

June

It's a rosebud in June and the violets in full bloom,
And the small birds singing love songs on each spray.

Chorus (after each verse):

We'll pipe and we'll sing love.
We'll dance in a ring love.
When each lad takes his lass
All on the green grass,
And it's, oh, to plough where the fat oxen graze low
And the lads and the lasses do sheep-shearing go.

When we have all sheared our jolly, jolly sheep,
What joy can be greater than to talk of their increase.

For their flesh it is good, it's the best of all food,
And their wool it will cloth us and keep our backs from the cold.

Here's the ewes and the lambs, here's the hogs and the rams,
And the fat wethers too they will make a fine show

One of my favourite Steeleye Span songs from their 1972 album *Below the Salt*.



This version was collected by Cecil Sharp in Somerset in 1904. Gustav Holst made an orchestral arrangement of the traditional tune. There are several other versions, similar but different, including *The Sheepshearing Song*. There are versions in print from 1715 and 1878. A version of the song is sung on Christmas Eve in the opening chapter of *Under the Greenwood Tree* by Thomas Hardy.

The number and variety of versions points to its age. And its

subject matter with the undertones of fertility rites of spring (not early summer) suggest antiquity.

It is now June and the roses are certainly blooming but the violets are long gone. Sheep shearing depends on the breed and how far north the flock but the general principle is to do it in the spring when it is warm enough for the sheep to do without the warmth of the fleece and before the summer heat makes the sheep uncomfortable. To my mind there is definitely a May Day feel about this song.

It is a good year for wild flowers in south east England. The poppies are remarkable. Packets of poppy seed were given to children 2 years ago to sow in commemoration of the centenary of the start of World War I. I think this is in part responsible to the profusion of red blooms all along the verges of major roads and between fields. Although poppies are noted for springing up whenever the grounds is disturbed.



A modern song about roses. Written by Joe South. The version I recall most played on UK radio is the one by Glen Campbell. But the bigger hit was by Lynn Anderson.

I beg your pardon
I never promised you a rose garden
Along with the sunshine
There's gotta be a little rain some time. . .

So smile for a while and let's be jolly
Love shouldn't be so melancholy
Come along and share the good times while we can



I have never seen a rose quite this deep shade of purple before. Maybe it is a salt resistant variety, especially hardy

for the North Sea wind and rain prevalent most of the year
across the Felixstowe Victorian Cliff Garden.

Photographs E Weatherwax England in June