

The Holly Bears a Berry

Capo 4

Verse



Refrain



1. Now the holly bears a berry as white as the milk,
And Mary bore Jesus, who was wrapped up in silk:
Refrain:
And Mary bore Jesus Christ our Saviour for to be,
And the first tree in the greenwood, it was the holly.
Holly! Holly!
And the first tree in the greenwood, it was the holly!
2. Now the holly bears a berry as green as the grass,
And Mary bore Jesus, who died on the cross:
Refrain
3. Now the holly bears a berry as black as the coal,
And Mary bore Jesus, who died for us all:
Refrain
4. Now the holly bears a berry, as blood is it red,
Then trust we our Saviour, who rose from the dead:
Refrain

"The Holly Bears a Berry", also known as "The Sans Day Carol" or "The St. Day Carol" is a variant of the family of "A Virgin Unspotted" tunes.

This carol was so named because it was first transcribed from the singing of Thomas Beard in the 19th century in St. Day (also Sans Day, or St. They - named after a Breton saint venerated in Cornwall) in the parish of Gwennap, Cornwall.

It is included in the **Roud Folk Song Index** as #514.

A.L. Lloyd commented in the original album's sleeve notes:

Another spring carol, proper to the period between Passiontide and Easter.

In it the evergreen holly is celebrated along with the dying and resurrected god. In tradition this carol lasted longest in Cornwall. It shares some verses with the better known Holly and the Ivy.

It was recorded by The Watsons, Sandy Denny, Maddy Prior, The Chieftains, John Rutter and the Cambridge Singers and others.