Six Dukes Went a-Fishing

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Six dukes went a-fishing
Down by yon sea-side.
One of them spied a dead body
Lain by the waterside.

The one said to the other,
These words I heard them say:
"It's the royal Duke of Grantham
That the tide has washed away."

They took him up to Portsmouth,
To a place where was known;
From there up to London,
To the place where he was born.

They took out his bowels,
And stretched out his feet,
And they balmed his body
With roses so sweet.

Six dukes stood before him,
Twelve raised him from the ground,
Nine lords followed after him,
In their black mourning gown.

Black was their mourning,
And white were the wands, (staves of office)
And so yellow were the flamboys (torches, of course)
That they carried in their hands.

Now he lies betwixt two towers.
He now lies in cold clay,
And the Royal Queen of Grantham
Went weeping away.

In The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs . Collected by Percy Grainger, 1906 in Linconshire. It's sung by A.L. Lloyd on Great British Ballads not included in the Child Collection, Riverside/Washington

Strongest suggestion on the background is that the incident

refers to William de la Pole, first Duke of Suffolk who was murdered by political enemies & his body tossed on the sea-shore at Dover in 1450. This was mentioned in Shakepeare's Henry VI, Part II, Act 4. A broadside on the song appeared in 1690. AJS

AJS

apr96

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