

Bernie Cherry

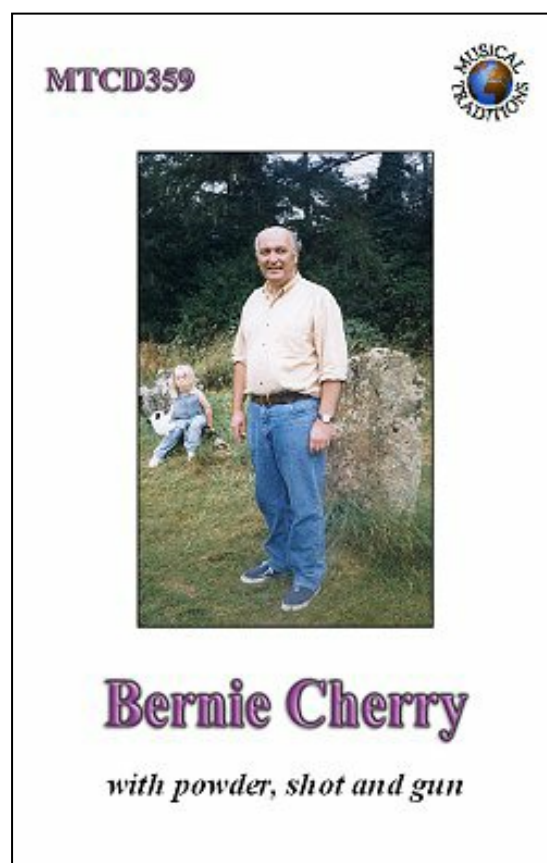
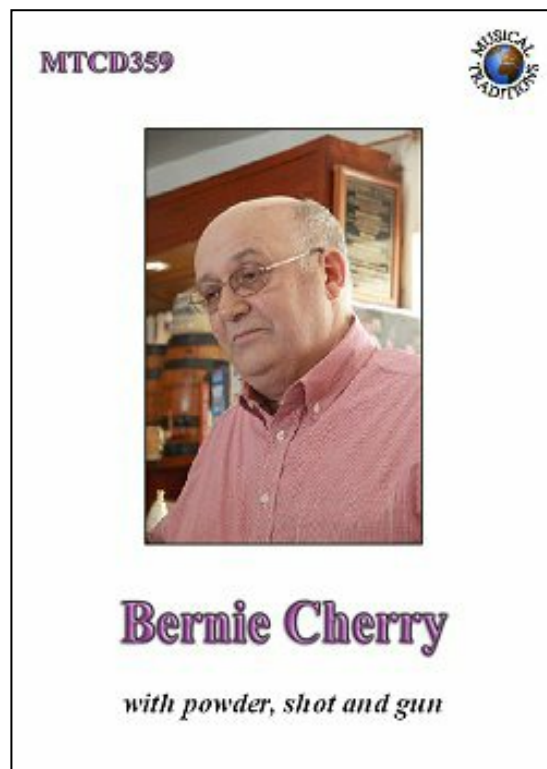
with powder, shot and gun

MTCD359

Tracklist:

1	<i>Cupid's Garden</i>	3:15
2	<i>The Bitter Withy</i>	2:59
3	<i>Henry My Son</i>	2:54
4	<i>The Drowned Lover</i>	5:09
5	<i>The Gown of Green</i>	2:37
6	<i>Death and the Lady</i>	3:44
7	<i>The Poor Old Couple</i>	3:16
8	<i>The Seeds of Love</i>	3:25
9	<i>Searching for Young Lambs</i>	2:56
10	<i>The Poachers' Fate</i>	2:38
11	<i>Peggy Benn</i>	3:38
12	<i>Green Upon the Green</i>	1:12
13	<i>Six Dukes Went a-Fishing</i>	2:41
14	<i>The Storms are on the Ocean</i>	4:30
15	<i>Henry the Poacher</i>	7:43
16	<i>No Sir, No</i>	4:32
17	<i>Sweet Belinda</i>	4:26
18	<i>Up in the North</i>	2:46
19	<i>The Royal George</i>	2:11
20	<i>John Barleycorn</i>	6:09
21	<i>The Wild Rover</i>	2:40

Total: 75:30



Bernie Cherry - *with powder, shot and gun*

Introduction:

When housing difficulties caused our move from London to Wiltshire in 1973, the Cheltenham folk clubs were our first source of friendship, song and music. We already knew several of the people concerned, but Bernie Cherry was one of the first new friends we made there. He was a singer, was learning to play the fiddle, and seemed to be involved in morris dancing. This latter activity was of some interest to me, as I'd just been asked to play for Bampton.

It wasn't too long after that I was asked to come and give a hand in the music for the morris side Bernie was involved with, along with Ken Langsbury and several others we knew slightly. This side quickly evolved into the *Gloucestershire Old Spot Morris Dancers* ... who became quite well-known within a year or so!

Another activity in Cheltenham was a newly formed song and music session at the *Old Swan Inn*, which eventually gave birth to *The Old Swan Band* - with Bernie as one of the fiddlers. But, as his brief autobiography (following) will show, Bernie had a tendency to move on as soon as something was going well, and he'd left the area and the company by the time *Old Spot* and *Old Swan* became well-known nationally.

But it was his singing that I always remembered; not at all like any of the other revivalists I'd heard in the London clubs we ran or attended, nor the ones in the south-west we now visited. But he didn't quite sound like someone trying to sound like a traditional singer either ... he had his own style, and very much his own repertoire of unusual songs.

We rather lost touch with Bernie when he was off around the country, except for the annual visit to Bampton at Whitsun, and didn't really re-connect with him until he settled in Suffolk with his wife, Marian, and growing young family. He's never been the sort of singer to put himself forward at a session, so we seldom heard more than one or two of his songs when we met - but they were always memorable.

If you value a no-nonsense approach to singing, and find unusual songs interesting, I think you'll enjoy this CD as much as we do.

Rod and Danny Stradling
Spring 2013

Bernie Cherry - in conversation with Rod Stradling:

I was born in 1947 in a place called Bill Street which was in the parish of Frindsbury Extra, born in a little row of 18th century cottages opposite my Dad's local, *The Royal Oak*, which later became my local as it happens.

Dad was the son of a farmer cum publican and worked on the land until the War, and then was in the Army, that sort of thing.

Mum was a Lancashire weaver who moved South, and went into service when the cotton industry collapsed, so how they got together I don't know.

Well, anyway it was a nice little old place to live and I lived there until I was nearly six and then we moved to a place called Wainscot which is in the same parish but over the fields a bit, yeah opposite my dad's local really ... as it happens, which later became a local of mine until I was 16 ... 17.

The Cherrys certainly hadn't moved since the 18th century more than about fifteen miles. Grandad was born in the next parish to me; Dad was born in a neighbouring parish, but a different one; they used to move around because of the farmwork basically but they never seemed get any farther north than the Gravesend area, and they never moved across the river, which is very strange. So quite an interbred lot, I think, really, us Cherrys, but there you are. Even Marian is partly Cherry. Her great grandmother was my grandfather's sister. Yeah, strange isn't it?

I don't really want to talk about school or anything like that, it's just a pain in the neck, but I did have quite a nice childhood for the most part. My dad's sister who was known as Aunt Sis, though her name was Ada, who lived opposite us in Bill Street for a fair few years and I was a bit of favourite with her and I used to spend a lot of time round there and even stayed round there for most of the summer holidays.

