

John Of Ditchford

Steeleye Span

In the spring of thirteen twenty two
Henry Felip and his son
Were riding home from Northampton
When they met with six bold robbers

Henry shouted to his son
"Take the money, boy and run"
So he's turned his horse to Courteenhall
For to raise the hue and cry

His father faced this ugly crew
But six to one, what could he do?
And when his son returned with help
He was too late to save him

He left his father where he lay
Through his tears to ride that day
And pursue the killers in their way
As they made off in the distance

Five of six, they swiftly caught
But one alone did slip their grasp
And to Wooten Church, he's turned away
And through her doors she's took him

Sanctuary was his claim
Sword and grief outside remain
Till the Coroner he quickly came
To hear the thief's confession

"I'm John of Ditchford", said the man
"I was there of six our band
And yes, we killed that nobleman
On the road to Stoke Bruerne"

"Do you now abjure the realm?
What's your meaning?", says young John
"You will leave this land and never return
Or your blood we will spill on her"

"Do you now abjure the realm?
I abjure it", says young John
"So to Dover you will straightway go
And the first ship you will take her"

He must reach that distant port
Without coin nor shoes nor friend
And stand in the ocean to his knees
And wait what ship would have him

They took from him all he had
Gave him sackcloth for to wear
And a wooden cross for him to hold
On the lonely road to Dover

He sets out upon the road
Cross in hand and heavy heart

They found him headless in a field
A mile away from Wooten