MARY THE MAID OF THE INN. WAS SHE A KIRKSTALL LASS? IF SHE WAS, WHICH KIRKSTALL INN?

A. INTRODUCTION

The best known, but certainly not the only, version of Mary's story is undoubtedly that in the poet Robert Southey's (1774-1843) ballad of that name.

To welcome you into the picture, and to put us in the mood for further discourse on this matter, I will quote:

1.
Who is yonder poor Maniac, whose wildly-fix'd eyes
Seem a heart overcharged to express?
She weeps not, yet often and deeply she sighs;
She never complains, but her silence implies
The composure of settled distress.

2.
No pity she looks for, no alms doth she seek;
Nor for raiment nor food doth she care:
Through her tatters the winds of the winter blow bleak
On that wither'd breast, and her weather-worn cheek
Hath the hue of a mortal despair.

3.
Yet cheerful and happy, nor distant the day,
Poor Mary the Maniac hath been;
The Traveller remembers who journey'd this way
No damsel so lovely, no damsel so gay,
As Mary, the Maid of the Inn.

4.
Her cheerful address fill'd the guests with delight
As she welcomed them in with a smile;
Her heart was a stranger to childish affright,
And Mary would walk by the Abbey at night
When the wind whistled down the dark aisle.

5.
She loved, and young Richard had settled the day,
And she hoped to be happy for life:
But Richard was idle and worthless, and they
Who knew him would pity poor Mary, and say
That she was too good for his wife.

6.
'T was in autumn, and stormy and dark was the night,
And fast were the windows and door;
Two guests sat enjoying the fire that burnt bright,
And smoking in silence with tranquil delight
They listen'd to hear the wind roar.

11.
With fearless good-humour did Mary comply,
And her way to the Abbey she bent;
The night was dark, and the wind was high,
And as hollowly howling it swept through the sky,
She shiver'd with cold as she went.

12.
O'er the path so well known still proceeded the Maid
Where the Abbey rose dim on the sight;
Through the gateway she enter'd, she felt not afraid,
Yet the ruins were lonely and wild, and their shade
Seem'd to deepen the gloom of the night.

13.
All around her was silent, save when the rude blast
Howl'd dismally round the old pile;
Over weed-cover'd fragments she fearlessly pass'd,
And arrived at the innermost ruin at last
Where the elder-tree grew in the aisle.

14.
Well pleased did she reach it, and quickly drew near,
And hastily gather'd the bough;
When the sound of a voice seem'd to rise on her ear,
She paused, and she listen'd intently, in fear,
And her heart panted painfully now.

15.
The wind blew, the hoarse ivy shook over her head,
She listen'd . . nought else could she hear;
The wind fell; her heart sunk in her bosom with dread,
For she heard in the ruins distinctly the tread
Of footsteps approaching her near.

16.
Behind a wide column half breathless with fear
She crept to conceal herself there:
That instant the moon o'er a dark cloud shone clear,
And she saw in the moonlight two ruffians appear,
And between them a corpse did they bear.

7. "'T is pleasant," cried one, "seated by the fire-side, To hear the wind whistle without." "What a night for the Abbey!" his comrade replied, "Methinks a man's courage would now be well tried Who should wander the ruins about.	7. Then Mary could feel her heart-blood curdle cold; Again the rough wind hurried by, . . It blew off the hat of the one, and behold Even close to the feet of poor Mary it roll'd, . . She felt, and expected to die.
8. "I myself, like a school-boy, should tremble to hear The hoarse ivy shake over my head; And could fancy I saw, half persuaded by fear, Some ugly old Abbot's grim spirit appear, For this wind might awaken the dead!"	18. "Curse the hat!" he exclaims; "Nay, come on till we hide "The dead body," his comrade replies. She beholds them in safety pass on by her side, She seizes the hat, fear her courage supplied, And fast through the Abbey she flies.
9. "I'll wager a dinner," the other one cried, "That Mary would venture there now." "Then wager and lose!" with a sneer he replied, "I'll warrant she'd fancy a ghost by her side, And faint if she saw a white cow."	19. She ran with wild speed, she rush'd in at the door, She gaz'd in her terror around, Then her limbs could support their faint burthen no more, And exhausted and breathless she sank on the floor, Unable to utter a sound.
10. "Will Mary this charge on her courage allow?" His companion exclaim'd with a smile; "I shall win, . . for I know she will venture there now, And earn a new bonnet by bringing a bough From the elder that grows in the aisle."	20. Ere yet her pale lips could the story impart, For a moment the hat met her view; . Her eyes from that object convulsively start, For . . what a cold horror then thrilled through her heart[1] When the name of her Richard she knew!
	21. Where the old Abbey stands, on the common hard by, His gibbet is now to be seen; His irons you still from the road may espy; The traveller beholds them, and thinks with a sigh Of poor Mary, the Maid of the Inn.

1796, Poetical Works, Vol.. 1, p 417 .

Southey mentions neither Kirkstall nor any particular inn. This has not stopped others, subsequently, with or without deference to Southey; with or without historical justification (a matter I will mull over later), from finding and naming a specific village and a specific inn for Mary, both within and far beyond the boundaries of Kirkstall.

Alan Jones, who was one such other, wrote:

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[1] In other versions, this line reads 'For, oh God! what cold horrors then thrill'd thro' her heart' the words 'oh, God!' having been omitted from the Poetical Works presumably for reasons of religious delicacy.

> 'There are two versions of this story [Mary Maid of the Inn], the most famous being that in verse by Robert Southey….
> There are two Inns in Kirkstall which are rivals as to which of them was the home of Mary. The Hark To Rover Inn, which is now the cottages on Morris Lane, and the Star and Garter, now known as the Barcelona [that is, now closed as an inn].
> The Hark To Rover is described as being built of stones taken from the Abbey and was described as being ".. . a small secluded Inn, of bad reputation, and used as a meeting place by highwaymen and poachers. Many are the wild and desperate adventures told within its walls by the lawless characters who assembled there".
> Both are within a short distance of the Abbey and the story fits whichever one you choose.
> Neither may be the right one as Southey himself could not remember to which northern Abbey the story referred, either Furness or Kirkstall. In any case the story is probably apocryphal - but until another stronger claim is made, Kirkstall clings to its romantic poetic legend.'
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> *Kirkstall: A Miscellany of Local Tales and Histor*y, Alan Jones, Almar Books, Leeds, 1984

But before talking about Mary the Maid and her story (perhaps I should say her several stories – more than the two versions mentioned by Jones), I shall talk about another mystery; the mystery of Hark To Rover. Was there once in fact and in real history an inn or alehouse at Hark to Rover in Kirkstall? Though I warn you that I am not able to provide a conclusive answer.

