats a little way across the water. The swimming rats that followed him set paw on the mud, and stuck. They drowned to the last one when the tide rose.

Back in Francheville the piper politely requested his reward, £50. Maybe it was not a manifesto commitment, or maybe the mayor fancied keeping some of the money for himself - a corrupt politician, whatever next? It may have been that the mayor thought it had been too easy. But all he offered was £20. The piper refused the lesser sum, and leaving the mayor he began to walk around Francheville again, playing a slightly different tune. Children flocked to him, entranced by his strange tune. Every child in the

place able to walk or crawl fell in behind the magical musician, who to the horror of the adults walked off into the woods behind the town, his infant entourage close behind. Before the shocked parents could react the darkness of the woods closed around the procession. Neither the piper nor the children were ever seen again.

Thus it was that when the French attacked in 1377, only those well beyond their best years remained to resist them. Francheville had lost an entire generation. The ruined town had begun a rapid descent from prosperity to paupery, never recovering its former glory. And all of this because the mayor withheld £30.