

Liverpool Improving Daily - On the grand procession and laying the first stone of the New custom house ...August 12, 1828

Synopsis

Description of the redevelopment of Liverpool in the early years of the 19th century. Includes mention of railways

Themes: Impact of the railway upon cities;
 Impact of the railway upon road traffic

Text

This Liverpool is a famous town / The great metropolis of trade sir
And vastly rising in renown / By new improvements daily made, sir:
Strangers view it with surprise / And towns folk scarce believe their eyes
Looking round, cry out quite gaily, / Liverpool's improving daily

Chorus: Sing hey, sing ho, hey down gaily,
 Liverpool's improving daily

Once dock drawbridges made of wood / Were dangerous for folks to pass, sir
But now they're made of iron good, / And nightly lighted up with gas, sir;
Lord street once it was so narrow / They'd scarce room to wheel a barrow
But now they've opened it so wide, sir / Six coaches can go side by side, sir

From Caste-street and all around / From Dale-street on to Richmond Row
Nice fields and gardens did abound / And trees of various sorts did grow;
No sound was heard but small bird singers, / Except sometimes th' Old Church ringers
But now the birds a-far are fled, sir, / Why should not we sing in their stead, sir

Once corn in church Street was growing / And cattle round about did loo,
Whitechapel like a brook was flowing / And ducks swam on it, to and fro,
But diff'rent ducks now fill the street / There's linens, cottons, Smallware cheap
And selling is a fine concern, sir / Pray keep them busy all day long, sir

But now tho' roads are all the go. / Railways beat them I've a notion,
For coaches without horses show / They've found the perpetual motion;
And none can say but we might try / To fly in kites, straight through the sky
That ladies, like larks, may mount in, sir / And seasick grow in an airing, sir

A powerful steam engine brought / And plac'd 'neath the old church steeple
To warm the church, and it is thought / To play the duce with single people;
For a clever chap found out the scheme / To tye the marriage Knot by steam,
And there's no doubt when they begin it, sir / It may tye a score a minute, sir

Once Old dock was so strangely fixt, / The streets seem'd as tho' not connect'd
There ships and houses oddly mixt, / But now grand custom house erect'd;
What glorious sights, on King's birthday / The Ladies grand and Music play
With all the Clubs so fine array'd / And MR MAYOR the first stone laid.

Chorus: Sing hey, sing ho, work goes on gaily / Our happiness improving daily

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So let us hope that things will be / So well ordered for the best
 All the world as one family / And each will cheerful serve the rest;
 So here's a health to our good King / May ev'ry Briton cheerly (sic) sing
 And peace and plenty be our share / God save the King, long live the Mayor

Chorus : Peace and commerce with all the World
 And increasing happiness to every Creature

Glossary:

Small Wares	The name given in this country to textile articles of the tape kind, narrow bindings of cotton, linen, silk, or woollen fabric; plaited sash cord, braid, etc..
"But diff'rent ducks now fill the street"	This is a wordplay "duck" is a strong untwilled linen (or later, cotton) fabric, lighter and finer than canvas; used for small sails and men's (especially sailors') outer clothing. In the earlier half of the 19th c. much worn for trousers.
Clubs	In this context probably means some sort of commercial association

Source of Text: Bodleian Library, *allegro* Catalogue of Ballads; 2806 c.17(229)

Music. No tune given

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Notes on the Song and Its Historical Background

This is one of several early 19th century songs that celebrate the technological achievements of the time.

The dramatic redevelopment described in the song was triggered by the increase in shipping using Liverpool which, as the song suggests had overwhelmed the capacity of the old port area.

Although the influential engineer John Loudon McAdam had done much to improve the road network between 1820 and 1825, the song writer is confident that "*But now tho' roads are all the go. / Railways beat them I've a notion*". This confidence is probably based on the widely known success of the Stockton and Darlington which had been operating since 1825. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liverpool_and_Manchester_Railway
Construction of the Liverpool and Manchester railway began in the summer of 1826 (ref: <http://www.mosi.org.uk/media/33871623/theliverpoolandmanchesterrailway.construction.pdf>)