

Freda Palmer

Leaffield Lass

(MTC375-6)

CD One:

1	<i>Up in the North</i>	3:00
2	<i>Daughter of Shame</i>	3:20
3	<i>A Miner's Dream of Home</i>	3:57
4	<i>Eighteen Pence</i>	2:57
5	<i>The Fox and Grey Goose</i>	1:51
6	<i>Home Sweet Home</i>	2:35
7	<i>Old King Cole</i>	5:27
8	<i>Oh What has Changed You</i>	3:50
9	<i>One of Our Streets</i>	2:12
10	<i>Put a Bit of Powder on it Father</i>	1:27
11	<i>The Week Before Easter</i>	1:26
12	<i>Chick Chick Chicken</i>	0:27
13	<i>Break the News to Mother</i>	3:10
14	<i>Billy Brown</i>	1:39
15	<i>A Little Bird built a Nest</i>	1:54
16	<i>The Mistletoe Bough</i>	4:10
17	<i>I Parted My Hair in the Middle</i>	4:46
18	<i>Teddy O'Neill</i>	2:13
19	<i>Frog he Would a Wooing Go</i>	2:22
20	<i>As I Was a Walking</i>	1:39
21	<i>Fathers got a Job</i>	0:30
22	<i>The Titanic</i>	3:23
23	<i>The Wandering Girl</i>	1:29
24	<i>If Those Lips parody</i>	1:05
25	<i>The Dumb Maid</i>	2:53

Total: 63:54

CD Two:

1	<i>Banks of Sweet Dundee</i>	1:44
2	<i>I Wish I Was Single Again</i>	2:42
3	<i>Little Cock Sparrow</i>	1:03
4	<i>Young Folks Old Folks</i>	2:10
5	<i>Three Jews from Jerusalem</i>	2:25
6	<i>After the Ball</i>	4:18
7	<i>Old Johnny Bigger</i>	1:22
8	<i>The Bailiffs Daughter</i>	2:05
9	<i>Jack and the Squire</i>	0:49
10	<i>Villikins and Dinah</i>	1:59
11	<i>Little Shirt me Mother Made for Me</i>	1:44
12	<i>A Man that's Done Wrong</i>	1:48
13	<i>Mother Caught a Flea</i>	0:16
14	<i>Your Faithful Sailor Boy</i>	1:12
15	<i>Good Company</i>	2:08
16	<i>What did You do in the War Daddy?</i>	2:07
17	<i>Needle Cases</i>	2:38
18	<i>A Group of Young Squaddies</i>	0:39
19	<i>I'll Sing of Martha</i>	1:33
20	<i>Oxford City</i>	2:27
21	<i>Ship that Never Returned</i>	0:55
22	<i>Maria Marten</i>	3:03
23	<i>Old Mammy Mine</i>	1:47
24	<i>The Ship I Love</i>	2:04
25	<i>The Warwickshire RHA</i>	2:13
26	<i>William and Mary</i>	1:35
27	<i>Young Williams</i>	4:43
28	<i>Hitler's Dream</i>	2:02
29	<i>Murphy's Little Girl</i>	6:43
30	<i>The Orphan Girl</i>	4:20
31	<i>A Dialect Story</i>	1:44

Total: 68:33

Freda Palmer was born in, and lived most of her younger life in, Leaffield, Oxfordshire. Later, she moved to nearby Witney, where these recordings were made.

From the age of eleven, she was employed as a glover ... making gloves, together with her mother at times, but mostly with her aunt, and it was from her that she learned most of her songs, as they sat across the table together, sewing their gloves.

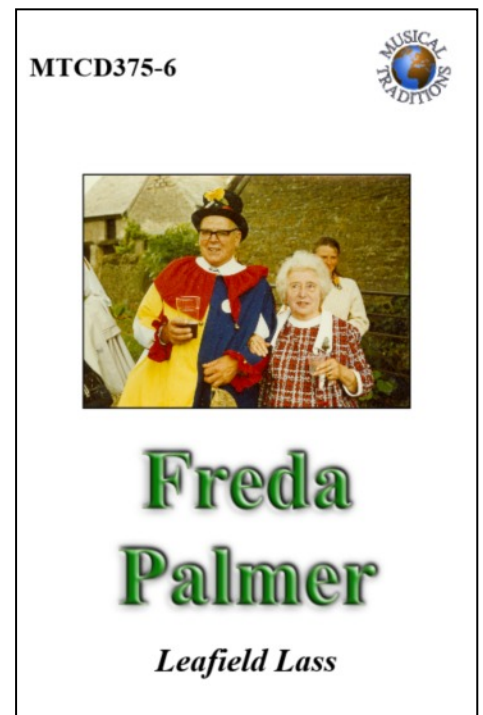
She had a phenomenal memory ... while raising six children she probably didn't have too much spare time for singing, and it was only in her later years that she was encouraged to visit folk clubs and festivals as a performer. But to have a repertoire of sixty or so songs, and to sing 35 of them off the cuff on *one* day when Alison McMorland visited her was quite an achievement ... not to mention reciting the 19 eight-line verses of *Murphy's Little Girl* without a stumble.

Everyone who knew her commented on her delightful, friendly personality, and the account of her life found in these pages shows that she was an almost unbelievably hard-working woman. The don't make 'em like Freda any more!

Rod Stradling - Spring 2018.



CD case cover



CD booklet cover

Introduction:

When I was writing the song notes for the recent MT Records publication *I Wish there was No Prisons* (MTC372) I noticed that Mike Yates had actually collected a good number of songs from Freda Palmer, as evidenced by the entries in Steve Roud's *Folksong Index*. So I set the 'Performer' field to "Palmer, Freda" and discovered that several other people had also recorded her. Thus, this pair of CDs came about. However, only one song not covered by other collectors was shown as having been recorded by Alison McMorland, so I contacted her to ask for a copy of her recording. Our subsequent email conversations revealed that she'd actually recorded lots of songs during her visit in the summer of 1975 - but that Steve only knew about the four published in Alison's book *The Funny Family* (1978). So - for other collectors - you need to let Steve know about your collecting work, or the rest of the world will remain in ignorance of it.

Alison had the advantage of recording Freda at least three years ahead of Steve Roud and Gwilym Davies - and she was in much better voice at that time. Alison also had a nice Uher stereo tape recorder, so her recordings are of good quality. This has meant that what I thought would be primarily a Mike Yates project has turned out to be primarily an Alison McMorland project.

The biography part of this booklet will be slightly different to most others in the MT range, in that it isn't written by just one person. In this case, none of the contributors felt able to write that entire section. I didn't want to delay this one any more than necessary, so I asked each of them to give me a shorter, personal account of their meetings with Freda Palmer.

Freda Palmer

5.5.1908 - 11.4.1991

Freda was originally from the village of Leafield, Oxfordshire, and her maiden name was Pratley. Some checks show that Leafield was full of Pratleys from the mid 1700s onwards (and possibly before).

Her parents were Claude William Pratley (b. Chipping Norton 15.6.1873 - d.1958, Chipping Norton, aged 84 years) and Edith Pratley née Franklin (1873-1964). They were married on 19.10.1896. Claude was shown as a 'gardener' and Edith as a 'glover'.

In the 1901 census Claude was described as a 'labourer' and Edith as a 'machine Glover'. They were living in Leafield with their daughter Muriel, aged 3 years, and their son Hubert, aged 2 years.

In the 1911 census they were living in Chipping Norton, with Muriel and Hubert and their other children, Mabel, aged 7 years, and Freda, then said to be aged 2 years. Freda was born on 5th May, 1908. She died on 11 April 1991.

Freda Pratley married George Palmer in September 1932.

Note that Chipping Norton District encompassed Leafield and good part of the surrounding Forest villages.

Derek Schofield writes:

I found the attached in the Thursday *Newsletter* at the 1975 Sidmouth. The title is *Focus on Freda Palmer*.

'Freda', as everyone is learning to call her, was invited to the festival as a result of the work that she has done with Mike Yates and Ken Langsbury on her songs and recitations (see article in *Traditional Music*, no. 1 for details of this). She is a charming, beautifully turned out lady who has lived for 21 years in Witney, Oxon, and was born in the village of Leafield, Oxon. As one of a large family, she started in the glove out-working industry when young, along with her aunt, who was already over 60. She learnt a number of her songs from this aunt and sang them while working the machine (sometimes breaking off to bicycle up to 12 miles a day to collect and take back urgent samples). One of her brothers was sent into service when he was 15, but was unhappy, and ran away to enlist in the army for World War I. This brother taught her, among others, *The Warwickshire RHA* and the monologue *The Kaiser's Dream* (now *Hitler's Dream*).

As a young girl she joined the Witch wood [Wychwood] Players, Bob Arnold's troupe, and remembers vividly the village halls and garden parties at which they performed songs and sketches. And the family would dance together, any sort of dance that came up, with her brother on harmonica.

Freda is clearly delighted with the response that her songs and recitations are getting here. As she herself says, her own family (she has had 6 children) are not going to carry on the songs, so she is very glad that tapes are being made. She is also rather pleased to point out that, so far, she hasn't repeated a single item of her repertoire, except, as a special request, *The Fox*, despite being kept so busy that she has only had time to see a very few of the other items - though she did see, and enjoy, the French stilt dancing.

Her own way of life has, like everywhere else, been affected by changes such as housing estates. For example, she says, when she goes out for a walk at night now she can't be sure of knowing who it is she meets, unlike earlier when one always could, despite the absence of street lighting, etc. But she is still fully involved with the village life of her area; on the Wednesday after the end of the festival, she is invited to the W.I. at Northleigh about 2.5 miles from her home. She thinks she will probably give them *The Volunteer Organist* as it is very popular with W.I.s. It seems a happy arrangement all round - Freda says "I've never had such a good holiday in all my life!" And we are delighted to have her with us. Thank you, Freda!

Ken Langsbury writes:

I will be eternally grateful to Mike Yates for suggesting I go and see a friend his, Freda Palmer. He told me he had collected a lot of songs from her and he was sure that she would like a visit from me.

Freda was such an easy person to get on with. Three years younger than my mother but very much of mum's generation and had the same philosophy and view of life.

Freda told me that during the 1940s together with Bob Arnold (Tom Forrest in *The Archers*), and Bill Dore who lived at Leafield, formed a concert party and would travel around the neighbouring countryside performing in village halls and the like. I asked if she would like to do that again? She said yes. So we went to see Bill Dore. He said no. His performing days were over but he sang several songs while we were there. I learnt *It's My Bath Night Tonight* off of him; a song that Freda heard me sing so often in the years to come that she started singing it herself. I suspect Bill wrote it himself. Incidentally, Martin Brinsford bought Bill's lovely old drum kit off him which he played in the early days of the Old Swan Band.

Freda and I did many gigs together including the Sidmouth Folk Festival in 1975 (when the photo with Mervyn Vincent was taken), *NTMC* in Nottingham and the *Empress of Russia* in Islington - that was a very memorable night with Bob Davenport as MC. The journey to the gig was notable as well - on the motorway it was blowing a gale. I was driving my little black Austin A35, Freda in the passenger seat and 'Son' Townshend, (Bampton Morris Clown) in the back. All of a sudden a rowing boat came bowling towards us, end over end. It had obviously come untied from the top of someone's vehicle. Both Freda and 'Sonner' became very excited, exclaiming that they hadn't expected to see a rowing boat going the wrong way up the motorway. Neither of them thought we were in any sort of danger and thought it very funny. It looked like it was made of fiberglass and in fact the wind took it right over the top of my car. It made me anxious, I can tell you. Years later I met Sonner at Bampton and the first thing he said to me was about the rowing boat we met on the motorway!

Freda was a good friend and I value the time I spent with her. When we did clubs I usually did a short first half and she would finish the evening with a longer set. I loved her wonderful songs and her singing. She was very entertaining and her good nature came across to her audience.

Keith Chandler writes:

Despite rejecting most aspects of the folk revival by the mid-1970s, I continued to attend a number of folk festivals each year, even though (other than the National at Loughborough) there was usually little in the way of the older tradition to be heard. When at Sidmouth Folk Festival for the first time, in August 1972, I quickly discovered the Ballad Shop, an egalitarian singaround held a couple of times each day in a dark and grimy vacant shop, and moderated by the amiable Fred Austin, who was a well-known elder statesman of the folk scene in that part of Devon. During the middle of the decade he decided to retire, and the management asked myself and others to share hosting duties. By this date I was well able to mentally and aesthetically distinguish between the attitudes and performance techniques of, say: George Belton and Nic Jones; of Bob Cann and Ian Dunmur; of Francis Shergold and Roy Dommett, and had begun to reject the modern revival out of hand.

It was at the festival in August 1975 that the Leafield singer Freda Palmer was booked as a guest. I had not heard of her but was immediately captivated by her unpretentious style, and was delighted when, on several occasions, she visited 'my' Ballad Shop, and we seemed to get on well. On these visits egalitarianism flew out of the window, as I encouraged Freda to sing far more often than one song from each singer around the room dictated. In fact, I remember one 'folkie' berating me for this action, saying that she was no better or different than any other singer present. You may be certain that this received the contempt it fully deserved, and I continued to do as I pleased.

The following year, aged 27, I registered as a mature student at Lancaster University, where I majored in history. It turned out to be less stimulating than I had hoped, and, in fact, it may have been (in failing memory) that I was considering abandoning the whole affair towards the end of the first year and returning to the printing trade. What saved the day was the discovery within the academic structure of a little-regarded department with the liberating designation 'Independent Studies'. In that context it was possible to create one's own degree scheme - much like doing an M.A. at the undergraduate level - the expected dissertation of 80,000 words counting for two-thirds of the final grade.

I had started morris dancing in 1972, and it fulfilled a role in my life which I've never quite been able to explain or understand. I heard Roy Dommett give a series of talks on the history of the morris at Sidmouth Folk Festival in 1973, which gave a great deal of context to my otherwise purely choreographic (and, of course, social) personal pleasures. In a desultory way I started looking a little deeper into the historical background. The Independent Studies option seemed, then, to be a perfect opportunity to extend my researches and get paid for it in the bargain (at that time there were no Student Loans and hence no repayment, with Staffordshire County Council covering the fees and my personal grant during all three years). I was able now to travel south and examine old newspapers, look for material in record offices and libraries, and begin to interview active and retired dancers in the surviving 'old' sides with a long historic pedigree. Still active were teams at Bampton (three discrete sets), Abingdon (a second, Hemmings family-based team had just been created), Headington Quarry and Chipping Campden.

I'm not certain just when it happened, but Freda had forged a relationship with Albert 'Son' Townsend, a veteran Bampton dancer of half a century, and they were now living together in Witney. As a happy result of rekindling a friendly dialogue during the summer of 1978 they invited me to come down from Lancaster, stay with them and use their house as a base for my research trips. 'Son' also offered to take me over to Bampton and meet up with Arnold Woodley and others. So it was that, a couple of months later, I was first welcomed into their home. One of the first things we did was walk down the road, where half a dozen houses away lived Frank

Woodley, Arnold's older brother, who had danced with the Bampton set for just a couple of years during the early 1930s. Much pleasant conversation was had with Freda and 'Son' over the course of several days. She told me of learning a good number of her songs from her aunt, when as a youngster she contributed to the family economy by making gloves in their Leafield cottage, and singing was a route to relieving the boredom of repetitive activity. I learned of her activity between the wars with a 'concert party' led by local personality Bob Arnold, who played Tom Forrest on *The Archers* for many years. I never did formally record her song repertory, knowing that others had already done so, and that any attempt would undoubtedly place our relationship on a very different footing. Most exciting to me was the descent she traced from Henry Franklin, one of two Leafield dancers active during the middle years of the nineteenth century who had supplied historical information and choreography to Cecil Sharp in the immediate pre-first war period.