B. SECTION: WHAT WAS HARK TO ROVER?

We know what it is now. It is now the row of three cottages; numbered. 90, 92 and 94 (which, rather than 'Hark to Rover' the Post office seems to prefer; though referred to by estate agents as the 'Hark to Rover Cottages') in Morris Lane, almost opposite the top of Abbey Walk, in Kirkstall. But what was it in earlier times, the times when and before the story of Mary, the Maid of the Inn was being recorded; was it, as it is now, the row of cottages; or the name of a pub or ale house of some sort; or what ….?

These cottages, we do know, were part of the estate of the 7th Earl of Cardigan. And we do know that after his death his Headingley-Kirkstall estate was sold off.

On 3 January 1881, the Leeds Mercury reported the death of James Depledge at Hark to Rover, aged 79 years, having been in service to late Earl and the Countess of Cardigan for upward of 60 years.

The Leeds Mercury, 13 December 1888, contained a report of one of the days of the sale, including the following:

> 'The freehold property "Hark to Rover" abutting on Morris Lane, with three stone-built dwelling houses and two cottages the whole covering an area of a little over an acre, was bought by Mr W H Kitson for £1,000, the bidding having started at £200.'

And on 25 July 1890, Hark to Rover was conveyed to William Henry Kitson (who then owned the large house known as Crooked Acres, just across the road) being described in the conveyance as ‘the plot abutting on Morris Lane, with a frontage to Morris Lane of 90 feet, containing about 1 acre 2 perches Together with the messuage or dwelling house and four cottages built thereon all of which premises are known as Hark to Rover.’ (See WRRD (1890) 25 571 284).[2] So, at that time there was the row of cottages which still exists (then divided into four dwellings) and also a house then known as Ivy Cottage, now demolished; all part of Hark to Rover. The OS map, published in 1908, originally drawn at a scale of 1:2500 (a copy of which is included here: Picture 1) shows the location and layout of Hark to Rover. It would be most accurate perhaps to think of Hark to Rover at that time as the name of a small settlement; whether or not it included or also referred at some time to an alehouse or inn within the settlement.

And that, so soon, is where any historical certainty in the story of Hark to Rover and the (possibly) related story of Mary the Maid of the Inn comes more or less to an end. There are other questions, more difficult (perhaps impossible with any sort of certainty) to answer: Why was Hark to Rover so called? Was there an inn or alehouse there at some time? What if any is its connection with the tale of Mary the Maid?

C. SECTION: WHY WAS IT CALLED HARK TO ROVER? WAS THERE AN INN?

There are many offered explanations of the origin of the name ‘Hark to Rover’, some more fanciful than others; and it is often repeated that. Hark to Rover was the name of an inn or alehouse where the Hark to Rover cottages are today; with little if any convincing evidence that I have found.

‘Hark to Rover’ is a curious name. It does sound, to me, as if it should be the name of a pub. Yet, surprisingly, as far as I am aware there is not, and has never been, any other pub in the country with that name. There is a pub called the Hark to Mopsey, in Normanton, West Yorkshire, the origin of whose name is equally lost in the mists of the past.

> ‘There are two explanations for this name. One is that the landlord had a nagging and loud-voiced wife called Mopsey. As she regularly shouted at her husband, she could be heard by people passing the inn and they would say: "Hark to Mopsey!" So the inn became known by that name.
> The second explanation is that the landlord was given a foxhound puppy from the kennels of the nearby Wentworth Estate with orders to train it, and it later joined Earl Fitzwilliam's pack of hounds. The pup was known as Mopsey and, whenever the huntsmen and pack passed the inn, the pup would produce its very distinctive bark or bell. Bell is a term that means a type of baying

[2] The West Riding Registry of Deeds was established by Act of Parliament in 1704 and operated until September 1970. One of only five Deeds Registries in the country it was created to allow land holders to register the title to their property.

produced by hounds. The passing huntsmen would therefore say: "Hark to Mopsey."'[3]

Flickr <http://www.flickr.com/photos/8976830@N03/2334136490/
July 5, 2013.

And there is a Hark to Bounty at Slaidburn in the Forest of Bowland in Lancashire..

Rather more curious, though perhaps with a more straightforward explanation, there was a hare-coursing dog called Hark to Rover, owned according to, for example, the Hull Packet for 14 November 1879, by Mr W Cliff and beaten on that occasion by Mr W Thackrah's Miss Williams; until (as told by the Tamworth Herald for 9 October 1880) it was acquired by Mr Krukenberg who, it seems, perhaps in the hope of changing its luck, changed its name to Red Rover. Presumably, Mr Cliff had some connection with our, Kirkstall Hark to Rover and used the local connection to give the dog a name.

There was a pub called the Hark to Rover in Spen Lane just above (and not to be confused with) the Hark to Rover of our story. This modern Hark to Rover was opened in 1963.in a 1950s building and closed in 2009. The name was suggested by a local person, taking his inspiration from the row of cottages nearby, without any suggestion that he was meaning to suggest the name of an earlier inn. (see 'Secret Leeds', downloaded, 6 July 2013 <http://www.secretleeds.com/forum/Messages.aspx?ThreadID=327> That there was (and is so often) confusion in these matters is shown by the comment of one person on the same web site relating the belief that there was a tunnel leading from the Abbey to the cellar of this (1960s' pub) dug to provide an escape route for the monks at the Abbey!! The poor monks must then have been in hiding there and hoping to escape for some centuries!!!

There is on the internet quite a flurry of suggestions as to how our Hark To Rover came to be so called; invariably without the offer of any sort of evidence. I will mention a couple in a moment. But, in the absence of reliable, written records can the local, folk history of Hark To Rover, its past, (and that of Mary the Maid) be trusted to the internet and survive such a modern day flurry?. What part, I wonder, does the world-wide internet now play in the creation, nurturing and perhaps destruction of a folk tale; of folk tales. Perhaps computer networking is the modern equivalent of the village pump of an earlier age, where knowledge was stolidly shared, handed down, gradually honed and stabilised, perhaps tested for reliability. But because internet, networking sites operate on such a vastly greater scale with thousands upon thousands of contributors each able at the click of a key – at any time from any place - to create a new or contribute a variation to any existing story - does history then become unreliable and does the folk tale lose its roots in any group; become unlatched from any tradition, any community? Maybe a folk tale must be credible to be worthy of the name (and not to be treated as a fairy story, science fiction, just someone's silly idea, etc), credible in the sense of being believed and believable at least by those who nurtured its growth, its telling and re-telling. Are we now in the age of the instant folk tale; the folk tale from lego-land? And can there be such a thing?

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[3] And see, the Leeds Mercury. Saturday, 4 August, 1888; Saturday Supplement. 'Curious Place-Names'.

