

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Wednesbury Cocking

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At Wednesbury* there was a cocking*,
A match between Newton and Scroggins.
The Colliers and Nailors left work,
And all to old Spittles went jogging.
To see this noble sport, me lads,
Many noble men resorted.
And though they'd little of money, me lads,
With that they freely sported.

Cho: "Oh, it's off to the fight," cried Bill Cartwright,
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There was Jeffory and Oldborn from Hampton*
And Dusty from Bilston was there.
Plummery, he came from Darlaston,
And he was as rude as a bear.
Old Will, he came from Walsall, me lads,
And Smacker from West Brom. come.
Blind Robin, he came from Rowley, me lads,
And staggering, he went whum. [home]

Ralph Moody come hobbling along,
As though he some cripple was mocking,
To join in the blackguard throng,
That met at Wednesbury Cocking.
He borrowed a trifle of Doll, me lads,
To back old Taverner's grey.
He laid fourpence half-penny to fourpence, me lads,
Then lost and went broken away.

But soon he returned to the pit,
For he'd borrowed a trifle of money,
And ventured another large bet,
Along with blobber-mouth Coney.
Then Coney demanded his money, me lads,
Which is common on all such occasions.
He cried, "Blast thee if thee don't bold thy peace, me lads.
I'll pay thee as Paul paid the Ephesians."

Scroggins' breeches were made o' nankeen,

And wore very thin in the groin.
In stooping to handle his cock,
His b*****ks burst out behind.
Besides, his shirt tail was bes***, me lads,
Which caused among them much laughter.
Scroggins turned himself round in a pet, me lads,
And cried, "Bugger ye! What's the matter?"

The morning's sport being over,
Old Spittle a dinner proclaimed,
Each man he should dine for a groat.
If he grumbled he ought to be damned,
For there was plenty of beef, me lads,
But Spittle he swore by his troth,
That never a man should dine, me lads,
Till he'd eaten his noggin of broth.

The beef it was old and tough,
Of a bull that was baited to death.
Barney Hide got a lump in his throat,
That had liked to have stopped his breath.
The company all fell into confusion, me lads,
At seeing poor Barney Hide choked.
They took him into the kitchen, me lads,
And held his head over the smoke.

They held him so close to the fire,
He frizzled just like a beefsteak,
Then threw him down on the floor,
Which had like to have broken his neck.
One gave him a kick in the stomach, me lads,
Another a kick on the brow,
His wife said, "Throw him into the stable, me lads,
And he will be better just now."

Then they all returned to the pit,
And the fighting went forward again.
Six battles were fought on each side,
And the next to decide the main.*
For they were two famous cocks, me lads,
As ever this country bred,
Scroggins' a duck-winged black, me lads,
And Newton's a shift-wing red.

The conflict was hard on both sides,
Till brassy-winged black's was choked.
The colliers were nationally vexed,
And the nailors were sorely provoked.
Peter Stephens, he swore a great oath, me lads,

That Scroggins had played his cock foul.
Scroggins, he gave him a kick, me lads,
And cried, "God damn your soul."

The company then fell in a discord,
A bold fight did ensue.
Kick bugger and bite was the word,
Till the Walsall men were subdued.
Ralph Moody bit off a man's nose, me lads,
And wished that he could have him slain,
So they trampled him to death me lads,
And they made a draw of the main.

The cockpit was near to the church,
An ornament unto the town.
On one side was an old coal pit,
The other well gorsed around.
Peter Hadley peeped through the gorse, me lads,
In order to see them fight.
Spittle jobbed his eye out with a fork, me lads,
And said, "Blast thee! It serves thee right."

Some people may think this is strange,
Who Wednesbury never knew,
But those who have ever been there
Won't have the least doubt but it's true.
For they are savage by nature, me lads,
And guilty of deeds most shocking,
Jack Baker he whacked his own father, me lads,
And so ended Wednesbury cocking.

Wednesbury = Wedgebury. Cocking = cockfight.
Hampton = Wolverhampton. Main = match
From an early 19th century Broadsheet
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