

# THE BALLAD OF THE GREAT BARMOTE COURT

being A letter from the Steward of the Great  
Barmote Courts of the Hundred of the High Peak  
and of the Soke and Wapentake of Wirksworth

Town Hall Chambers,  
Bakewell,  
Derbyshire.

It is amazing what we find hidden away in the furthestmost recesses of our office, invariably covered in dust and, if documentary, always written in fading ink on ill-cured parchment. Before I could even start to read the title of "The Ballad of the Great Barmote Court", I had to clean the ancient parchment with the utmost care, using a traditional secret recipe composed of a judicious mixture of Gin, Vodka and Rum (White Rum, of course) in proportions which I am not permitted to disclose. In addition to using a minute quantity of the mixture on the parchment itself, it invariably proves essential to consume the residue internally in order to enable me to decipher the faint, faded ink.

You asked for a copy of the ballad, here it is:

## The Ballad of the Great Barmote Court

This is the tale of the Derbyshire Mines where Th' Owd Man worked the Ore  
And the Barmote Court and its Officers upheld the Mineral Law.  
The Miners went down their fearsome shafts on the end of a length of rope  
And on every 13th Dish of Lead they paid their Lot and Cope.

When Buckley H. and Bacon R. set out to search for Lead  
T'was Bacon R. who carried the Pick while Buckley went on ahead.  
They were the pride of the Miners there, in the Soke and Wapentake  
And they dug and delved and, later on, their massive thirsts did slake.

With unremitting toil and sweat they hunted for Galena  
And if any man stood in their way, they took him to the Cleaner.<sup>1</sup>  
So, as they filled each Miners Dish, and none could do it faster,  
They took it round to show to Bill, the worth old Barmaster.

At the Court on Wednesday last I had only been able to decipher twelve lines but, since then, driven on perhaps by the punch, I have almost revealed four more, as follows:

The contiguous vein had been Nicked again by a man they both abhorred,  
A Miner bold who was not so old - his name was Trevor Ford  
Now, Trevor Ford was a mighty man - he was as bold as Brass  
And what our Miners longed to do was ... him ... the ... .

I have not been able to ready the three missing words at the end of the last line. My brother Steward for the Private Liberties, a very erudite man, suggests that it might have read "lay him on the Grass"<sup>2</sup> but the Worthy Barmaster - of an earthier turn of mind - does not agree. As, no doubt, the Miner referred to is an ancestor of yours perhaps you could suggest something.

W. Michael Brooke-Taylor

<sup>1</sup> 'Cleaner'. This is somewhat obscure. One theory has it that it was a slang Anglo-Saxon word possibly referring to the Barmaster i.e. the person who 'cleaned-up' on behalf of the Crown. The expression has been known to imply a Show of Strength.  
<sup>2</sup> Meaning "knock him down".