I will just mention a couple of the suggested origins of the name Hark to Rover of the many to be found on the internet, some more fanciful than others. I have no evidence that any one of the many is more, historically reliable or more ancient than the rest.

> ‘One legend tells of a girl missing in the grounds of Kirkstall Abbey and how the family dog barking continuously, hence “Hark to Rover”, discovered her body.
>
> A bit more information from Leodis:
>
> The name is derived from a local legend concerning a barmaid, Mary, who worked at the Star and Garter. She had taken a lover who was involved with a gang of highwaymen. They had waylaid and killed a victim at Kirkstall Abbey. She witnessed her lover burying the body, screaming and wailing in distress. Her dog, back in the cottage, heard her and began to bark incessantly when he heard her scream! A poem by Robert Southey 'The Maid of the Inn' narrates the tale….
>
> Both from ‘Secret Leeds’
> <http://www.secretleeds.com/forum/Messages.aspx?ThreadID=327>

And from ‘Geograph <http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/140890>

> ‘This row of cottages, opposite Abbey Walk, has a strange name. Apparently there are several explanations for the name, one being that a child was lost in the grounds of Kirkstall Abbey and the family dog barked continuously on discovering her body….
> Another possible origin of the name was suggested by a visitor to Geograph, who commented "I was told, as a local kid, that this name was a corruption of the Latin... "acqui trovere" corrupted to "akwi t' rovere" which means "here is the treasure". I believe that the dissolution officers did not find the treasures they anticipated: “maybe it's around nearby"’ [Te story was that at the dissolution of the Abbey the King’s representatives could not find the treasure which had been buried by the Abbott.’

At this point Lettice Ulpha Cooper Cooper must be introduced:

> .
> ‘He [that’s Mr Ampleforth] toiled up the lower slopes of the hill following the track of the watercourse, and found the pool of water. As he stooped to fill the petrol tin, the sun came out from behind a cloud. The landscape, rather sombre before to Mr. Ampleforth's taste, glowed into light and colour, the green hills rolling away into the deep blue distance, the pale ribbon of road shining below him….
>
> ….The Vicar paused in the doorway.
> "Yes?"
> "Do you know a place up the hillside—about a mile along the road, where there's a spring, a waterfall over a rock, and a pool of brownish water?"
> "Oh yes, quite well."
> "Is that on this young Stannyland's land ? "
> “Yes. He goes about a mile beyond that."

"That's good," Mr. Ampleforth muttered to himself. "Is that water ever used for anything?"
"I don't think so. I've seen picnic parties filling kettles there. There's a story about the place. It was supposed to be a favourite haunt of an old highwayman who pestered the neighbourhood a good deal. He used to water his horse there. The place has got a queer name which sounds as though hounds might have met there sometimes, but I don't think there's ever been any hunting near here, and I've always supposed it might have something to do with him."
"Ah?" Mr Ampleforth was examining the wood of the bannisters. "What's it called?"
"It's called ' Hark to Rover'"'

From the novel, *Hark To Rover*, Lettice Ulpha Cooper (London, Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1933), pp 9, 14. 15.

Lettice Cooper was brought up near Leeds where her father had an engineering firm, and she returned there after graduating at Oxford. In addition to her twenty novels (including *Hark to Rover*) and many other books she wrote *Great Men of West Yorkshire* (1955, London, Bodley Head Ltd) which includes a chapter on Richard Oastler who lived for a time in Headingley and is buried in the Parish Church in Kirkstall.. In 1987 she was granted the freedom of the City of Leeds. I mention her (apart from the fact that she was an interesting woman and a committed socialist!) because she must have been well informed about Leeds; and have known the Hark To Rover in Kirkstall; and presumably that was the inspiration for its place in her book. Beyond that it is idle to speculate; except perhaps to suggest that to her Hark to Rover was the name of a location, a place rather than a single building; and that her association of her Hark to Rover with highwaymen is interesting in light of the frequent association of the Kirkstall Hark to Rover with poachers and highwaymen.

One final thought on this matter. Kirkstall does seem to have had its share of curious, local names (though perhaps most places offer a treasury of curious and inexplicable names). Opposite Hark To Rover there was (until quite recently a private care home acquired it and changed its name to the boringly, mundane 'Kirkside') a house known as Crooked Acres. Until recently I was not able to discover the source of the name and whether the field there was known as Crooked Acres, or whether the name was first used of the house built on the field by the Butlers between 1876 and 1878. In fact, I have recently been reliably informed by Dr Cruickshank (by e-mail on 11 July 2013) that the field or close was known as Crooked Acres at least as early as 1652 as shown by a long lease of that date. Presumably the use of the name arose from the shape of the field. And, I have just noticed on the 1908 O S map that there was, between Vesper Lane and Morris Lane a 'Hell Hole Gill'. How can that have got its name; more reminiscent of a trench on the Western Front 1914-18 than Kirkstall, West Yorkshire?

D. SECTION: WAS THERE AN INN OR ALEHOUSE AT HARK TO ROVER?

'The original "Hark to Rover" stood adjacent to cottages in Morris Lane, Kirkstall. It was described as being built of stone taken from the Abbey. It was known as "a small secluded Inn, of bad reputation, and was used as a meeting place by highwaymen and poachers.'

Secret Leeds:8 July 2013.
http://www.secretleeds.com/forum/Messages.aspx?ThreadID=327

The above statement (taken originally from a BBC virtual tour of Kirkstall Abbey Museum), is to be found repeated, often in identical words, in a number of places. It is, I surmise, very likely that there was an inn (or at least an alehouse) at Hark to Rover; probably in the late eighteenth century, and that it was in the house next to the row of cottages.

Until 1827 Hark to Rover stood at a road junction on an important route. The turnpike road from Leeds to Otley through Burley, today changing its name from Morris Lane to Spen Lane at this point, passed immediately in front. And Vesper Lane also led from this point down (what is now the top section of Abbey Walk) to Kirkstall Forge. Carriageway access to the Star and Garter was by way of Kirkstall Lane. Ale was brewed at the Forge for Forge workers (see Cruickshank, p 129). But an inn or alehouse at this road junction must have seemed an attractive proposition. What is now Abbey Road dividing what is now the Abbey Museum from the Abbey itself was not laid down until 1827 as part of the Kirkstall to Ilkley Turnpike Road; no doubt taking much of the traffic from the Morris Lane-Spen Lane road (as is only too obviously does today!), which then became known as the Old Turnpike Road. (see my “Short History of De Lacy Mount” posted in Kirkstall on Line <http://www.kirkstall.org.uk/board/forum_posts.asp?TID=138> (8 July 2013). Carriageway access to the Star and Garter was down Kirkstall Lane. Kirkstall Road, giving more direct access from Leeds to Kirkstall Bridge and the Star and Garter was built in 1801.