After a few delightful days I bade goodbye and returned to Lancaster, full of warm memories and delighted with the historic haul from my first intense interviewing trip. Some time later I stayed with them again and once more it was a great honour and a real pleasure. It was on this occasion that I wallpapered their bathroom as a small 'thank you' gesture. Graduating in the summer of 1979 I decided that I would move to Oxfordshire in order to collect as much material as might have survived among families of pre-1900 morris dancers. And so, towards the end of the year I found a shared bungalow on a farm above Crawley, a mile outside Witney, from which I could cycle forth and knock on doors in my quest for historic information. My research took me often to Oxford Public Library, searching for references among their collection of newspapers. This involved a cycle ride into Witney to get the bus, and, conveniently, Freda and 'Son' lived just a hundred yards from a bus stop. With their consent I often left my bicycle behind the house while off on my jaunts. Sometimes I would see them while dropping it off or collecting it and stay for a cup of tea, sometimes not, but friendly contact was maintained. When my girlfriend of the time got a shared house in Bampton, just two doors down from *The Eagle*, at that date headquarters for the morris team led by Francis Shergold, I was over the moon. During 1980 I was often in Bampton, and we sometimes walked out to the 'folk club' held on Friday evenings in one of the bars of *The George and Dragon*. Arnold Woodley would play his harmonica (though rarely his fiddle), his friend Ken Adams (who carried the cake for the Woodley team) and others would regale us with songs, dancer Robin Connaughton delivered monologues, and, once in a while, Freda and 'Son' would come over from Witney and contribute.

And so, the all-too-brief encounters with Freda and 'Son' continued for a number of years, although when they relocated to a bungalow in Dark Lane, a more out of the way part of Witney and nowhere near a bus stop, I saw them less often. I would still call in on occasion and was always greeted in a friendly manner with a cup of tea. And, of course, I saw 'Son' out fooling with the morris dancers many times, and Freda sometimes came along for the ride - the greatest distance covered undoubtedly being a tour of the north-eastern United States in August, 1982 (one photograph reproduced here shows her in an American street). During the late 1980s her health was gradually deteriorating and ultimately she needed a wheelchair to move around. But she continued to come over to Bampton on the Spring Bank Holiday Monday (though less frequently), and it was on one of those occasions that I saw her last.

A note on social context: Freda spoke to me (and others) of various cultural activities which took place in mid 20th century Leafield (which even now is a relatively isolated rural village). Being single-mindedly obsessed with documenting the old morris dancing I never followed up on those community experiences at the time. More recently I have devoted more effort to these aspects of village life, and several octogenarian Leafield women of my acquaintance, contemporaries of Freda's children, have reminisced in brief about the musical activity of their youth. One recalled that Freda used to come down when they held concerts at the village hall. Several spoke about the social dancing which went on; Leafield on Friday evenings, and Finstock (the next village along) on Saturday. Bands appear usually to have consisted of piano, drums and accordion (presumably piano accordion - specifics are not recalled after so long - 'You're talking about more than sixty years ago.'). No accordion players have been named so far, but Bill Dore (whom Mike Yates also recorded) often played piano; while Danny Spiers and Bob Wiggins are remembered as drummers. Sometimes the bands were fronted by a singer, with Nora Harris ('from Banbury way') being the only one remembered to date.

Thanks to Derek Schofield for hammering my failing memories of Sidmouth Festivals of almost half a century ago into something approaching the truth.

Alison McMorland writes:

(With additions from Mike Yates, in brackets)

Freda Palmer was a name I first heard mentioned in 1974 at Sidmouth Festival where I was running daily sessions of songs and singing games for children. She wasn't to appear until the following year at this International Festival but already her name was on people's lips as someone to look out for - a recently discovered traditional singer who had learnt her songs as a youngster whilst sitting 'making gloves' alongside her singing aunt, an alluring description. Needless to say in 1975 at the Sidmouth Festival - where again I was running daily sessions of songs and singing games for children in the Lower Methodist Hall - I was genuinely pleased to meet Freda Palmer and hear her sing both informally, probably at the Volunteer afternoon sessions, and formally in her spots as an invited Festival guest at the Drill Hall or Beach Store. I remember her as an older, smallish lady, neatly dressed who sang in a straight forward way with no 'airs or graces'. She sang songs that were new to me, giving no introductions, or very little, and which needed another hearing on my part to appreciate. She also sang songs that entertained and made the audience laugh whilst they were joining in on choruses of things like:
Young Folks Old Folks everybody come,
To our little Sunday School and we'll have lots of fun
Bring your toffee apples, sit down upon the floor And we'll tell you Bible stories
that you've never heard before.

For my part on hearing Freda sing *The Fox and the Grey Goose* for a second time during her stint at Sidmouth gave me the chance to listen more closely to the words as well as its arresting melody, and then when she followed it with *A Little Bird Built a Warm Nest in a Tree* I recognized songs as sung to and by children. This area of personal research began for me in 1970, developing in 1972 to win a film award commissioned by Yorkshire Arts Society, to produce *Pass It On, childhood songs and games*. Based on my field recordings of older generations spanning 80 years, and showing the children of the day playing current games the narrative script traced how these were passed on, generation to generation.

I was lucky enough to talk with Freda and asked if I could visit and record her singing these songs at her home in Witney? perhaps in the autumn before the nights drew in? which she agreed to. I was living in York at the time and suspected it could be possible to do it in a day from there, down the M40 or the A1? spend the afternoon over a cup of tea with her, then back home early evening - for after all, I only wanted to record these children's songs!

In the Autumn of 1975 I took this 400 mile round trip, equipped with my second hand Uher stereo recording machine. I was still paying this off in instalments to the York Sony Shop that did trade-ins for customers who were upgrading to the latest equipment. This journey was new for me as I was visiting a part of England I had never travelled before. I had been told to look out for the Fosse Way, part of the ancient Roman roads system, and sure enough detouring my way towards my destination, an unmistakable straight, expansive road stretched into the distance. It was flanked by peaceful hedges and fields showing evidence of the harvest already complete on this late September day. The scene I remember vividly, and thinking then what a stunning part of England - not fully realising I was also heading to a part of Oxfordshire renowned for its long history of glove making.

I must have been given good directions for I had no difficulty in finding where Freda lived. I had the expectation of seeing only her, so I was mildly surprised to find a man already there who she introduced as her friend Son and I was given the impression he was there to give her moral support, but he also seemed very at home and comfortable in the armchair. Whilst setting up the microphones and tape recorder, I explained why I wanted to record her 'children's songs' as I called them and, if she agreed, for them to be published in a future book I had been asked to compile for Ward Lock Educational (*The Funny Family* 1978).

This was agreeable to Freda who seemed keyed up and before I had even done a sound check or level she unexpectedly launched into singing *Three Jews from Jerusalem* causing me to adjust things hurriedly. In response to my questions of who did you learn that from? and when did you learn it? her answer was brief "I don't know; I've always known that one" - a phrase I was to hear more than once throughout the long afternoon. She then went quickly into *The Fox and the Grey Goose* followed by *A Little Bird Built a Warm Nest in a Tree* which Son volunteered to remark on as "a nice child's song that". After singing *A Little Cock Sparrow sat on a Tree* Freda, for the first time, spoke of her aunt "I suppose we used to sit and sing together ... I can't really remember who taught me, but these songs like, children's songs, she'd learn those at school, so they go back all those years ... a hundred years. She'd be 60 odd when I went making gloves with her. Oh, if she lived she'd be 120-odd now, more than that."

Freda later remembered two little rhymes from her childhood which seemed to wind up what she wanted me to hear as 'children's songs':

Oh, Mississippi-o, got a little baby o,
Dresses it in calico riding on a donkey.

(Mike Yates has heard the verse "Oh Mississippi -o" etc, sung as a children's ball bouncing song in Whitehaven, Cumbria.)

To be followed by:

One two three, me mother's got a flea
Put it in the teapot to make a cup of tea
When she put the water in the flea was on the top
When she put the lid on the flea went pop.

(Which I'm sure plenty of older readers will remember from at least 70 years ago.)

Up until now Freda would sing spontaneously and I would show my appreciation and ask about the song in a conversational manner - a pathway to tease out information or nudge for more songs. Freda became more relaxed and began to tell about her life ... when and how she learnt her songs, the family history of gloving, the hardships, what it was like living in the small rural village of Leafield 'the windy high ground between Witney and Charlbury'.

As part of my contribution to the CD's booklet notes I include edited transcripts of Freda's oral recollections. You can hear her speech patterns in the telling of some of her life experiences and how, where and from whom she'd learnt her songs.

FREDA REMEMBERS ... songs with childhood friends ... as a teenager:

This was before I left school we used to walk from Leafield to Shipton Church every Sunday about ... oh, I think from 10 to 20 of us girls, and then the choirboys used to walk back with us. Then they'd got to turn round and walk back to Shipton after that (laughs) but we used to sing all the way back, all these silly songs that we used to sing coming home, that's when I learnt...

As I was a going down one of our streets
I met a poor boy with no shoes on his feet
He'd plenty of money bit little to spare
So I took to him to fruit shop
And bought him a pear

Once they was practising in the Old George at Leafield, and some man walked in. 'Oh' he said, 'it sounds beautiful outside', so they all got up put their instruments down to go out to listen (laughs). That's true, Alison! And they went carol singing

and if the wind was the wrong way ... it used to blow it out, then you've got to light it up again. You've got to boil the water before you can start washing. You've got to wash it and then boil it and then rinse it and no mangles, no nothing, you wrung it out by hand. I had six children and ... well I don't know how I done it, no washing machine or anything like that. Well we wouldn't have much ... not for ... I used to set off sometimes to ... bike, one o'clock in the morning for samples... to get extra money like, to keep them clothed nice, nicely, then at Christmas to earn extra money for extra toys.

Father's got a job and he won't go
Maria won't go and the fire won't go
On our divan he came there in a van
He's got a six-foot brokersman and he won't go
The hens won't lay, the cock won't crow
The lodger in the attic and the clock won't go
Her mother's got a pimple on the tip of her nose And old Jerusalem and that won't go

FREDA REMEMBERS ... living in Leafied ... family names ... stories:

I could go out ... when you wouldn't see a hand in front of you, but you could hear anyone coming, I'd know who it was. You knew with the steps, you could tell everybody in the village, though you couldn't see them when you passed them you couldn't, cos there was no lights in the village in those days ... and there was no fighting or rape in those days. You had to know everybody ... and they were related ... the Pratleys like, I was a Pratley before I was married, but I mean there were so many Pratleys.

But we weren't relation to the other Pratleys, so they called me Freda Claude because my father's name was Claude. I had to be called Claude, Freda Claude ... or else they wouldn't have known, if I'd have said Freda Pratley ... There was so many Pratleys, Ferrymans, Townsends, you see ... and the postman well ... say there was C or F, it could be Ferryman ... might not have had the same names but the same initials that the postman, he wouldn't have known, the post place itself had to write what they were called, Bob-a-Lads and Jack-a-Lads and all these names or else they wouldn't have known where to take the letters. Oh, there was lots of that, and ... the Quit a Quots and ... Puddles, there was a lot of Puddles. Years ago, how silly people were, they all had different names. I mean, there were so many Shaylers, Pratleys, Ferrymans, Franklin Collicutts and you had to call them ... like, well, as I said, Bob-a-lad, Jack-a-lad, there was Frank Nosey, they all had different names.

Here's a true story, this gentleman drew up one day, this man that was working with my husband, he said to him "Can you tell me where Mr Frederick Wiggins, Witney Lane, lives?" He said "I don't know a Mr Frederick Wiggins", so the car went off. Well, his boss come up just after, he said "Hi Billy", he said "There was a gentleman just gonna come up and ask where Frederick Wiggins, Witney Lane, live." "Well" he said, "You damn fool, you be Frederick Wiggins." "Well", he said "why in the bloody hell hadn't he said Paddle?" He only knew himself as Paddle Wiggins but he was Frederick Wiggins and he didn't know.

There was two brothers, they used to live in this long row of houses, and every Saturday night he used to come down the road like, as all us kids we used to follow him ... and if his brother was ... he was abed he'd get him up to have a fight ... one was called Decky and the other Fordy ... he used to stand outside and he used to say "Get up, Decky you bugger!" and he used to have to get out of bed to fight and there was a little field in ... not much bigger than this, and they used to fight 'til one of them dropped down. And this ... Decky then, his wife was dead and he'd got one daughter and two sons.

Well, I used to go about with the daughter. She was then about 13 or 14 and we belonged to the GFS ... that's the Girls' Friendly Society. Well, on this Monday there was a woman come up to my place. She said "Oh did have a good hiding last night" she said. Someone went and told her dad that she'd been out when she hadn't, like she was abed, and he ... they had what they called palley? Like straw beds. And he pulled them out from under her and he threshed her, and so I waited 'til I knew he'd gone to work. I shall never forget opening the door. I started crying, she cried, she was black and blue all over, both her eyes was black. She said "I'm gonna run away" but she ... given me a present ... like it was a heart-shaped pincushion with 'with love' in the middle and she'd got it all packed up in a box and all to give me. She said, "And if I can't get anywhere" she said, "I shall do away with myself." I said, "Don't be silly", I said, "you belongs to the GFS" I said, "you go to them in Oxford. They'll look after you". And she lived where there was a lane that you could cut across to Ascot Station, and the forest was the other side. She said, "I'm going down and with a case", she said "and the neighbours will think I'm going to the station" but she said, "I'm going through the forest and out the other way". And she did and got a lift and they got her a job in London and all. Oh, she wouldn't have been quite 14 between 13 and 14. Oh, must have thrashed her, she hadn't done a thing. The neighbours told him she'd been out. Women had hard lives in them days ... they used to say the men didn't care...

Her repertoire of songs says it all...revealing underlying emotions. Freda spontaneously sang the following song after telling the above stories:

I once loved a young man as dear as my life,
and oftimes he's told me he'd make me his wife
But now to some other his love it has flown,
and he's left me to wander the streets all alone
So I'll pick up my baby and contented I'll be,
and I'll try to forget him as he forgot me.

Then I'll go to my mother with a tear in my eye,
and I'll say dearest mother will you take me in?
She'll scorn me and she'll slight me,
she'll turn me from her door,
she'll tell me to wander as I've wandered before.

So all girls take warning take warning by me,
Never trust in a young man as I trusted him
They'll kiss and caress you and say they'll be true,
But the very next moment they'll bid you adieu
So I'll pick up my baby and contented I'll be,
And I'll try to forget him as he forgot me.

These accounts of Freda's childhood, gloving at home with her mother, sisters and then her aunt who sang constantly, show the family's musical inheritance. The songs she learned from the Leafied community: where she went to school and church, mingled and sang in the three pubs, went to dances; got married and started her family - all the time gloving - and as a working Mum bringing up a family of six ... to my eyes a heroine of the everyday. I feel very fortunate to have met her and to have made these recordings in 1975. At the time, of the four reel-to-reel tapes I made, I only listened to the first one - for the children's songs. The other three tapes? Well they lay in a suitcase in the attic, recovered in February 2017 when trying to fulfil Rod's request for one song. In amazement I listened and noted down 35 songs along with her many recollections. I am pleased for these to see the light of day on these CDs dedicated to Freda Palmer.

The Songs:

Roud numbers quoted are from the databases, *The Folk Song Index* and *The Broadside Index*, continually updated, compiled by Steve Roud. Currently containing almost half a million records between them, they are described by him as "extensive, but not yet exhaustive". Copies are held at: The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, London; Taisce Ceol Duchais Eireann, Dublin; and The School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh. The Folk Song Index is also accessible on-line at: <http://library.efds.org>. They can also be purchased direct from Steve at: 38 King Street, Somersham, Cambs PE28 3EJ, UK. E-mail: sroud@btinternet.com

Child numbers, where quoted, refer to entries in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* by Francis James Child, Boston, 1882-98. Laws numbers, where quoted, refer to entries in *American Balladry from British Broadside* by G Malcolm Laws Jr, Philadelphia, 1957.

In the following Song Notes, all Musical Traditions Records' CDs are referred to only by their Catalogue Numbers (i.e. MTCDxxx), as are all Topic Records' CDs (i.e. TSCDxxx) and Veteran CDs (i.e. VTxxx). The names of all other CD publishers are given in full.

The majority of these recordings were made by Alison McMorland, in the summer of 1975, and by Mike Yates, between 1972 and 1975. All the recordings were made in Freda's home in Witney, Oxfordshire.

CD 1:

1 - 1. **Up In The North** (Roud 582, Laws P3)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 15 Oct, 1972.

Up in the north, there lived a brisk couple,
Where young men and maiden a-courting do go.
Always a-courting, but never talked of marrying,
Until this young girl she began forth to say:
"Young man, young man, what is it you mean?
Of courting I'm weary, I'm resolved to get married,
Or else from your company I must refrain."

"And then I must own, I do love you dearly,
But that's for to marry I don't feel inclined.
When a man he gets wed, his joys are all fled,
He's free from all liberty, bound down towards slavery,
So whilst I am single I'll wish you good night."

