

BILLY BUNCE'S ANVIL

In Eighteen-Ninety-Six, when Victoria was Queen,
Aloft on a 'Penny-farthing', a young man was seen,
With very few possessions but well-endowed with skill,
Billy Bunce, the blacksmith, came over Ashbury Hill.

Ere long, another song joined the Blackbird's trill,
It was the song of the hammer and the singing anvil,
The hammer and the anvil that awakened the lark,
The hammer and the anvil that sang until dark.

No "spreading chestnut tree", for gentle Billy's shade,
But close by the smithy where he worked at his trade,
Two stately elms swayed gently o'er the Village Green
And shaded the little smithy with their canopy of green,

Billy laboured daily with iron und water and fire,
The wheel of the wheelwright was banded by his tyro,
And Billy shod the horses, great Shires and noble Bays,
The anvil rang, the children sang, all the Summer days.

With Billy's lively mind and Billy's skilful hand,
The farmers were helped in their struggle with the land,
His invention of the "Whipples" helped them even more,
Two furrows with three horses - (it formerly took four).

The skills of Billy and his workers saw their children fed,
The hammer and the anvil ensured their daily bread,
With Billy, the master, the lads were taught their trade,
And, in time, their children too, around the anvil played.

The work started on the anvil still goes on today,
The snow ploughs and the brushes clear the travellers' way,
And make safe the runways for the jets from over the sea,
And thanks to Billy's anvil, we are fed - you - and me.

The 'sombre chimes of the Passing Bell told their sorry tale
Of the silence of the anvil that had sung to the Vale
The gentle folk of Ashbury and his friends from the Shire,
All came to mourn the passing of William Bunce, Esquire.

John Kelly 1976

