

David Stacey

Good Luck to the Journeyman

(MTC360)

Introduction:

Given the nature of so many of MT Records' CDs, it's not unusual for me never to have met the singer or musician featured. However, when the singer is still alive I don't think I've ever made a CD of someone I've not met or, usually, recorded myself. So I thought it important to make the long drive over to Saffron Walden in north Essex to spend an enjoyable evening with David Stacey, singing a few songs and clarifying some details of the information in this booklet.

David originally sent me the text for a Musical Traditions Magazine 'Enthusiasm' article, *A Gorgio Amongst Travellers*, back in 2003. As an enthusiast for Gypsy and Traveller singing for many years, I was very pleased to print it, and fascinated to read it. Particularly to discover that it was David who, having met Ted Haynes in a Kentish pub near where he was apple-picking, was told that Ted's Mum knew a lot of old songs - "She's a bit of a rough'un - but she sure can sing". Ted's Mum turned out to be Mary Ann Haynes and, although David did get to meet her, he decided that, in order to get her recorded on something rather better than his own cheap cassette recorder, he should pass the information on to someone with more professional equipment. In the first instance, this was David Bland, at that time doing some field recordings for Bill Leader. David passed her details on to Mike Yates who eventually did record Mary and went on to describe her as 'one of the most outstanding folksinging discoveries to be made in recent years' (*Green Grow the Laurels*, Topic 12TS285).

Last month, David contacted me again asking if I'd be interested to hear - and look into the proper conservation of - the cassettes he'd recorded in the 1970s of Gypsy, Traveller and local Essex and Kent singers. I was very pleased to do so, and in the course of the ensuing email conversations about their contents, he sent me some recordings he himself had made. I was very impressed by what I heard, and asked him about their source. It turns out that Neil Lanham (of the Helions Bumpstead Records label) made the recordings as a favour to David, who wanted the CD as "a birthday gift to an old girl friend who had liked my singing many, many years before."

So that is the CD you now have before you - only five copies were made, and few people beyond its intended recipient have ever heard it. Moreover, given the life that David lived - of which you can read more later - few people beyond those he learned the songs from will have heard him sing at all. I think you'll be very pleasantly surprised. Most of the songs are in slightly unfamiliar versions (to me, at least) with some excellent variations of the tunes, and have been learned directly - face to face - from traditional singers.

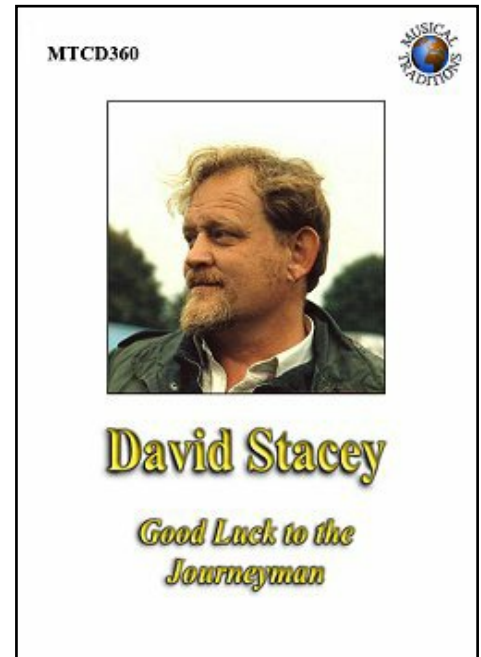
The following section has been put together from various pieces of text David has sent me, originally written at different times and for different purposes. I hope it doesn't seem too disjointed.

Rod Stradling - Summer 2015

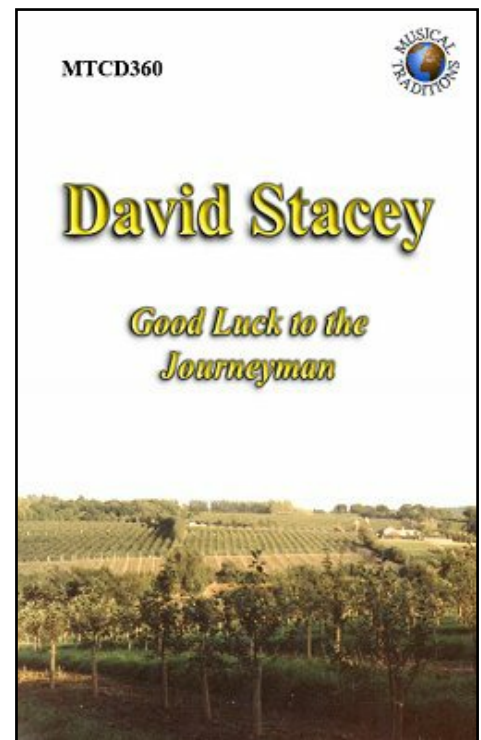
In his own words:

I was born in Saffron Walden, Essex in 1943. The first Stacey came to Walden in 1700 as a 'poor orphan boy', apprenticed to a fustian weaver. The family struggled on as paupers. In 1833 John Stacey, brother of my great x 3 grandfather, was transported to Australia for stealing six ducks. My great x 3 grandfather was charged with the same crime but did not have a previous conviction, unlike John who had been done for stealing two rabbits, value ten pence, otherwise I'd have been an Australian! The men of the family worked in the winter months in the maltings for which the town was then renowned. My great grandfather was the first of the family to escape the label 'pauper' by becoming a bricklayer, a job that he and his three sons continued in as a team. My father dragged himself into the lower middle classes; he left school at 14 and went to work in a lawyer's office. By chance and due diligence he eventually became town clerk of Saffron Walden.

