



Fair and Windy

Recently my wife Kristi and I stole an afternoon, unhooked our diets, and wheeled a barrow of fivers to the Dane County Fair. We rode the ferris wheel, ate fried cheese and kettle popcorn, and watched horse competitions and alpaca judgments. We saw Fainting Goats, a nutty rooster named "Psyco" that we knew from last year, and a confluence of fashion: jodhpurs, overalls, spurs, mini skirts, flocked helmets, suspenders, stilts, chains, studs, bolos. And you should have seen the NEXT guy.

A few folk songs sprang to mind: WIDECOMBE FAIR, SCARBOROUGH FAIR, OH DEAR WHAT CAN THE MATTER BE (Johnny's so long at the fair), THE ANIMAL FAIR, Bill Staines' beautiful ROSEVILLE FAIR, and Ann Reed's MY MINNESOTA STATE FAIR. And of course the 1945 Rogers and Hammerstein musical film **State Fair**, featuring the cerebral and complicated song OUR STATE FAIR:

*Our state fair is a great state fair,
Don't miss it, don't even be late.
It's dollars to donuts
That our state fair
Is the best state fair in our state.*

Back home I Googled and found songs about fairs everywhere! I also used the great Mudcat Cafe at www.mudcat.org/ where I searched for "fair" in the Digital Tradition Database, and had hits like "The Fair Maiden's Anvil" but there were lot of trad songs about fairs there, too.

WIDECOMBE FAIR stars seven blokes who borrow an old horse to go to the fair. The horse dies, and its ghost proceeds to haunt the local moor.

There's AIKEY FAIR, with the recurring theme of drunken fighting, but it also covers the fair's used car market feature:

*Oh, the next come in was Jock Munro,
Wi' his aul' lorry that widna go,
He should o' sold it lang ago,
In bonny Aikey Fair.*

Another one that ends wretchedly is COPSHAWHOLME FAIR:

*This is the fashion they thus pass the day
Till the night coming they all hurry away
& some are so sick that they'll never go mair
With the fighting and dancing at
Copshawholme Fair.*

There's the BEGGARS OF COUDINGHAM FAIR, and even a murder in the FAIR AT TURLOUGHMORE:

*Come tell me, dearest mother, what makes
my father stay
Or what can be the reason that he's been so
long away?
Oh hold your tongue, my darling son, your
tears do grieve me sore,
I fear he has been murdered at the Fair of
Turloughmore.*

THE RAWTENSTALL ANNUAL FAIR is a precursor to LYDIA THE TATTOOED LADY and just as suggestive:

*"Roll up, roll up, see the tattooed lady,
See the lovely lady with the pictures on her
skin."
In went the lads and they began to cheer,
To see that on her back were all the towns o'
Lancashire.
There were Odsall Bottom, Manchester City,
The town hall standin' in the square.
Oldham, Bolton, Ashton-under-Lyne,
'Coal pit up at Burnley were lookin' mighty
fine,
Till someone shouted "Daddy, don't go
down the mine,"
At the Rawtenstall Annual Fair.*

STRAWBERRY FAIR is about romance on the way to the fair...

*As I was going to Strawberry Fair,
Singing, singing, buttercups and daisies,
I met a maiden taking her wares, fol-de-dee.
Her eyes were blue and golden her hair,
As she went on to Strawberry Fair.*

...BRIGG FAIR covers love at the fair...

*It was on the fifth of August
The weather fair and mild
Unto Brigg Fair I did repair
For a love I was inclined...*

*...I took hold of her lily-white hand
And merrily sang my heart
For now we are together
We never more shall part*

...and there's love on the way home, in THE FAIR O' BALAMINNA:

*As I was comin' hame frae the Fair o'
Balnaminna
I met a bonnie lass, she was fairer than Diana*

There are many modern fair songs, like COUNTY FAIR by Chris Ledoux...

*Well there's a full moon in the western sky,
And there's magic in the air.
Nothin' I know of, can make you fall in love,
Like a night at the county fair.*

COUNTY FAIR by the Beach Boys...

*This time each year in our hometown
The county fair comes our way...
...I soon decide that I'd take with me
The most specialest girl I knew
I had her pack us a lunch and on down the
dirt road we flew*

COUNTY FAIR by Bruce Springsteen...

*Every year when summer comes around
They stretch a banner 'cross the main street
in town
You can feel somethin's happenin' in the air
From Carol's house up on Telegraph Hill
You can see the lights going up out in Sol-
diers Field
Getting ready, for the county fair*

There's another COUNTY FAIR by John Mellencamp, and this COUNTRY FAIR by the band Lonestar...

*Down at the county fair
Big time, big top, big crowds, big hair
There's nothing bigger all around
The country anywhere
Than the county fair*

...there's STATE FAIR WOMAN by Larry Weaver...

*The moonlight reflected off the gold in her
front tooth
And guided me to love right by that polish
sausage booth.*

...and a fair farewell, the Roger Miller song TOM GREEN COUNTY FAIR:

*Time to go. The pickup truck,
It rattles down the gravel road
And all of us kids sit backwards, looking
through the dust cloud at the lights and the
laughter, at the Tom Green County Fair*