

Captain Courtney's Mistake

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We rode up to Highways farm
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!
 Thinking to do the smugglers harm,
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!
 For Highways was home to the Arthur gang,
 The slickest smugglers in all the land,
 Captain Courtney swore they would hang,
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!

We got to the farm just before dawn,
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!
 It looked like nothing was going on,
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!
 We searched the farm for a hiding place,
 Full of contraband to prove our case,
 And we made our way up to the attic space,
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!

In the attic a barrel we found,
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!
 'Tis contraband, I'll wager a pound!
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!
 The barrel was full of Jamaica rum
 Fresh from the Indies newly come,
 'With this evidence we'll have us some fun!
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!

But how to fetch the barrel away?
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!
 The Revenue wagon's up Fairwood way,
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!
 "You ride up and tell them to come,
 I'll sit here and look after the rum."
 On the barrel he parked his bum,
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!

But when I got back with the Revenue men,
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!
 We opened up the barrel again,
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!
 The barrel was empty, our spirits were low,
 No liquor was left for to put up on show,
 Just a hole drilled in from the floor below!
It was Captain Courtney's mistake!



A traditional story from Gower. During the Napoleonic War, there was more contraband landed on Gower than anywhere else along the Bristol Channel. The smuggling gang was led by William Arthur of Highways Farm, Pennard (near Fairwood Common). The farm is not far from a deserted bay nowadays called 'Brandy Cove'. The gang were almost impossible to catch, since most of the locals were in their pay, and difficult to prosecute since the local magistrates enjoyed cheap brandy as much as anyone else. One Customs Officer tried to catch the gang red-handed with incriminating evidence – it didn't work. It was in fact Captain Courtney's mistake.