I first heard folk songs being sung by 'traditional' singers, in my late teens, on the Radio series *As I Roved Out* which, if I remember correctly, was broadcast on a Sunday afternoon. The music captivated me. I came across the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* and learned a few of the songs for my own entertainment.cold winter. It was isolated, although *The Chequer's* pub was not so far away. As it had an open fire in the bar I was a regular visitor. There were few customers during the week but one was an old traveller, Jim Hedges, whose trailer was a fair walk away, but who came for much the same reason as myself, some company and a warm fire.



CD case cover



CD booklet cover

There were few customers during the week but one was an old traveller, Jim Hedges, whose trailer was a fair walk away, but who came for much the same reason as myself, some company and a warm fire. We were often the only people in the public bar so, although I was a lower middle class lad just turned twenty, and he was in his 70s or 80s and had been a horse dealer all his working life, we inevitably chatted together in the glow of the fire. Jim's stories always started with a horse and finished in a pub and, because he was illiterate, they were extremely visual, to the extent that on one occasion he mentioned as an aside, that the time by the Corn Exchange clock was such and such. When he found that I was from Saffron Walden he told numerous stories that started at the local horse fair which he said I must remember. I later asked my father about the Walden Horse Fair and he told me that they had come to an end with the First World War!

On the weekends the public bar's main customers were local travellers - many, of course, related to Jim. I don't remember any of them singing much, but they were quite happy for me to burst forth occasionally - this was the first place I ever sang in public - it was all entertainment, between the banter and the gossip, and it helped to pass the time. I was fascinated with the way that the travellers kept the evening going with old stories, humorous witticisms, etc. I was tolerated because they knew I was working locally, although I do remember being cautioned by Charlie Peters for flirting too long with his daughter Molly, a fine looking woman who attracted attention. He took me to one side and said that he liked me, had absolutely nothing against me, but that he'd have to punch me out if I was ever to set a hand on Molly!

From Ugley, early in 1965, I finished up at Masada in Israel, as an archaeological volunteer (see more, later). I don't remember doing too much singing, except to myself, between the two venues. I continued to learn songs from collections and must have sung them to people every now and then because I certainly sang for Deborah (for whom this CD was recorded) in Jerusalem in 1968. When she returned to Boston I followed after her and spent about 15 months in the States doing quite a bit of singing in the Boston area, sometimes in 'folky' places but, more enjoyably, amongst the Boston Irish, to whom I was introduced by Jack White, a singer and whistle player, whose Irish aunt Aggie White was a champion fiddler, and who appears on Topic's *Voice of the People* CDs.

After the States I largely flitted between Israel and the Kentish apple harvest. In Israel I sang unaccompanied songs to a captive, sometimes even appreciative audience, of archaeological volunteers. Eventually, for a while, I formed a group - The Taverners (because we sang in *The Tavern!*) which consisted originally of an Israeli computer hardware engineer, on guitar, an American-born Israeli biochemist also on guitar, and a Canadian-born Israeli dentist David Deklebaum on banjo, and me. I've never really sung in folk clubs - found them most un-conducive to enjoyable craic. The last time I sang was with Jack White, who I traced when I knew I was going to be in Boston giving a paper at the annual conference of the American School of Oriental Studies in 2008 or '09.

The Masada excavations:

Most British volunteers responded to articles published in *The Observer*, which also helped fund the dig. At the time of the 1963 call I was helping to clear-fell and replant a coop of ancient woodland in rural Essex. There were no shops near-by, I did not see newspapers, so I missed the call to arms.

It was bitterly cold that winter and, as I huddled over my small wood fire, the concept of migrating to warmer climes the following winter was appealing. In the spring I quit the job, and visited some of the pubs in London around Goodge Street where the footloose were often to be found being fancy free, and swapping tales of their travels. I heard of places called kibbutzim in Israel, where one could get room and board in return for doing menial work; but, what the hell, surely the sun would be shining?

I met Noelle, a dark haired lady, and we crossed the seas to Guernsey where we had heard that there was plenty of seasonal work to be had. We worked - and saved our pennies - and at the end of the summer happened upon *The Observer's* call for volunteers for Masada. As this sounded far more interesting than shovelling chicken shit on a kibbutz we applied immediately and were accepted.

We lived in old army tents in the desert, the work was hard, the amenities simple, but we learnt by experience and the longer we stayed the more use we were, and newcomers were placed under our watchful eyes. In the evenings we had to entertain ourselves. A tent mate of mine was an Irishman, Joe Dolan, who had been making a precarious living since the age of 16 playing guitar in Irish Show Bands. He and his guitar soon became a centre of many an evening's entertainment, to which I would add an occasional English folk song. Some weekends we would drift to Tel Aviv and busk around Dizengoff. He later became a founding member of Sweeney's Men and a song he wrote whilst at Masada, *The Trip to Jerusalem*, was later recorded by Christie Moore on his LP *The Iron Behind the Velvet*.

For some of us Masada had become 'home' and we did not fancy the prospect of leaving once the excavations were completed. A few were offered the chance to stay on helping with the reconstruction - but the spirit soon fizzled out - no longer were we working as hard as we could to achieve a common end. We were now paid labourers and the regular hired workers, mainly new immigrants from Morocco, had a very different attitude - do as little as you can get away with. After we left Masada, Noelle and I still had itchy feet and we hitched to India after a season picking hops and apples in Kent.

After our return from India, Noelle and I went our own ways. I was drawn back to Israel, initially for the desert landscape over which we had gazed from Masada. I could not resist the allure of archaeology and in the summer of 1968 volunteered on an American excavation that was having its first season at Tel Anafa. Volunteers were given room and board in return for their labour, much as Prof. Yigael Yadin had introduced at Masada.