Uncle Albert was the chief mechanic at a big haulage company in Gravesend, and they had this lovely pre-war Wolsley, big black Wolsley with, y'know, doors that the opposite way to these days, and we used to go to Hastings, and places like that. Aunt Cis used to say "Where do you want to go?" and I'd say "I'd like to go to Margate" and she'd say "We ain't going to Margate, boy," she said, "because it's only in the winter that the water ever gets over the sand there, and you get all sorts of Heathens pissing shit and spewing all over the place." That was Aunt Cis, she believed in calling a spade a spade. Lovely woman, lovely woman, and she could cook. And Uncle Albert was one of these people that let life roll over them, you know. He sat there and got looked after, he never kicked up. They were nice. They were lovely days, and it was an interesting area to live in as well, because it was countryside, typically Kentish in that there's lots of woodland, and orchards, all that sort of thing, so scrumping was quite a big pastime, and then later on working picking fruit, y'know, for pocket money.

But also it's a really big military area and so it's full of all these wonderful strange Victorian and Georgian fortifications that I used to find fascinating. There's two great big granite forts on the islands in the Medway and one of them you could get to at low tide, you could walk across but I wasn't thinking about the tides so I walked across (laughs) and when I got back to where the crossing was up the water was up. I yelled me guts out and then somebody came and took me off and said "The way the wind's blowing you're lucky we heard you. They'd hear you in Gillingham alright" which was miles away, y'know. But it was one of those places where everybody knew everybody else, so the word soon got round. "You could've been drowned, Bernard" said Mother.

Anyway, that's where I'm from. Moved away when I was about sixteen. Shall I tell you what I did for a living, first of all. When I left school, I went and worked in Chatham Dockyard as a messenger and it was probably ... I've worked in some overmanned places in my time, but Chatham Dockyard was astounding for overmanning, I mean we worked in this office block and I suppose there might have been maybe 16 ... 18 offices which were all occupied by, almost all occupied by naval officers and they were very luxurious, wonderful carpets and mahogany desks, and everything made in the dockyard, absolutely incredible. And I think there were six messenger boys, a Head Messenger, and an Assistant Head Messenger, on the ground floor; and three was a Head Messenger and one boy upstairs. But the senior officers were on the ground floor, obviously, and a really nice lot they were, the navy lot, much more democratic than you'd imagine, you know, friendly and kind. So I worked there for a while, but it was deadly boring. And then, you never stayed in that job for long, they'd always find you something else, and I went and worked in the sail loft. It's not as romantic as it sounds 'cos the only sails they made were nylon sails for the Royal Navy Yacht Club, and they also made tarpaulin covers for the guns onboard ship and things like that, and it was my job to wax the thread mechanically, and generally cart things about and that was nice there.

RS: Still pretty much a messenger boy, then?

Oh yeah, messenger boy cum labourer, but it paid a little bit better and it was the first time really that I became aware of the fact that people had their own little ways of doing things. Like there were a couple of blokes that I knew there and they were like a music hall double act, they were absolutely brilliant, y'know, insults and little songs in harmony, and things like that, very, very nice.

So I did that for a while but again it was boring and underpaid so I decided I would go and the following summer I thought I would go and have a bit of adventure - off I went, and packed my sleeping bag and went on the road. Went to Brighton and St Ives and all those places for a few weeks. Went home; sort of ran into a few mates and one or two people. One mate of mine and his girlfriend said "Oh, we're moving to a place called Cheltenham, I don't know if you've ever heard of it." They said, "Well, if you want to come up, we're sharing this great big flat, if you want to come up and stay, then do." So they'd no sooner asked and ... so that was how Cheltenham happened. This mate of mine, he was a communist. His dad worked for Intourist, which was the Soviet Union's tourist organisation, y'know. So it was family stuff, but he was into folk music of various sorts. The first time I ever heard the Carter Family was a record that he'd got, but he also had a lot of records of English Revivalists, some Bob Dylan records, all sorts of stuff, you know.

RS: So, just to interrupt, the year when you went to Cheltenham?

That would be, the first time, 1965 I suppose. I'm missing some ... no, 1964 I went for the first time but I only stayed for a few days. That was it, and I went back the next year and moved in with them. It all gets a bit confusing, it's such a long time ago but ...

My main musical interest was jazz, New Orleans jazz in particular, like with a lot of people. But folk music sort of caught my ear, especially the Carter Family, as it happens. After a while I suppose I just sort of bummed around for a while. But about 1966, late '65 I met a Welsh girl who sang and played guitar - good singer and played guitar quite well - and she taught me to play guitar and I started singing, even though I'd been told at school that I couldn't sing in tune ... isn't it always the way?

RS: So many people. Normal!

Really? Good God! Anyway, eventually we moved down to Rochester, we had a flat just opposite Rochester Cathedral and Castle, which are across the way from each other. We used to go to local folk clubs and so on, and got to know the local folk scene a bit.

RS: That's where you encountered Mike Hicks?

Mike Hicks was living on the sailing barge under the Medway Bridge, the sailing barge *Nellie*. It's still afloat, partly thanks to him 'cos he did a lot of work on it. Anyway, I'd heard most of the people who were doing the folk clubs at the time by then, including Seamus Ennis, who I thought was wonderful. Including Arlo Guthrie, and, this was all in Rochester, Margaret Barry. It was great but most of the records I was listening to were the usual popular revivalists of the time; Martin, of course, The Watsons, who I thought were wonderful. And I decided I wanted to learn a song called *Spencer the Rover*, so I asked Mike about this, I'd met him in a folk club a little while before, and I said "Have you got a recording?" He said "Yeah. I've got two recordings of it. I've got one by the Young Tradition (I think it was) and I've got this other one" which of course was the Copper Family. So I went over and he played me that; then he played me Harry Cox, and various other people, and that amazed me because I'd read somewhere that a lot of people up at Cecil Sharp House had taken years to get their ear around Harry Cox, and the first time I heard him I thought "This is the man, this is the man." Wonderful!

And so I dropped fake folkie accent and started singing like an old man (laugh)

RS: The other folkie accent!

Well, put a bit of a groan into me voice. There weren't many people around who were singing in their own natural voice at the time, that's a fact. Including a lot of the folk club acts. There was this strange thing that you should ... I think it was partly McColl's idea that you should sing either in your own accent or in the accent of the region that the song came from, which I thought was incredibly weird. But then he used to do that himself, so ...

RS: But he also interestingly said that people ought to try and sing songs from their own area ...

Well, I wasn't aware that anything had been collected in Kent at all, until I saw the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, which has one song that was collected in Maidstone, it says anonymously, but it was actually Francis Collinson who collected a lot of stuff around Maidstone in the forties, and I wasn't aware that there were any traditional singers living in Kent, but there were but it never occurred to me until a little bit later that some of the people I worked with were. Because there were two songs that all matelots knew, and a lot of the factories I worked in there were a lot of ex-Chatham ratings, and one of them was *A Working Man Came Home One Night* and the other was *The Young Sailor Cut Down in his Prime* and I met several people who knew both of those and nothing else except matelot songs, which were interesting in their own way, but unfortunately I don't remember any of them, which is a real pity, 'cos they're very funny a lot of matelot songs, especially the ones that take the piss out of the people that work in the dockyard.

RS: It's sort of interesting that there doesn't appear to be a great deal of overlap between the songs that the sailors are reputed to sing, songs about on the sea, and the songs in the dockyards. I think it's the same in Plymouth. Had odd conversations with Vic (Legg) ...

