

# In Peascod Time

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# In Peascod Time – Music, Words and Song for Summer and the Harvest

This is a collection of ballads, madrigals, lutesongs, dances and consort music from the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, inspired by nature and in particular the activities of Summertime and the Harvest. The collection is named after the ballad tune *In Peascod Time* – the time when peas are in their pods.

Cavendish's madrigal *Zephyrus Brings the Time*, and Nicholas Breton's description of Summer depict the coming of Summer, with many Classical references, particularly to Flora, goddess of flowers.

There are numerous poems and songs emphasizing the virtues of the simple country life over the rich, sophisticated and dangerous life at Court. *Amyntas with his Phyllis Fair* is typical in its description of amorous shepherds and shepherdesses in their pastoral idyll, while *Jacke and Jone* describes hard working country folk with their home-made pleasures. Both songs are set in summertime and end with a reminder of the dangers of Court life. Sadly, even this idealised world has its share of death and heartbreak, as can be heard in *As I walk'd Forth one Summer's Day*.

The work of haymaking is described in Gamble's *Haymaker's Song* and in the ballad of *The Country People's Felicity*. The hard physical labour of the field work was rewarded with piping and dancing at the end of the day, and after prayers on Sundays and feast days as described in *In Summer Time*. *Barly Brake* was a popular outdoor game, played by three couples: one couple was in the middle (described as “Hell”) and had to catch the others, and put them into Hell. Summer was also a time for hunting with hounds, and with hawks – described in Bennet's *Hunting for the Hearne and Ducke*.

Perhaps the most famous of the Summer fairs is Bartholomew Fair, held in Smithfield in London in late August from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries. Commemorated in Ben Jonson's play of the same name, the fair was celebrated for its sights and entertainments as much as for the goods sold by the traders. The Bartholomew Fair ballad is set to the tune *Digby's Farewell*. I've also included the music for *Bury Fair* (held in Bury St Edmunds on St Matthew's day in September), *Sturbitch* [Stourbridge] Fair (held in Cambridgeshire in August and September) and a melody and a ballad for Green Goose Fair (held in Bow on the Thursday after Whitsunday – a green goose being a “midsummer” or young goose).

Just as *Zephyrus Brings the Time* describes the joys of Summer's coming, so *Why are our Summer Sports so Brittle?* laments the end of Summer, but also makes the point that an endless Summer would give no pleasure. There is sweetness in contrast.

Harvest was seen as a separate season from the Summer – a time of plenty, of gathering in and of celebration. Particularly important in a time when a poor harvest would mean starvation for many. In the song from the wedding masque in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Ceres, goddess of the Harvest, pours out her blessings – abundant crops and full stores. No music survives for this but I have set it to one of Monteverdi's *Scherzi Musicali*. This blessing is also described in Green's setting of Psalm 65. Herrick's *Hock Cart* describes in vivid detail the secular celebrations of the Harvest Home with good food from the harvest enjoyed at the feast - a festive atmosphere also evoked in Purcell's *Harvest Home*.

**In Peascod Time** was first put together with the support of REEP ([www.reep.org](http://www.reep.org)), and is one of a series of seasonal collections of music, words and song. The others are **To Shorten Winter's**

**Sadness** and **Old Christmas Returned** (Christmas and Winter), and **This Merry Pleasant Spring** (Spring).