After a spell in the States I eventually returned to Israel in 1972 and became increasingly involved in excavation work, first at the Kotel, and later with anybody who would pay me. For many years I worked with Ehud Netzer as a field director on his excavations. My last time in the field was, appropriately, with Ehud on renewed excavations at Masada in 1989.

By then, I was married to an Israeli and, during this, my second excavation at Masada, I learnt that we were expecting our first child. Sarah was born in Jerusalem later that year and we moved to England when she was not yet a year old, and I studied for a PhD. Nowadays I dig nothing but my garden, though on the day that I am writing this (in 2013), I have received copies of a book that I have co-authored called *Qumran Revisited* which uses my knowledge of the archaeology of Jericho and Masada to suggest that Qumran, far from being some sort of Jewish monastery, was, in reality, a light industrial suburb of the Royal Estate in Jericho. And that the scrolls were not written there but were *geniza* deposits made by the High Priest whose estate it was.

It would never have been written if I had not served my time with Yadin's band of Merry Men and Women at Masada.

Kent hop and apple picking:

I first went down to Kent for the hop/apple picking in the mid '60s and frequently returned over the next 20-25 years. If you were any good at picking apples, and were prepared to work hard - putting in 50-60 hour weeks for 4-6 weeks - you could make good money, cash in hand. My life developed whereby I was working in archaeology in Israel for much of the time - but, for visa reasons, had to leave Israel periodically. It became convenient for me to leave for the Kentish season where, eventually, I left an old

caravan on a farm near Goudhurst to come back to. The money I could make helped subsidise my archaeological work, which, whilst totally engrossing, paid diddly squat. At no time was I in Kent 'collecting folk songs'!

Years later, when Maggie Thatcher announced she was taking away my right to a free education up to degree level I thought "sod her" and decided to find out what it was I'd actually been doing for the previous 20 years! I eventually gained a PhD at London University.

One year, in the late-'60s-early-'70s, I stumbled across Ted Haynes in what that season was my local pub. I realised that his mother, Mary Ann Haynes, had a good repertoire and I made the effort to get her recorded in Brighton. Gradually I became aware that there was a small number of locally based older travellers who still enjoyed the old songs, although they were becoming an anachronism within their own community (much I suppose as am I to my own children!) I met Henry Ridley who lived in Goudhurst and he was particularly keen on the old songs because, I think, he had married out and was, thus, somewhat of an 'outcast'. The old songs tied him to his family roots. We would look out for each other whenever I arrived back in Kent because we could enjoy a bit of a singsong, even if only for each other. Note however, that I was there to make money and only went out Saturday nights and Sunday lunchtime! I rarely took my very cheap cassette with me to a session as it tended to get in the way.

Henry was a cousin of Jasper and Levi Smith, who were around some seasons - and had another cousin married to Mary Haynes' eldest daughter - so inevitably his repertoire was much the same as theirs. A young nephew of Henry's, Ambrose Cooper, was often around and sang his own songs and those of other younger travellers. He totally confused me because he sang what I thought must be a rare old poaching song, *Two for the Price of One*, of which I could trace no earlier versions ... years later I was told it was a song written by Bob Davenport! I think Ambrose has had a certain amount of contact with *gorgi* folkies - you can certainly find him on You Tube!

Another traveller with an interest in the old songs was Johnny Mathews - a very gentle man, a market trader from Maidstone - who had a limited repertoire which included some *cant* songs - a version of *The Baby in the Basket* or, 'kipsy' in his rendition. But he loved it when I sang songs that he remembered his mother singing.

In 1990 I fell victim to marriage and babies, etc and left Israel - and the apple picking - for good. During the next decade or so I had some contact with Eli Frankham, a traveller activist in Wisbech and with travellers in that area, though there was not much in the way of the old songs being sung. I also used to go occasionally to the *Pike and Eel* - closed now - in Cambridge, where the local travellers had musical sessions after hours when the pub 'closed' on a Saturday night. Although a few of the older men enjoyed hearing the old songs: one family was intermarried into that of Phoebe Smith; and there was plenty of singing; a West was an entertaining singer of Jimmy Rodger's songs; I never once heard an 'old song'. By now, I'm afraid, they are of no interest to the current generation. (I did have, some 20 years ago, a couple of young lads - early 20s? - sing me a version of *The Old Farmer from Cheshire* on a travellers' site in Harlow, but they were inevitably somewhat suspicious of my motives for showing up there. It certainly helped in Kent that I was there for much the same reason that they were - to make a few bob - and could even sometimes get them 'a ladder' which, as 'gyppos,' they might not have been able to get for themselves).

In Saffron Walden I also met Walter Jarvis who had by far the widest repertoire of the old songs in the town. His reputation as a boozier meant that, even though I had known of him since I was a kid, I only discovered that he knew songs very close to the end of his life in 1984.

Walter had tried to enlist during WWI as a 14 year old. He was a big lad and was initially accepted until his mother heard about it and 'rescued' him. A year later he tried again and this time he avoided his mother's 'interference'. The army were not entirely convinced he was yet of a correct age so he was not sent off to be cannon fodder but, as a country boy, was sent to help shoe the hundreds of thousands of horses that were also being recruited. One of these horses trod on his foot and broke it - as Walter said 'that didn't half hurt boy and I swore at that old horse, but he probably saved my life'. Because of the broken foot he was never sent to the trenches and spent the whole of the war as a farrier. He claimed that all the lads, apart from himself, who had joined up from the town on the same day that he did died in the war.

After the war he worked with his father as, in the summer, a thatcher, and, in the winter, as a pig-sticker specialising in travelling around killing cottage-raised pigs which people had made unsuccessful attempts at slaughtering earlier. Naturally the pigs were aware of what was about to happen to them again and were less than cooperative and it took big men to perform the coup de grace. Walter and his father spent quite a lot of time travelling across into Suffolk to gather reeds and thatching straw, and to find cottages to thatch.

