SIGGEOUTION DECEMBER 2016

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

There are few references to Christmas carols in the collections of Folk Songs. However, this could be in part because they were not seen as part of the 'folk tradition'. Therefore of no interest to collectors, who did tend to define what they wished to collect or what they felt was in the tradition of material they considered 'folk'. Also singers would have felt that hymns and songs they sang at Christmas time were religious songs. However, Sally Sloane did sing this carol, 'Christ was born in Bethlehem' for John Meredith who recorded it in the 1950s.

Unfortunately, I have not come across any conversation about it as tape was expensive and machines were turned off for all except the actual song or music. These days collectors are aware that incidental conversation can be very informative; this coupled with inexpensive recording devices ensures extra information is captured for later research.

John Meredith noted that a version of this carol had been printed in the USA as a' Kentucky song' but the tune varied as did the words. It is fascinating to wonder how Sally came to learn this version.

The first Christmas carols were part of the Byzantine liturgy in seventh century Nativity plays. By the thirteenth century, the Franciscans had encouraged the singing of songs at Christmas in people's own native language. In 1426, the first carols in English by John Awdlay, were recorded at Shropshire.

Singabout S1 December 2016

The apportioning of blame for the crucifixion of Christ has changed over the centuries depending on politics of the day and religious arguments. Initially the violence of the Roman administrators and Pontius Pilate were blamed, then Jewish religious leaders, or Jews gerenerally, then it was argued that Jesus accepted his fate as sacrificial lamb and son of God. Words and painting imagery changed according to the religious theories of the day and I am sure many thesis have been written upon these themes, but I don't know if this helps us date the origins of this carol.

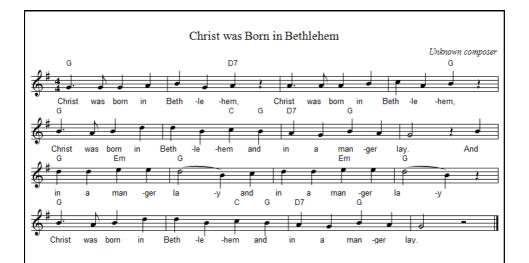
Dale Dengate

[Ed: I did manage to find another Christmas item in Trove, which can be seen on page 4 of Singabout. It has quite a different tone.

http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/58728808



A John Dengate Christmas Card titled "The adoration of the Magi... gifts of Gold, Myrrh and Frankenstein." Image courtesy Dale Dengate.



Christ was born in Bethlehem, Christ was born in Bethlehem Christ was born in Bethlehem and in a manger lay. And in a manger lay, and in a manger lay, Christ was born in Bethlehem and in a manger lay.

The Jews they crucified him, the Jews they crucified him, The Jews they crucified him and nailed him to a tree. And nailed him to a tree, and nailed him to a tree, The Jews they crucified him and nailed him to a tree.

Mary she came weeping, Mary she came weeping, Mary she came weeping and stole away my Lord. And stole away my Lord, and stole away my Lord, Mary she came weeping and stole away my Lord. And finally, a more prosaic view of Christmas by West Australian poet Edwin Greenslade (Dryblower) Murphy first published in the Perth *Sunday Times* 23 December 1934, page 9 and found in NLA's Trove collection:

NOW'S THE TIME A Christmas Carol

Now's the time the Christmas turkey Mutters maledictions murky. Or he would if he could speak.

Now's the time the chook and chicken Who'll provide the supper pickin' All bewail the coming week.

Now's the time we get the wood in To incinerate the puddin', Ditto savories and sweets,

Now's the time we slice the suet, Fill the sugar bowl and cruet, Olives, lettuces, and beets.

Now's the time the Christmas card man. The ballading and bard man, Seek around the shop for sentiment and roam around for rhyme.

But if you would ask the question What comes after indigestion-Now's the Time

Now's the time the seaside flapper Gets a notion in her napper She's the Beauty of the Beach;

Now's the time her escort gallant, Minus balance, brains, or talent; Is to loveliness a leech;

Now's the time the brave beginner Who has sluiced his Christmas dinner With a modicum of malt, Drives his primus stove on wheels Till his radiator squeals And the John Hop calls a halt.

Now's the time the dust and heatmen, The Golden Mile and wheat men, Go to Cottesloe to swim away the dust and grit and grime.

If you'd see why neck-to-needn'ts Shocked our wowser antecedents Now's the Time.

If you'd know why people normal All forsake the clean and formal And go picnicking in scrubs,

Go, some sultry day and blazing, When these idiots amazing Camp amongst the ants and grubs

Their homes are cool and cosy But a picnic isn't prosy, So they scramble in the sand,

Their tea and grub is gritty. But it's "better than the city," So they lunch upon the land.

They get sunburt, they get silly They boil tadpoles in the billy Their togs and shoes are ruined by the gravel, clay, and lime.

But. though go again they'll never If you'd see those who endeavour To kid themselves it's clever -Now's the Time!