Oh yeah, 'cos he's got a lot of matelot songs, matey songs.

RS: But they're not sea songs.

Oh no. Very often they're parodies of old pop songs.

RS: So, anyway, you'd heard Harry Cox and that made a big impression on you

Yeah, I thought "this is for me", and I enjoyed singing unaccompanied,

anyway, though I did carry on with guitar and five string banjo for quite a time; I still do play guitar a bit, but it doesn't interest me as much as it did, which is ironic really, 'cos I've got a really good guitar now and I didn't then. But there we are.

So then what happened from there? When I split up with Barbara I basically went back to Cheltenham. And lo and behold, somebody said to me "There's a folk club at the Victory Club, but the lights are on and it's everybody sitting in rows. I don't think you'll like it." But it was the only folk club there was in Cheltenham at the time so I thought 'Well, I'll go.' And Hallelujah, I went along, put me name down to sing, you used to get a free pint the first time you sang there, which was nice, and met Ken Langsbury, Dave Stephenson, Ron Taylor, and the rest is history. And I went every week, and I sang just about every week, and sang two different songs every week for about two years I think.

I think the *Victory Club* had probably finished by then and there were two, either that or they were both running together because the *Victory Club* was Sunday night and the *Exmouth Arms* I think was Wednesday night, something like that. So you got two good nights ... maybe the ... I'm not quite sure of the *Victory Club*. I think perhaps it did carry on because it was on a circuit with Swindon, 'cos Swindon was Friday night, and there was a club in Tewkesbury on Saturday night, and then the *Victory Club* on ... so you could get some really quite interesting people that you couldn't book them economically for one night, you know. So you would get Isabel Sutherland, for instance, who I thought was lovely, such a nice woman. And you'd get all the stars, Shirley Collins, Martin, the funny people - Nigel Denver and so on. And people who used to travel miles; I mean Bob Cooney used to come down from Birmingham probably once a month, and he always used to sing and he was good - a good singer. All sorts of people - Peter Coe and Christine Richards, regularly there because Peter was at college in Cheltenham. All sorts of people - Roy Harris, oh well, it just goes on and on doesn't it? Scan Tester was there once. Trying to think who else. Not a lot of traditional singers, as it happens, but you know one or two, and just about all of it was recorded, which was also very nice, and it was a club for people who appreciated decent music and were interested ... great days. I didn't stay with it very long, though.

RS: Well, it didn't actually last very long, really.

Well no it didn't. I'm not quite sure why that was because I'd already gone but I always suffered with depression, and when I got depressed I would just run away from myself basically, so I could bugger off and do something else. Of course you always take yourself with you; it took me a lot of years to work that one out. You know, I would always just disappear, as the saying goes, I would "snatch defeat from the jaws of victory". It was the same with the *Swan Band*, left just as it was starting to get interesting, y'know. And I regret that to this day, I must say 'cos I wouldn't have minded, I'm not sure that I would have wanted to play with the band as it is now, but I wouldn't have minded another two or three years of it, but that's life innit? Might have even improved my fiddle playing a bit, but that had to come later.

RS: So you baled out of Gloucestershire, and where did you go?

I went to Pembrokeshire where I didn't do anything much musically for a long time. I did sing. There was a sort of folk club which was really the kind of place that was swarming with singer/songwriters most of whom could sing but most of them couldn't write - and the few that could write couldn't sing. And I used to go along and sing a few songs there.

RS: What work were you doing then?

When I was working, working on the land. Worked for a neighbouring farmer quite a lot of the time, I used to work part time for the bloke next door. Always worked on the haysel and the harvest as well for my landlord, who was quite a big farmer by local standards. A lot of farmers used to take casual work there and they paid cash, and they fed you. They're very hospitable, Pembrokeshire farmers. Did a bit of building work as well, this that and the other. But I got fed up with it in the end, felt like a stranger in a strange land, which of course I was; and it got to the point where I knew enough Welsh to know that I was being talked about. Most people were fine, you know, I will say, for the most part, very friendly, kind, generous. Proper old fashioned country people, in fact.

But I'd more or less forgotten about singing, I guess, except as y'know sing a song now and then in a pub or whatever. You know how it is, we lived in Leeds for a while, and it was a strange scene there, I never did any singing there at all. I used to play the fiddle a bit in sessions.

But when we moved to Suffolk, there was a lot going on there. There

were still a lot of the old boys, and John and Katie were running a regular monthly do, which was a knockout, absolute knockout. I always used to sing at that, but you sing a song that really catches the imagination of the people around you, they ask you to sing it *ad infinitum*, so you end up with a repertory of about three songs, and it got a bit like that. So that was the singing, but I did start playing a lot more, and we had a little band going for a while which was quite an interesting one. It was me, Reg Hall, Phil Heath-Coleman on fiddles, John Grout on cello, and Des Miller on mouthorgan. Most of the time we used to meet up at our place, we were living out in the sticks in Suffolk then, and it used to go like a bloody train, but whenever we tried to play anywhere publicly it never seemed to work, you know, and in the end it was a pity, but there was bit of a falling out between me and Des. I never did work out what it was about. So that was nice, and it did do a lot for my fiddle playing, and much happier about my fiddle playing than I used to be. I play much more like Reg Hall than I used to, as well. But Reg was bloody good to me, I must say, he always encouraged me and, y'know, I used to enjoy going down to see him and Clare, and eating Clare's wonderfully eclectic food, and going out around the pubs in Croydon or up to *The Triangle* for the Irish night, and so on, and talking non-stop, talk, talk, talk, about the music and all the rest of it. It did me a lot of good.

I don't know if there's much missing out of this, but it doesn't matter 'cos we can put it together, but what got me back into singing, I'll tell you what it was. I went to, I was at the Music Day in Stowmarket, and Roger Grimes came over to me, and I'd known Roger vaguely for a long time but only vaguely, like from Stroud Folk Club days and all the rest of it, and then we'd got talking, I think, the year before, and we'd hit it off really quite well. He came over and he said "I've got a message from Ken. Ken says "Would you like to come to Sidmouth, and help run the session in the *Volunteer* in the evenings' because he thinks you're the sort of person who would help run it the way we want it." So I said I'd be absolutely delighted. So, this being September and it's August before the next one. So I said to Marian "What do you think? Would you mind if I went to Sidmouth for a week?" And she said "No, that'd be alright. We'll have a few days in the ... we'll take the caravan to the Forest of Dean and then you can drive us over to Margaret's, that's her sister in Oxford, and then you can take the caravan down to Sidmouth." But in the meantime of course I'd got this lost repertory, so I thought we'll dig a few bits out of that. I wasn't very happy with it, so I started learning songs again. I got a lot from the stuff that you put out, *Up in the North and Down in the South*, for a start. Great record. Anyway, my singing has really improved in the last few years and I've cobbled together what I think are some quite interesting versions of fairly well known songs, I don't sing anything the way I first heard it.

The Songs:

Roud numbers quoted are from the data-bases, *The Folk Song Index* and *The Broadside Index*, continually updated, compiled by Steve Roud. Currently containing almost 388,500 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.efdss.org> 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 Broad-sides* 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.

1 - *Cupid's Garden* (Roud 297)

'Twas down in Cupid's Garden
I wandered for to view
The sweet and lovely flowers
That in the garden green

And one it was sweet jasmine
The lily, pink, and rose
They are the finest flowers
That in the garden grows.