Walter thought of his songs as belonging to two distinct repertoires - his 'Army' songs, all learnt before the age of 18 during WWI and his 'Suffolk' songs learnt mainly in the pubs of Suffolk during work related forays into that county.

The CD:

From the original booklet notes: This CD is dedicated to Henry Ridley of Goudhurst, Kent, timber-feller, tar-macker, fine singer, in whose company many a pint was quaffed and good song sung.

I first picked hops and apples in Kent in 1964 and returned to the same area south of Maidstone on a fairly regular basis. Occasionally, in the evenings, I would sing a song in one of the village pubs. The BBC series, *As I Roved Out*, had introduced me to English traditional unaccompanied singing in my early teens, and I had been inspired to learn a few songs from books and records, one of the latter being *The Roving Journeyman* (Topic12T84) an LP of songs sung by the Willett family of Kentish travellers.

My regular farm, in those early years, was in Marden Beech. The nearest pub, *The White Hart*, in Claygate was a couple of mile's walk along a narrow lane. In the autumn of 1972 I found that the pub had become a regular watering hole for travellers. My face was gradually accepted, as were my musical contributions to the many evenings of chat, song and stepping that enlivened that season's fruit picking. These sessions tended to come to a halt if *gorgios* came into the pub but I was tolerated because I could 'give' a song.

Over the next couple of decades I continued to be a regular picker although my main base shifted to Ash Farm in Horsmonden, coincidentally ideally situated for the annual Horse Fair held in September, despite local opposition, on the village green. In amongst the stalls and the horses there could usually be heard a few songs, to which I would add a contribution. At the start of each season I would look out for Henry Ridley, a locally based traveller with a goodly repertoire of songs. Henry's paternal Uncle Nelson had been recorded by Ewan MacColl. Sometimes other members of Henry's extended family, including his maternal uncle, Levi Smith, and two of his nephews 'young' Levi Smith and Ambrose Cooper would be there to offer a song (not necessarily old songs: Levi, senior, although knowing old songs was more likely to give a rendition of a George Formby number, whilst his son was a yodelling country and western singer. Ambrose specialised in songs from the country and western scene in Australia where he had relatives. Johnny Mathews, a market trader, whilst not having a large repertoire of songs was always

an appreciative audience and it was particularly for him that I learnt a version of *The Folkestone Murder*, a song his mother had sung. Ben Willett, though rarely persuaded to sing, was often at the Fair and sometimes at *The George* in Yalding which, in the '70s, still had a pub pianist on Saturday nights.

Some years after Mary Haynes had died, Henry and I were in *The Vine Hotel*, Goudhurst, when he suggested I sing one of Mary's songs for one of her sons who had just come in. I sang *Camden Town*. Unusually, the bar became silent and, at the end, there were tears not only in her son's eyes, but in mine too.

Many of the pubs where we used to sing are now, sadly, closed, amongst them *The Kings Arms*, Horsmonden, *The Eight Bells*, Goudhurst, and *The Globe and Rainbow*, Kildown.

Since returning to my home town of Saffron Walden I have had some contact with travellers in Cambridgeshire and have enjoyed a few songs with, amongst others, the late Eli Frankham, Nancy Webb (née Stewart) and Albert Brazil, who, although he will not sing in public can 'tell' a number of songs, including *The Folkestone Murder*.

Almost all of the songs on this CD were learnt from travellers I had met and sang with; either by direct absorption, or by recordings made by myself with a cheap domestic tape recorder, or from recordings made by others. They are not facsimiles of any particular source, but are, I hope, true to the spirit of those sources; they were learnt to be sung and, over the years, have no doubt developed their own idiosyncrasies. Where words had been forgotten or become garbled I would find alternatives which were easier to remember. In one instance I find that I have dropped a verse which never made sense to me but which I discover was part of the original song. *Twenty One Years* is one of Henry's favourite songs, and a song of which nearly every traveller can sing a bit. His third verse goes "Go ask the guv'ner, babe, upon your sweet soul / If you can't get a pardon then get a parole / If I had the guv'ner, where the guv'ner's got me / Before Tuesday morning the guv'ner'd be free." To my surprise I find that a verse very similar to this was in the version written and recorded by Bob Miller in 1930. I have heard some younger travellers sing a cant version of *Twenty One Years* which, they told me, was commonly sung in prison by travellers languishing inside. I wonder whether anyone has recorded such a version?

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 more than 452,000 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 Ceoil Dúchais Éireann, Dublin; and the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh. They can also be purchased direct from Steve at Southwood, Maresfield Court, High Street, Maresfield, East Sussex, TN22 2EH, UK. Recording dates are shown in the sequence day/month/year.

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. VTxxxCD). The names of all other CD publishers are given in full.

The majority of these songs were learned - often directly - from Travellers and Gypsies in Kent and Essex, particularly from Mary Ann Haynes and Henry Ridley. Other sources are indicated in the song notes.

1 - **The Yellow Handkerchief** (Roud 954)

Well, now once I loved a woman
Oh as dear as I love my life
I thought in my own heart
I would make her my wife,
With her white cotton stockings
And her high ankle shoes
And she wears a yellow handkerchief,
Oh wherever she goes.

So now take this yellow handkerchief
In remembrance of me
Wear it round your pretty little neck
All in flash company
All in flash company, me boys,
Like a great many more
If it hadn't been for flash company
I would never have been so poor.

For it's a-jigging and a-dancing
That was all my delight
A-staying out late, me boys,
It's been the ruin of me quite
Yes, a-staying out late, me boys,
Like a great many more
If it hadn't been for flash company
I would never have been so poor.
For now once I had a colour it was red as any rose
But now I'm as pale as the lily that blows,
Like the lily in the garden all my colour has gone,
Now you see what I am coming to
All for loving that one.

