

*Ding Dong Merrily on High*  
Music, 16th Century French Dance Tune  
George Ratcliffe Woodward, Lyrics, 1921

*"Ding Dong Merrily on High"* is one of those joyous Christmas tunes that you makes you want to get up and dance! It is often included in medleys of "French Carols". But, ironically, this song was not a Christmas carol in France, but a secular dance tune. It first appeared in print as *"le branle de l'Official"* in *"Orchésographie"*, a dance book written by 16<sup>th</sup> century French composer, Jehan Tabourot (1519–1593). The branle was a popular group dance, in which dancers held hands, formed circles, and then rotated according to various patterns.



In 1921, Englishman George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848–1934) married this tune to English verses of his own creation, which he then published in his *"The Cambridge Carol-Book: Being Fifty-two Songs for Christmas, Easter, And Other Seasons"*. Woodward loved to read older English poetry. For this song, he used archaic language that might fool a listener into thinking that the words were centuries old instead of decades.

Charles Wood harmonized the tune when it was published with Woodward's text in *"The Cambridge Carol Book."*

*Tull*