I had not been in the garden
But scarcely half an hour
When I beheld two fair pretty maids

Sat under a shady bower
And one she was sweet Nancy
So beautiful and fair
The other was a virgin
And did the laurels wear.

I boldly stepped up to her
And unto her did say
"Are you engaged with any young man?
Come tell to me I pray."
"No, I'm not engaged with any young man
I solemnly declare
I mean to stay a virgin
And still the laurels wear."

So hand in hand together
This loving couple went
To view the secrets of her heart
Was the sailors full intent
And whether she would slight him
While he to the wars did go
Her answer was "Not I, my love
For I love a sailor bold."
"It's down in Portsmouth harbour
There's a ship lies waiting there
Tomorrow to the seas I'll go
Let the wind blow high or fair
And if ever I live to return again
How happy I shall be
With you my love, my own true love
Sat smiling on my knee."

This song seems well-known today, probably due to the Copper Family version which became popular in the 1970s, and Roud has 107 instances, though half of these refer to broadside publications. The other entries are mostly from England. There are only 28 named singers, the most well-known of whom are Harry Cox, Sarah Makem, and various members of the Copper Family.

The song was popular on broadsides, with most of the major 19th century printers including it in their lists. The earliest dated version so far to come to light is in the songster *The Vocal Library* published in 1818, but this is a long time after Cuper's pleasure gardens were closed in 1753. They were founded by Abraham Cuper in 1678 and were situated just south of the River Thames, where the approach to Waterloo Bridge now stands. In their time, the gardens were a well-known pleasure resort for Londoners, and are also mentioned in several other traditional songs.

There have been just a dozen sound recordings, of which only those by Sarah Makem (TSCD674), her cousin Annie Jane Kelly (MTCD353-5), and Bob and Ron Copper (TSCD534) are available on CD. *Bernie*: The tune for this is from John Mason of Icomb near Stow-on-the-Wold, the words from the Copper family. I very much like simple love songs like this.

2 - *The Bitter Withy* (Roud 452)

When our saviour walked down to yonder town
As far as the holy, holy well
Oh, there he espied three of the finest children
That ever any tongue could tell.

"Good morn, good morn, good morn" cried they
"Good morning then" cried he
"And which of you three fine children
Will play at ball with me?"

"Oh, we are lords' and ladies' sons
All born in a bower and hall
And you are but a poor maid's child
Born in an oxen's stall."

So our saviour built a bridge of the beams of the sun
And over he went he
And the three jolly children they followed him
And drowned they were, all three.

Then upward ball and downward ball
Their mothers did wail and squall
Saying "Mary mild, fetch home your child

For ours he has drowned all.”

Then Mary mild took a handful of withys
And laid our dear saviour across her knee
And with that handful of small withys
She gave him slashes three.

Then it's "Cursed be to the bitter withy
That has cursed me to smart
And the withy shall be the very first tree
To perish at the heart.”

A song known only in England and almost exclusively in the west Midlands - particularly Herefordshire - accounting for 49 of Roud's 63 sightings. And although surnames can be misleading, it looks as if the great majority of the named singers were Gypsies.

Only four sound recordings are known to Roud - one is accredited to a collection by Karpeles and Kennedy from William Payne - then aged 59 and having learned the song from his father - in Gloucester in 1952 (BBC recording 18618). However, the version on *Songs of Ceremony* (Caedmon/Topic) is a conflation of Payne's and one by Charlotte Smith of Tarrington, Herefordshire ... a traveller, of course. Smith was apparently recorded by Kennedy, also in 1952, but both that album and the Folktracks issue credit the collection from Payne as by Karpeles and Pat Shuldham-Shaw. It's something of a paradox that, wherever there's some confusion about who *really* did what in the mid-20th century, the name of Peter Kennedy seems to be frequently involved, yet there was rarely any lack of clarity when it came to demanding royalty payments on 'his' songs.

The other three recordings are available on CD: Sarah Porter sings this song on MTCD309-19, as do both Lemmie Brazil and Alice Webb on MTCD345-7. All three of these singers are Gypsies. Another Gypsy, Wiggy Smith, sings a very similar song, *The High-Low Well*, on MTCD308. Indeed, I am at a loss to see how this isn't merely another version of the same song - it was certainly collected mainly in the same geographical locations, except for a small group of sightings down in Cornwall.

Bernie: I got this from the Bill Payne recording in about 1969, and it's been one of my core songs ever since.

3 - *Henry My Son* (Roud 10, Child 12)

“What have you been eating of? Henry my son,
What have you been eating of? My pretty one.”
“Eels, dear mother, eels, dear mother
Come shake up my bed for I want to lie down,
Oh I want to lie down.”

Who gave you those eels?
My sister dear mother.

What will you leave your father?
Farms and cattle.

What will you leave your mother?
Wealth and riches

What will you leave your sister?
A rope for to hang her.

Also known as *Lord Randall*, this is a very well-known ballad, with 607 Roud entries, and Professor Child gives over a dozen examples. Attempts have been made in the past to tie this ballad to an actual event, usually to the family of Ranulf, sixth Earl of Chester (d.1232), but as it is known in one form or another all over Europe, this has never been successful. Child noted that the ballad was popular in Italy c.1629, so it is probably quite an old story.

As with the ballad *Edward* (Roud 200, Child 13), we have little idea of what actually lies behind this apparently motiveless murder - usually a poisoning by eating either 'sma fish', snakes, eels or, infrequently, poison berries. Not that this has bothered singers, who continue to enjoy the piece.

Other versions available on CD: George Dunn (MTCD317-8); George Spicer (MTCD311-2); Fred Jordan (MTCD333); Bill Smith (MTCD351); Paddy Reilly (MTCD325-6); Joe Heaney (TSCD518D); Ray Driscoll (EFDSS CD02); Gordon Hall (Country Branch CBCD095). Jeannie Robertson's superb version, *Lord Donald*, is regrettably only available

in a truncated form (along with similar versions from Elizabeth Cronin, Thomas Moran, Colm McDonagh and Eirlys & Eddis Thomas) on the CD *Classic Ballads of Britain & Ireland - volume 1* (Rounder CD 1775).

Bernie: I never took much notice of this song until I heard George Spicer's wonderful tune - I was hooked from the start.

4 - *The Drowned Lover* (Roud 185, Laws K18)

In Scarborough fair town a young damsel did dwell
She loved a young sailor, she loved him full well
When he was about to marry her it became this young man's lot
Instead of a married life a watery grave he got.

As they were got sailing through Robin Hood Bay
The wind came down all on then and dismal was the day
The wind came down all on them and the seas like lions roared
Which tossed these poor sailors upon a lee shore.

As they were got swimming, yes swimming for their lives
Some of them had sweethearts and some of them had wives
It was a sad misfortune, it became this young man's lot
Instead of a married life, a watery grave he got.

As soon as this fair maid these tidings did hear
In wringing her hands and a-tearing of her hair
Crying "Come all you cruel billows, come toss my love on shore
That I might behold his sweet features once more.”

As she was a-walking down by the seaside
She met her drowned lover, washed up by the tide
As soon as she seen him, she immediately did stand
For she knew it was her own true love by the marks on his right hand.

“And now that I have found my own true love I do adore
I'll kiss him I'll embrace him ten thousand times o'er
I'll be happy and contented to lay down by his side.”
And the very next day morning, this pretty fair maid died.

