

# **'Won't You Come to the Hills?': Community, Place and Folk Music in a Rural Northumbrian Parish 2016**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis presents the ways musician members of the small rural parish of Tarsset in Northumberland, England, construct and enact their sense of community and place through their musical practices. I consider myself a practicing folk musician, and therefore already occupying a relatively knowledgeable position within the field. This insight is complimented by a range of ethnographic methods, including depth interview, participant observation, and ethnographic filmmaking. The empirical data was coded using an adaptation of the framework analysis model.

In a novel way, the research establishes various themes pertinent to rural community and place studies, through the prism of Northumbrian folk music. Employing Ruth Liepins' (2000a) model for rural community, analysis chapter 4 develops an understanding of the role of folk music participation in engendering a sense of community belonging and meaning; the socialising functions and the significance of 'authentic' community voices; and the structures and spaces in which musical practices occur. The research also indicates ways in which musical practices can also inhibit senses of social inclusion.

Chapter 5 turns to ideas of rural place and landscape. Employing Keith Halfacree's (2006a) model for rural space, the chapter explores the ways folk music both connotes and detracts from a 'sense of place' through representations of rural locality. Again, the spaces in which music is practiced are explored, as are the associations between particular pieces and the Tarsset landscape. Finally, I turn to the notion of rural occupations, particularly shepherding, as an embodied form of participation with the Northumberland landscape and musical tradition.