

Across the Sands

Words and Music: Nigel Harbron

Am G Am

Tra-vel-ling north from Lan-cas-ter, that Red Rose coun-ty town, You see the fell tops

G Am Am

of the Lakes, a place of great re-nown. But to reach those parts on foot or horse takes for

G Am Am G

e-ver and a day, Much qui-cker by the north-west-route 'cross the sands of More-cambe

Am Am C G Em

Bay. Fas-ter than a horse can run, Fas-ter than a horse can run,

Am G Em F

Fas-ter than a horse can run, In comes the tide.

Travelling north from Lancaster, that Red Rose county town,
You see the fell tops of the Lakes, a place of great renown.
But to reach those parts on foot or horse takes forever and a day,
Much quicker by the north-west route 'cross the sands of Morecambe Bay.

*Ch: Faster than a horse can run,
Faster than a horse can run,
Faster than a horse can run,
In comes the tide.*

For centuries this forlorn place saw travellers everyday.
While many safely crossed the sands, some perished on the way.
For river channels often change on their journeys to the sea,
And quick-sands lie in wait for those who wander carelessly.

Then came the fishermen with their carts to take their spoils away.
By day and night they chased the tide far out into the bay.
With rakes and sieves they worked the sands for cockle shells galore,
But whatever the size of the load they took, they'd be back next day for more.

Some time before the tide's return they'd plod back to the beach,
Anxious once more to leave the sands, their wives and homes to reach.
For the treacherous ways of this watery waste they fully understood:
There is no chance of winning through when surrounded by a flood.

In recent times, the work has changed, with gang-masters centre-stage.
Now teams of men work frantically to scrape a living wage.
And if they chance to miss the call as the tide looks set to turn,
A grave beneath the cloying mud is all that they will earn.



Pretty in their shells, but not so pretty out of them, cockles have been taken from the productive sands of Morecambe Bay for centuries. Unfortunately, in recent years cockle fishing has become an industry, and the only surprise about the disastrous events of February 2004 (when over twenty Chinese pickers were drowned) is that it didn't happen earlier - and hasn't happened since. Irritatingly, most of the cockles from Morecambe Bay finish up in France and Spain, countries which have just about exhausted their own cockle beds, and are now intent on doing the same to ours.

*Some time after writing this song, I discovered that Christy Moore had beaten me to it with **On Morecambe Bay**. His song is also in A minor, always a good key for miserable songs!*

