

## The Death of Ben Hall (Traditional - - Arrangement Copyright Collector)

From the Collector CD "Coming in From the Old" (2002)

Bill Browne: Kit Drums

Jim McWhinnie: Bodhran

Alex Hargraves: Guitar

Mike Martin: Button Accordion

Roger Hargraves: Bouzouki

Chloe Roweth: Vocal, Mandolin

Jason Roweth: Bass

*This wonderful ballad was collected from traditional singer Sally Sloane (1894-1982) in 1954 by the late John Meredith. Ben Hall's sister-in-law was mid-wife at Sally's birth in Parkes, in 1894.*

Guitar Tuning: E A D G B E (Standard)

Capo: None

Time: 3/4

Asus2 C A E5 D Asus2  
Come, all you young Australians, and everyone besides,  
Asus2 D A C D Asus2  
I'll sing to you a ditty that will fill you with surprise,  
Asus2 D A G D Asus2  
Concerning of a 'ranger bold, whose name it was Ben Hall,  
E5 C A E5 D Asus2  
But cruelly murdered was this day, which proved his downfall.

An outcast from society, he was forced to take the road,  
All through his false and treacherous wife, who sold off his abode  
He was hunted like a native dog from bush to hill and dale,  
'Til he turned upon his enemies and they could not find his trail.

All out with his companions, men's blood he scorned to shed,  
He oft-times stayed their lifted hands with vengeance on their heads.  
No petty, mean or pilfering act he ever stooped to do,  
But robbed the rich and hearty man, and scorned to rob the poor.

One night as he in ambush lay all on the Lachlan Plain,  
When, thinking everything secure, to ease himself had lain,  
When to his consternation and to his great surprise,  
And without one moment's warning a bullet past him flies.

And it was soon succeeded by a volley sharp and loud,  
With twelve revolving rifles all pointed at his head.

F G D A  
"Where are you, Gilbert? Where is Dunn?" he loudly did call.  
It was all in vain, they were not there to witness his downfall.

They riddled all his body as if they were afraid,  
But in his dying moment he breathed curses on their heads.  
That cowardly hearted Condell, the sergeant of the police,  
He crept and fired with fiendish glee 'til death did him release.

Although he had a lion's heart, more braver than the brave,  
Those cowards shot him like a dog-no word of challenge gave.  
Though many friends had poor Ben Hall, his enemies were few,  
Like the emblems of his native land, his days were numbered too.

It's through Australia's sunny clime Ben Hall will rein no more.  
His name is spread both near and far to every distant shore.  
For generations after this parents will to their children call,  
And rehearse to them the daring deeds committed by Ben Hall.

Please note:

These chords are meant as a guide only. We sometimes use different chords for different sections of a song or tune. We hope that this transcription will be enough to give the idea and get things started, but we would also like to encourage experimentation!

**An except from the conversation between collector John Meredith and Sally Sloane that precedes the performance of “The Death of Ben Hall” on the field recording.**

(J.M.) Tell me about Ben Hall.

(S.S.)...mother knew Ben Hall's sister in law - and she brought us into the world - and I saw the place where Ben Hall was killed - he lay down this day in ambush - near Forbes, on the Lachlan Plain to have a rest - and Coobung Mick always used to look after his money for him and he lay there this day waiting for Coobung Mick to bring food to him - instead of bringing food he brought the cops - and when the policemen come they surrounded him - and riddled his body with bullets - and Mrs Coobung Mick knew that her husband used to look after the money for Ben Hall and when she heard all these here shots going into poor Ben Hall she put her fingers to her ears and said -

“O My God poor Ben - that's Ben” - she said – “my husband has betrayed him!”.

She was carrying a child at the time and when the child was born it had 32 white spots on it and that child was exhibited through the length and breadth of Australia for show purposes.

Poor Ben Hall he had a property of his own - near Forbes - and all the bad deeds that used to be done used to be pinned on to poor Ben Hall - and he was yarding this cattle this day and they come on to him and took him into Forbes - for a trial for something that he didn't do - and all his cattle was left in the yard - instead of the police pulling the sliprails down and letting them out they was all left to perish - and when he come out after doing a month in gaol they were just carcasses in the yard.

(J.M.) - Didn't they burn his house down?

(S.S.) - Yes, they burnt his place down and his wife had betrayed him and went off with another man - and the blackfella – he took to the bush - and his gin.

(J.M.) – What did he do when he found his house was burnt down and his stock was destroyed?

(S.S.) - Well he took to the bush then - he turned out to be a highwayman when he found out what had happened - his wife had gone - his stock and everything was destroyed and he took on to bushranging...

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