So now come all you pretty little flash girls
And a warning take by me
Don't you build a swallow's nest upon a willow tree
For the green leaves they will wither
And the shoots they'll all decay
And the beauty of a young girl
It soon dies and fades away.

This is a song that is almost exclusive to Suffolk these days - we heard it in the repertoires of at least six singers there in the late 1960s - although there are a small number of sightings along the south coast - Sussex, Hampshire and Dorset. The song was first noted in Limerick in the 1850s and was still well known recently, not only in East Anglia, but also among Travellers throughout southern England. Roud has 97 instances of the song, 27 of which are sound recordings.

Other versions available on CD: Caroline Hughes (MTCD365-6); Cecilia Costello (MTCD363-4); Phoebe Smith (MTCD356-7); Cyril Poacher (MTCD303); Pop Maynard (MTCD401-2); Mary Ann Haynes (EFDSS CD 002).

2 - **Wexford Town** (Roud 263, Laws P35)

Now there was a pretty maid in Wexford Town
She fell in love with a miller boy
He asked her to go walking
Through fields so sweet and green
That they might walk, and they might talk
All for to name their wedding night.

But he took a hedge stake from the hedge
And he beat her to the ground.
"For mercy" cried "I'm innocent,
I'm not fit enough to die."

Now when he came to his master's house
It being the middle of the night,
His master rose and let him in
By the striking of the light.

Oh he asked him, cross-questioned him,
Saying "What are those blood stains
On your hands and clothes?"
The answer, oh what he saw fit,
Was "Sir, it's the bleeding from my nose."

But it was just a few days after,
When her body it was found
A-floating past her mother's door,
Oh, what led to Wexford Town.

And now that young man's taken up,
He's bound down in iron strong
And now he do a prisoner
For the murder he have done.

A very well-known song indeed, with 365 Roud instances, 98 of which are sound recordings. MacColl & Seeger quote an American source who says that the villain in this song was a John Mauge, who was hanged at Reading, Berkshire, in 1744. But, we know that *Waxford Town* comes originally from a long 17th-century ballad *The Berkshire Tragedy, or The Wittam Miller*, a copy of which may be seen in the Roxburgh Collection (vol.viii p.629), and it may be that Mauge's name came to be associated with the earlier ballad because of the similarity of his crime. Later printers tightened the story and reissued it as *The Cruel Miller*, a song which has been collected repeatedly in Britain (63 instances) and North America (228 instances - where it is usually known as *The Lexington/Knoxville Girl*).

Somewhere in the past, the story has separated into two versions, and both Laws and Roud differentiate between them, giving Roud 263, Laws P35 for this one and Roud 409, Laws P24 for the other - usually known as *The Butcher Boy*. However, since Roud includes 365 and 300 examples respectively, it must be clear that there will be many versions which fall into the grey area between them.

Other recordings on CD: Caroline Hughes (MTCD365-6); Jack Smith (MTCD356-7); Lizzie Higgins (MTCD337-8); Mary Ann Haynes (MTCD320); Mary Delaney (MTCD325-6); Harry Cox (TSCD512D); Phoebe Smith (TSCD673T).

3 - When the Nightingale Sings (Roud 140, Laws P14)

As I was a-walking one morning in May
Oh there I spied a young couple a-making of hay
Oh and one was a pretty maid
And her beauty it shone clear
And the other was a soldier
In the Bold Grenadiers.

Now walking and a-talking and walking together
Oh walking so far about
'Til they scarcely knew whither.
So they both sat themselves down
By some cool crystal stream
All for to see the flowers grow
And hear the nightingale sing.

Now it is ... and comfort he drew around the middle
And out of his knapsack he drew forth a fiddle
And he played her such a pretty tune
It made the groves and valleys for to ring
"Oh 'tis hark, hark" said the fair maid
"How the nightingale sing."

"Oh, come now", said the soldier "
It is time to give o'er."
"Oh, no then," said the fair maid,
"We will have one tune more,
For I do like your music
And the tune of your string

I do like to see the flowers grow
And hear the nightingale sing."

"Oh, come then", said the fair maid
"And won't you marry me?"
"Oh, no then" said the soldier "that never can be
For I have got a wife at home, in my own country
And such a fair woman you never did see."

"Oh, no then," said the soldier, that never shall be
For I have got a wife at home, and children three.
But if I should come this way again
It will be in the spring
All for to see the flowers grow
And hear the nightingale sing."

David probably learned this song from Walter Jarvis of Saffron Walden. Under a variety of titles, including *The Bold Grenadier*, *The Soldier and the Lady* and *The Nightingale*, this gentle, sensuous song had a huge spread across Britain and North America. Roud's 222 entries include 61 sound recordings, but comparatively few appear to have made the transition to CD.

Other versions available on CD: Caroline Hughes (MTCD365-6); George Dunn (MTCD317-8); both Hobert Bowling and Mildred Tucker (MTCD505-6); Neil Morris (Rounder CD 1707); Viv Legg (VT153CD); Charlie Pitman (VTC9CD); Raymond and Frederick Cantwell (Rounder CD 1778).

4 - The Song of the Thrush (Roud 1763)

Out in the gold fields in the wilds of Australia
Out in the gold fields there once stood a camp.
Now the miners was made up of all sorts of classes
There was many rough fellows
And many's the scamp.
When into their midst came a
Young man from England
And with him he brought a small bird in a cage
Now to hear that bird sing
They flocked round in dozens
That beautiful songster became quite the rage.