"Oh, there's one thing, dear John, I should like to ask you.
That's if you're married first, ask me to your wedding
And if I am before you, then I'll do the same."
So the bargain was made, when up stepped a young jade.
He step-ed up to her, he intended to have her.
He was a ship-carpenter's son by his trade.

So she wrote John a letter, a kind, loving letter,
To come to her wedding On the ninth day of June.
To wait at her table, instead of a better,
To wait at her table all on the bridegroom.
When this letter he read, it made his heart bleed,
In sorrow he mourn-ed, his tail was soon turn-ed.
"I'm a fool, I'm undone, I have lost her indeed."

So he saddled his horse, rode off to the station,
Thinking to meet with his true-lover there.
But when he got there, he was sadly amaze-ed,
To see this young girl so highly surmounted,
Which caused from his eye to fall many a tear.
"If I had of a-known you'd been had so soon,
I would not have tarried, but you I'd have married.
So jump up beside me and leave him alone."

"Oh no, my dear John, for I've much better choos-ed,
And can't you remember what you said to me?
When a man he gets wed, his joys are all fled,
He's free from all liberty, bound down towards slavery.
So whilst you are single, you'd wish me goodnight."

Up in the North, or, *No Sign of a Marriage* as it is called in the Southern Uplands of the United States, appeared on several early 19th century broadsides and chapbooks, although it has seldom been encountered by collectors in England. The Hammond brothers noted a fine Dorset version, *Down in the West Country*, in 1907, while Alfred Williams found it sometime before 1914 at Brize Norton, only a few miles from Mrs Palmer's home. In Scotland and North America it has been more popular and most of Roud's 47 entries refer to these countries - however, Freda's is the only sound recording of the song ever made in these islands.

1 - 2. **Daughter of Shame** (Roud 27914)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

Through the dark streets with a babe at her breast
Hurried a woman in savage distress
She stopped where the dark river cold waters glide
Her babe to throw in the dark flowing tide.
She cursed the child's father who led her astray.
Footsteps approaching, she hurries away
Oh, cruel mother, how could you do so?
Her babe she had left in the cold bitter snow.

Chorus:
Left like a dog on the doorstep to die
Left to the mercy of some passers by
Thrown on this world without any name
Poor little innocent daughter of shame.

In scenes of gay pleasure and scenes of delight
Her mother oft tries to forget that dark night
When she left her child at a gentleman's door
And prayed in her heart she might see it no more.
The child to a beautiful girl has grown
Loved where she dwells like a child of their own
But little she thinks that the good lady found
Her lying one night in the snow on the ground.

Chorus:
An old woman haggard and withered with years
For charity calls every day there in tears
To get a fond glimpse of her child she will try
She weeps with delight as she sees her pass by.
And now in the workhouse through illness she lies
She sends not one word to her child ere she dies.
She's happy I'm sure, and they'll ne'er let her know
That her mother deserted her out in the snow.

Chorus:
A song previously unknown to Steve Roud, so it has a new number ... and there's nothing we can tell you about it.

1 - 3. **A Miner's Dream of Home** (Roud 1749)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

It's ten weary years since I left England's shore
In a far distant country to roam;
How I long to return to my own native land
To the friends and the old folk at home.

Last night as I slumbered I had a strange dream
One that seemed to bring distant friends near,
I dreamt of old England, the land of my birth,
To the heart of her sons ever dear

Chorus:
I saw the old homestead and faces I love
I saw England's valleys and dells
And I listened with joy, as I did when a boy,
To the sound of the old village bells
The log was burning brightly
'Twas a night that should banish all sin
For the bells were ringing the old year out
And the new year in.

While the joyous bell's rang, swift I wended my way
To the cot where I lived when a boy,
I looked in the window, yes there by the fire
Sat my parents - my heart filled with joy.

The tears trickled fast down my brozen brown cheeks
As I gazed on my mother so dear
For I knew in my heart, she was raising a prayer
For a bot who she dreamt was not near.

Chorus:
At the door of the cottage, we met face to face
'Twas the first time for ten weary years
Soon the past was forgot and we stood hand in hand
Father, Mother and wanderer, in tears
Once more in the fireplace the oak log burned bright
As I promised no more would I roam

And I sat in the old vacant chair by the fire
And sang the dear song Home Sweet Home

Chorus

Words & music Will Goodwin and Leo Dryden (1891). Despite being popular on the Halls, this song has not been much collected - only 22 Roud entries - although it was found all over England, plus single instances in both Scotland and Ireland. This was probably the result of the early collectors only being interested in what they thought of as 'folk songs'.

Recordings by Bob Hart (MTCD301-2); Fred Whiting (VTC6CD) and Sam Friend (Helions Bumpstead NLCD 14) are the only ones available on CD.

1 - 4. **Eighteen Pence** (Roud 2798)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

I took my girl to a ball one night
'Twas called the social hop
She stood until the crowd passed out
And the music it had stopped.
Then to a restaurant we went
The best one in the street
She said she wasn't hungry
But I'll tell you what she eat -
Mutton chop, chicken's crop, oysters by the score
Sparrow grass with apple sauce, still she hollered "More"
Oyster stew, biscuits too, her appetite was immense
When she called for pie I though I'd die
For I had but eighteen pence.

"You said you wasn't hungry
And didn't care to eat."
Said she "I've money in my clothes"
Said she "I can't be beat."
She took it in so cosy, she got an awful tank
She said she wasn't thirsty
But I'll tell you what she drank -
A glass of gin, whisky skin, it made me shake with fear
Some ginger pop with rum on top and a barrel of Laker's beer
Bass's ale, gin cocktail, she ought to had more sense
When she called for more I fell on the floor
For I had but eighteen pence.

"You said you wasn't hungry
And didn't care to eat"
Expecting every moment
To be kicked into the street.
She said she'd bring her family round
Some day and have some fun.
I paid the man my eighteen pence
And what do you think he done? -
He broke my nose, tore my clothes, hit me in the jaw
Give me a prize of a pair of black eyes
And with me wiped the floor
He grabbed me by the trousers
Nearly threw me over the fence.
Take my advice, don't try it twice
If you have but eighteen pence.

She called me over the telephone
And talked to me so sweet,
Saying "Take me down to Richmond
I'm hungry and want to eat.
I'm over here in Islington waiting to be fed."
But before I shut that telephone off
This is what I said -
I'm sick in bed, nearly dead, me eyes are both in black
I've got no snout, me teeth are out, and all my bones are cracked.
My back is sore, me clothes is tore
I've got too much good sense
If I'd taken that drive I shouldn't be alive
And I've lost my eighteen pence.

A song which uses the same story line as several others - a girl who eats far more than the protagonist can afford, and the obvious results. The American singer Harry 'Mac' McClintock - best known for singing & recording *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* - recorded this as "Fifty Cents" for Victor Records on 5th September, 1928. It remains unissued.

This plot seems to have been far more popular in N America than England; we have only four named singers out of Roud's 47 entries. It's probably an American song, since the earliest date in Roud is Spear & Dehnhoff (New York) / White, Smith & Co. (Boston / Chicago) in 1883 (and the eighteen pence is fifty cents) whereas the earliest English entry is 1964.

1 - 5. **The Fox and the Grey Goose** (Roud 131)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 1972.

A fox jumped up on a moonlight night,
The stars were shining and all things bright.
"Ha-ha", said the fox, "it's a very fine night

For me to go through the town-di-o
For me to go through the town."

The fox when he came to yonder's stile
He p(ri)cked up his ears and listened awhile.
"Ha-ha", said the fox, "it's but a short mile,
From this to yonder town-di-o
From this to yonder town."

The fox when he came to the farmer's gate,
Who should he see but the farmer's drake.
"I love you well for your master's sake,
But I long to be picking your bones-i-o
But I long to be picking your bones."

The grey goose ran around the stack,
"Ha-ha", said the fox, "you're very fat,
You'll do very well to ride on my back,
From this to yonder town-di-o
From this to yonder town."

The farmer's wife she jumped out of bed
And out of the window she popped her head.
"Oh husband, oh husband, the geese are all dead,
The fox has been through the town-di-o
The fox has been through the town."

The farmer he loaded his pistol with lead,
And shot the old rogue of the fox through the head.
"Ha-ha", said the farmer, "I think you're quite dead,
No more you will trouble the town-di-o
No more you will trouble the town."

The Fox and the Grey Goose is a universally known song - at least in the version popularised by Burl Ives - although, surprisingly, Freda had never heard of the latter version until Mike Yates mentioned it to her. Freda's line "*From this to yonder town*" seems to suggest a non-English origin for her version; "*From here to yonder town*" would be more usual. Maybe this one has Irish origins?

A verse of the song appeared in *Gammer Gurton's Garland* (1810) and it is one of the songs that Sir Walter Scott listed as being a favourite of his childhood. Many Victorian broadside printers included it in their catalogues, and collectors have found it being sung in many English counties - thus the 205 instances in Roud, though almost half of these are from the USA. Only Alfred Williams' collection from 'Wassail' Harvey of Cricklade, Wilts, and Janet Blunt's collection from Charles Harris Blunt, of Adderbury, are from Freda's part of the country; the majority of English versions come from either Sussex or the south west.

Harry Burgess sings a Sussex version on *The Voice of the People* (TSCD668), as does Bob Copper (TSCD673T), Cyril Biddick sings a Cornish one (Rounder 1741) and an American version, based on the Burl Ives rendition, can be heard sung by E C Ball of Virginia on *High Atmosphere* (Rounder CD 0028).

1 - 6. **Home Sweet Home** (Roud 13449)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

"So you're going to leave the old folk, Jim,
Today you're going away
You're going among those city folks to dwell"
Thus spoke a fond old mother to her boy one summer's day
"If your mind's made up that way, I wish you well

"But the old folks will be lonely,
They will miss you when you're gone
The birds won't sing so sweet when you're not nigh.
If friends you have not any, in your pockets not a penny,
There's a mother always waiting you at home sweet home."

Ten years' later to that village came a stranger no-one knew
His clothes were old and ragged that he wore
The little children laughed at him as down the lane he walked
But at last he stood before a cottage door.

He gently knocked, no sound he heard,
He thought "Could she be dead?"
But at last a voice well known to him he heard.
It was the voice of Mother dear, the voiced he loved so well,
And she said "Thank God, they've brought us back our Jim."

If sickness overtakes you and old companions forsake you
As through this world you wander all alone.
If friends you have not any, in your pockets not a penny,
There's a mother always waiting you at home sweet home.

Written by John Howard Payne, with music by Henry R Bishop in 1823. As with *After the Ball*, it would seem that Freda's is the only sound recording from the oral tradition in the UK, and Roud has only one other out of his 167 entries, from Floy Huskey in Missouri, USA.

1 - 7. **Old King Cole** (Roud 1164)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

Old King Cole was a merry old soul

And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe and he called for his light
And he called for his fiddlers three.
Now every fiddler has a fiddle
A very fine fiddle has he
"Oh fiddle diddle dee, diddle dee"
Said the fiddler "Oh what harmony
There's none so rare as can compare
With boys of harmony

Now old King Cole was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe and he called for his light
And he called for his fluters three.
Now every fluter has a flute
A very fine flute has he
"Oh flute tiddley oot ,tiddley oot" says the fluter
"Fiddle diddle dee, diddle dee"
Said the fiddler "Oh what harmony
There's none so rare as can compare
With boys of harmony

Now old King Cole was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe and he called for his light
And he called for his painters three.
Now every painter has a brush
And a very fine brush has he
"Oh slap it up and down, up and down" says the painter
"Oh flute tiddley oot ,tiddley oot" says the fluter
"Fiddle diddle dee, diddle dee"
Said the fiddler "Oh what harmony
There's none so rare as can compare
With boys of harmony

Now old King Cole was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe and he called for his light
And he called for his tailors three.
Now every tailor has a stitch, a very fine stitch has he
"Oh stick it in and out, in and out" says the tailor,
"Slap it up and down, up and down" says the painter
"Oh flute tiddley oot ,tiddley oot" says the fluter
"Fiddle diddle dee, diddle dee"
Said the fiddler "Oh what harmony
There's none so rare as can compare
With boys of harmony

Now old King Cole was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe and he called for his light
And he called for his barmaids three.
Now every barmaid has a pull, a very fine pull has she
"Oh pull it, pull it, pull it, pull it," says the barmaid
"Stick it in and out, in and out" says the tailor,
"Oh slap it up and down, up and down" says the painter
"Oh flute tiddley oot ,tiddley oot" says the fluter
"Fiddle diddle dee, diddle dee"
Said the fiddler "Oh what harmony
There's none so rare as can compare
With boys of harmony

Now old King Cole was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe and he called for his light
And he called for his butchers three.
Now every butcher has a block and a very fine block has he
"Oh slap it on the block, on the block" says the butcher
"Pull it, pull it, pull it, pull it," says the barmaid
"Stick it in and out, in and out" says the tailor,
"Slap it up and down, up and down" says the painter
"Oh flute tiddley oot ,tiddley oot" says the fluter
"Fiddle diddle dee, diddle dee"
Said the fiddler "Oh what harmony
There's none so rare as can compare
With boys of harmony

Now old King Cole was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe and he called for his light
And he called for his jugglers three.
Now every juggler has some balls, some very fine balls has he
"Oh balls in the air, in the air" says the juggler
"Oh slap it on the block, on the block" says the butcher
"Pull it, pull it, pull it, pull it," says the barmaid
"Stick it in and out, in and out" says the tailor,
"Oh slap it up and down, up and down" says the painter
"Oh flute tiddley oot ,tiddley oot" says the fluter
"Fiddle diddle dee, diddle dee"
Said the fiddler "Oh what harmony
There's none so rare as can compare
With boys of harmony

Now old King Cole was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe and he called for his light

And he called for his farmers three.
Now every farmer has a cock, and a very fine cock has he
"Oh cock-a-doodle-oo, doodle-oo" says the farmer
"Oh balls in the air, in the air" says the juggler
"Oh slap it on the block, on the block" says the butcher
"Pull it, pull it, pull it, pull it," says the barmaid
"Stick it in and out, in and out" says the tailor,
"Oh slap it up and down, up and down" says the painter
"Oh flute tiddley oot ,tiddley oot" says the fluter
"Fiddle diddle dee, diddle dee"
Said the fiddler "Oh what harmony
There's none so rare as can compare
With boys of harmony

Now old King Cole was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe and he called for his light
And he called for his parsons three.
Now every parson has a book and a very fine book has he
"May the Lord have mercy on your soul" said the parson
"Cock-a-doodle-oo, doodle-oo" says the farmer
"Balls in the air, in the air" says the juggler
"Slap it on the block, on the block" says the butcher
"Pull it, pull it, pull it, pull it," says the barmaid
"Stick it in and out, in and out" says the tailor,
"Slap it up and down, up and down" says the painter
"Flute tiddley oot ,tiddley oot" says the fluter
"Fiddle diddle dee, diddle dee"
Said the fiddler "Oh what harmony
There's none so rare as can compare
With boys of harmony

Although Roud has 100 entries, and 20 sound recordings of this song, only one seems to have ever been published, that by Martin Gorman on TSCD 657.

1 - 8. Oh, What has Changed You? (Roud 23269)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

While walking down a street one night
I heard a mournful cry;
A girl was weeping bitterly
Her lover stood close by
She cried "Oh do not leave me"
As the tears rolled down her face.
"Oh do not leave me" cried the girl,
"For you know I'm in disgrace"

Chorus:
"Oh what has changed you? Do you forget
How once you loved me the first time we met?
When we were lovers ere my downfall
Now I'm rejected and sneered at by all.

"Once you said you loved me before I knew a care
Once you used to kiss my bonny face and hair
But now you wish to cast me off
And leave me in my shame.
Oh do not leave me", cried the girl,
"For you know I'm in disgrace"

Chorus:
The young man turned ... and he said "Now, will you go?"
And before anyone could interfere struck her a dreadful blow.
Just then a carriage passing by, beneath the wheels she fell
And as they raised her up she sobbed out scarcely none could tell

Chorus:
The life blood streaming down her face
As she lay there in the snow
"Oh bring my babe to me" she cried
"One moment ere I go"
And as they brought her babe to her
She clasped it to her breast
Crying "Oh God bless baby dear
When my poor soul's at rest."

Chorus:
And as the man was standing there
Who had caused her all her pain
She forgave him all the wrong he'd done,
Kissed her poor babe, and died.
The stern policeman and the crowd
Were every one in tears
And as I walked down the street
These words rang in my ears

Chorus:
Another rarity; Roud has just 13 entries, mostly from broadsides, with just two sound recordings from Canada.

