

WHO TOLD HIM

The book's central defect is that it does not mark its sources at the point of use. This sheet does it for him, chapter group by chapter group.

Where	What kind of thing	Whose it is
Book I chapters I–II	Mixed: printed sources with some contemporary observation.	The classification is his own. The Shakespeare excursion is literary. The Devon and general remarks about the state of belief in 1880 read as first-hand.
Book I chapter III	Printed and traditional sources.	The Meddygon Myddfai legend has a manuscript tradition behind it and reaches him through print, not through a lake-side informant.
Book I chapters IV–V	Largely compilation.	The changeling remedies are the kind of material a collector gets from earlier collectors; no informant is named for any of them.
Book I chapter VI	Mixed, and the mixture is unmarked.	Elidurus is Giraldus Cambrensis, twelfth century, via print. Shuï Rhys carries a parish — St Dogmell's, Pembrokeshire — and reads as collected. They are printed side by side at the same weight.
Book I chapter VII	Traditional material plus printed airs.	The tunes and their legends belong to the Welsh musical literature; Shon ap Shenkin is a widely told tale-type, not a local report.
Book I chapter VIII	Edmund Jones, explicitly.	This is where Jones is introduced by name and described. Everything after this in Book II should be read with him in mind.
Book I chapters IX–X	Probably closest to his own collecting.	Old Betty Griffith and her gorse barricade is one of the very few named living informants in the volume, and the protective practices read as reported rather than compiled.
Book I chapter XI	Printed theory.	The realistic, Druidic and aboriginal-race theories were all in the literature; the chapter is a survey, not a finding.
Book II chapters I–IV	Substantially Edmund Jones, 1780.	The apparitions with names and parishes attached are his. So is the Philadelphia story, which is eighteenth-century and not, as the surrounding text implies, contemporary.
Book II chapter V	Jones, and the Trwyn material.	The Trwyn sprite is the best-documented case in the book precisely because it comes through a source that documented.
Book II chapter VI	Welsh literary and folk tradition, via print.	The Sion Cent cycle is literary; the Devil's Bridge story is international and not Welsh in origin at all.
Book II chapters VII–IX	Overwhelmingly Jones.	The corpse-candle, cyhyraeth and gwrach y rhibyn chapters are the densest material in the book and the most concentrated in one source and one county. This is the single most important attribution on this page.
Book III chapters I–IV	Largely Sikes himself.	Calendar customs he could attend and did: the New Year apple, Lent, midsummer, Christmas, the eisteddfod, the evening in Carmarthenshire. The Pontypridd ceremonies he watched — and dated as ancient what a living Welshman had begun about twenty-three years earlier.

Where	What kind of thing	Whose it is
Book III chapter V	Mixed, and the least attributed in the volume.	Bundling is attested elsewhere; his particular assertions about its currency in 1880 carry no informant at all, which matters more here than anywhere else in the book.
Book III chapters VI–VII	Sikes, with older printed matter for the plates.	The wedding and funeral chapters read as attended. Two plates are marked from an old drawing, which is Sikes doing exactly what the rest of the book fails to do — telling you where an image came from.
Book IV chapters I–V	Antiquarian literature, with some site visits.	Holy wells and inscribed stones already had a literature and he uses it. The passages that read as first-hand are the ones where he describes standing somewhere.

Two conclusions follow, and they cut in opposite directions.

Book II is not what it appears to be. The finest material in the volume — three chapters of death-portents that later scholarship confirmed — is largely one Independent minister’s collection, made in one county a hundred years earlier, to prove a point about the reality of spirits. It is excellent evidence for eighteenth-century Monmouthshire. It is much weaker evidence for Wales in 1880, which is what the book implies it is.

And Book III is better than it appears to be. The customs Sikes attended are the material he is least confident about and least likely to flag, and they are the only pages in four hundred where a modern reader is getting a first-hand witness. He under-credits his sources; he also under-credits himself.

From British Goblins by Wirt Sikes, Valice Classics 16. Free at valicepress.com/companion/british-goblins