Before the nineteenth century and the development of the purpose built pub, the distinction between the inn, the tavern and the alehouse was recognised but blurred. If there was a drinking place at Hark to Rover it is likely to have been at the alehouse end of the spectrum.

> ‘Their ranks (of inns and taverns) were far exceeded by the legions of alehouses…. In fact for much of the early modern period alehouses were far more numerous than any other type of public meeting place or established retail outlet in the country….From the 1810s and 1820sd purpose-built public houses began to appear in growing numbers in London and other major centres: quite often the core of the building survives today. Hitherto alehouses had been ordinary dwelling houses, adapted for the drink trade with a limited number of alterations….normally smaller premises serving ale or beer (and later spirits) and providing rather basic food and accommodation for the lower orders’ (Clark, pp 5, 14, 15, 273).

On the difficulty of identifying a past alehouse, Dr Cruickshank comments:

> ‘In comparison with the inns, the smaller alehouses remain obscure. At best only isolated crumbs of information survive to indicate their existence. There may be some for which no record has been traced. Those that did exist did not necessarily do so continuously, nor was their existence always reliably recorded.’ (Cruickshank, p 129).

By the nineteenth century the dividing line between home brewing (as we would call it) and the brewing or purchasing of ale for retail sale was becoming more rigid. Also, licensing control, although relaxed for beer/ale houses for a time after 1830, was generally becoming tighter and so ale houses more visible. Any ale house at Hark To Rover is perhaps most likely to have been in the later part of the eighteenth century.

So; was there an ale house or an inn at Hark to Rover? In his book (Cruickshank, p 129), Dr Cruickshank states that ‘At the bottom of Spen Lane, at the junction with the

present-day Morris Lane was a late eighteenth century alehouse called Hark to Rover.' However, in a e-mail to me (20 June 2013) he confirmed that '…I don't know! I had accepted the repeated statements that Hark-to-Rover had been a pub at some stage, but like you have not found positive proof.'

I have so far traced the following references:

(a)

> 'The tale called "Mary the Maid of the Inn," is, by some, supposed to be connected with the nave of the abbey of Kirkstall; it briefly runs thus :—
> "One stormy night, as two travellers sat at the inn, each having exhausted the news of the times, directed their conversation to the abbey and the boisterous night, when a bet was laid by one of them that Mary would not go and bring back from the nave a slip of the alder tree growing there. Mary, however, did go; but when she had nearly reached the tree, she heard a low, indistinct dialogue; find at the same time, something black fell and rolled towards her, this afterwards proved to be a man's hat blown off by the wind; and directing her attention towards the place whence the conversation proceeded, saw, as she was hid behind a pillar, two men bearing a murdered body between them. As they passed by the place where she stood, a heavy cloud swept from off the face of the moon, and Mary fell senseless.—one of the murderers was her intended husband! She was found shortly after; but, when she was wakened from her swoon, her reason had fled—never to return!"'

At the end of this guide there is a note 'To Visiters' (sic):

> 'When Visiters approach the Abbey by the Burley Road, (which is by far the most interesting) inquiry for access to the interior of the Ruins may be made of Mr James Johnstone, who keeps the key, and whose house is known as Hark to Rover.'
>
> History of Kirkstall Abbey, Near Leeds, Yorkshire, (Leeds, John Heatong, 7 Briggate, 1831) (Copy in Leeds Central Library)

There is no mention here of Hark to Rover being or having been an alehouse (or of its being the inn of the tale of the Maid of the Inn.)

(b)

What was I think the second edition of the same (1831) booklet, published in 1848 (copy held in the Thoresby Collection in Leeds) refers to 'Hark to Rover' as 'formerly a retired inn or pot-house, the haunt of highwaymen and poachers' , and says 'Access to the interior of the ruins can be had by applying to Mr James Johnson whose house is known by the name of Hark-to-Rover...where parties can be accommodated with refreshments, where he has resided for upward of 25 years.'

Information kindly provided by Eveleigh Bradford, joint librarian of the Thoresby Society.

(c)

> 'The tale of Mary, the Maid of the Inn, is supposed, and not without foundation, to be connected with this abbey; "Hark-to-Rover", the name of the house where the key is being kept, being, about a century ago, a retired inn or pot-house, and the haunt of many a desperate highwayman and poacher. The anecdote is so well known, that it is scarcely necessary to relate it. It however, is briefly this:-'

[The story is then set out in terms identical to those in (a) above.]

> History of Kirkstall Abbey: Containing a Description of the Ruins and Other Interesting Particulars, Cullingworth (Fifth Edition, 1845)(Copy in Leeds Central Library)

Note that this piece, although it refers to Hark to Rover being an inn of ill-repute, does not say so directly, but presumably is intended to convey, that Mary worked at the Hark to Rover.

(d)
The eighth edition (1876) of the just mentioned (1845) booklet (held in Leeds Central Library) tells the matter in identical terms; except that after concluding that Mary's 'reason had fled forever' adds: 'Which gave rise to the following lines:' Southey's ballad is then set out in full.

(e)
There is, held in the Abbey Museum, an old, undated photo of the row of Hark to Rover cottages, together with the neighbouring house. Handwritten on the back, but the writing much destroyed by damp is the story of the Hark to Rover inn being the haunt of poachers and highwaymen.

(f)
There is held by the Leeds Museum Department an etching of the Abbey. The computerised copy on the Museum Department's digital files has the legend stating, inter alia, that the painting was by Edward Dayes; that it was engraved in 1805 by 'T C. Smith.; with Hark to Rover Inn;' The original of the etching, again held by the Museum Department, has on the back, hand-written in faint pencil, nothing but .the words 'Hark to Rover'. As I understand the etching it has at some stage been reversed and compressed laterally; but it does show the terraced row of Hark to Rover cottages, but not, being behind a tree, the adjoining building. I can see nothing in the etching itself to indicate the presence of an inn.

(g)
A contributor to Secret Leeds (<,http://www.secretleeds.com/forum/Messages.aspx?ThreadID=327> offered the following on 21 May 20007:

> 'The original "Hark to Rover" stood adjacent to cottages in Morris Lane, Kirkstall. It was described as being built of stone taken from the Abbey. It was known as "a small secluded Inn, of bad reputation, and was used as a meeting place by highwaymen and poachers.'

(h)

> 'There used to be a pub adjacent to the cottages [that is the Hark to Rover cottages] with the same name "a small secluded Inn, of bad reputation, and was used as a meeting place by highwaymen and poachers. Many are the wild

and desperate adventures told within its walls by the lawless characters who assembled there.'