1 - 9. As I Was A-Going Down One of Our Streets (Roud 1407)
Recorded by Steve Roud in 1978.

As I was a-going down one of our streets
I met a poor boy with no shoes on his feet
I'd plenty of money but little to spare
So I took him to a fruit shop and bought him a pear

Chorus:
Toodle-ay, toodle-ay
The chorus is bland I could sing it all day
Toodle-ay, toodle-ay
God bless the poor working man

Two lovely black eyes had poor old Uncle Jim
The boys had been throwing tomatoes at him
"Tomatoes don't hurt you" I said with a grin
Oh don't they, by Christ, they were stuffed in a tin

Chorus
I once met two beggars all tattered and torn
They were eating the grass off of our front lawn
I said "If you're hungry just step round the back
Where the grass is much longer and thicker than that"

I once took a note to poor old Mrs Brown,
She was having a bath and she couldn't come down.
I said "Oh by golly, just slip on a tick"
And she slipped on the soap and, by Christ, she came quick

I once bought a hen in town yesterday
And thought on the morrow an egg it would lay
But when I awoke, oh I had such a shock
The hen said "You can't have an egg, I'm a cock."

I dreamt I did die and to Heaven did go
"Where do you come from?" they wanted to know
I said "I'm from Witney." St Peter did stare.
He said "Step in quick, you're the first one from there."

This fairly rare song - only 30 Roud entries - was also sung in Suffolk by both Geoff and Percy Ling, Jumbo Brightwell and Arthur Drewery, usually with the titles like *All Tattered and Torn* or *The Boy With No Shoes*. Actually, it's not so much a song as a collection of those simple jokes that occur all over the English lower classes' cultures.

The other named singers are scattered all over England, from Co Durham to Sussex, and there are a couple of entries each from Scotland, Ireland, Australia and the USA. Recordings by Percy Ling (MTCD339-0), Jumbo Brightwell (Neil Lanham NLCD3) are available on CD.

1 - 10. Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father (Roud 10671)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

My father in a raffle once he won a lovely duck
And he kept it in a rabbit hutch 'til Sunday just for luck.
On Sunday to the bakehouse he took this duck with pride
To get it cooked so nice and brown before he went we cried;
Put a bit of powder on it Father
Put a bit of powder on it do
Put a bit of powder on it Father
Let me beg of you
For the neighbours if they smell it
They'll want to summons you

So put some eau de cologne on his old trombone
And put a bit of powder on it do
My mother went to a music hall and father stayed at home
The baby woke while she had gone and filled the house with roar
But father nursed it on his knee and bathed the kid as well
And as he put his nightie on we all began to yell

Put a bit of powder on it Father
Put a bit of powder on it do
Put a bit of powder on it Father
Let me beg of you
For the baby won't stop crying
Dear Daddy 'til you do
So slap it on nice in the same place twice
And put a bit of powder on it do

A popular music hall song from the singing of Billy Williams - 'The man in the velvet suit' - an Australian who came to London in 1901. He was a prolific recording artist who died aged 37 years in 1915. During the period 1908-09, Williams recorded this song on no fewer than five occasions - it was issued, variously, on Aco, Homochord, Edison Bell, Pathe, Diamond, Regal, Pelican and Zonophone and, hence, became very popular.
However, it doesn't seem to have remained in the oral tradition to any degree. We only know of two other instances - Walter Pardon sings a much fuller version on MTCD3056, and Paul Marsh recorded it from Bob Mills of Winchester, Hants, in 1980 and published it on Forest Tracks FTC 6025.

1 - 11. **The Week Before Easter** (Roud 154)
Recorded by Steve Roud, 27 Feb, 1978.

When I saw my love all to the church go
The bridegrooms and bridemaids all cut a fine show
And I followed after with my heart full of woe
To see how my false love was guarded.

The parson that married them so loudly did cry
"Now all who forbid it I'll have them draw nigh".
I thought to myself "Good reason have I"
But I'd not the heart to forbid it.

Dig me a grave, both large, wide and deep
And strew it all over with flowers so sweet
That I may lay down and take a long sleep
And that's the right way to forget her.

When I sat down to dine nought could I eat
For I loved her sweet company far better than meat
I loved her sweet company far better than meat
Although she was tied to some other.

This is a pretty popular song, with 195 Roud entries - some 58 of which are sound recordings - from all over the English speaking world (except the USA, strangely), with England and Scotland each accounting for about a third of the total, while Ireland boasts only 18 entries. *The Week Before Easter* seems to be the preferred English title and *False/Forsaken Bride/Lover* the Scots. In fact, I had always thought that these two songs were actually considered by experts to be separate entities despite sharing a number of verses and images. The Irish titles are all different.

Other versions on CD include: Lizzie Higgins (MTCD337-8); George 'Pop' Maynard (MTCD309-10); Danny Brazil (MTCD345-7); Seamus Ennis (MTCD356-7); Sarah Makem (MTCD353-5); Harry Burgess (TSCD665); Maggie Murphy (VT134CD); Gordon Hall (Country Branch CBCD095); Gordie Hanna (*The Fisher's Cot* CD) and Duncan Williamson (Fife) - Kyloe 101.

1 - 12. **Chick, Chick, Chick, Chick, Chicken** (Roud 27913)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

Chick chick chick chick chicken
Lay a little egg for me
Chick chick chick chick chicken
I want one for my tea
Oh I haven't had an egg since easter
And now it's half past three
So chick chick chick chick chicken
Lay a little egg for me.

Written by Americans Fred Holt / Thomas McGhee / Irving King, and recorded by several performers in the US in 1926.

1 - 13. **Break the News to Mother** (Roud 4322)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

While the shot and shells were screaming
All on the battlefield
The boys in blue were fighting
Their noble flag to shield.
Came a cry from their brave captain
"Look boys, our flag is down.
Who'll volunteer to save it from disgrace?"
"I will," a young lad shouted,
"I'll bring it back or die!"
Then ran into the thickest of the fray,
Saved the flag, but gave his young life,
All for his country's sake.
And they brought him back and softly heard him say

Chorus:
"Break the news to Mother,
You know how much I love her;
Tell her not to wait for me,
For I'm not coming home.
But say there is no other
Can take the place of Mother,
Kiss her dear sweet lips for me,
And break the news to her."

From afar, a noted General,
Who'd witnessed that brave deed,
"Who saved our flag; speak up my lad,
'Twas noble, brave indeed."
"Here he lies, Sir" cried the Captain,
"But he's singing very fast."
Then he slowly turned his head to hide a tear.
The General, in a moment
Knelt down beside the boy
Then he gave a cry
That touched all hearts that day
"It's my boy, my brave young hero;
I thought you safe at home."

"Forgive me Father, for I ran away."

Chorus.

Written by Charles K Harris in 1897 and sung by a whole host of music-hall performers. Harris was an American who wrote more than three hundred songs, and was one of the early pioneers of Tin Pan Alley, where he was known as 'The king of the tear jerkers'. Unsurprisingly, this song was as popular in North America as in Britain.

It seems that the only English CD versions available are from: Bob Hart (MTCD301-2); George Dunn (MTCD317-8).

1 - 14. **Billy Brown** (Roud 3354)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 1974.

Billy Brown was a worn-out clown
And a careful clown was he.
He'd saved enough to open a pub,
Somewhere in Kensal Green.
You never could forget the tricks by which
He earned his daily bread.
And now and then, when the fit came on,
He'd stand upon his head.
All the people shouted out, "Oh, my".
All the people they did stare.
For there was Brown, he was upside down,
With his legs sticking up in the air.

Now the nearest neighbour to old Brown,
Was a widow, Mrs Birch.
He proposed to her. She answered "Yes",
So they toddled off to church.
"Will you love and obey this man?"
The worldly parson said.
She blushed and screamed, for there was Brown
A-standing on his head.
The parson gave a scream, and shouted out "Oh, my"
And all the people they did stare.
For there was Brown, he was upside down,
With his legs sticking up in the air.

A-twelve months after a child was born,
To the great delight of Brown.
It was the image of himself
And a regular little clown.
Before the child was six weeks old
It scrambled out of bed,

And to the nurse's great surprise was standing on his head.
The nurse she gave a scream and shouted out "Oh, my",
As she fainted away in the chair.
For there was young Brown, he was upside down,
With his legs sticking up in the air.

The song is clearly from the Music Halls, where singer Harry Fragson recorded a song called *Billy Brown of London Town* in 1909 (issued on either Pathe 5104 or 5333) which is likely to be the same song, and Will Bint sang *Brown Upside Down*, which almost certainly is - although it could equally, we suppose, be another title for *The Old Dun Cow*.

Mike Yates recorded this song from Mabs Hall in the 1980s as *Old John Brown* (VT115CD), as did Ian Russell from Arthur Howard, of Hazlehead, Yorkshire, who had this as *Old Jepson Brown* on the LP *Merry Mountain Child* (Hill & Dale HD 006).

1 - 15. **A Little Bird Built a Warm Nest in a Tree** (Roud 13706)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

A little bird built a warm nest in a tree
And laid some blue eggs in it, one, two and three
And very much pleased and delighted was she
And very much pleased and delighted was she.

She spread her soft wings over them all the day long
To warm and to guide them, her love was so strong
And her mate sat beside her and sang her a song
And her mate sat beside her and sang her a song

One day the poor birds were all crying for food
So out flew the mother, away from her brood.
Then up came some boys who were wicked and rude
Then up came some boys who were wicked and rude.

They tore the warm nest down away from the tree,
The little ones cried but they could not get free.
And so they all died away - one, two and three
And so they all died away - one, two and three.

And when back again the poor mother did fly
Oh then she set up a most pitiful cry.
She mourned a long time then she lay down and died
She mourned a long time then she lay down and died.

This song appears to be unique to Freda Palmer. She uses a shortened version of the tune of *The Mistletoe Bough*.

1 - 16. **The Mistletoe Bough** (Roud 2336)
Recorded by Alison McMorland in 1978.

(spoken) This Lovell, Lord Lovell he lived there and when his daughter got married, it comes in the song, she wanted to play hide and seek. And she went first and they sought her and sought her and she was never found, and they used to say... 'The old man weeps for his fairy bride' but she'd been and hid in an oak chest and when they opened it there was just her shroud ... That is a true, really true song.

The miseltoe hung in the castle hall
The holly branch hung on the old oak wall
The baron retainers were blythe and gay
Keeping their christmas holiday.
The baron beheld with a father's pride
His beautiful child, young Lovell's bride
While she with her bright eyes seemed to be
The star of that goodly company
Oh oh the miseltoe bough
Oh oh the miseltoe bough

"I'm weary of dancing now" she cried
"Here tarry a moment, I'll hide, I'll hide.
And Lovell be sure thou art the first to trace
The clue to my secret hiding place."
Away she ran and her friends began
Each tower to search and each note to scan,
And young Lovell cried "Oh where dost thou hide?
I'm lonesome without thee my own dear bride"
Oh oh the miseltoe bough
Oh oh the miseltoe bough

They sought her that night, they sought her next day
They sought her in vain 'til a week passed away
In the highest and the lowest and the loneliest spot
Young Lovell sought wildly but found her not.
And years flew by and their grief at last
Was told as a sorrowful tale, long past.
When Lovell appeared the children cried
"See the old man weep for his fairy bride"
Oh oh the miseltoe bough
Oh oh the miseltoe bough

At length an old chest that had long lain hid
Was found in the castle. They raised the lid.
A skeleton form lay mouldering there
In the bridal wreath of a lady fair.
Oh sad was her fate in sporting jest,
She'd hid from her lord in the old oak chest.
It closed with a spring and her bridal bloom
Lay withering there in the living tomb
Oh oh the miseltoe bough
Oh oh the miseltoe bough

Spoken - and that is the truth Minster Lovell that is, the ruins are still there.

Clearly, Freda believes that this is a true account of an incident which took place in the nearby village of Minster Lovell - although it was actually written by Thomas Haynes Bayly (1797-1839), who also wrote the words of *Home Sweet Home*. This has been extremely popular throughout southern England and the USA and appears in a number of popular song books. It relates well to the novels of Sir Walter Scott and the general Gothic Novel movement. Roud has 153 versions, almost all from printed sources, with only 26 recorded examples, almost all from England. One must assume that the element of pastiche in the song (trying hard to seem much older than it actually is) meant that the earlier English collectors ignored it (for they surely must have encountered it), since it appears only in a Thomas Hardy manuscript and in Henry Burstow's book listing his own songs - and much else - *Reminiscences of Horsham* (1911).

Walter Pardon (MTCD305-6); George Townshend (MTCD304-5) and Will Noble (Village Carols VC 009) are the only CD publications.

1 - 17. **I Parted My Hair in the Middle** (Roud 27917)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

I used to be bashful and shy
For fast living I didn't care
But now I'm a bit of a dog you can tell
By the way that I've parted my hair.
They told me to lead a gay life
A life that was dashing and free
So I made up my mind I would do something rash
Just to show what a nat(?) I could be
So I parted my hair in the middle,
In the middle, in the middle
Now when I leave my hotel
Everyone follows me, dogs as well.
If a girl gives to me the glad eye
I smile and I say 'fiddle diddle'
I smoke some brown paper without being ill
Since I parted my hair in the middle.

Now when I get my fighting blood up
I make a blancmange shake with fear.
One evening two navvies I saw in a fight,
There was murder about, it was clear.
One jumped on the other one's chest
Then somebody cried "Look at that.
They're killing each other, do stop them at once"
So I flung off my coat and my hat.
And I parted my hair in the middle,
In the middle, in the middle
"Someone try to stop that fight,
You are the fellow", I murmurs "Right"
So I went up to those brutal brutes
And cried "Stop!" But they said "Fiddle diddle"
And as I stepped between them one picked up a brick
And he parted my hair in the middle.

Our bedroom last night caught on fire
The flames were all round me in bed
I thought to myself 'here's the chance of my life
Just to show them how I keep my head'
I got up and first had a wash
Then shaved and without any rush
I put a clean collar on then tied on my tie
And picked up the comb and the brush
And I parted my hair in the middle,
In the middle, in the middle
Then quite calmly I strolled out
Everyone cheered me and gave a shout
They shouted "There's presence of mind"
But the wife said "oh fiddle-dee-liddle
You've still got your nightie on." I said "Well I know
But I've I parted my hair in the middle."

Last night with a girl on the Strand
I had an appointment and so,
As I'm a little bit spoony on her,
In my Sunday best I did go.
I got her a nice bunch of flowers
From the dustbin just behind the back street
And as I stood in front of the looking glass
To make my appearance complete
I parted my hair in the middle,
In the middle, in the middle
Then I noticed our tom cat
Washing his face on the front door mat
He carefully curled his moustache
And his left eye at me he did twiddle
Then I knew he had got an appointment as well
'Cos he parted his hair in the middle.

As we went out sailing abroad
We passed the Cape of Good Hope
Some real dirty weather we struck all at once
I'd have washed it but I had no soap
The lightning it flashed overhead
On deck everybody did swarm
The lightning it flashed and the hurricane blew,
In fact I've not seen such a storm
Since I parted my hair in the middle,
In the middle, in the middle
All at once the captain cried,
"The ship's leaning over upon one side."
He shouted "She's springing a leak"
"Spring a leak" I said, "fiddle diddle.
The reason she's leaning on one side is this
I've not parted my hair in the middle."

Written in 1913 by the very prolific songwriting team of Worton David and C W Murphy, and sung by George Formby. That said, it's a surprise that it's not better known today.

1 - 18. **Sweet Teddy O'Neil** (Roud 5207)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

I've seen the mud cabin he's danced his wild jig in
A neater mud cabin that ever was seen
Considering he's used to keep poultry and pigs in
I'm sure it was always kept elegant clean.
But now all around seems sad and all silent
All sad and all silent - no piper, no reel.
Not even the sun through my window shines clearly
Since I lost my own darling sweet Teddy O'Neill.

He said 'twas to better his fortunes he went roaming
But what is the gold, to the joy I could feel?
If he'd only come back and be honest and loving
So promised my own darling Teddy O'Neill.
I nveer shall forget when the big ship was ready
The time it had come for my love to depart.
I cried like a culin and said "Goodbye, Teddy"
With a tear in my eye and a stone at my heart.