In Scarborough fair town this young couple do lay
And written on their tombstone in full memory:
Come all you loyal lovers this way as you pass by
Shed a tear for this couple that now here do lie.

More usually known as *In Scarborough Fair Town*, this is a fairly well-known song (89 Roud entries) in both England and Scotland, but it doesn't appear to have crossed the sea to Ireland. About half of all versions mention Scarborough (or Stowbrow) as the setting of the tragedy in their title, although only six of the collections were from Yorkshire. It was printed by Pitts c.1800-30.

Other recordings on CD: Jumbo Brightwell (MTCD339-10); Sam Lerner (TSCD652); Frank Verrill (TSCD662); Harry Cox (TSCD512D); Harold Smy (VTC5CD); Gordon Hall (Country Branch CBCD 095).

Bernie: One of my favourite tunes with a tragic story - how could I resist? From the great Sam Lerner.

5 - *The Gown of Green* (Roud 1085) With Roger Grimes, melodeon.

As a soldier was a walking all along the highway
Being weary of travelling for many's the long day
Well he met a lovely woman with a baby all in her arms.
Who that she kissed and said "I wish your father would return.”

He said "My charming creature I'm proud to meet you here
With that sweet babe all in your arms that you love so dear
Well I think I know the father and you before I've seen
Don't you remember the day my dear you wore the gown of green.”

“Well it's many battles have I fought all on that raging main
And many battles have I fought in Portugal and Spain.
But now I am returned again with plenty of gold in store
I mean to make you my lawful wife and roam abroad no more.”

“So let us buy the licence all on this very day
And then we will get married without any more delay
With our pretty little prattling babies some pleasures may be seen
That you may never regret the day you wore the gown of green.”

Not a very well-known song, if Roud's total of only 51 instances is realistic; half of these are from broadside or book publications. For some reason or other, *The Gown of Green* was entitled *The Answer to The Gown So Green* on Victorian broadsides, so it may be that there was an earlier song with the first title.

The collected examples come mostly from England; four from Scotland make up the remainder. Percy Grainger recorded it from Joseph Taylor back in 1906, but the recording seems never to have been published.

Other versions available on CD: Danny and Harry Brazil and Alice Webb (MTCD345-7); May Bradley (MTCD349); Jack Norris (TSCD 651).

Bernie: A 'gown of green' is what a young woman gets if she lies on the grass! This is from Jack Norris, a fine singer and melodeon player from Sussex.

6 - *Death and the Lady* (Roud 1031)

As I walked out one morning in May
The birds did sing and the lambs did play
The birds did sing and the lambs did play
I met an old man by the way

His head was bald, his beard was grey
His coat was of some myrtle shade
I asked him what strange country man
Or what strange place he did belong
My name is death, cannot you see?
Lords, Dukes and Ladies bow down to me
I And you are one of those branches three
So you fair maid must come with me

I'll give you gold and jewels rare
I'll give you costly robes to wear
I'll give you all my wealth in store
If you'll let me live a few years more

Oh Lady lay your robes aside
No longer glory in your pride
And now sweet maid make no delay
Your time has come, and you must away

A few days later this fair made died
Write on my tomb the lady cried
"Here lies a most distressed maid
That death now lately hath betrayed"

Although Roud has 110 instances of this wholly English song - all from printed sources of one kind or another - it would seem that it has only been collected from six traditional singers, and that there are no sound recordings.

The text would imply a great age to the song, and Roud's earliest entry shows it having been published in Carey, *Sailor's Songbag*, pp.38-39, in 1778.

Bernie: This is from the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*. "If life was a thing that money could buy, the rich would live and the poor would die." Well, it isn't - good job too!

7 - *The Poor Old Couple* (Roud 491)

There was an old couple and they were poor
Artful, artful, dinna all day
They lived in a house with only one door
Oh, what a rum couple were they.

The old man he went out one day
He left the old woman at home for to stay
Oh what a bad woman was she.

The clerk of the parish came passing by
She invited him in with the wink of her eye
Oh what a bad woman was she.

The old man he came home at last
He tried the door and he found it fast
"Oh my poor wife" cried he.
"It's I've been sick since you've been gone
If you'd been in the garden
you'd have heard me moan."

"Oh my poor wife cried he."

"There's one thing you can do for me
That's fetch me an apple off yonder tree."
"Oh that will I do cried he."

As he was climbing up the tree
She kicked at the ladder and down tumbled he
"That's cleverly done cried he."

As he was climbing up the tree
She opened the door and away ran he
"That's cleverly done cried he."

Not a much collected song with only 44 Roud entries, almost all of which are from England. Only three sound recordings appear to have been made, none of which are available on CD.

Bernie: I learned this from the singing of Manny Aldous of Great Bricett in Suffolk. Manny was one of John Howson's informants.

8 - *The Seeds of Love* (Roud 3)

I sowed the seeds of love
All for to blossom in spring
In April, May and June likewise
While the small birds sweetly sing.

My garden was planted well
With flowers everywhere
I had not the liberty to choose
The flowers that I love most dear.

The gardener was standing there
And I asked him to choose for me
He chose the violet the lily and the pink
But these I refused all three.

The violet I did not like
Because it faded so soon
The Lily and Pink I did quite overlook
And I vowed I would wait 'til June.

For in June there's a red rosy bush
And that's the flower for me
Often times have I plucked
at the red rosy bush
'Til I gained the willow tree.

The willow tree will twain
And the willow tree will twine
And I wish I was back in that young girl's arms
That once had this heart of mine.

So come all you sorrowful young men
That likes to chipper and to change
The grass that is often times trodden under foot
Give it time, it will rise up again.

One might presume that the popularity of this archetypal southern English love song (295 Roud entries) stems from the fact of it being the first song Cecil Sharp collected from the oh-so-appropriately named John England, in Hambridge, Somerset, in 1903. However, the earliest printed versions date from the eighteenth century, and there were many earlier collections, so it seems, simply, that it was a very popular song and no surprise at all that Mr England should have chosen it to sing.

In essence, it's a very old song, and belongs to that class of songs and ballads (going back at least to *A Nosegaie Alwaies Sweet* ... included in *A Handful of Pleasant Delights*, 1584) which centre around the symbolism of flowers - thyme for virginity, rue for its loss, rose for passion, willow for regret, etc.

Other versions available on CD: Cyril Poacher (MTCD303); George Dunn (MTCD317-8); Alec Bloomfield (MTCD339-10); Unknown singer (MTCD333); Fred Jordan (VTD148CD); Pop Maynard (TSCD660); Ernie Payne (VTC6CD); George Withers (VTC9CD); Billy Bartle (EFDSS CD002).

Bernie: Another love song. Tune from Ernie Payne, words by osmosis.

9 - *Searching for Young Lambs* (Roud 1437, Laws O9)

Young Johnny walked out on one Midsummer's morn
And where should he hide himself but under a thorn
He was waiting for that pretty fair maid as she came passing by
She went down in yonder meadow and that is very nigh.

She looked all around her, no lambs could she find
Often had she crossed that young man all in her mind
Then turning round so carelessly she smiled with a blush
For young Johnny had followed after and hid all in a bush.

"Have you seen 'ere a ewe with her young and tender lambs,
Strayed away from the fold, strayed away from their dams?"
"Oh yes oh yes my pretty fair maid I saw them passing by
They went down in yonder meadow and that is very nigh."

He held her hand, he whispered love, he swore his heart was true
He kissed her lips, the lambs they skipped all in the morning dew
About them in the morning dew beneath a sunny sky
It was down in yonder meadow, and that is very nigh.