From Geograph, downloaded 8 July 2013.
http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/140890

(i)

'There are two versions of this story [Mary Maid of the Inn], the most famous being that in verse by Robert Southey….
There are two Inns in Kirkstall which are rivals as to which of them was the home of Mary. The Hark To Rover Inn, which is now the cottages on Morris Lane, and the Star and Garter, now known as the Barcelona [that is, now closed as an inn].
The Hark to Rover is described as being built of stones taken from the Abbey and was described as being ".. a small secluded Inn, of bad reputation, and used as a meeting place by highwaymen and poachers. Many are the wild and desperate adventures told within its walls by the lawless characters who assembled there".

Kirkstall: A Miscellany of Local Tales and History, Alan Jones, Almar Books, Leeds, 1984. (whom I have already quoted)

(j)

'The first poem, "Mary, the Maid of the Inn " was by
Robert Southey. This epic, produced in 1796, was based on a story about the original Hark to Rover Inn near Kirkstall Abbey. On a dark windy night, Mary (the bar-maid) accepted a bet to go down to Kirkstall Abbey. The proof was to be some foliage from the alder tree that grew there. She accepted the bet and whilst in the Abbey came across two men carrying a body….' And the story continues.

From a Report of the Abbey Museum's Wednesday Club, led by the then Curator, Samantha Flavin; Kirkstall Matters, Issue 94, early 2007.

Unfortunately, Alan Jones, although he does offer a bibliography and uses inverted commas, does not offer (and I have not found) the origin of the comment, relating to Hark to Rover. And equally unfortunately, not one of the statements listed above gives an authoritative source for the sometimes dogmatic assertions. (There is a lot to be said for meticulous, researched and properly referenced historical scholarship!). Not one of them is speaking as a contemporary witness of Hark To Rover as an inn. I assume there was a common source for the oft repeated statement that Hark to Rover had been an inn haunted by highwaymen and poachers. I have not found it. I suppose that frequent repetition of a story or event may give a (small) degree of credibility!

E. SECTION - WAS HARK TO ROVER CONNECTED TO THE STORY OF MARY THE MAID?

Let me be bold in surmise; with little evidence to help me in any direction; and before perhaps the social internet further clouds any truth that we do have. It seems very likely to me that there was an alehouse at Hark To Rover at some time, probably towards the end of the eighteenth century. But, further, it seems to me that there is no good reason, whether in the history or the folklore of Kirkstall, for placing an ale house at Hark at the centre of Maid Mary's story. The only connection I have seen offered is in the pieces listed above; and not one of those offers any credible evidence either from history or any stable folklore.

F. SECTION- WHAT WAS SOUTHEY TALKING ABOUT?

I want now to return to the Southey's ballad which I quoted at the start of this piece: 'Mary, The Maid of the Inn'; the ballad which was I now suspect (and I shall endeavour to explain my suspicion) the real and really the only founding inspiration of all the versions of the story of our Mary that have appeared; in other words, my belief is that any truth, historic or folk truth, about Mary the Maid, can only be traced back to the ballad and whatever may have followed it.

I must first say that Southey's ballad does not name an inn. And although Southey did say that the story of his ballad may have derived from a Kirkstall (or Furness) story told him when a schoolboy (below), nowhere, I think, did he name a particular inn. As the piece from Alan Jones's booklet and the other pieces above (a) to (j) show, within Kirkstall, both the Star and Garter and the Hark To Rover have been claimed as the inn intended in the story of Mary the Maid of the Inn; and, as they do not show, other inns and other settlements away beyond the boundaries of Kirkstall have featured as the setting of the story. In Kirkstall, a thought in passing, curiously, I have found no claim made for the Horse and Jockey (as it was in the eighteenth century, becoming the Bridge Inn in the nineteenth; and now temporarily at least closed) as the scene of the events in the story; although it was only a few hundred yards towards the bridge from the Star and Garter.

In the Preface to his ballad, Mary, the Maid of the Inn, Southey wrote:

> 'The circumstances related in the following Ballad were told me, when a schoolboy, as having happened in the north of England. Either Furness or Kirkstall Abbey (I forget which) was named as the scene. The original story, however, is in Dr. Plot's History of Staffordshire.
>
> "Amongst the unusual accidents," says this amusing author, "that have attended the female sex in the course of their lives, I think I may also reckon the narrow escapes they have made from death. Whereof I met with one mentioned with admiration by everybody at Leek, that happened not far off at the Black Meer of Morridge, which, though famous for nothing for which it is commonly reputed so, (as that it is bottomless, no cattle will drink of it, or birds fly over or settle upon it, all which I found false,) yet is so, for the signal deliverance of a poor woman enticed thither in a dismal stormy night, by a bloody ruffian, who had first gotten her with child, and intended, in this remote inhospitable place, to have despatched her by drowning. The same night (Providence so ordering it) there were several persons of inferior rank drinking in an alehouse at Leek, whereof one having been out, and observing the darkness and other ill-circumstances of the weather, coming in again, said to the rest of his companions, that he were a stout man indeed who would venture to go to the Black Meer of Morridge in such a night as that; to which

> one of them replying that, for a crown, or some such sum, he would undertake it, the rest, joining their purses, said he should have his demand. The bargain being struck, away he went on his journey, with a stick in his hand, which he was to leave there as a testimony of his performance. At length, coming near the Meer, he heard the lamentable cries of this distressed woman, begging for mercy, which at first put him to a stand; but being a man of great resolution and some policy, he went boldly on, however counterfeiting the presence of divers other persons, calling Jack, Dick, and Tom, and crying, Here are the rogues we looked for, & c.; which being heard by the murderer, he left the woman and fled; whom the other man found by the Meer side almost stripped of her clothes, and brought her with him to Leek, as an ample testimony of his having been at the Meer, and of God's providence to." – P 291
> The metre is Mr Lewis's invention; and metre is one of the few things concerning which popularity may be admitted as proof of merit. The ballad has become popular owing to the metre and the story; and it has been made the subject of a fine picture by Mr Barker.
> Poetical Works, p 417; repeating the Preface to the original Collected Volumes of Poems in ten volumes of 1837& 1838.

It is a bit difficult to understand why Southey talks of Dr Plot as 'this amusing writer'. Dr Plot, no less than an LL. D., 'Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, & Professor of Chymistry in the University of Oxford' must surely deserve to be taken seriously. Perhaps Southey was quietly warning against his own ballad being taken too seriously! .Dr Plot's book, *The Natural History of Staffordshire* (Oxford, Printed at Theater, 1686) was, I believe, intended as a serious scientific work, not to amuse. At p 296 he writes:

> 'In the year of Our Lord one Thomas Rolleston founded or rebuilt the tower at least of the church at Mathfield in this county as appears by the inscription over the west door of the same steeple.'

Serious history can hardly be more serious than that!