I drempt last night back-a-rest(?) of my dreaming
I'd die if my thoughts would come truly to pass

I dremp't as the tears down my pale cheeks were streaming
That Teddy was courting another fair lass.
Oh did I not wake with a weeling and wailing
The thought of my love was too much to conceal
My mother cried "Nora child, what is your ailing?"
But all I could answer was "Teddy O'Neill"

Sweet Kitty O'Neil was sung on the Halls by Tony Pastor (1832-1908), and this could be the same song with the gender reversed for a female singer. Roud lists 53 instances, all but four of which relate to printed sources. Of these four sound recordings, none appear to have been published.

1 - 19. **A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go** (Roud 16)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 10 June, 1977.

A frog he would a-wooing go
Hey ho said Roly
A frog he would a-wooing go
Whether his mother would let him or no
With a roly poly gammon and spinach
Hey ho said Anthony Roly

So off he sat with his opera hat
Hey ho said Roly
And on the way he met with a rat
With a roly poly gammon and spinach
Hey ho said Anthony Roly

Soon they came to Mouse's hall
Hey ho said Roly
And there they did both knock and call
With a roly poly gammon and spinach
Hey ho said Anthony Roly
"Pray Mrs Mouse are you within?"
Hey ho said Roly
"Yes, kind sir, I'm sitting to spin"
With a roly poly gammon and spinach
Hey ho said Anthony Roly

So as they sat down a merry-making
Hey ho said Roly
A cat and his kittens came tumbling in
With a roly poly gammon and spinach
Hey ho said Anthony Roly

The cat she sank with the best of the crowd
After the kittens they pulled the little mouse down
With a roly poly gammon and spinach
Hey ho said Anthony Roly

Then Mr Frog in a terrible fright
Hey ho said Roly
He picked up his hat and he wished them goodnight
With a roly poly gammon and spinach
Hey ho said Anthony Roly

Mr Frog he was coursing over the brook
Hey ho said Roly
A lily white duck came and gobbled him up
With a roly poly gammon and spinach
Hey ho said Anthony Roly

So that is the end of one two and three
Hey ho said Roly
The rat, the mouse and the little froggie
With a roly poly gammon and spinach
Hey ho said Anthony Roly

This children's song was but the remaining stub of a satirical ballad which probably dates back at least to the mid-sixteenth century. Sigmund Spaeth has a note claiming that the original version was supposed to refer to François, Duke of Anjou's wooing of Elizabeth I of England. Evelyn K Wells, however, suggests that the original may have been satirically altered in 1580 when it was recorded in the register of the London Company of Stationers, as this would have been at the height of this unpopular courtship. But the Wedderburn text, which at least anticipates the song, predates the reign of Queen Elizabeth by nine years, and Queen Mary by four. So, if it refers to any queen at all, it would seemingly have to be Mary Stuart.

The Frog and the Mouse has a remarkable 765 Roud entries, mostly from North America, although over half of them refer to printed sources. Only about 60% of the entries carry a date (the earliest being 1851), so it's reasonable to suggest that none of the named singers would have had any idea of what the ballad was originally about. There are 62 entries for England, and only 22 Scottish and 11 Irish ones.

Cecilia Costello (MTCD363-4) had a fragmentary text of this normally rather longer children's song, known all over the anglophone world, which goes by dozens of different titles - almost all of which mention a frog and a mouse - although her song doesn't mention a frog at all. Other recordings: Martha Hall (KY) on *Mountain Music of Kentucky* Smithsonian-Folkways SF CD 40077; both Jean Ritchie (Ky) and Seamus Ennis (Ireland) on *Jean Ritchie Field Trip* Greenhays GR726. Also John Alexander Brown's 1939 Library of Congress recording from Mississippi (tune only) can be heard on Document DOCD-8071.

1 - 20. **As I Was A-Walking** (An S-O-N-G) (Roud 965)

Recorded by Mike Yates, 1974.

As I was a-walking one morning in May,
I met a fair damsel to sigh and to say,
"My love he's gone from me
And showed me false play,
It was down in the meadows
Among the green hay."

The very next time that I did him see,
He vowed and declared he'd be constant to me.
I asked him his name and he made this reply,
"It is T-I-M-O-T-H-Y."

"My father's possessed with
Ten thousand or more,
And I am his daughter and his only heir.
Not one penny in portion, he vows and declares
If I marries to Y-O-U my dear."

"Oh, that's for your fortune, love,
You never mind,
I'll make you a husband both loving and kind.
So off to the church, love, come let us prepare,
Never mind your F-A-T-H-E-R."

So off to the church the very next day,
And home to her father without more delay.
"Dear hon-or-ed father I tell unto you,
We are M-A-R-R-I-E-D."

And then the old man he began for to swear,
"You've married my daughter, and my only heir.
But since it is so, I have a new son,
You are W-E-L-C-O-M-E."

To our knowledge this is only the third time that *As I Was a-Walking* has been collected in England. Tony Wales heard Mrs Powell of Portslade, Sussex, sing it - and he recorded it, too. The version noted by George Gardiner from Alfred Stride in Southampton in 1907 was printed in Frank Purslow's book *Marrowbones*, under the title *An S-O-N-G*, and Purslow adds, "The humour of this song is not immediately apparent until one realises that each line of the first two verses is 'lifted' from other folk songs, and that there is a liberal sprinkling of quotes and allusions in the remaining verses."

1 - 21. **Father's Got a Job** (Roud 13703)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

Father's got a job and he won't go,
Maria won't go and the fire won't go
On our divan he came there in a van
Is a six foot broker's man and he won't go.

The hens won't lay, the cock won't crow,
The lodger in the attic and the clock won't go
And mother's got a pimple on the tip of her nose
And oh Jerusalem and that won't go.
This song appears to be unique to Freda Palmer.

1 - 22. **The Titanic** (Roud 27918)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

It is of the steam liner Titanic
Set forth on her maiden trip
And over two thousand people
Were on board that native ship
Some of them were journeying
To dear ones across the foam
While others were leaving old England
In a strange land to make their home.

Chorus:
Titanic will no more plough through the raging sea
Alas her maiden voyage her last one it will be
While widows and mothers dear for their lost ones they sadly weep
Went down in that liner Titanic to sleep in the ocean deep.

It started to sail from Southampton,
All on board happy and gay,
Some of them were playing football
Some cricket on that day
Some of them were dreaming
Some smiling perhaps in their dreams
But they never once dreamt of distaster
That was coming soon on the sea.

Chorus

'Twas about two o'clock in the morning
No sound but the engines was heard
And as the great mass approached
A terrible mass ahead
"Oh God, it is an iceberg"

Just look at the mountain high”
Then there came a crash just after
Men, women and children cried

Chorus

AM - And you got that from your brother?

FP - Yes

AM - And he brought it back?

FP - I learned it off of him, but whether it had happened before, or happened afterwards when he taught me I can't, I don't know when the ...

Another song which is, apparently, unique to Freda Pamer.

1 - 23. The Wandering Girl (Roud 1691)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

I once loved a young man as dear as my life
And oftimes he's told me he'd make me his wife
But now to some other his love it has flown
And he's left me to wander the streets all alone.

So I'll pick up my baby and contented I'll be
And I'll try to forget him as he forgot me.
And I'll go to my mother with a tear in my eye
And I'll say "Dearest Mother, will you take me in?"

She'll scorn and she'll slight me, she'll turn me from her door
She'll tell me to wander as I've wandered before.

Now all girls take warning, take warning by me
Never trust any young man as I trusted him.
They'll kiss and caress you and say they'll be true
And the very next moment they'll bid you adieu.

This is a very rare song; Roud lists just two examples from the oral tradition, the other being George B Gardiner's collection from James Channon in Ellisfield, Hampshire, in 1907.

1 - 24. If Those Lips (parody) (Roud 27915)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

The judge he looked down at the prisoner
He said "You have been here before,
The last time you came was for pinching,
You said you would come no more.
You are a perfect nuisance,
To your country you are a disgrace,
For pinching a gentleman's tucker
I'll send you to a lonely place

Where those eyes will never see
And those lips will never taste
Roast beef and yorkshire for dinner
And sausages for tea
I'll give you ten long years
Where your pleading will all be in vain
For pinching a gentleman's tucker
And its beautiful golden chain."

1 - 25. The Dumb Maid (Roud 434, Laws Q5)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

There was a country jade
And he married a country maid
And he safely conducted her to his home home home.
She was neat and she was smart,
And she pleased him to the heart
But ah poor lassie she was dumb dumb dumb.
But ah poor lassie she was dumb dumb dumb.

She could brew and she could bake
She could sew and she could make
She could sweep round the house with her broom broom broom
She could hang and she could wring
And do any kind of thing
But ah poor lassie she was dumb dumb dumb.
But ah poor lassie she was dumb dumb dumb.

To the doctor then he went
Just to make himself content
To get his missis cured of the mum mum mum
Said the doctor "Of my heart
Aye 'tis the easiest part
To make a woman speak that is dumb dumb dumb.
To make a woman speak that is dumb dumb dumb."

So the doctor in he brings
And he cut her chattering strings

And at liberty he set to her tongue tongue tongue
Then her tongue began to work
And she began to talk
Just as though she never had been dumb dumb dumb.
Just as though she never had been dumb dumb dumb.

Now its properties she tried
And it filled the house with noise
And rattled in his ears like a drum drum drum
He bade (?) a deal of strife
Made the worry of his life
"I wishes day and night she was dumb dumb dumb
"I wishes day and night she was
dumb dumb dumb."
To the doctor then he goes
And he just unfolds his woes
"Ah doctor, thou hast made me undone done done
For my wife she proves a scold
And her tongue she will not hold
I'd give any kind of thing is she was dumb dumb dumb
I'd give any kind of thing is she was dumb dumb dumb."

"When I did undertake
For to make thy wife spake
'Twas a thing quite easily done done done
But it's past the art of man
Try the best that e'er he can
To make a scolding woman hold her tongue tongue tongue.
To make a scolding woman hold her tongue tongue tongue."

Rather surprisingly, this little-known song has 118 Roud entries, though all but 8 relate to text publications: books and broadsides. There are only 9 named traditional singers from these islands ... so this is clearly one of those songs which broadside printers thought would sell well, yet were rarely taken up in oral tradition. There are only 8 sound recordings, from just 7 singers, only two of whom are from England. The other is Mabs Hall (VT115CD).

CD 2:

2 - 1. The Banks of the Sweet Dundee (Roud 148)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

There was a farmer's daughter
So lately I've been told
Her parents died and left her
Five hundred pounds in gold
She lived with her uncle,
Who was the cause of all her woe
Now this maiden fair, ye soon shall hear,
She proved her overthrow

As Mary went a-walking,
The mountains for a laugh (?)
She met the noble squire
Down in her uncle's grove
He put his arms all round her
"Stand off, base man" said she,
For you sent the only lad I love
From the banks of the sweet Dundee."

He put his arms all round her
And tried to slow her down.
Two pistols and a sword she spied
Beneath his morning gown.
Young Mary took the weapons
He thought he'd use so free,
Then she did fire, and shot the squire
On the banks of the sweet Dundee

A doctor soon was sent for
A man of mighty skill
And likewise came a lawyer
For him to make his will
He willed his gold to Mary
Who'd fought so manfully
Then he closed his eyes, no more to rise
On the banks of the sweet Dundee
And now she lives quite happy
On the banks of the sweet Dundee

A very popular song indeed, with over 355 Roud entries, of which 107 are from England. There are 78 sound recordings, of which only a dozen or so have appeared on CD. Several other songs follow much the same story line.

Other recordings: Caroline Hughes (MTCD365-6); Danny Brazil (MTCD345-7); Harry Upton (MTCD372); Bill Smith (MTCD351); Michael 'Straighty' Flanagan (MTCD331-2); Walter Pardon (TSCD514); Bob Brader (TSCD665); Rebecca Penfold (TSCD672D), Joe Thomas (TSCD673T); Fred Jordan (VTD148CD).

2 - 2. I Wish I was Single Again (Roud 437)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 1974.

When I was a young man, oh then, oh then, oh then
When I was a young man, oh then
I'd a horse to ride upon and a sword beside my side

And money in my pocket to spend, spend, spend

Chorus:

Again and again and again
Again and again and again
For when I was single
My pockets they jingled
Oh I wish I was single again/
I was glad I was single again
I married my wife, oh then, oh then
I married my wife, oh then
I married my wife, she was the plague of my life
Oh I wish I was single again

My wife she did die, oh then, oh then
My wife she did die, oh then
My wife she did die and I laughed till I cried
For I was glad I was single again
I followed her to the churchyard, oh then, oh then
I followed her to the churchyard, oh then
The band of music played and I danced all the way
For I was glad I was single again

As I was a-coming back, oh then, oh then
As I was a-coming back, oh then

As I was a-coming back I met another lass
And I was glad I was single again

I married the other, oh then, oh then
I married the other, oh then
I married the other, she was a damn sight worse than t'other
And I wish I was single again

A well-known and frequently collected song, with 164 Roud entries, and one which seems to have once been especially popular in America. Freda's song was popularised on the English Music Hall Stage by the singer Ernest Butcher (1885-1965), who called it *I Married a Wife*. Butcher's final verse is omitted by Freda:

*Young men who have wives, Oh then
Young men who have wives, Oh then
Be kind to the first, for the next may be worse
And you'll long for the first one again.*

Most commentators suggest that the song is based on another piece, *When I Was Young* (Roud 894), which more or less tells the same story, though from a woman's point of view. This latter song was printed, c.1850, in the songster *120 Comic Songs sung by Sam Cowell* and begins:

*When I was a maid, O then, O then,
When I was a maid, O then,
As many bright stars as appear in the sky,
So many lovers were caught by my eye,
But I was a beauty then, O then,
But I was a beauty then.*

Other recordings: Dan Tate (MTC501-2) as *The Devil's Grandmother*; Johnny Doughty (12TS 324); Peggy MacGillivray (Rounder CD1795) as a children's parody, *The World Must be Coming to an End*.

2 - 3. The Little Cock Sparrow (Roud 3368)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

A little cock sparrow he sat on a tree
A little cock sparrow he sat on a tree
A little cock sparrow he sat on a tree
Looking as happy as happy could be.
A little boy came with his bow and arrow
A little boy came with his bow and arrow
A little boy came with his bow and arrow
Said he "I will shoot that little cock sparrow."

His body will make me a nice little shoe
His legs will make me a nice pie too"
"Oh no" said the sparrow "that never will do"
So he fluttered his wings and away he flew
So he fluttered his wings and away he flew.

This song has only 12 Roud entries, but these range from Cornwall to Yorkshire, and three singers have been recorded - though Roy Last (VT130CD) is the only one to have been released on CD.

2 - 4. Young Folks Old Folks Everybody Come (Roud 4614)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

Adam was the first man that's what we all believe
One morning he was filleted and introduced to Eve
He had no-one to show him, but he soon found out the way
And that's the only reason why we're sitting here today.

Chorus:

Young folks, old folks, everybody come
To our little Sunday School and we will have some fun
Bring your toffee apples and sit down upon the floor
And hear the bible stories that you never heard before.

Esau was a fellow with a very hairy chest
His chest it was so hairy he'd no need to wear a vest
His father left him property not very far from Norwich
But the damed fool went and swapped it for a basin full of porridge.

Chorus

Pharoah had a daughter with a most bewitching smile
She found the infant Moses in the rushes by the Nile
She took it home to dear Papa and he believed the tale
It was just about as probable as Jonah and the Whale.

Chorus

Adam was a good man, children he had seven
Thought he'd hire a donkey cart and take them all to Heaven
Strange to say he lost his way, although he knew it well
Over went the donkey cart and sent them all to Hell.

Chorus

From the dates of Roud's 22 entries, it looks as if this might have originated as an American song called *The Darkies' Sunday School*. It was found in California in the 1920s, but didn't turn up in England 'til the mid-Sixties.

2 - 5. There Were Three Jews from Jerusalem (Roud 3708)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

(There were) three Jews from Jerusalem
There were three Jews from Jerusalem
Jerry jerry jerry, slam slam slam
Jerry jerry jerry, slam slam slam
There were three Jews from Jerusalem

Now the first Jew's name was Abraham
The first Jew's name was Abraham
Abri Abri Abri, ham ham ham
Abri Abri Abri, ham ham ham
The first Jew's name was Abraham

Now the second Jew's name was Isaac
The second Jew's name was Isaac
Issy Issy Issy, sac sac sac
Issy Issy Issy, sac sac sac
The second Jew's name was Isaac

Now the third Jew's name was Abrial (?)
The third Jew's name was Abrial
Abra Abra Abra, hal hal hall
Abra Abra Abra, hal hal hal
The third Jew's name was Abrial

Now they went for a ride in a charabanc
They went for a ride in a charabanc
Chara chara chara, banc banc banc
Chara chara chara, banc banc bance
They went for a ride in a charabanc
They came to the edge of a precipice
They came to the edge of a precipice
Preci preci preci, wee wee wee
Preci preci preci, wee wee wee
They came to the edge of a precipice

Now we must finish it
Now we must finish it
Fini fini fini, la la la
Fini fini fini, la la la
And now we must finish it

Although Roud has only 11 instances of this song, his list includes examples from all the Anglophone countries. Ken Stubbs recorded it from Albert Farmer in Lingfield, Surrey; the only other sound recording. In addition, it was recorded by Elizabeth Stewart and included in her Memoir *Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen*, edited and compiled by Alison McMorland, University Press of Mississippi.

