

**Pennyworth Of Fun; Or, Opening The Oxford Railway**

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**Synopsis**

A celebration of the new railway and the people who went to see it.

**Text:**

If you will listen to my song / And I will not detain you [very] long,  
On the first of May the folks did throng / To view the Oxford Railway.  
And to have a ride – [oh] what a treat / Father, mother, son and daughter,  
Along the line like one o'clock / By fire [and] steam and water.

chorus: Rifum tifum, mirth and fun, / Don't you wonder how it's done?  
Carriages without horses run / On the Hampton and Oxford Railway.

From villages and from the towns / The gents and ladies flocked around  
And music through the air did sound / Along the Oxford Railway.  
There's butchers, bakers, nailers too, / Lots of gentlemen in blue,  
And all did strive to get a view / Along the Oxford Railway.

An old woman peeping at the line / Said, I wouldn't care a farthing,  
For they destroyed my cottage fine / And cut away my garden.  
Where I for many years did dwell / Growing lots of cabbages and potatoes,  
But worse than that my daughter Nell / Went off with the navigators.

In Alcester lives a bonny lass / I think they call her Nancy,  
Says she, a trip upon the line / Greatly would really please my fancy.  
I will ride by steam and work by steam, / By steam I'll on be hurried,  
And when I can a husband find / By steam I will be married.

When line is finished at both ends / You may send your cocks and hens  
And go to visit all your friends / Your ducks and turkeys, pigs and geese  
To any part wherever you please / You may also send your butter and eggs  
And them can ride as has no legs / On the Hampton and Oxford railway.

A cobbler bold, as I have been told / He shouted to his daughter,  
Saying, while I put some bristles on, / And get a tub of water,  
Pop on the train as quick as rain, / And pop away to Worcester  
For some soles and upper leather /

And now my song is almost done, / I hope I offended none,  
May they never off the incline run, / On the Oxford and Hampton Railway.

**Glossary:**

Hampton	the name by which people living around Birmingham, Wolverhampton and the Black Country would have referred to Wolverhampton
Nailer	Nail maker
Navigator	Navvy
Incline	Probably embankment

**Source of Text:** Palmer, Roy; A Ballad History of England; ISBN 07134 0968 1  
Palmer cites his source as the Crampton Broadside Collection; British Library 111621 h 11 vol. 4 p 12

**Music.** No tune given but a version has been collected from the oral tradition. The tune of which is given in Bar302, *Oxford & Hampton Railway*.

**Source of Music:** No tune given

**Printer:** Pratt

**Where Printed:** Birmingham

**Author :** Anonymous

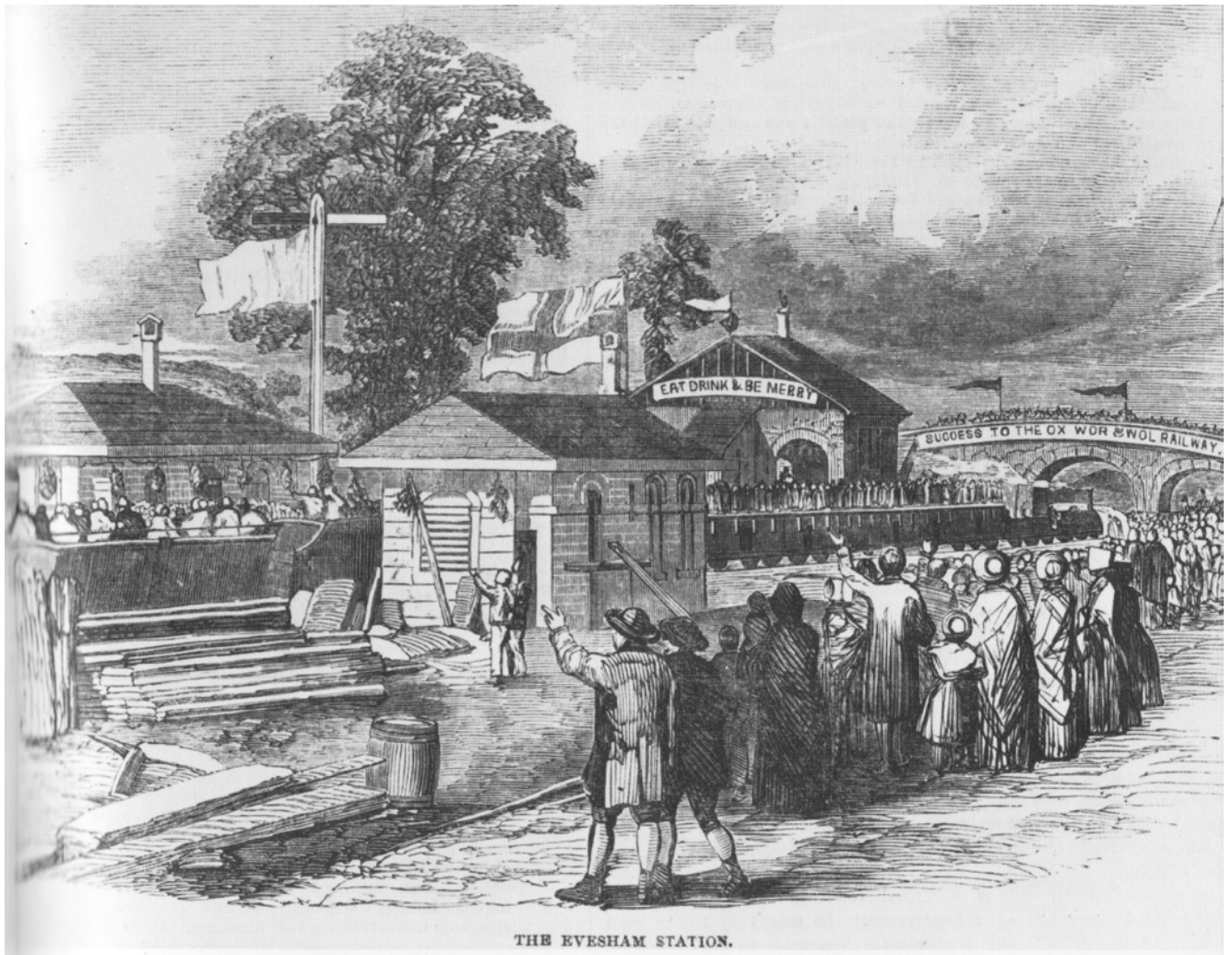
**Date:** 1852

### **Notes of the Song and Its Historical Background**

The first substantial section of the opened on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1852, when the first official train ran from Stourbridge to Evesham (normal traffic began two days later.) "The day was treated as a public holiday in all the towns and villages along the line, and thousands turned out to wave and cheer....At 9.0 a.m., the special set off from Stourbridge amid a tumult of cheering crowds, cannon fire and church bells. Triumphant arches of flowers and evergreens spanned the line in several places, and bands, church bells and wildly cheering multitudes welcomed the packed special at Kidderminster, Droitwich, Worcester and Pershore. The train finally reached Evesham at just before noon, and here, according to a contemporary account, about 10,000 people had gathered to witness the first arrival"

S.Jenkins and H.I. Quayle, the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway, Oakwood Press, Blandford, 1977, p.28, quoted by Palmer)

Alcester is 11 miles from Evesham and a round trip of 22 miles on foot would not have been unusual at the time. Nonetheless, as Palmer says; it seems strange that a girl from Alcester is mentioned in the song since the line did not go there.



Source of picture : Palmer, Roy; A Ballad History of England; ISBN 07134 0968 1

**Related Songs:**

This song is a member of Variant Set 003 – Oxford Railway. See the notes on that variant set for more information.