In Chapter VI Dr Plot treats of plants, writing: 'having done with the mineral, the order of nature directs me to consider the vegetable kingdom, the plants of this county, whether herbs, shrubs or trees amongst which (as in Oxfordshire) [his *Natural History of Oxfordshire*] I shall only treat of such as are:-

(1) Wholly undescribed by any author, we yet know of, or described imperfectly….'

And so on.

In Chapter VIII, 'Of Men and Women, at p 268 he describes the case of the 11 year old child '…that seems to be neither [man nor woman]; the sex not being distinguished by the usual marks, nothing appearing in the place but an unusual aperture of a raw membrane, which I guess might be nothing else but the neck of the bladder.'

Some of Dr Plot's material may tend to be anecdotal and quirky. But I see no reason to doubt his story of the Black Meer of Morridge.[4] Of course, offered as a piece of history, its accuracy is important; but seen as an element in Southey's inspiration for his ballad, (and I shall return to this idea later) the historical accuracy is not, I think, relevant.

[4] The Black Meer is on the moorland between Leek and Buxton. Dr Plot's work apparently contains the first reference to crop circles.

The similarity between Dr Plot's story and Southey's ballad is hardly extensive. Both stories start with a drinking bout in an alehouse; a wild, dark night; someone being dared to go from the alehouse to a place eerie and frightening on such a night; the challenge is accepted. Both meet with a frightening but different experience, both become involved in a frightening, but quite different, event. That is about the extent of the similarity.

Southey himself recognised the influence of Plot. It has also been suggested that he may also have drawn inspiration from Burger's poem 'Des Pfarrers Tochter von Taubenheim', translated as 'The Lass of Fair Wone' in the Monthly Magazine for April 1796 by William Taylor of Norwich
< http://www.english.uga.edu/~nhilton/450/ww/fairwone.htm>. The Lass of Fair Wone told the all too common – especially in that period – story of the parson's daughter, seduced and made pregnant by a local lord, rejected by the lord, murdering the child and being hanged for the infanticide.

The literary and historic tradition which any particular writer has joined and the sources of his creative stream are important to trace. But too much can perhaps be made of searchings for a writer's particular sources for a particular work. It is easy to see Southey drawing inspiration (for which like any poet he was no doubt always searching) from Plot's tale; perhaps to see poems like the Fair Lass of Wone, although so different in their events, feeding into his creativity, perhaps at the level of his subconscious. And no doubt there were many other such sources – Southey was a voracious reader. Certain common themes, albeit each with its individual twist, thread through so many of such nineteenth century tales and ballads. They may all have fed, directly or indirectly, into the piece called 'Mary, the Maid of the Inn', which we have now in front of us.

G. SECTION: LATER VERSIONS OF THE MAID.

Southey, as I have described, wrote that the circumstances/the events of his ballad were told to him when he was a schoolboy, and related to either Kirkstall or Furness. So far, I have found no evidence of either a historic event or a folk story (in either Kirkstall, Furness or indeed elsewhere apart from that in Dr Plot's story) which could sensibly be said to have provided the recognisable paradigm of his ballad.

What we do find is a number of versions of the Maid – the ones which I have acquired acknowledging the existence of, if not a debt to, the ballad; all of which were I think written in the nineteenth century, later than the ballad.

It is worth looking now at some of these. For one question may be whether they provide evidence of either a historic event or a folk tale already existing outside and before and feeding into the imaginative creation of Southey's ballad; pointing him to a particular, place or to an event?

I have accumulated three other versions of 'Mary, The Maid of the Inn'. Without doubt there are, or were, more, which have not surfaced or have not survived. I will list the three, briefly giving what I think are for us the salient facts of each tale. But first, as a point of focus, the facts of the ballad.

A. <u>The Southey ballad.</u>

The story:

Mary identified as Mary, the Maid of the Inn, not otherwise. The inn not identified. Due to marry her lover, Richard . Stormy night. Two guests at the inn wager that Mary will not dare to go down to the abbey ruins; to bring a bit of elder growing in aisle as proof. She witnesses two ruffians burying their murdered victim. Hat of one blows off, lands at Mary's feet.. Back at the inn she recognises the hat as Richard's. He is hung in the gibbet by the Abbey. Mary goes mad.

.

B 'Lloyd'

Note: *Mary Clarkson; or the Kirkstall Abbey Murder*, Anglesea Lloyd. This first appeared, serialised, in the Leeds West Riding Express for 1863, September 5, 12, 19 and 26; later published with an identical text as a booklet by Fred R Spark at 18 & 19 Swinegate, Leeds, running to at least 8 editions. The copy which I have is a facsimile copy of that eighth edition produced by Alan and Marjorie Jones, Almar Books, Kirkstall. No doubt this is the same Alan Jones who wrote *Kirkstall: A Miscellany of Local Tales and History*, referred to earlier; obviously a stout champion of Kirkstall.

The first page, under the title, contains words: 'The following story has served Southey for the groundwork of his Ballad, "Mary, the Maid of the Inn". It is for the reader to say whether the incidents have been made more interesting by the changes introduced by the Poet.

Lloyd sets the story 150 years ago – ie about 1700.

The last paragraph reads:

> 'Mr Southey, in his ballad, considered it more poetical to make her live and die a maniac; but as I had no poetical necessity to submit, I have related the circumstances of the story as they really occurred. The accomplices of Bedford were arrested in a short time after his trial for a highway robbery, committed in the neighbourhouod of Manchester, and tried and executed at Lancaster.'

The story:

Set in the Star and Garter at Kirkstall, an honest and respectable inn. The landlord is Job Sutcliffe; no children of their own, so he and his wife have adopted the wife's niece, Mary Clarkson. The lover, William Bedford. is in fact a highwayman. Mary and Bedford arrange to marry secretly in Leeds. Bedford and two accomplices waylay and murder a merchant travelling with money collected in York. . They bury him (rather stuff him down one of the ancient drains!) in the Abbey. Mary, worried at keeping the intended marriage secret, takes a walk in the Abbey at night to calm her nerves. Mary witnesses the burial. Bedford's hat blows off. It is picked up by Mary and the lock of her hair in the inside brim unmasks him. Bedford is arrested. Mary gives evidence against him. He is found guilty but commits suicide in prison. Mary lives on for fifty years, a healthy mother and grandmother.

C. 'Otley'

Note: On the front cover is printed '*Mary, The Maid of the Inn. '(*Otley, Printed by William Walker') No other information printed. .Nine pages. The Southey ballad is printed at the end with a note at its head stating: 'Founded on the foregoing melancholy tale'. A BBTI Search – Shows two William Walkers, Otley 1813-1837 and 1830-1855 Thus perhaps printed and published about 1850.