How they miners did hush as the song of the thrush
Rang out 'mongst that motley throng.
Oh, and many a young fellow's eyes grew dim
As that bird sang its sweet roundelay;
Eyes opened up with a bright shining look,
As that bird sang its sweet roundelay.
It brought back to mind
Dear old England and home,
Thousands of miles away.

Written in 1897 by Walter Hastings with music by George Le Brunn, it was sung on the Halls by Jenny Hill and by her daughter Peggy Pryde, but not much taken up by the oral tradition - only 19 Roud entries. All five named singers were English, but he also has book examples from Canada and, appropriately, Australia. As well as Bob Hart (MTCD301-2), Ben Ling also sang it in Snape - as did Fred Jordan over in Shropshire, although he never seems to have recorded it .

5 - The Maids of Australia (Roud 1872)

As I went down by those Oxburgh banks
Where the girls of Australia
They play their wild pranks
'Neath the green shady bower
As I sat myself down
Oh, the birds they sang sweetly
And played all around

In the forests of me native Australia
In the forests of me native Australia
Where the girls they are handsome and gay

Now as I sat viewing that glorious scene
Oh, the birds they sang sweetly,
The trees they was green,
A fair pretty damsel before me appeared
To the banks of the river she quickly drew near
In the forests of me native Australia
In the forests of me native Australia
Where the girls are handsome and gay

Now she stripped stark naked,
Before me she stood
Just as naked as Venus that rose from the flood,
She blushed with confusion
Then, smiling, said she
“Now these are the clothes that Nature gave me
On the day I was born in Australia
On the day I was born in Australia
Where the girls are handsome and gay”

Well, she leapt in the river without fear or dread
Her delicate limbs she extended and spread,
Her hair hung in ringlets, her colour was black
“Now you see, kind sir, I can float on my back
In the streams of me native Australia
In the streams of me native Australia
Where the girls they are handsome and gay”

Now she got started swimming, she came to brink
“Your assistance, kind sir,
I’m afraid I might sink.”
Like lightning I flew and I gives her me hand,
But her foot it slipped, we fell back on the sand
And I entered the bush of Australia
Oh, then I entered the bush of Australia
Where the girls they are handsome and gay.

Now we huddled and cuddled
With the highest of glee
Oh the fairest pretty damsel you ever did see
Long time on her bosom my face I did hide
‘Til the sun in the west began to decline
Then I left that fair maid of Australia
Oh, then I left that fair maid of Australia
Just as the sun went down.

David: I almost certainly learned this from an LP of Harry Cox.
Although Roud lists 34 examples of this fine song, Harry Cox and
Walter Pardon account for 19 of them, and almost all the others
are also from Norfolk.

Other recordings available on CD: Sam Larner (MTCD3690);
Harry Cox (TSCD512D); Walter Pardon (TSCD514); Bob Green
(Helions Bumpstead NLCD 6).

6 - **Camden Town** (Roud 564, Laws P18)

As I went out one May morning
Down some clear running stream
Who should I spy but a sweet pretty maid
She was a-pleasing to my mind.

I said to her “My sweet pretty maid
Will you sing me a true lover’s song?
And if it is true I will marry you
Oh I’ll make you my own true wife.”

So he took her by oh the lily white hand
He kissed both her cheeks and her chin

He took her to some very large house
And she slept the night with him.

Now the moon being gone, oh the sun at dawn
The sun on the golden hill
This young man he arose, he put on his clothes
Saying “Fare you well my dear.”

“Now that ain’t the promise you made to me
Down by that clear running stream.
You promised that you would marry me
And make me your own true wife.”

“But how could I marry a girl like you
You’re too easily led astray
You’d better go back to your mother’s house
And cry all your tears away.”

“But how could I go back to
My dear old mother’s house
And leave her in shame and disgrace?
I’d rather go to some very large brook
And I’ll throw my body in.”

So he took her by oh the lily white hand
He kissed both her cheek and her chin
He took her to some very large brook
And he threw her body in.

Now there she goes, oh see how she goes
A-floating away on the tide.
Instead of that young girl having a watery grave
She ought to’ve been my bride.

Now I’ll go away to some other foreign land
Another girl for me
Where no-one shall know of the trouble I have done
Save the girl that courted me.

So come all you young girls and a warning take by me
Don’t you ever be led astray
If any young man asks to come your way
Let your heart be miles away.

This song, more usually known as *Down by the Old Riverside* or *Lily White Hand*, got its present title from its first publication in the FMJ in 1969, collected by John R Baldwin, in Wootton, Oxfordshire, from a singer whose name was given only as ‘Mrs F. D.’ Her first line was ‘*In Camden Town there lived a lass ...*’ Even though this was a slightly different song (Roud 1414), Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger published versions under this title by both Nelson Ridley and William Hughes in *Travellers’ Songs from England and Scotland*, and the name seems to have stuck in some circles.

This was the ‘family song’ of the Brazil family in Gloucester, and was sung by every member of the family we know to have been recorded - see the 3-CD set MTCD345-7.

It has 118 Roud entries, 36 of which are sound recordings. Almost all are from England, plus a few from the north of Ireland and North America. Gypsy names crop up frequently amongst the listed singers.

Other recordings on CD: both Caroline and William Hughes (MTCD365-6); Jack Smith (MTCD356-7); May Bradley (MTDC349); Danny, Harry and Lemmie Brazil and Doris Davies (MTCD345-7); George Spicer (MTCD311-2); Nimrod Workman (MTCD512); Mary Lozier (MTCD505-6); Harry Cox (TSCD512D); Paddy Doran (TSCD677T); Fred Jordan (VTD148CD).

7 - Dolly Dimple (Roud 21971)

Now poor old Dolly Dimple was a widow
On her husband's grave she sat one night
In the cot they ... she sat there until midnight
Her husband's ghost would appear
By pale moonlight.