2 - 6. After the Ball (Roud 4859)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

Came a wee maiden climbed an old man's knee
Begged for a story "Do, Uncle, please."
"Tell you a story, what shall I tell?
Tales about giants or elves in the dell.
Nay, I will tell you something that's true
Why I ne'er wed, or had children like you.
Once I'd a sweetheart, my all in all,
But I thought her faithless after the ball

Chorus:

After the ball is over,

After the break of dawn
After the dancers' leaving
After the stars are gone
Many a heart is breaking
If you could read them all
Many a hope that is shattered
After the ball.

Scenes a grand ballroom, gorgeous and bright
Throbb'd my heart wildly thrilled with delight
Proud of my sweetheart, proud of her charms
Proud of the dear one clasped in my arms.
"Water, I'm fainting" softly she cried.
When I returned someone stood by her side
Kissing ... I let the glass fall -
'Twas broke as my heart was, after the ball.

Chorus:

After long years of silence and gloom
One day a letter came to my room
'Maggie is dying, come ere she dies.
I went, forgiveness shone in her eyes.
"Darling, the man you saw kissing me.
He was my brother, no lover was he.
Kiss me, God bless you, hark angels call
Our God did I know, after the ball."

A song with a rather chequered history. It was originally written by Charles K Harris in 1892, but largely re-written by Bowyer & Powell in 1893, and sung by Vesta Tilley amongst others, although Kilgariff says that it was the original that became the most popular. We know that it was printed in a songster by Henry J Wehman of New York, around 1893, and that several parodies were written, including the fairly well-known 'false parts' one:

*After the ball was over, Bonnie took out her glass eye,
Put her false teeth in the basin, corked up a bottle of dye
Put her false leg in the corner, hung up her hair on the wall
And all that was left went to bye byes, after the ball.*

Both Bob Hart and Percy Webb sang it in Suffolk, but it would seem that Freda's is the only sound recording from the oral tradition in the UK.

2 - 7. Old Johnny Bigger (Roud 19111)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

Now Johnny Bigger's wife she went out one day
She stuck her left foot in nine foot of clay
All the little frogs came hopping about
So she got a spade to dig herself out

Chorus:
Singing I do believe, I do believe
Old Johnny Bigger was a gay old nigger
And a gay old nigger was he.

Now the doctor came, he had a good look
He wrote it all down in his big little book
He told old Bigger to begin
To rub his old girl's leg well with gin

Chorus

Now old Johnny Bigger he thought it was a sin
To rub his old girl's leg with gin
So he tipped the gin down his long throttle
And he rubbed her leg well with the bottle.

Chorus

Now God made man and man made money
God made the bees and the bees made honey
God made Devil and the Devil made sin
And the Devil made a hole to put old Bigger in.

Chorus

Spoken: "That's the words I learnt when we going round the pubs then."

This song, definitely non-PC in today's climate, may, or may not, have started life as the Minstrel song *Johnny Boker, or, De Broken Yoke in de Coaling Ground*, which was printed on a music sheet in Boston in 1840 and performed by J W Sweeny. Over the years it became known under a number of different titles, such as *Old Johnny Booker* or *Old Johnny Bucker*, and sometimes carried a chorus similar to that found in Freda's song. Interestingly, *Old Johnny Bigger* is a song that the Bampton Morris Dancers continue to sing - but without the N-word.

Other recordings: Percy Bridges (MTCD372); Bill Smith (MTCD351); Jack Elliott (TSCD664); Mrs Hewett (TSCD671). Lee Hammons, a West Virginia musician, plays the tune to *Old Johnny Booker* on Rounder CD 21504/05, while Walter Smith sings the words on his 1929 recording, *Old Johnny Bucker Wouldn't Do*, which has been reissued on Document DOCD-8062.

2 - 8. The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington (Roud 483, Child 105)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 19 Oct, 1972.

There was a youth and a well beloved youth
He was a squire's son
He loved the bailiff's daughter
She lived at Islington.

But she was shy and never could
On him her heart bestow
'Til he was sent to London Town
Because he loved her so.

When seven years had passed away
She put on mean attire
And straight to London she did go
About him to enquire

But as she went along the road
The weather being hot and dry
She nestled on a mossy bank
And her lover came riding by

"Give me a penny, thou 'prentice boy(?)
Relieve a maid forlorn."
"But before I give you a penny, sweet one,
Pray tell me where thou was born."

"Oh I was born in Islington"
"Then tell me if you know
The bailiff's daughter of that place."
"She died, Sir, long ago."

"If she be dead, then take my horse,
My saddle and bridle also,
And I will to some far off land
Where no-one doth me know."

"Oh stay, oh stay, thou goodly sir,
She is standing by thy side,
She's here alive, she is not dead
But ready to be thy bride."
She's here alive, she is not dead
But ready to be thy bride."

A song whose popularity (185 Roud instances, of which 55 are from England) seems to stem, in this country, mainly from having been taught in schools during the early years of the 20th century. Of the 68 sound recordings, only four seem to have made the transfer to CD: Alf Wildman (MTCD356-7), Daisy Chapman (MTCD308); Bob Lewis (VTC6CD); Albert Beale (Rounder CD 1775).

2 - 9. Jack and the Squire (Roud 511, Laws K40)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 15 Oct, 1972.

Now Jack he heard the squire say,
That he that night with her would lay.

Chorus:
Da um diddle um di do.
Da um diddle um dee.

Now Jack he went and pulled the string,
And she came down and let him in.

But in the morn, when this fair maid awakened,
She looked at Jack with heart forsaken.
For Jack he had a ragged shirt,
His hands and feet were covered in dirt.

*'No', said Jack, 'it's no such thing,
For you came down and let me in.'*

But Jack he loved the girl so well,
He told the squire to go to hell.

Freda could only remember a fragment of this fairly popular song (100 Roud entries), one that Cecil Sharp titled *Jack the Jolly Tar*. There are four versions printed in Sharp's collection, as well as a version, *Doo me Ama*, that was collected by Captain W B Whall and published in his book *Ships, Sea Songs and Shanties* (Glasgow. 1913. pp.23-24). George Withers also recorded it (VTC9CD), as did Pop Maynard (12T 286).

2 - 10. Villikins and Dinah (Roud 271, Laws M31A/B)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 1975.

There was a rich merchant who in London did dwell
He had but one daughter a very fine girl
Her name it was Dinah, scarce sixteen years old,
She'd a very large fortune of silver and gold.

As Dinah was walking in the garden one day,
Her papa stepped up to her, and quickly did say
"Go dress yourself, Dinah, in costly array,

And you shall have a husband both gallant and gay!"

"Oh, Papa, oh, Papa, I have made up my mind,
To marry just now, I don't feel inclined;
To you my large fortune I'll freely give o'er,
If you'll let me live single a year or two more."

"Go, go, boldest daughter," her parent replied;
"If you don't give consent to be this young man's bride,
We'll give all your fortune to the nearest of kin,
And you shan't reap the benefit of one single pin."

As Villikins was walking in the garden one day
He found his dear Dinah lying dead by the way
With a cup of cold poison that stood by her side,
'Twas the benedict that stated by poison she died.

He kissed her cold corpse as she lay on the ground
He called her his lover although she's no more,
Then he drank up the poison like a true lover brave,
Now Villikins and Dinah lie both in one grave.

Twelve o'clock the next night in a tall poplar tree
The ghost of young Dinah her parents did see
Arm in arm with young Villikens and both looking blue
Singing "we shouldn't have been poisoned if it hadn't been for you".

This was first sung by Frederick Robson in *The Wandering Minstrel* at the Olympic Theatre in 1853, although its origins are obscure, says Kilgariff. However, of Roud's 173 instances, all but 18 are from printed sources - mostly broadsides. These are very difficult to date, but the song does appear in some 54 books, which generally do have publication dates. It can be found in *Crawford's Collection of Ballads & Songs* where it's noted as having been collected as *Diana* by Thomas Maqueen in Ayrshire in 1827.

2 - 11. **The Little Shirt my Mother Made for Me** (Roud 10437)
Recorded by Gwilym Davies, 30 November, 1975.

Oh I never shall forget the day that I was born
'Twas on a cold and frosty winter's morn.
The doctor said I was chubby chap
And then the nurse she took me on her lap
And she washed me all over I remember
And after puffin' powdered me, you see
She laid me in the cradle near the fender
In the little shirt my Mother made for me

When I first wore my little knickerbocks
It did seem funny after wearing frocks
I looked a little picture, they all say,
And then they sent me out to run and play
But I didn't like the breeches I was wearing
So in the street I took them off, you see,
And I started walking home so brave and daring
In the little shirt my Mother made for me
Last summer I went on my holidays
Down by the briny ocean it was gay.
The water looked so nice, I thought I'd go
And have a bathe, but, in a minute, oh
All the girls on the beach at me were staring
And some were taking snapshots, I could see
'Twas a good thing for me that I was wearing
The little shirt my Mother made for me

Written by the English music-hall composer, Harry Wincott (d.1909) but seemingly as popular in N America as in England: Charlie Craver 'Arkansas Charlie' on 3 October, 1928 (Vo5270); Bradley Kincaid's 1933 recording has been reissued and is available on the 4 CD set *Bradley Kincaid - a man and his guitar* (JSP77158A-D). The earliest recording was by Tom Wootwell (1865-1941) in England, in 1907.

2 - 12. **I'm a Man That's Done Wrong To My Parents** (Roud 1386)
Recorded by Steve Roud, 26 Feb, 1978.

I once wronged my father and mother
They then turned me out from their door
To beg starve or die, or in some gutter lie
Never to enter their dwellings no more

I'm a man that's done wrong to my parents
As daily I ramble about
To beg starve or die, or in some gutter lie
Never to enter their dwellings no more
My mother, poor thing's, broken hearted
And oftimes would try to meet me
And give me a crown with her head hanging down
And a tear rolling out of her eye.
My father will say when he meets me
"You beggar, are you still at large?"
Mind, sir, you do not come near me
Or, by heavens, I'll give you in charge."

My sister who's married a squire
Will neither look nor speak to me

Because in this world she's much higher
And rides in her carriage so free.

The girl that I once loved so dearly
Is lying broken hearted they say
And now on her bed she's lying nearly dead
And now for her outcast I'll cry

I'm a man that's done wrong to my parents
As daily I ramble about
To earn a small mite for my shelter at night
God help me now I am cast out.

Lucy Broadwood and J A Fuller Maitland included a version of this in their book *English County Songs* (1893), while the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould included it in his *English Minstrelsie 8* (1898). Obviously a once-popular song, versions have been collected in Dorset, Kent, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Sussex and Yorkshire, as well as in Australia and North America. Broadwood and Fuller Maitland saw a connection between the tune and one used by J Markordt in his ballad opera of *Tom Thumb* (1781). They also noted that the air had been found in versions of several other songs, including *Rosin the Beau*, *Wrap Me Up in My Old Stable Jacket*, *The Old Farmer*, *The Gallant Hussar*, *Adam and Eve* and *The Green Mossy Banks of the Lea*.

It seems to have only appeared in the oral tradition about 13 times, mostly in England. Although there have been 6 sound recordings, only those by Harry Upton (MTCD371); May Bradley (MTCD349); Wally Fuller (TSCD 672D) and Mary Ann Haynes on the CD which accompanies the EFDSS book *Traveller's Joy*, compiled by Mike Yates, are now available on CD.

2 - 13. **1, 2, 3, Mother Caught a Flea** (Roud 19164)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

One two three, mother's caught a flea
Put it in the teapot to make a cup of tea.
When she put the water in the flea was on the top
When she put the lid on the flea went pop.

A fragment of a children's rhyme, to be found in Sinclair, *Murder Murder Polis* (1986) - Roud's only entry.

2 - 14. **Your Faithful Sailor Boy** (Roud 376, Laws K13)
Recorded by Steve Roud in 1978.

... that ship returned without her sailor boy
He died whilst on the voyage and
The flag was half mast high.
His comrades when they came on shore
Told her that he was dead;
A letter he had sent to her,
The last line sadly said -

"Farewell farewell my own true love
On earth we'll meet no more.
I soon shall be from storm or sea
On that eternal shore
I hope to meet you in that land,
That land beyond the sky,
Where you will not be parted from
Your faithful sailor boy."

The Faithful Sailor Boy was written by the American, George W Persley, towards the end of the 19th century. Few songs have achieved such widespread popularity among country singers and their audiences. It turns up again and again in pub sing-songs throughout Britain, even through into the 1990s. There are 121 other examples in Roud, 69 of which are sound recordings (though few seem to have been published) all with much the same title. Gavin Greig has it as *The Sailor Boy's Farewell* in FSNE where he refers to the song as being 'Very popular in Aberdeenshire in the early years of this century' and we have heard it sung in both Donegal and Cork in the last few years. Two versions have been found in the North Carolina mountains, while other sets have been reported from as far away as Australia and Tristan da Cunha.

Other recordings on CD: Cyril Poacher (MTCD303); Walter Pardon (MTCD305-6); Daisy Chapman (MTCD308); Percy Webb (MTCD356-7); George Attrill (MTCD372); Fred Jordan (VTD148CD); and Charlie Carver and Stan Stegges (VTCD8CD).

2 - 15. **Good Company** (Roud 13680)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

I am a sport, always a sport,
You can bet your life that I'm a real good sort
Once on a train, I got in with a klick
And when they showed to me the three card trick
Chorus:
Well I do like to be in good company
Good company for me.
Dear old pals, jolly old pals
We're all in harmony.

When they knocked me down to my last half a crown
Through the window they pushed me In a cattle truck I fell,
Full of pigs, but I said "Well,

I'm in a good company".
Not so long ago things were very slow
So I paid a bob to see the waxwork show
Went off to sleep, woke up from me nap
To find meself a-sitting up on Queen Anne's lap.

Chorus
Then sweet Joan of Arc, as we sat there in the dark
Said "Oo la la, oui oui" So I sent home to the wife
Oh I shan't be home tonight
I'm in a good company."

Old Parson Brown at the Rose and Crown
Got me when I was nearly upside down
"You'll never go where the angels dwell
You'll go down below m'lad but I said "Well

Chorus

As I sit on the hob with the rest of the mob
Browned on both side I'll be
Then I shout out with delight
"Old Tom Jones is on me right
I'm in a good company."

A music-hall song popularised by Ernie Mayne's Winner 78 in 1923. George Spicer also sang this song, but his recording is not available on CD.

2 - 16. **What did You Do in the Great War, Daddy?** (Roud 27919)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

"What did you do in the Great War, Daddy?"
A boy asked his father one day.
The fighting was done, the victory won
And peace reigned instead of a sword and a gun
"Tell me what you did" the boy once more cried,
Then proudly his father replied

"What did I do in the Great War, Laddie?"
What did I do you want to know
When they called for men, I was ready then
To go and fight the foe.
I did my best for king and country, Laddie,
Just to keep old Britain free.
But when I'm old and grey,
For what I've done today
What will Britain do for me?"

"What is that medal you are wearing, Daddy?
Why is your sleeve empty there?"
A pause, then a sigh, then there came this reply
"I gave that for Britain, no need to ask why.

And if my country were calling for men,
Why I'd do the same, Lad, again.
"What did I do in the Great War Laddie?
What did I do, you want to know.
When they called for men, I was ready then
To go and fight the foe.
I did my best for king and country, Laddie,
Just to keep old Britain free.
But when I'm old and grey,
For what I've done today
What will Britain do for me?"

Yet another song seemingly unique to Freda Palmer.

2 - 17. **Needlecases** (Roud 1300)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 10 June, 1977.

Chorus:
Needle cases, won't you buy one,
You will buy one I'm sure
Won't you buy a case of needles
From Jack that's so poor?

