

Come let me tell ye... by Lindsay Hannon & David Silk

David Silk speaking

These days, people come to Northumberland, and Cumbria. For the peace and quiet, and it can be hard to believe that this was a land once haunted by bloodshed. And if the old songs be true, by the supernatural.

Lindsay Hannon singing

The castle Thirlwall stands right proud, above the Tipalt burn
Its stones they hide goodly secrets, as ye soon shall learn
The family name, the story here, they both mean to enthrall
How the baron came from foreign wars laden with such a horde.

David Silk speaking

Of these barons of Thirlwall Castle much ink has been spilled.
Tales of such chivalrous gentleman as Sir Percival Thirlwall, who it is said, held high the king's banner even when his legs were from him hewn, which sounds most uncomfortable, but the Baron in our story is cut from a different cloth, a Reiver, and a Freebooter. He had much treasure piled up in his castle and the greatest of this treasure was a table of beaten gold, which came with a mysterious guardian, a grizzly dwarf

Lindsay Hannon singing

Was he who guarded Thirlwall's wealth an agent of the 'dell (devil)
His redcap coloured from the men, that he has left to bleed
Or could it be Old Nick himself, that wiley, muckle fiend

Poisoning the hearts of all and haunting good folks dreams.

David Silk speaking

Now it happened that Belted Will, the Lord of Naworth Castle, just down the road, hatched a plan to get his hands on the Baron of Thirlwall's treasure. And he put word out across the land that a group of merchants, laden with gold would soon be riding from Carlisle to fair Newcastle town unprotected and undefended. This was too much for the Baron of Thirlwall to resist, and he spoke then to his sworn brother, his closest companion Jock the Shuff of whom it was said that no man in Cumberland could ever beat him at the span. And he sent him with 12 of his best men to ambush these merchants, on their way and take the yellow gold from them.

Now when they saw them coming, their horses and saddlebags all laden, their cloaks hanging down, Jock leapt out and brandished high, his brand in the air.

"off your steeds, southrons" he cried, "... and geez ya stuff, or else feel cold steel"

But he was disappointed, for the riders threw back their cloaks and back and breastplates shone and they drew their swords and set about Jock the Shuff and his men. And soon, nine lay still, beneath the witch's tree and Jock was bound with 14 stone of Spanish iron and carried back to the dungeon towers of Naworth Castle, where he rested a night before he danced from the end of a rope by an oak in Brampton town.

When the Baron of Thirlwall heard that his best men were slain his wrath was great. He was enraged and swore that the marches would burn for the death of Jock, but Belted Will cared little enough for his anger.

“It is like the heat of a haggis” he called out, “hottest at the first puff.”

Lindsay Hannon singing

Belted Will rides swiftly out, with murder on his mind
The riches of Northumberland, that he intends to find
With tar barrel and reeking peat he flames the Baron's nest
The bitter wind from off the moor took care of all the rest

David Silk speaking

Now with the castle all a flame, Belted Will pursued the Baron of Thirlwall through the corridors and chambers of his castle, so close that he cut the skirt from his cloak with his sword, until the Baron came to the innermost Chamber of his tower and barred the door. There was the table of gold. There the grizzly dwarf that watched it, the fire flashed through the keyhole and filled the whole chamber with the reek of smoke.

Now the Baron begged the guardian to save him, and swore that he would give his body and soul if the dwarf would take him from this place, body and soul. The dwarf threw his arms around him, and dragged the Baron, and the table all down, down to the bottom of the well, and there the dwarf it was said, cast a spell, overall, to conceal the well from human sight, a spell that would only be broken by a widow's son.

As of the poor Baron's men, those who lived spent the rest of their days in the cold dungeons of Naworth Castle. As for the Baron himself, well, where he went cold was not one of his concerns.

Lindsay Hannon singing

After many years have past, the legend half forgot
A ploughman happily at work, finds the very spot
The ground beneath his very feet, it rings as if hollow
Thirlwall's wealth it's sure to be and riches to follow

David Silk speaking

Keen for the wealth but wary of watching eyes, the ploughman creeps back home and swears to return to the spot with shovel, pick, and axe to dig the treasure from its hole. But when he returns however hard he searches, all that day and all the next, for months, and years, till his life is sped, he can never again find the very spot.

Lindsay Hannon singing

Well good friends we gather here, the closing of our song
Over the graves of all concerned the shadows have grown long
Our legend started long ago, yet you yourself are here
Keep your eyes and ears open the treasures lying near

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