And now they are got married and are joined in wedlock's bands
No more to go roving in search of young lambs
In searching for young lambs, kind friends, old friendships to renew
And the lambs they skip all round them, all in the morning dew.

Not to be confused with the song *Searching for Lambs* so beloved of Cecil Sharp and other early collectors on account of its splendid tune. The formal structure of this present song belies its origin, namely the Pleasure Garden stage and, indeed, it first appeared in print c.1750 in *Six English Songs and Dialogues, as they are Performed in the Public Gardens*. The song was obviously a favourite at the time and was included in two other song collections, *Apollo's Cabinet*, printed in Liverpool in 1757, and *Cleo and Euterpe*, printed in London in 1758.

Today it is seldom encountered, although odd sets were reported during the last century; Roud has 34 examples; all the English ones are from the southern counties of Devon, Somerset, Hampshire and Sussex, while just three Canadian and two Scottish singers are named. The only still currently available sound recording is of George Spicer (MTCD311-2).

Bernie: Apart from one verse, this is from George Spicer who was, like me, from Kent. Another of those love songs of which I am so fond.

10 - *The Poachers' Fate* (Roud 793, Laws L14) With Rod Stradling, melodeon.

Come you young men of high renown
Who like to drink strong ale that's brown
All pull the lofty pheasant down
With powder, shot and gun.

Me and four more a-poaching went
To get some game was our intent
Our money being gone and spent
We'd nothing else to try.

The keeper heard us fire a gun
And straightway to the spot he run
And swore before the rising sun
That one of us should die.

The bravest man in all our lot
It was his misfortune to be shot
His memory never shall be forgot
As long as we have life.

For help he cried but it was denied
He rose again to join the fight
And all across his gallant breast
The crimson blood did flow.

Deep was the wound the keeper gave
No mortal man his life could save
He now lies sleeping in his grave
Until the judgement day.

And the murderous man who did him kill
And on the ground his blood did spill
Must wander far against his will
And die in sad disgrace.

Usually titled *The Gallant Poachers*, Roy Palmer (in *Everyman's Book of English Country Songs*, 1979) feels that the song dates from at least 1811 or 1812 as its textual influence can be seen on a Luddite song of that period. Given its generally fine tunes and wealth of resonant phrases, it's something of a surprise to find that it has only been collected from ten singers in the oral tradition, all but two from England; most of Roud's 81 entries refer to broadside printings. Only five singers have been recorded: George Dunn (MTCD317-8); Walter Pardon (TSCD668); Harry Cox (TSCD512D) remain available on CD.

Bernie: This is the only song in my repertory that I pinched from the Watsonsons, and what a cracking song it is! I used to do this one with Rod back in the Seventies and I'm glad that I remembered that. I won't forget it again!

11 - *Peggy Benn* (Roud 661)

As I rambled over Highlands hills to a farmer's house I came.
The night being dark and something wet I entered in the same
Where I was kindly treated and a pretty girl I spied
She asked me if I had a wife, but marriage I denied.

I courted her all that long evening 'til near the dawn next day
When frankly then she said to me "Along with you I'll go
For Ireland is a fine country, and you to the Scots are kin
So I will go along with you, my fortune to begin."

Now the daylight being nearly come unto the house I was taken
Where the good man kindly asked me would I wed his daughter, Jane?
"One hundred pounds I will give you besides a piece of land."
But scarcely had he said the word when I thought of Peggy Benn

"Your offer it is very good and I thank you sir, said I
But I cannot be your son in law and I'll tell you the reason why
My business calls me in haste, I am the king's messenger bound
And I cannot be your son in law 'til I've seen the Irish ground."

Oh Peggy Benn thou art my jewel and your heart lies in my breast
And though we at a distance are I will love you the best
And though we are at distance are and the seas between us roar
Yet I'll be constant, Peggy Benn, and I drift for evermore.

This song is something of a mystery because, although the text appears to be Scottish, it was probably first printed in a Belfast chapbook that bears the date 1764, although no printer's imprint is shown. It was published, without music, in the Scottish *Vocal Companion* dated around 1772, and in *The Scots Musical Museum* (1787-1802). This tune is found in *The Songs of Ireland* and is listed there as 'an old melody'. The song thereafter appears in many collections, and in 1788 William Shield included it in his opera *Marian*. The song later appeared in several Irish collections and Colm O'Lochlainn notes that it was 'once very popular in Northern Ireland and among the Irish in Scotland'. However, none of Roud's 64 entries are from Scotland and only two are from Ireland!

There are several variations in the spelling of Bawn (presumably from the Gaelic *bán* = fair or white), *Peggy Band*, *Peggy Ban*, *Peggy Baun*, *Peggy Bawne* or *Fair Peggy* - Walter Pardon is the only listed singer to call her *Peggy Benn*.

Only two singers seem to have been recorded singing this song; Hugh Shields collected it from Margaret Byrne, in Donegal in 1968, and several people recorded Walter Pardon singing it, an example of which can still be heard on TSCD651.

Bernie: As soon as I heard Walter Pardon sing this I knew it was for me!

12 - *Green Upon the Green* (Roud 5363)

There once was a man and his name was Green
Green, lived upon the green.
And he had a son who'd never seen a woman
And you all know what I mean!

There was another man and his name was Green
And he had a daughter who'd never seen a man

"Let's put them into the bed together
To see what they will do to one another."

"Now what is this with it's head so high

Oh, that's my horse with his head so high."

"Now what's this stream that never runs dry
Oh, that's my stream that never runs dry."

"So, lead your horse down to my stream
And if he won't drink we'll push the bugger in!"

This looks like a unique song; Mike Yates recorded it from Bob Cross in Witcombe, Gloucestershire, in 1975, and Roud has no other examples.

Bernie: What more can I say?

13 - *Six Dukes Went a-Fishing* (Roud 78)

Six Dukes went a-fishing
Down by yon seaside
One of them found a dead body
Lay'n by the waterside.

Said one to the others
These words I heard them say
It's the Royal Duke of Grantham
That the tide has washed away.

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

They took out his bowels
And laid out his feet
And balmed his body
With roses so sweet.

Six dukes went before him
Nine raised him from the ground
Twelve lords followed after
In their black mourning gowns.

Black, black was the morning
And white were the wands
Yellow were the flamboys
They carried in their hands.

He now lies betwixt two towers
He now lies in cold clay
And the Royal Queen of Grantham
Goes weeping away.

Not at all a well-known song in the oral tradition, and hardly known at all outside Lincolnshire; Roud's 39 entries include only 7 named singers, with just four sound recordings - none of which have ever been published.

From the *Penguin Book* ... Learned over forty years ago, I love it - it's so sombre that I feel lucky to be alive after I've sung it!

14 - *The Storms are on the Ocean* (Roud 4628 or 49, Child 76) With Roger Grimes, melodeon.

"I'm going away to leave you love,
I'm going away for a while
But you know I will return again
If I go ten thousand miles."

Chorus:

The storms are on the ocean
The heavens may cease to be
The world may lose its motion love
If I prove false to thee.

"Who will shoe your pretty little feet
And who will glove your hand
And who will kiss your rosy red cheeks
When I'm in a far off land?"

"Papa will shoe my pretty little feet
Mama will glove my hand
You can kiss my rosy red cheeks
When you return again."

Don't you see that mournful dove
Flying from pine to pine
She's mourning for her one true love
Just like I mourn for mine.