Now poor Dolly she'd been
Drinking port and lemon
"I need a piss" poor Dolly did declare
So she hoisted up her skirt beside the tombstone
And squatted right on a bunch
Of nettles growing there.
Now in those nettles they
Of course had started tickling
To keep a straight face she did contrive,
But at last she hollered "George, oh do give over
You're worse now than when you was alive."

Learned from Walter Jarvis, of Saffron Walden. Roud has only two entries for this song - Walter Jarvis and Rex Gage both sing it on Helions Bumpstead NLCD 8.

8 - Hail the Dewy Morning (Roud 11, Child 112)

Now as I went walking around yonder fields
Well, I met a girl in brown, Sir,
I put me arms around her waist
And tried to throw her down, Sir.

She said "Kind sir what have you got,
What is it do possess you?
Pray do you wait 'til we get home,
For the grass will stain my dress, Sir."

Blow the misty morning, blow the wind hi ho
Blow away the morning dew,
How sweet the winds do blow.

"For if you come to me father's house
Well it's neatly built all round, Sir
You can have your heart's desire
All on a bed of down, Sir.

But when they came to her father's house
Well it's neatly fenced all round, Sir.
She went in and she slammed the door
Oh, and he was left hanging outside, Sir.

Hail the misty morning, blow the wind hi ho
Stepping through the morning dew,
How sweet the winds do blow.

Now there is a cock in me father's yard
And he cannot tread the hens, Sir.
He struts about and he flaps his wings
Aye and that's the same with you, Sir.

Hail the misty morning, blow the wind hi ho
Blow away the morning dew,
How sweet the winds do blow.

This song, which David probably learned from Walter Jarvis of Saffron Walden, tells a perennially popular story, so we should not be surprised to find that Child cites 1608 as its first known publication, or that many of its broadside versions are titled *The Baffled Knight*. Nor that it sports 161 Roud entries - the most recent having been collected in 1976. What is slightly surprising is that it seems to have fallen out of favour in the oral tradition in the mid-Seventies, despite huge popularity in the revival at precisely that time. So there are only 20 sound recordings listed, of which only those by: Sam Lerner

(MTCD3690); Emily Bishop (TSCD673T); William Rew (Rounder CD 1778) and Alfred Edgell (EFDSS CD 002) appear to be available on CD.

9 - The Oyster Girl (Roud 875, Laws Q13)

Now as I went a-walking down fair London street
A pretty little oyster girl I chanced for to meet.
Into her basket so nimbly I did peep
For to see if she had any good oysters.

"Oh oysters, oh oysters, oh oysters," said she,
"I've got some of the finest oysters
That ever you did see.
Now I sell them three a penny,
But four I'll give to thee
If you'll bargain for me basket of oysters."

"Oh landlord, oh landlord, oh landlord" said he
"Have you got a private room
For this oyster girl and me?
Where we may be merry and merrily we'll be,
And she'll learn me how to a bargain for oysters."

Now we hadn't been in that private room
No more'n hour or two
Before she leaped out of bed
And down the stairs she flew
She's took all me money, me gold watch too
And she's left me with a basket of oysters.

"Oh landlord, oh landlord, oh landlord" said he
Have you seen that oyster girl
That come along with me?"
"Oh she paid all the reckoning
And you may go free
For to travel with your basket of oysters."

According to Gavin Greig (who noted no fewer than 13 versions of this song) 'It is a lively ditty and very popular. The sum stolen from the gentleman varies in different copies from five hundred to ten thousand pounds.' The song appears to have been first printed in a Stirling chapbook of eight texts called *A New Patriotic Song*, by M Randall, c.1794-1812, under the title *The Eating of Oysters*. Roud shows 99 entries, mostly from England (Essex to Northumberland) and Scotland, including 24 sound recordings.

Other recordings available on CD: Sam Lerner (MTCD3690); Caroline Hughes (MTCD365-6); Chris Willett (MTCD361-2); Mary Ann Haynes (MTCD320); George Dunn (MTCD317-8); Phil Tanner (VT145CD).

10 - The Young Sailor Cut Down in his Prime (Roud 2, Laws Q26)

Now one day as I strolled down by the Royal Albion
Dark was the morning and cold was the day
When who should I spy there
But one of me shipmates
Wrapped in a blanket far colder than clay.

He called for a candle to light him to bed with,
Likewise an old flannel for to wrap round his head
For his poor head was aching,
His heart it was breaking
For he was a young sailor boy cut down in his prime.

So rattle your drums and play your pipe merrily
Play the dead march as we carry him along
Take him to a churchyard
And fire three volleys over him
For he was a young sailor boy cut down in his prime.

Now his poor agèd father, his dear old mother,
Oftimes had warned him about his past life
Along with those flash girls
His money he squandered
Along with those flash girls he took his delight.

But now he is dead to the
Churchyard we'll carry him
Six jolly sailor boys march by his side
And in each of their hands a bunch of white roses
That no-one need smell him as we pass along.

So rattle your drums and play your pipe merrily
Play the dead march as we carry him along
Take him to a churchyard
And fire three volleys over him
For he was a young sailor boy cut down in his prime.

Now at the corner of the street
There's two girls a-standing
One to the other do whisper and say
"Here comes the young fellow
Whose money we squandered
Here comes the young sailor boy
Cut down in his prime".

Now at the top of his tombstone
These words they are written
'Come all you young fellows take a warning by me,
And never go courting the girls of the city
For the girls of the city were the ruin of me'

So rattle your drums and play your pipe merrily
Play the dead march as we carry him along
Take him to a churchyard
And fire three volleys over him
For he was a young sailor boy cut down in his prime.
David: I learned this from Walter Jarvis, of Saffron Walden.