I'm a poor wandering fellow, my name it is Jack
My clothes are all tattered, scarce hang on my back
My belly is empty, my feet they are sore,
Won't you buy a case of needles of Jack that's so poor?

Chorus

I once was a fellow and followed the plough.
Don't think I'm a charmer, just look at me now,
All ragged and torn from belly to top.
Don't you think that I'm a poor silly wandering rag shop?

Chorus

Once I had a table all lined with good food
Both eating and drinking and all that was good.
But now I've no table, no things and all that.

I'm obliged to beg a crust with the crown on my cap.

Chorus

Now since you won't buy one I find I must leave,
But to leave such good company it does my heart grieve.
It does my heart grieve and if I should come back,
Won't you buy a case of needles from poor wandering Jack?

Chorus

Not a well-known song, with only 13 Roud entries. Alfred Williams found it in Southrop, Glos, in the 1910s, and Bob Arnold, of *Archers* fame, used to sing it (which is undoubtedly where Freda learned it), but Francis Shergold (VTC7CD) has the only other CD release available.

2 - 18. **A Group of Young Squaddies** (Roud 1783)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

[One] has hair of silvery grey, the other has hair of gold,
One is young and beautiful, the other is bent and old
These are the lives that are dear to me
Neither of them would I part
One is my mother, God bless her, I love her,
The other is my sweetheart..

Freda has just the chorus of this very well-known song. It's strange to find a song which was known to so many singers, having only 23 entries in Roud's Index - although, unusually, every one cites a named singer. All the *Blaxhall Ship* singers knew it. It could be that it's not the sort of song many collectors would bother with, or because it was a comparatively recent composition, by Lester Barrett in 1892.

Roy Harvey first recorded it with the North Carolina Ramblers in 1927, as did the Carter Family in the 1930s, under the title *Two Sweethearts*, and I would guess that this was how it entered the oral tradition in Britain. All the collections date from the late-1960s onwards.

Other versions available on CD: Bill Smith (MTCD351); Joan Taylor (MTCD345-7); David Stacey (MTCD360); Geoff Ling (VT154CD); Viv Legg (VT153CD).

2 - 19. **I'll Sing of Martha** (Roud 10560)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

I'll sing of Martha, my dear wife,
Her loss I deeply mourn.
She's left this world of care and strife
And now I'm all forlorn.

She used to call me turtle dove,
To all my faults were blind.
I never can forget my love,
She was so good and kind.

So good and kind was Martha dear,
She'd let me scrub the floors,
And once she even let me clean,
The knocker on the door.

She'd let me fetch her errands in,
And say I was a dear.
And once a week she'd let me have,
A half a pint o beer.

The baby she would let me nurse,
And wash it now and then.
And never send me off to bed,
'Til very nearly ten.

Our eldest boy is very tall,
His age is twenty-three.
Dear Martha saves his left-off clothes,
And cuts them down for me.

I never went out by myself,
She thought it was not right.
She'd take me every morn to work,
And fetch me back at night.

Especially on a Saturday night
When I had got my pay,
She'd put it in her purse for fear,
I might lose it on the way.

Oh, I can't forget my Martha dear,
I loved her so because,
She was so good and kind to me,
She was, she was, she was.

Written in 1885 by David G Day, as *She Was! She Was! She Was!* The Black-Country singer George Dunn said that the chorus to the song was sung as a round

by hop-pickers. George's short fragment can be heard on his double CD *Chainmaker* (MTCD317-8). This song follows the same plot as several others - Walter Pardon's *Husband Taming* for one.

2 - 20. **Oxford City** (Roud 218, Laws P30)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

There was a girl in Oxford City,
The ter [truth] I now will tell to you.
All by a young man this maid was courting,
And he loved her as his life he gave.

She loved him too, but t'was at a distance,
She did not seem to be so fond.
He said, "My dear one, why can't we marry?
And then at once it would end all strife."

"Oh no, I am too young to marry,
Too young to incline on a marriage bed.
For when we are married then we are bound for ever
And then at once all our joys are fled."

As she was dancing with some other,
This jealousy came in his mind.
All for to destroy his own true loved one,
This wicked young man he was inclined.

Some poison strong, which he had conceal-ed,
He mixed it in a glass of wine.
Then he gave it unto his own true-loved one,
And she drank it up most cheerfully.

But in a very few minutes after,
"Oh, take me home, my dear", said she,
"For the glass of liquor you lately gave me,
It makes me feel very ill indeed."

"Oh, I've been drinking the same before you,
And I've been taken as ill as you.
So in each others arms we will die together."
Young men be aware of such jealousy.

Versions of this song turn up all over the place. Harry Upton, for example, called his version *Near Arundel Town*, and, like Mrs Palmer, believed it to be a true story. At the beginning of the 20th century, Vaughan Williams found another singer using Mrs Palmer's tune for the song *A Bold Young Farmer* and he later incorporated this tune into his ballet for orchestra *Old King Cole*.

There are 210 entries in Roud and, more to the point, it's a song which has remained in the country repertoire right up to the present time, particularly amongst Gypsies and Travellers. It has numerous titles in addition to the ones mentioned above, including *Jealousy*, *Down the Green Groves* and *Poison in a Glass of Wine*, but whatever it may be called by the singer, the song would appear to stem from a broadside issued by John Pitts of London in the early 1800s.

Most versions are from England, but there are also two from Ireland, eight from Scotland, 20 from the USA, nine from Canada, and one from Tristan da Cunha noted. Fifty-eight sound recordings are known, but versions by Harry Upton (MTCD371), Jack Smith (MTCD356-7), Pop Maynard (MTCD309-0), Danny Brazil (MTCD345-7), May Bradley (MTCD349), Louie Saunders (MTCD309-0), Sheila Stewart (TSCD 515), Joseph Taylor (TSCD 653) and Garrett & Norah Arwood (MTCD503-4), are the only other ones available on CD.

2 - 21. **The Ship that Never Returned** (Roud 775, Laws D27)
Recorded by Steve Roud in 1978.

"I must cross the wide, wide sea;
For they say that France is a far off country
There is health and wealth for me."
The mother listened in fond affection
In her heart for her youngest yearn'd;
Then she sent him forth with a smile and a blessing
On the ship that never return'd.

Chorus:

Oh she never returned She never return'd
Her fate, it is yet unlearn'd;
And from that day to this there were fond ones watching,
For the ship that never returned.

A remarkably popular song with 145 Roud entries, although the majority of these are from N America. The 33 English ones range from Sussex to Yorkshire and, of the 42 sound recordings, it would appear that only Fred Jordan (VTD148CD) can be found on CD. It was recorded by several American singers, including Vernon Dalhart and Bradley Kincaid. The latter recording has been reissued and is available on the 4 CD set *Bradley Kincaid - a man and his guitar* (JSP77158A- D).

2 - 22. **Maria Marten** (Roud 18814)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 1974.

In eighteen hundred and twenty seven
On the ninth day of June
Maria was dressed all in men's clothes
And her mother unto her did say

"Oh daughter, why dost thou disguise thyself?
Pray tell it unto me
For I'm sure some harm or other
May happen unto thee."

"Oh mother, I'm going to the Red Barn
To meet my William dear.
His friends won't know me as I am
Nor when I shall get there.

"I will put on my wedding gown
And we will haste away
To Ruislip tomorrow at six
All for our wedding day."

She straightway went to the Red Barn
And never more was seen
'Til eleven months was over
Her mother she dreamt a dream.

Three nights she dreamt the very same dream
Then unto her husband did say
"I will of thee rise instantly
And with thee take thy spade

Thy neighbour with his pickaxe
Shall bear thee company
To the far corner of Red Barn
My daughter there you'll find."

They straightway went to the Red Barn
To the place where they'd been told
And with their spade and pickaxe
They've razed the floor and mould.

And when they'd dug seven inches deep
The body there they found
Tied in a sack and lying dead
With many a ghastly wound.

This damsel caused many young men
To court her as you'll find
'Til at length upon a farmer's son
This damsel fixed her mind.

Spoken:

FP: that's all I know of that. Whether there should be more I ...

MY: Where did you learn that?

FP: I learned that from my aunt.

MY: How did you ...? When you were working together?

FP: Yes when we were working together. All these I've learned as we were like gloving together. There was lots and lots.

MY: When you were gloving how did you ...?

FP: We gloved with machines. She had her machine that way, facing me, and I had my machine facing her and we used to just sit and sing all day, as she was gloving and I was gloving, making the gloves, we used to just sit and sing, like sing together.

MY: How long ago was this?

FP: Oh dear, I'm 64 so that's nearly 50 year ago, when I was, I started when I wasn't quite fourteen, so that's 50 year ago.

MY: Did you used to sing in a factory or ...

FP: No, in her little bungalow.

MY: Where was that?

FP: In Leaffield.

Broadside printers always welcomed a popular theme to increase their sales and, as one Victorian pedlar put it, 'There's nothing beats a stunning good murder'. Maria Marten's death, in 1827, was a boon to the printers. Maria had left Polstead in Suffolk with William Corder, whom she intended to marry in order to avoid a bastardy charge. She was never seen alive again, and following a series of prophetic dreams by her mother, her body was found, buried in The Red Barn, Polstead. Corder was arrested, found guilty of Maria's murder, and hanged outside Bury St Edmunds jail on August 11th, 1828.

Maria Marten, the 'innocent nymph of her native village', became something of a cult figure on broadsides and in melodramas such as *Murder in the Red Barn*, so much so that her three illegitimate children - to different fathers - and her possible criminal activities with Corder became overshadowed by the myth that grew up around her death. Indeed, research now suggests that her mother's 'supernatural dreams' were motivated not so much by psychic phenomena as by her own criminal knowledge and probable association with Corder. *Maria Marten* was published as a 'dying speech' by the printer James Catnach of Seven Dials. Freda Palmer's tune is a version of that usually found with the ballad *Dives and Lazarus*.

Given that popularity, it's surprising to find only 8 Roud entries and just one other sound recording, that by Sally Sloane in Australia (Larrikin LRF 136).

2 - 23. **Old Mammy Mine** (Roud 27916)
Recorded by Alison McMorland, autumn 1975.

I don't want the pleasure this life has in store
For I miss your smile so gentle
And your two dear eyes that shine
Just because you're part of me, old mammy mine.
Every time I write a letter all my love's in every line
'Cos I really love you so, old mammy mine.

For the things I did when but a kid
You always saw me through
The silver hair that I put there
It's all forgiven too
And if I owned a million dollars
They would not be worth a dime
Not without that love of yours, old mammy mine.

For the things I did when a kid
You always saw me through
The silver hair that I put there
It's all forgiven too
If I owned a million dollars
They would not be worth a dime
Not without that love of yours old mammy mine.
There's one wish I treasure; to see old mammy mine once more

Another song unique to Freda Palmer.

2 - 24. **The Ship I Love** (Roud 17057)
Recorded by Steve Roud in 1978.

A gallant ship was sailing,
Sailing on the sea
The captain stood upon the deck
"Gather around" said he
"This ship is doomed and sinking
While there on the lea is land
So launch your boats and pull away
And think of your children grand

Chorus:
But I'll stick to the ship, lads,
You save your lives.
I have no one to love me
You have sweethearts and wives
You take to the boats, lads,
And pray to the heavens above
That I may go down in the angry deep
On the ship I love

The crew stood hesitating
Their hearts were staunch and true
With tear stained eyes up spoke the men
"Sir, we will die with you".
The Captain cried "What? Mutiny?"
For there on the lee is land
So launch your boats and pull away
And think of your children dear.

Chorus.

Cecilia Costello (MTCD363-4) also sang, at least the chorus, of this little-known song (just 11 Roud entries). It was composed by Felix McGlennon in 1898, and sung on the Halls, along with many other songs, by Tom Costello.

2 - 25. **The Warwickshire RHA** (Roud 163)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 1974.

I was a jolly ploughboy ploughing in the fields one day
When a silly thought came into my mind, I thought I'd run away,
I was tired of the dear old country and the place where I were born,
So I've been and joined the army and I'm off tomorrow morn.

Chorus:
Hurrah for the RHA,
See the spurs how they glitter in the sun,
And the horses gallop like lightning,
With a fifteen pounder gun,
And when we get to France, my boys,
The Kaiser he will say,
"Ach Ach Mein Gott what a jolly fine lot,
Are the Warwickshire R.H.A."

I'll lay aside my old grey mare, I'll lay aside my plough,
I'll lay aside my ... smock, I shall not want them now,
No more will I go harvesting or reap the golden corn,
For I've been and joined the army and I'm off tomorrow morn.

Chorus

There's one thing I must leave behind and that's my Nelly dear,
I've promised I'll be true to her if I were far or near,

So if ever I return again I'll let you all see me,
For I'm going to do the churchyard walk and a captain's wife she'll be.

Chorus.

A fairly popular song, more usually titled *The Scarlet and the Blue* - indeed, Freda seems alone in using this local name, and in including the wonderful "Ach, ach, Mein Gott! What a jolly fine lot are the ..." It's found in most parts of England, but nowhere else. RHA stands for the Royal Horse Artillery.

Although there have been 27 sound recordings, it looks as if Bob Hart (MTCD301-2) and George Spicer, (MTCD309-0) are the only other singers to have got their song onto a CD.

2 - 26. **William and Mary** (Roud 348, Laws N28)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 1974.

As William and Mary stood on the seashore,
Their last farewell for to make.
"Should you never return" young Mary she said,
"I am sure my poor heart it would break."

Seven years gone and past, without news at last,
She stood weeping by her cottage door.
When an old beggar he came by,
With a patch upon his eye,
Both lame and in charity implore.

"If he lives, Heaven knows the joy that I feel,
Although his misfortune I'll mourn.
He's welcome to me, in his poverty,
With his blue jacket ragged and torn."

Then the patch from his eye,
This old beggar he threw down,
His coat and his crutches besides.
With his cheeks as red as a rose,
And his eyes as black as sloes,
It was William stood by Mary's side.

"Forgive me, dear Mary", young William he said,
"It was only your love that I tried.
So to church we'll away, all by the break of day,
And I'll make little Mary my bride."

So to church they away'd,
All by the break of day;
And he made little Mary his bride.

The story of the sailor returning home in disguise to test the fidelity of his sweetheart is as old as Homer's *Odyssey*. The ballad of *Hind Horn* (Child 17) tells fundamentally the same story, as do several stall ballads. (For two superb traditional recording of *Hind Horn* see those sung by Joe Esty of New Brunswick, Canada, on Folk-Legacy CD-125, and Maggie Hammons Parker of West Virginia, on Rounder CD 1504/05.) According to the Victorian song collector William Alexander Barrett, who included a good set of *William and Mary* in his book *English Folk Song* (1891), the song appeared on a broadside issued by J Evans of Long Lane, Smithfield in 1794, and Mrs Palmer's version no doubt originally comes from this source.

The song was recorded twice in 1928 by commercial singers. Sam McGee's recording has been reissued on Document CD *Sam McGee* (DOCD-8036), while the recording by Marc Williams 'The Cowboy Crooner' is available on Jasmine CD *Marc Williams - the forgotten singing cowboy* (JASMCDCD-3534).

Although Roud shows 161 entries, most are from Scotland and North America and only 24 English sources are noted. Of these, Freda's is the only English collection since 1911, and the only sound recording.

Recitations:

2 - 27. **Young Williams** (Roud 13704)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 1 May, 1975.

Young Williams was a soldier
Who had left his mother dear
Had left his home surroundings
For a soldiering career
He was nothing but a stripling
Of eighteen years or so
But England wanted soldiers
Young or old to face the foe.

He had gone to join his colours
That his comrades fighting host
But the guard one morning found him
Sleeping at his post.
It was the same old story,
'Ard tramping, little rest,
To keep his poor eyes open
He had tried his very best.

But the god of sleep, alas,

Took possession of his brain
On his character ... (exemplary?)
At last there fell a stain
He was marched off under escort,
Every face bore the look of gloom
For they all loved the poor lad Williams
And they each one guessed his doom.

At last came the day of trial,
In the court with bated breath
Williams heard them pronounce him guilty
He heard his sentence, death.
Then the president slowly asked him
If he had anything to say,
For mercy or forgiveness
It was useless now to pray.

So he turned his eyes to the colonel
And mournfully he replied
"Ask my comrades to keep it a secret
From my mother, how I died.
For some, when the war is over,
May see her dear old face
And I wouldn't wish for her to know
That her son fell in disgrace.