I'll never go back on the ocean love
I'll never go back on the sea
I'll never go back on that blue eyed girl
'Til she goes back on me.

A song known only in the southern Appalachians, with 27 instances in Roud. It was collected in North Carolina in 1917 by Frank C Brown, who subsequently published it in his 1952 book *North Carolina Folklore* 2, pp.88-92. This was a decade before A P Carter 'wrote' it, recorded it, and made it a worldwide hit. Numerous versions of the various Carter Family recordings will be still available on CD.

Of course, this song is only a shortened version of the great ballad, *Lord Gregory / Fair Annie of Lochroyan*, which has 173 Roud entries from all over Scotland, Ireland, and North America. Surprisingly, there are none from England.

Bernie: One of the first songs recorded by the Carter Family, and a great favourite of mine.

15 - *Henry the Poacher* (Roud 221)

Come all you wild and wicked youths wheresoever you may be
I would have you pay attention and listen to me
The fate of poor lost convicts as you shall understand
And the hardships they all undergo all on Van Dieman's Land
Young men all now beware, lest you be drawn into a snare.

My parents raised me tenderly good learning give to me
'Til all my bad companions beguiled my home from me
I was brought up in Worcestershire, near to the town did dwell
My name is Henry Hubbard and there's many knows me well.

Me and four more went out one night to Squire Daniel's farm
To get some game was out intent as night came falling down
But to our sad misfortune we were taken there with speed
We were taken off to Warwick Gaol which made our hearts to bleed.

It was at the March Assizes at the bar we did appear
Like Job we stood with patience to hear our sentence there
But being some old offenders it made our case so hard
Our sentence was for fourteen years and we were sent on board.

The ship that bore us from the land, the Speedwell was her name
For a full four months and a half we ploughed across that raging main
No land no harbour could we see, believe me it is no lie
All around us one black water, and above us one blue sky.

I oft times looked behind me toward my native shore
And that cottage of contentment that I shall see no more
Likewise my poor old father, he tore his hoary hair
Also my tender mother, in her arms she did me bare.

It was on the fourteenth of July the day we made the land
At four o'clock we went on shore all chained hand in hand
And to see our sufferers I fear I can't tell how
Some were chained unto the harrow and some unto the plough.

And then they marched us into the town without no more delay
It was there a gentleman took me, bookkeeper for to be
I took to my occupation there, my master likes me well
My joys are out of measure, I'm sure no tongue can tell

He kept a female servant, Rosanna was her name
For fourteen years transported from Worcestershire she came
We oft times tell out love tales, there where we are so far from home
And now we're rattling off our chains in foreign lands to roam

These days, this song is usually known as *Van Dieman's Land*, probably from the Watsons' recordings, but this is not the case in the oral tradition - only six of Rouds 85 entries (mostly broadsides) are so named - most singers have preferred Bernie's title. Indeed, the song has not been very widely sung; only nine singers are named by Roud, of whom Walter Pardon, Harry Cox and Frank Hinchliffe are the best-known.

Since it's about a poacher, it should come as no surprise that the song is only known in England - I just tried a search of the Roud *Index* on songs with 'Poacher' in the title and found 337 instances - only a dozen of which could be identified as not being English! Are we the only thieves in these islands - or just the only ones who enjoy singing about it? It could, of course, have something to do with the way in which the English, alone in Europe if not the world, have accorded landowners rights of ownership to the wild animals which happen to be on their domains at any particular time.

Of the six known sound recordings, only those by Walter Pardon (TSCD654), Harry Cox (TSCD512D) and Frank Hinchliffe (Root and Branch 1) are available on CD:

Bernie: This song sounds almost as if it was written by one with first hand experience of the English game laws. Words from Harry Cox, tune from Walter Pardon.

16 - *No Sir No* (Roud 146)

In London city there lived a lady
And her age I do not know
I courted her, all for her beauty
But she would always answer "No.
No Sir, no Sir, no Sir, no Sir."
For she would always answer "No Sir, no."

Her husband was a Spanish captain
Seven long years had been away
And the last time that he left her
He bade her always to say nay

"Oh madam may I walk your garden
Walk and talk as lovers do
And madam would you think it rudely
If I plucked a rose and pinned on you?"

"Oh madam may I tie your garter
Just one inch above your knee
And if my hand it should slip higher
Would you think it rude of me?"

"Oh madam would you strip stark naked
Go to bed as lovers do
And madam would you think it rudely
If I undressed and came with you?"

And now we are in bed together
Gazing on each other's charms
"Would your own husband please you better
If he lay all in your arms?"

"Madam arise, draw back the curtains
The morning cock is crowing high
Madam arise draw back those curtains
Unclasp your arms and let me fly."

This is quite a well-known song, with 125 Roud entries, roughly shared between England and North America; only one example each seems to have been collected in Ireland and Scotland. It must have remained popular into the recent past as there are 36 sound recordings listed, though very few have ever been published. None are currently available on CD, although there are two slightly different versions of the song, called *Ripest Apples*, sung by Joe Jones (MTCD320), and *Twenty Eighteen*, sung by George Townshend (MTCD304-5).

Bernie: As any politician can tell you, it's not what you ask but how you ask it that matters! Another from Sam Larner.

17 - *Sweet Belinda* (Roud 1404) With Roger Grimes, melodeon.

All in the merry month of May, when the men were making hay
And I walked across my old grandfather's farm
There I met a pretty maid, and to her I gently said
"Let me wind up your little ball of yarn."

Chorus:

Sweet Belinda, sweet Belinda, tell me truly, tell me truly you'll be mine
And the blackbird and the thrush, they do sing in every bush

Keep your hand upon your little ball of yarn

"Oh no kind sir she said, we are strangers you and I
And I think you have some other lady charmed."

"Oh no my turtle dove, you're the only one I love
Let me wind up your little ball of yarn."

I put my arm around her waist and I gently laid her down
I didn't mean to do her any harm
Then it was to my surprise, when I looked into her eyes
Then I wined up her little ball of yarn

It was twelve months to the day I went walking back that way
When I met her with a baby in her arms
I said "My pretty miss, you never expected this
When I wined up your little ball of yarn."

So come all of you young ladies and a warning take by me
Don't take your walk so early in the morn
When the blackbird and the thrush, they do sing in yonder bush
Keep your hand upon your little ball of yarn.

Still quite a popular song (66 Roud entries), and versions are found all over the Anglophone world. *The Little Ball of Yarn* has caused all sorts of speculation as to the origin, and meaning, of its title. Interestingly, in America the song was copyrighted in 1884 to one Polly Holmes, and all the earliest collections are from the States. According to Roud there are no known broadside publications of the song, a fact which suggests a late date of composition. Cecil Sharp collected a version in 1904 (the earliest known collected version - still unpublished!) and it could well be that this version, along with all the subsequent collected versions, is based on what may have once been quite an innocent song in the eyes of Ms Holmes (if, indeed, she was the composer of the song).

Other versions available on CD: Mary Ann Haynes (MTCD320); May Bradley (MTCD349); Nora Cleary (MTCD331-2); Walter Pardon (MTCD305-6); Danny Brazil (MTCD345-7); Elizabeth Stewart (EIC D 002); Ray Hartland (VTC7CD); Charlotte Renals (VTC1CD); Gordon Woods (VTC2CD).