Easby Abbey or the Abbey of St Agatha is an abandoned Premonstratensian abbey on the eastern bank of the River Swale on the outskirts of Richmond in the Richmondshire district of North Yorkshire. The site is maintained by English Heritage and can be reached by a riverside walk from Richmond Castle. <. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easby_Abbey> (downloaded, 17 July 2013). Richmond is about 4 kilometres from the A1, the Great North Road,. I have not traced a Falcon Inn in this area.

The story

Mary the daughter of Stephen Benton, the landlord of the Falcon Inn on one of the great roads in the north of England., near St Agatha's Abbey. Set on a gloomy November night. Richard Harroby, son of a maltster, fails to persuade her to elope. He staggers down to a low alehouse in the village to meet his fellow criminal. Richard is driven to take part in the robbery as he owes the other criminal a debt. Planning to rob a squire of rents collected from tenantry. Two guests at the inn wager that Mary will not dare go to Abbey. To bring back a bunch of flowers from aisle as proof. At the Abbey Mary witnesses the murderers burying the body. Hat of one blows off. Mary grabs it and gets back to the inn. Mary recognises hat being that of Richard – had his name written inside in his handwriting. Richard is arrested (in the Abbey presumably). Richard condemned, and his body gibbeted at site of murder. Mary goes mad; dies lying on her mother's grave.

D 'Davison'

Note: This version includes Southey's poem immediately following the end of the text. The copy I am using is downloaded from 'Popular Romanticism' <<http://poprom.streetprint.org/items/263> 17 July 2013. There is a facsimile of the same version published by The Making of Modern Law Collection of Harvard Law School Library.

The title page reads:
'Mary, The Maid of the Inn; An Interesting Narrative; detailing the singular way she discovered her lover to be a Robber and Murderer; his conviction and execution, with her forlorn and destitute wanderings and unhappy death.
Alnwick: Printed and sold by W Davison, Bondgate Street, Where may be had a large assortment of Histories, Song, Pictures, Children's Books, & c.'

> '**William Davison** was born in Alnwick on 16 November 1781, the younger son of William (senior) and Mary. William was educated in Alnwick, and was apprenticed at the age of fourteen to Mr. Hind, a chemist in Ponteland, Newcastle. He returned to Alnwick in 1802 to set up business as a pharmacist, and in 1803 was for a short time in partnership with a printer (Joseph Perry).

Wishing to enlarge his business, William placed an advert in the "Newcastle Courant" in 1804 indicating that his pharmacy now stocked books, paper, drawing materials and musical instruments in addition to the ointments etc….

He worked very hard and was extremely innovative, publishing and printing his own products which included the broadsheets, small chapbooks, larger chapbooks, pamphlets, children's books, school books, guidebooks, books dealing with his own home town of Alnwick both guide books and history books, commercial billheads, advertising flyers, and everything else it seemed it was possible to print. Between around 1812 and 1817 he published a set of caricatures, (the total number is uncertain but probably almost 50), being small (approx. 233mm x 133mm or 9.5" x 5.5") single sheets with a topical subject shown in the, then newly, very popular caricature style.

He failed in his attempt to produce a new ambitious bible, costing him financially, and when others beat him to produce a comprehensive history of the region, his own plans were stillborn, but otherwise he was very successful in all his many ventures.'

Wikipedia – 17 July 2013, Footnotes omitted

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Davison_(publisher)

The story:

The inn is only located as being at the side of a public road in the north of England, named the Wheatsheaf, the landlord being John Simpson, and Mary being the only child of him and his wife. Richard Jarvis is Mary's lover. The second robber uses a debt owed to him by Richard to force him not to back out of the enterprise The victim is the squire to be robbed of rent-money collected from tenants. Squire gets shot in resisting the attack; Richard and his partner decide to bury him in the Abbey. Meanwhile, Mary's mother brings up Mary's lack of fear with two strangers visiting the inn; Mary asked by the strangers to go to Abbey and bring back twig from yew tree there as proof. Mary witnesses the two criminals about to bury the body; her shriek frightens them so that they fly leaving the body unburied., one of them leaving hat behind. Mary seizes the hat and returns to the inn. Richard arrives to see her and, in his presence, she produces the hat which has Richard Jarvis's name in it. Richard secured, attempting to flee. Mary gives evidence against Richard who is condemned. He refuses to turn King's evidence. She visits him in prison. Brief description of his calm on being executed. Mary goes mad, Simpson made ill and dies. Mary's mother sent to prison for debt and dies. Mary wanders as a mad, manic wreck, dies in the snow and buried in the workhouse.

I will briefly mention one other story I have found; the Maid and Magpie. - call it 'Magpie'. It is not in any way a version of Mary the Maid of the Inn; but may have some relevance. It is set in the village of Palaiseau, then on the outskirts of Paris. Poverty hits Annette's father so he joins the army. She is taken in by friend as a servant. She is about to be executed for stealing some of the family silver plate when, at almost the last minute her devoted lover Blageau, discovers that the family magpie was the thief. Girl's honour saved; father pardoned for justifiably striking a superior officer. The local justice, the villain of the piece, is execrated.

The front cover of the booklet reads: 'The Maid and Magpie, A Pathetic Tale, founded on fact. Together with Southey's poem on Mary, the Maid of the Inn. Durham: Published by W W Murrary, 75 Claypath, 1854.' Southey's ballad is indeed printed following the text of the tale.

H. SECTION: SO WHAT, IF ANYTHING, HAVE WE ESTABLISHED?

I have been able to refer to only a few versions of the tale of Mary the Maid of the Inn; but they are I surmise fairly typical. They are all from a time in the nineteenth century after publication of Southey's ballad. . Southey said he had been told as a schoolboy that the events giving rise to his ballad had happened in either Kirkstall or Furness; he could not remember which. So he is telling us that these events had occurred/existed, presumably as real historical events before and had inspired his ballad. In the Otley version the author says that the ballad, which is printed there, was founded on 'the foregoing melancholy tale', In the Lloyd version, Anglesea Lloyd writes: 'The following story has served Southey for the groundwork of his Ballad, "Mary, the Maid of the Inn". It is for the reader to say whether the incidents have been made more interesting by the changes introduced by the Poet' In other words, Lloyd, like the author of the Otley version and Southey himself are claiming that they are merely putting into poetry or prose a story, presumably that of either a factually historic event or some sort of folk story, already long established. This is not to me convincing.

It lacks conviction in part because, as we have seen, the story has been located, at the whim of the particular author it might seem, in different places, not just Kirkstall, not just the Star and Garter. If a claim is being made to be the real originating scenario, whether historical or folk, of the story, then not just Kirkstall but Furness will have a claim; St Agatha's Abbey at Easeby will have a claim. I guess that there are quite a few similar others emerging from the nineteenth century. Obviously, the tales, including the ballad, at which I have looked, do have a unifying theme, some sort of unifying spring, though with rather a lot of a lot of particular variations: Mary and her murderous boyfriend; the latter getting his desserts, etc. The source of this theme, can hardly be a historic event. The same murder does not occur in different places.