"Her face would not look so worried,
That face so pinched and wan,
If she only thinks I died
As a soldier and a man."

They marched him back under escort,
The soldiers all shed tears,
But William kept up like a hero,
Although but a boy in years.
Though he knew that very shortly
His life's journey would be trod
He was only allowed a couple of days
To prepare to meet his God.

Now there was a private by the name of Ewart
Some galliant deed had done
The goodwill of his colonel
And officers he had won.
Now the colonel ordered Ewart
Before them to appear
With troops drawn up in line
To welcome his with a cheer.

Then the colonel said "Private Ewart,
Your deed is fit to be
Chronicled on the pages
Of military history.
Now to reward you properly
I was almost at a loss,
But you I have recommended
For the great Victoria Cross.
"For your noble deed of valour
Is admired by all the poor
And if you have any request now
It shall be granted I am sure."

Then the private said boldly, "Colonel,
Accept my sincere thanks
For the honour you are bestowing
On a private in the ranks.
I only did my duty
As a British soldier should,
And if the occasion rose
Do the same again I would.

"I want no decorations
To put upon my breast
But if you can see your way clear
To grant me one request.
There's a lad by the name of Williams
Who must meet his death 'fore long
For sleeping at his post, Sir,
The temptation must have been strong.

"Think of his poor old mother
In that old land far away;
Day and night for her soldier boy
She would kneel her down to pray.

Think if he should be shot, Sir,
'Twould break that mother's heart,
The heart that was near broken
When from him she had to part.

"If you think I've earned your good will
And am worthy of reward
Extend your hand in mercy
On poor Williams, don't be hard.

Let him come back to his comrades
Let him take his sword in hand
As a British soldier should do
As a credit to the land.
"I want but one reward, Sir,
If a reward you think I've won,
And that is, pardon Williams,
The widow's only son."

When Private Ewart had finished
From the ranks rose 'earty cheers
And even the roughest soldier
Could not resist shedding tears.
Then the colonel said "Private Ewart,
You're a credit to your cause.
You've done as a hero should do,
Of this we all feel sure.
You've won a higher prize, Sir
Than any I can bestow
But to grant your brave request, lad,
You'll find I am not slow.

"The lad should be forgiven,
For it really must be confessed,
No commander of the army
Could ignore such a brave request.
You've won the poor lad's gratitude,
You deserve your country's praise.
Good luck to you, Sergeant Ewart,
To this grade, you, I must raise.
Such a lad as you I'm proud of
Such a lad I can understand
Your name shall live forever
In the good old motherland."

This recitation appears to be unique to Freda Palmer.

2 - 28. **Hitler's Dream** (Roud 13705) Recorded by Steve Roud, 26 Feb, 1978.

There's a story now certain though strange it may seem
Of the great Adolph Hitler and his wonderful dream.
Being tired of his allies he lay down in bed
And, amongst other things, dreamt he was dead.

And in a fine coffin was laying in state
With a guard of brave Germans who mourned for his fate.
He wasn't long dead 'til he found to his cost
That his soul, like his soldiers, had gone to be lost.

On leaving the earth to heaven he went straight
And arriving up there gave a knock at the gate
But St Peter looked out with a voice loud and clear
Said "Be gone, Adolph Hitler, we don't want you here."

"Well" said old Adolph, "that's very uncivil.
I suppose after this I must go to the Devil."
So he turned on his heels and off he did go
At the top of his speed to the regions below.

But when he got there he was full of dismay.
Whilst waiting outside he heard Old Nick saying
"Now look here, boys, I give you a warning
I'm expecting old Adolph down here in the morning.

But don't let him in for to me it's quite clear
He's a very bad man and we don't want him here.
For once he gets in there'll be no end of quarrels;
In fact, I'm afraid, he'll corrupt our good morals."

"Oh Satan, dear Satan," old Adolph he cried
"Excuse me for listening whilst waiting outside.
If you won't let me in, where can I go?"
"Indeed" said the Devil "I really don't know."

"Let me sit in the corner, no matter how hot"
"Oh no", said the Devil, "most certainly not.
We don't admit people for riches or wealth
Your sulphur and matches made hell for yourself."

He kicked Adolph out and vanished in smoke
And just at that moment old Adolph awoke.
He jumped out of bed in a shivering sweat
And said "That dream I shall never forget.
I won't go to heaven, I know very well
But it's really too bad to be kicked out of hell."

This recitation appears to be unique to Freda Palmer.

2 - 29. **Murphy's Little Girl** (Roud 27920) Recorded by Gwilym Davies, 30 November, 1975.

Murphy was one of God's gentlemen

Well, that's what the sky pilot said,
He should have known the make of men
Out there midst the wounded and dead.
With its shrapnel mixture
And death shrieking round in the air
That stamps the hallmark on a fellow
And shows if he's crooked or square.

You'd never call Murphy an angel
A six footer brawny and tough
He could swear too, could Murphy -
Which angels don't.
When the shells were cutting up rough
But next minute his smile was on
'Twas that smile won many a pal
And you'd know Murphy's text before it began
"Say boys, you should see my gal."

And she wasn't his sweetheart either
Just a quaint little lass of seven
And Murphy would tell you
Her eyes were like stars
Just touched with the blue of heaven.
Her mother was dead, and the girlie was left
To brighten up life's dark ways
For the Dad who loved her dearly
And who talked of her night and day.

Of the quaint little letters she wrote him
Once she told how her doll had got broke
??? Pal, Tommy Jones said "'Twas German"
Murphy laughed a week at the joke.
"Tom shot her at eight in the morning
With a hammer that did just as well
So I hopes you sends me a British one, Dad,
With kisses and love from your Nell."

We'd pictured her bright as a sunbeam
And skipping around in her play
And Murphy he never let on we were wrong
'Til we found it out one day.
Ginger Brown of company "B"
Had the luck to get home on a pass
And what does he do but he makes a call
On Murphy's little lass.

"Say boys" whispered Brown "She's a cripple
And sits in her chair all day
So I moves we send her the biggest doll
That's made out Boo-long way"
So we hands round the hat and buys the doll
Though 'twas French it would do as well
And we send it, "With love
from your Daddy's chums"
Straight off to Murphy's Nell.
The very next night through the winding trench
The word went travelling round
"Boys, it's the charge and bayonets.
And we outs with ne'er a sound.
While the guns kept up their bombing
Like a dart, for the foe we sped
A volley, and then another
And into the death storm ahead.

A chap hasn't time to think much then
Scarce a minute to mutter a prayer,
For the bullets were whistling
We heard music of death in the air.
It was death in our wake and death before
In that grapple of man to man
And Murphy he fought with avenging hand
Nell's Dad was aye in the van.

And we drove them back to the trenches
Holding fast 'til break of day
And then they came on in their thousands
So we suddenly gave way.
Paying off the debts we owed them
For the comrades we had lost
Straight, we struck a blow for Britain
But what mattered it the cost.

I saw Murphy wipe his bayonet
Though the steel was thick with red
And then he staggered back against me
While his eyes bulged in his head.
"Oh my God" he cried, "There's Gerry.
He's been hit, he's down, my Pal
I am going out to fetch him
For the sake of Gerry's gal."

It was death to make this venture
And we told Jim Murphy so
But he counted it his duty

'Twas a comrades place to go.
His eyes were shining bright as stars
His smile was there as well
And stretching out his hands he cried
"I'm coming, coming, Nell."

We thought him mad, but soon
He's racing for the hill
Where Gerry Baker's lying
Will he win? Ah no, he never will.
He's down, no there he is again
The boldest held their breath
For Murphy, God's own gentleman
Was playing a game with death.

We saw him reach his comrade
Then slung him o'er his arm
And I think we prayed that God
Would keep the both of them from harm.
Then crawling back to our cages
Keeping Gerry under fire
Just like an older brother
And I ? both ??
But the bullets they still whistled
From that trench way up the hill
And when almost safe amongst us
Murphy fell, and lay stark still.

With his body covering Gerry's
From the leaden hail that sped,
And our eyes grew sort of misty
For we knew our pal was dead.
When the dark of night came creeping
And the stars looked out and smiled
We went out for Jim and Gerry
Thinking of that little child,
Sitting all alone for ever
For the Dad who'd come back no more.

Gerry lived, but brave Jim Murphy's
Fighting days were past and o'er,
And a chap could ne'er die better
His, the long and dreamless sleep.
Hers, the weary nights of waiting
Nights when she would wake to weep
He was smiling, just like Murphy
In his finger clenched a curl
That he'd clipped when duty called him
Just to mind him of his girl.

To the cannon's sullen bombing
Comrades laid him down to rest,
Far away from her he worshipped
Little lone girl in the west.
Up comes Ginger Brown in a hurry
"Tis a letter came tonight
It's for Murphy but I'm thinking
'Tain't his little girl's handwrite"

"Read it" says the Sergeant
While we all stood silent near
"Cos you see, Jim might be listening
It might do him good to hear."
Ginger's voice broke "It is a neighbour;
She writes this note to say
God has call-en home your darling;
Nellie passed away today."

Not a word was even spoken
Sometimes words are vain and cheap
We just crept back to our duties
Though we felt more like to weep.
Ginger Brown he stayed behind us
Just to lift away the sod
And lay the letter near the ringlet
Leaving Murphy safe with God.

Life and death is just a riddle,
And I wonder if it's true,
That the dead can call the living;
If 'tis so, Jim Murphy knew.
Maybe little Nell had called him
Way from the gates of pearl,
Maybe they passed through together,
Murphy and his little girl.

Apparently this poem was written by a soldier in the First World War and was actually printed in a magazine called *The Red Letter*, which was published from 1899 to 1987 by the DC Thomson Organisation.

2 - 30. **The Orphan Child** (Roud 24563)
Recorded by Mike Yates, 1 May, 1975.

Slumbering by the dear old fireside

When the lights are dim and low
There's a vision oft appearing
Takes me back long years ago.

'Tis the picture of a maiden
With two eyes of azure blue
And it brings back tender memories
Of a child that I once knew.

Just a little ragged urchin
One of London's waifs and strays
Like the ones you often meet with
In great cities nowadays.

In my dreams I seem to see her
Standing there with bare white feet
With her tiny tray of flowers
In the busy London streets.

From my study I could hear her
With her sweet and plaintive cry
As she offered sprays of flowers
To the people passing by.

And I used to sit and wonder,
For the whole thing puzzled me,
Where the little child belonged to
And where all her friends could be.

But in time I learned the story
From my little daughter, Flo,
How her parents both had perished
In a train smash, years ago.

She had no-one left to help her
So the child had settled down
With a woman she called Auntie
In the slums of London Town.

Flo and Rosie grew quite friendly
And a dozen times a day
Flo would tell us all the troubles
Of the waif across the way.

And when play time hours were over
Flo would sit upon my knee

Asking me, in childish fashion,
Why such cruel things could be?

Came, at last, the eve of Christmas,
London lights were all a-glow

And the crowds of Christmas shoppers
Gaily wandered to and fro.

I was sitting in my study
When I heard my daughter say
"Can I take this dolly, Mama,
To my friend across the way?"

With a smile, my wife consented
For her heart was good as gold,
And she'd taken quite an interest
In the tales our child had told.

So my little fair haired lassie
Gazing on the doll with pride
Slipped away to give the present
To the little waif outside.

She had left us but a moment
When my heart nigh ceased to beat
For a childish scream of terror
Reached me from the busy street.

I rushed out in fear and trembling
And my heart's blood nearly froze
For a crowd of white-faced people
Stood around my child and Rose.

Very soon I learned the story
From the people passing by
How the crowd had been attracted
By my little daughter's cry.

And they noticed she had stumbled
As she made to cross the road
Right in front of the great horses
Cantering with their heavy load.

Though the man had tried to stop them
It was more than he could do
For the load was mighty heavy
And the road was greasy, too.

Then the little waif from Slumland
Rushed across the busy street
And, with God's help, dragged my darling
From beneath those iron feet.

Little Flo was quite uninjured
But the waif was racked with pain
For those iron hoofs had caught her
And her chance of life seemed vain.

All that night we sat beside her,
Though it seemed all hope was far
And our eyes were weak with watching
When the morning came at last.

'Twas an old time Christmas morning,
Snow lay thick upon the ground,
And the bells were sweetly pealing
From the churches all around.

But our hearts were filled with sorrow
Standing by that snow white bed.
For, before those bells ceased ringing,
Little Rosie's soul had fled.

She had turned and gazed with longing
At the dolly by her side
And the tender word of 'Mother'
Passed her lips just as she died.

Now her troubles all are ended
Never more will people meet
With that tiny ragged urchin
In the busy London streets.

I was young when those things happened
Now I'm growing old and grey
But the deed will live in memory
Right until my dying day.

My dear child is now a woman
And poor Rosie's tiny grave
Is attended to and cared for
By the one she died to save.

This recitation appears to be unique to Freda Palmer, and she said that this was one of the stories that she would tell while travelling with the concert party. According to Freda, such pieces, delivered with a broad Oxfordshire accent, were always popular.

2 - 31. Dialect Story

Recorded by Mike Yates, 1975.

There was two chaps, they'd never been out of the village. So one said "I should like to go to London. Would thee like to go?" And he said "Ah" and he said "Well, let's go then." So off they goes to London.

And when they gets there one said "I ben alf ungruy." He said "So be I." He said "Here's a likely place, let's go in here." So in they goes. He said "This is a posh place. Tablecloths an' all, he said "I reckon we've come to have a wrestling match, not to have a meal. Along comes this chap, handed us a bit of paper. I looked at it ... We didn't stop in there very long cos they had us out.

So we goes out and I goes up to the man on the corner and I said "Can I have an Oxford Mail?" He looked at I as if I was daft. So I goes back and says to George, "C'mon let's go back to Leafield cos he says "This is no place for we." So back we goes. I said "I be going back up the street. Is thee coming?" He says "Aah, I might as well come with you." Then off we goes up there and that's when we meet George 'n I says "En't you going courting then?" He says "Aah, I be just going, says cos when we goes out we don't talk," he says, "but we walks for hours and hours ... And then her gives a sigh an' I ... it's time to talk. So I says to her says I "Meg, I love ee" and her said "George, I love ee too." And I says to her, I says, says I "What fer did ee love I?" "What fer? Cos 'e do."

Credits:

Firstly I should thank the people whose recordings appear on this CD - primarily Alison McMorland and Mike Yates. Alison McMorland sent me her collection of four tapes-worth of songs and recollections of Freda Palmer. As mentioned in the Introduction, Alison's treasure trove of 35 song recordings might never have seen the light of day if I'd not contacted her ... and this would have been a single CD rather than a 2-CD Set. I should add that Freda's friend Albert 'Son' Townsend, from Bampton was present at the time of recording, and can be heard contributing to the choruses of some of the songs, along with Alison herself - making these tracks the 'art as process' approach that I so love. Also, as you will see, she contributed the majority of the biographical booklet notes through transcribing so much of Freda's conversation. Enormous thanks to Alison for this great contribution.

Regular MT Records purchasers will know that this is, I think, the thirteenth time that Mike Yates and I have produced CDs for the label - some of which, the *Far in the Mountains* series, have been our best sellers over the years. It is worth pointing out that Mike has always donated the 10% royalty that I pay on sales, towards the running costs of both the MT Magazine and the MT Records label. He has never asked for, or received, any reward beyond the knowledge that the singers and

players he recorded are available to the small audience which values them.

Much the same applies to all the other collectors with whom I've worked down the years. Without them, these CDs would never have existed ... and it goes without saying that without the assistance of countless other collaborators over the years, none of our 112 CD and CD-ROM publications would have ever been possible.

I should also thank Steve Roud, not only for the recordings of his that appear here, but also for providing me with copies of his wonderful *Folksong* and *Broadside Indexes*, without which many of my Song Notes would certainly never exist. Also thanks to Gwilym Davies, not only the two of his recordings included here, but for numerous others scattered amongst the output of MT Records. Thanks to Duncan Broomhead for scans of the photos of Freda from the Arnold Woodley Collection in the Morris Ring Photographic Archive. Finally, thanks to Mike, Ken, Steve and Keith for their contributions to the booklet notes.

Neither should anyone forget Danny Stradling's exemplary song transcriptions and proof-reading, the subject of much praise from numerous reviewers down the years.

Booklet: editing, DTP, printing
CD: formatting, production
by Rod Stradling

A Musical Traditions Records
Production © 2018



Various photos of Freda from the Arnold Woodley Collection in the Morris Ring Photographic Archive.

This one by Mike Yates.