Bernie: I've known *The Little Ball of Yarn* since about 1966, but then I heard this 'Sweet Belinda' chorus from some people from Bristol who, by some stroke of luck turned up at Cheltenham folk club. If it was you, gentle reader, thanks very much!

18 - *Up in the North* (Roud 582, Laws P3)

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

"Though I must own I do love you dearly
But 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 to slavery
So I will stay single and I'll bid you goodnight."

"There's one thing, dear John, I would like to ask you
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 stepped up to her, he intended to have her
He was a ships carpenter's son by his trade.

She wrote John a letter, a kind loving letter
To come to her wedding on the ninth day of June
To wait at the table instead of a better
To wait at the table all on the bridegroom
When the letter he read, it maps his heart bleed
In sorrow he mourned, his tail was soon turned
I'm a fool, I'm undone, I have lost her indeed.

So he saddled his horse and rode off to the station
Thinking to meet with his true lover there
But when he got there he was greatly surprised
To see this young girl so highly surmounted
Which caused from his eye to fall many a tear

“If I had ‘a known you’d be married so soon
I would not have tarried, it’s you I’d have married
So jump up behind me and leave him alone.”

“Oh no my dear John I’ve much better choosed
And don’t you remember what you said to me -
When a man gets wed, his joys are all fled
He’s free from all liberty, bound down towards slavery -
So you can stay single and I bid you goodnight.”

A song Bernie learned from Freda Palmer, *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 chap-books, 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 Freda Palmer’s home in Witney. In Scotland and North America it has been more popular and most of Roud’s 40 entries refer to these countries - however, Freda’s is the only sound recording (MTCD311-2) of the song ever made in these islands.

Bernie: Freda Palmer learned this song, and most of her other songs, from an aunt as they sat hand-stitching leather gloves, and I learned it from Freda, bless her.

19 - *The Royal George* (Roud 2529)

As we set sail from the rock of Gibraltar
As we set sail from sweet Dublin bay
Oh little did we think of our sad misfortune
Sleeping on the briny sea.

There was one poor woman
A-living in the city
When she heard that her husband was dead
It would fill your poor old heart with grief and pity
To hear what this poor woman said

She said “I’ll go and seek my own true lover,
I’ll go search the ocean round
And if my own true lover I do not discover
In some deep salt sea I’ll drown.”

It was on the Royal George I met my misfortune
Sleeping on the briny sea
Oh, little did we think of our sad misfortune
Sleeping on the briny sea.

There were fourteen hundred men, women, and children,
Only four got safe onshore
Oh, little did we think of our sad misfortune
She went down and was seen no more.

A pretty rare song with only five named singers in Roud’s *Index*, of whom only Gordon Hall ever recorded it - sadly, a recording no longer available.

Bernie: This is about the sinking of HMS Royal George at Spithead in (I think) 1782, when upwards of a thousand people, including Admiral Kempenfelt, were drowned. I got this from Gordon Hall.

20 - *John Barleycorn* (Roud 164)

There came three men from out of Kent, their fortunes for to try
And those three men made a solemn vow John Barleycorn should die
So they ploughed, they sowed, they harrowed him in, pulled clods down on his head
And those three men home rejoicing went, John Barleycorn was dead.

Chorus:
Hey John Barleycorn! Ho John Barleycorn!
Old and young thy praises have sung; John Barleycorn!

So they let him lie for a very long time ‘till the rains from Heaven did fall
Then John Barleycorn stuck up his head and soon amazed them all
Then they let him lie ‘till Midsummer’s Day, ‘til he looked both pale and wan
Then John Barleycorn’s grewed a long, long beard and so became a man.

Then they hired man with scythes so sharp to cut him off at the knee
They took and bound him round the waist, served him most barbarously
Then they hired men with pitchforks in to pierce him in the heart

But the loader he served him worse than that, for he bound him to the cart.

Then they wheeled him round and round the cart, ‘till they came unto a barn
And there they made a solemn mow of poor John Barleycorn
Then they hired men of holly-tree sticks to beat him skin from bone
But the miller he served him worse than that, for he ground him between two stones.

Then they put him into a mashing tub, thinking to scald his tail
But when he came out they changed his name, for they called him home brewed ale
So, put brandy in a glass my boys, put cider in a can
Put John Barleycorn in a nut brown bowl, for he’s proved the strongest man.

John Barleycorn is a hero, bold as any in the land
For ages good his fame has stood and shall forever stand
The whole wide world respects him, no matter friend or foe
Whoe’er they be who make too free, he’s bound to lay them low.

There are actually two songs with this title in the oral tradition; the most well-know being this one, telling the story of the conversion of barley into beer, ale or whisky. The other, Roud 2141, is more of a ‘praise song’ to the beverage, and has only 25 Roud entries, with the version by George Townshend (MTCD304-5) being the only one available on CD.

Bernie’s song is old; a blackletter version, printed by Henry Gosson (1607-41) can be found in the *Pepys Collection* and several 18th century broadsides are known. It has been very widely-collected in England, but has not spread too far beyond if Roud’s 208 instances show the whole picture; there are just a scattering of examples from Ireland, Scotland, the USA and Canada. Bernie has added the chorus of the rarer song to this more popular one.

Other currently available CD recordings include those by Bob Hart (MTCD301-2), Austin Flanagan (TSCD664), Bob Blake (VTC4CD) and Fred Jordan (TSCD663), Roy Last (VT130CD), Tom Smith (VTC2CD).

Bernie: This is a hybrid, the tune, chorus and last verse are from a version of *Hey! John Barleycorn* that I got from the late Richard Valentine. The words I’ve known for years. I love the tune, but the words of *Hey! John Barleycorn* have no appeal for me.

21 - *The Wild Rover* (Roud 1173) With Roger Grimes, melodeon.

I’ve been a wild rover this many long year
And I spent all my money on ale, wine, and beer
To give up all roving, put my money in store
And ne’er will I play the wild never no more.

Chorus:
No, nay, never, never no more,
Ne’er will I play the wild rover no more.

I went into an alehouse where I used to frequent
And I told the landlady my money was all spent
I called for a pint, and she said to me “Nay,
Such a customer as you could have any day”

I put my hand in my pocket, pulled handfuls of gold
And on the round table it glittered and rolled
“Here is my finest brandy, my whiskey and all”
“No, begone Landlady, I’ll have none at all.”

I’ll go home to my parents, tell them what I’ve done
And hope they’ll give pardon to this prodigal son
And if they’ll forgive me as they’ve done times before
Then ne’er will I play the wild rover no more.

I’d always thought of this as a Irish song but, if Roud’s 122 instances paint a representative picture, this seems not to be the case. Most are from England, then comes Scotland, then North America, then Australia, with Ireland last with just two entries. Most of the instances are of book and broadside publications, with only 16 sound recordings, of which only four have ever been published, and none of these have ever been available on CD.

Bernie: This is yet another of Sam Larner’s great songs. How I wish I’d known him.



Above: Bampton.
and with his Mum.



Sides: gardening, and Postlip ECMW, with Wiggy Smith and Ray Driscoll.

Below: with his Dad, on a pony.

Below centre: with Billy Bennington at an ECMW.



Left: His Mum and Aunties.

Below left: Dad and grandparents.

Below right: with Dad and brother.

Bottom center: taking it easy.



Credits:

Thanks to Bernie - for the songs and the song text transcriptions, his mini-biography, the photos, and for his comments on the songs.

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Booklet: song notes, editing, DTP, printing

CD: recording, editing, production
by Rod Stradling

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