

THE BALLAD OF SILVER JOHN

Many years ago in the Harley Valley,
There lived a shepherd, John by name.
A man of humble ways and means,
But wise and famous he became

When he was young, just starting out,
He found that sheep need a lot of care
They wander in places where they slip, get hurt,
Twist limbs, damage muscles here and there.

But young John Lloyd was a kindly soul.
Couldn't bear to see his lambs in pain.
Gently reset their displaced bones
Into their rightful place again

More and more skilful he became.
His careful hands always could tell
Just how to heal all his sheep that were hurt,
And those of his neighbours as well.

Next he began to practise his skills
On people, for joint pains were rife.
With slipped discs, sciatica and other complaints
John gave many a new lease of life.

His patients all wanted to pay him,
But no invoices John ever wrote.
For he had a passion for buttons of silver,
And these he sewed onto his coat.

As the years passed, John's coat became covered
With buttons that sparkled like dew.
Everyone thought of him as a friend
Of enemies he had very few.

Every so often to market he went,
In his pony and trap off to Builth.
His coat always wearing with well earned pride,
A poor man yet crowned with such wealth.

One Christmas he went off to market.
Took the best of his lambs to sell there.
Bought buttons then got in his pony and trap
Set off for home without fear.

His pony returned but empty the trap
Of silver John there was no sign.

They searched his route but found no trace
Of John or his coat so fine.

Not far from the Harley Valley
Lies the picturesque pool of Llyn Hilyn.
That year was so cold that it froze.
Safe skating for those who were willing

The children had fun till a girl slipped down.
Her screaming went on and on
For there beneath her with glassy eyed stare
Was the face of Silver John.

The ice on the pool that year was so thick
They couldn't reach John till the thaw.
T'was then they discovered that missing
Was the silver coat he always wore.

The constable said it was murder
But who could have done such a deed.
For John was loved and respected by all.
The motive must have been greed.

On the hillside they buried John Lloyd.
But a tombstone never was raised
There he lies to this day, under an oak
On the land where once his sheep grazed.