A little more convincing, it is to see the story as a folk tale, having survived and been nurtured over long years, recovered in the nineteenth century by enterprising printers and publishers such as Davison, and Walker of Otley keen to satisfy the rapidly growing market for popular, printed literature. The day of Mills & Boon was dawning.

A folk tale with a common theme, though local variations, can sometimes be found alive in different places. Such was the case with the most famous English folk tale of all: Robin Hood. Was there such a folk tale of Mary the Maid, to be reduced to writing in prose and poetry in the nineteenth by people like Southey and Lloyd?

:

> ‘What is 'folklore'? And what is 'English' folklore?
> As regards the first, 'folklore' is notoriously difficult to define with rigour, and the term now covers a broader field than it did when invented in 1848, linking many aspects of cultural traditions past and present. It includes whatever is voluntarily and informally communicated, created or done jointly by members of a group (of any size, age, or social and educational level); it can circulate through any media (oral, written, or visual); it generally has roots in the past, but is not necessarily very ancient; it has present relevance; it usually recurs in many places, in similar but not identical forms; it has both stable and variable features, and evolves through dynamic adaptation to new circumstances. The essential criterion is the presence of a group whose joint sense of what is right and appropriate shapes the story, performance, or custom—not the rules and teachings of any official body (State or civic authority, Church, school, scientific or scholarly orthodoxy). It must be stressed that in most other respects this 'group' is likely to share in mainstream culture and to be diverse in socio-economic status, interests, etc.; the notion that folklore is found only or chiefly where an uneducated, homogeneous peasantry preserves ancient ways has no relevance to England today, and probably never had.’
>
> Simpson & Roud, Introduction.

But I am not convinced that Southey and the others were resurrecting a folk tale. The suggestion lacks conviction in part because, as we have seen, the story has been located, at the whim of the particular author it might seem, in different places, not just Kirkstall, not just the Star and Garter. If a claim is being made to be the real originating scenario, whether historical or folk, of the story, then Furness will have a claim; St Agatha’s Abbey at Easeby will have a claim. I guess that there are similar others. But it is, to me, difficult to see this as evidence of some sort of established folk tale. (And I must say, in passing and with regret of course, that if there was such a folk tale, emerging in different places, Kirkstall could hardly claim its exclusive ancestry.)

My research may have been limited; but I have not come across a shred of real evidence that there was any such, established folk story in existence before the day of Southey’s ballad. I am sceptical. My belief is that Southey was the founding father of Mary, the Maid of the Inn; inspired to a greater or lesser extent by Dr Plot’s story, by his own extensive reading, by reported events and stories, by information garnered from friends.

> ‘Although he [Southey] was anxious from the beginning, as we have seen, to preserve the fiction of Espriella’s authorship, he frequently applied to his friends for information on topics with which he was insufficiently acquainted himself.’
>
> Letters from England, pp. xix,xx.

So why did he link the story in his ballad to an old Kirkstall (or Furness) story told to him when a boy? In this context, a look at *Letters from England:* by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella, published in 1807, claiming to be a translation from the Spanish. The Spaniard was a fiction. The work was written in English and by Southey.

> ‘But why did he choose to adopt this mask? Why should he not have written a straightforward account of England under his own name? There are, I think, three answers to that question.
>
> In the first place, he believed that a foreigner's account, if it were shrewd and lively, would sell better than the same book appearing as the work of an Englishman: for we all have a natural curiosity to know what other people think of us. As we have seen, he was still a struggling writer, to whom the financial return of his work was extremely important. To achieve its effect, the secret of the authorship would have to be guarded closely and kept up with the greatest care. But of that he was confident. Only a few of his close friends knew the secret, and the book was printed by Richard Taylor, whom he knew he could implicitly trust Besides, he piqued himself on his accurate knowledge of Spanish character: he felt certain he could avoid giving himself away. Secondly, he loved a mystery for itself. It tickled him to think of people discussing the book—perhaps in his own presence—-without knowing that he was the author. This was not the only work he published anonymously.
>
> *Letters from England,* Introduction, p xviii.

Southey’s ballad was popular:

> ‘They have made a melo-drama of “Mary the Maid of the Inn,” at one of the Strand theatres….I verily believe that at least half my reputation is owing to that paltry ballad, which is bad enough to spoil a very fine story [he is referring her to Plot’s story]. The strolling players recite it here about the country.’
>
> Southey’s Commonplace Book, Second Series, edited by John Wood Warter (London, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849); p 181.

I am thinking that, apart from the aptness of presenting such a ballad story as the versifying of an old folk tale, he may well have thought this would increase the attraction to the public and the profit to him; in the nineteenth century antiquity was becoming increasingly popular. And Kirkstall (and no doubt Furness) could have occurred to him as an ideal place in which to plant his folk tale. In this period the ruined Abbey must have been well known and was being panted by such as J M W Turner, John Sell Cotman and Thomas Girtin.

And I am thinking that the other writers, whilst in fact getting their inspiration from Southey, and feeling honour bound to mention his name and ballad (and perhaps hoping to reflect a bit of his glory) adopted the same tactic of claiming to be retelling an ancient tale. Why has the tale of Robin Hood been so ineradicably poplar? In part because it is rooted far back in our folk history. It is interesting that Lloyd in effect is claiming that she is telling the genuine ancient tale which Southey has adopted. Similarly, the author of the Otley version is claiming Southey’s ballad is derived from the ‘melancholy’ tale which he has just related. And it is interesting that the story of *The Maid and Magpie*, whilst of a totally different plot from Mary the maid, is of the same genre, sees fit to include Southey’s ballad and seeks to boost its popularity with the claim that the story is ‘Founded on Fact.’.

In conclusion: even if, as I have been suggesting, Southey and the writers such as those I have looked at, were not adopting and adapting old tales, they could perhaps themselves be seen has having giving birth of a new folk tale, a folk tale to be repeated and

nurtured many times in many places, over many years up to today. Certainly it seems to me that today the tale is rooted in the imagination of many in Kirkstall – without the need seen for any research into historical origins. So, in a sense, seen as such a folk tale, a folk tale arising out of Victorian times and thoughts, whether Southey was thinking of Kirkstall when he wrote his ballad, whether or not the Victorian tales did stem from some lost, earlier and ancient folk tale, perhaps does not really matter. As far as Kirkstall is concerned, Mary has been adopted; and is to us a Kirkstall lass; our very own (so we will say)folk heroine.

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Mike Harwood
21 July 2013.