An extremely popular and widespread song throughout these islands and North America - in fact, almost two thirds of Roud's 355 entries are from the USA. It's an old song, but doesn't appear in many broadsides (only 15), though it has been included in a few books - 154 to be exact!

There are 106 sound recordings, and those by: Harry Brazil (MTCD345-7); Harry Holman (MTCD309-10); Bob Hart (MTCD301-2); Bill Ellson (MTCD320); Hobert Stallard (MTCD344); Texas Gladden (Rounder CD1500); Fred Jordan (VTD148CD); Johnny Doughty (TSCD662); Harry Upton (TSCD652); Viv Legg (VT153CD); Moses 'Clear Rock' Platt and James 'Ironhead' Baker (Rounder CD1821) remain available on CD.

11 - **The Trombone** (Roud 1848)

Well, now, the other night I took me wife
Unto the music hall
And ever since that blooming night
Well it has been our downfall
For she sat beside the bandsman,
Oh, he filled her with delight
The fellow that played the trombone,
Oh, he stole me wife that night

With his rrrumpti ra, rrrumpti ra,
Rrrumpti ra a ray,
The fellow that played the trombone
He stole me wife away,
He pulled that long thing in and out,
It made her feel so gay
He really tickled her fancy with his
Rrrumpti ra a ray

Well, now, she said she liked his music
And would go there every week
I said it would be our downfall
If she didn't stop her cheek
But she took no notice what I said
And she went from time to time
Whilst I like a silly old fool stayed at home
And nursed the kids and him at her did shine

On his rrrumpti ra, rrrumpti ra,
Rrrumpti ra a ray,
The fellow that played the trombone
He stole me wife away,
He pulled that long thing in and out,
It made her feel so gay
He really tickled her fancy with his
Rrrumpti ra a ray

Well now, the other night I woke and found
She'd gone with all her clothes
She'd gone with that --- bandsman
To a place God only knows
And if ever I should find them,
Why I'll break his honeymoon
I'll smash his bloody instrument
If I catch him playing a tune.

On his rrrumpti ra, rrrumpti ra,
Rrrumpti ra a ray,
The fellow that played the trombone
He stole me wife away,
He pulled that long thing in and out,
It made her feel so gay
He really tickled her fancy with his
Rrrumpti ra a ray

Probably learned from Jimmy Knights, or another of the Suffolk singers. Both Jimmy and Ted Chaplin had recordings issued, but they are not available on CD.

12 - **The Tarry Sailor** (Roud 1403)

Well I am a tarry sailor boy
Just lately home from sea
When a beautiful young damsel
She winked her eye at me.
So boldlye stepped up to her and
I took her by the hand
"Oh," I said "My pretty fair maid
Will come to some foreign land?"

"What, come to some foreign land, kind sir,
What would my parents say?
My friends and my relations
Would banish me straightway.
For you're a tarry sailor boy
And I'm a girl so high
You ask me for to go with you,
Oh no, kind sir, not I."

But he gave to her a ribbon,
He gave to her a ring
He gave to her a sweet kiss
And a far better thing
Saying "Lady, won't you marry me,
Marry sweet as I?"
The answer that she gave to him was
"No, me love, not I."

But six long months being over,
And seven was making haste
This beautiful young damsel
She thickened round the waist.

No drawers they would not fit on her,
Nor apron strings would tie
She cursed the very day when she said
"No, me love, not I."
Now nine long months being over,
And ten was coming on
This beautiful young damsel
She proved to have a son
She took it to young Willie,
But he unto her did say
"D'you think that I will marry you now?
Oh no, me love, not I."

And now your little baby's born,
I'll tell you what we'll do
You take your baby on your back
And a-begging you may go
And when you are tired
You may sit down and cry
And you can curse the very hour when you said
"No, me love, not I."

So come all you pretty fair maids
And a warning take by me
Don't you build a nest in the top of any tree
For the green leaves they will wither
And the roots they'll all decay
And the beauty of a young girl soon ...
And fades away.

David: Another song I learned from Walter Jarvis, of Saffron Walden.

Despite Walter's title, this is not actually a version of *The Tarry Sailor*, but in fact a song usually called *No, my Love, not I*. It's quite well-known, with 78 Roud entries, mainly from England, but with quite a few from North America. It was quite widely printed in broadsides, but the only sound recordings from these islands are from Scotland and Ireland.

13 - A Group of Young Squaddies (Roud 1783)

A group of squaddies one night in a pub
They was talking of sweethearts they had.
They all looked so happy save one of the boys
Oh and he was downhearted and sad.
"Come cheer up, me laddy," said one of the boys,
"For surely there's someone loves you."
Now he hung down his head, and softly he said,
"Well, boys, I'm in love with two.

Chorus:

For one has hair of silvery grey,
The other has locks of gold,
One is young and beautiful,
The other is bent and old.
Both of their lives they are dear to me,
From neither shall I part,
One is my mother, God bless her I love her,
And other is my sweetheart."
*My sweetheart, you know,
She's a hard-working lass
And her I'm determined to wed.
But my Father says "No, Lad, it cannot be so;
You must marry an hieress instead."
I'll go tell my Mother, who knows how it is,
For when she met Dad, he was poor.
She said "Lad, don't you fret,
You'll have your reward yet,
And you Father's consent, I am sure."*

Chorus.

It's strange to find a song which was known to so many singers, having only 21 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.

The italicised second verse is from Percy Webb, of Snape, Suffolk.

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

14 - The Crab Fish (Roud 149)

Well now there was a little man
And he had a little horse
He took it to the river to see if it would cross
Singing 'oh Mrs Donovan,
Oh Mrs Donov-all the day.

Well he rode and he rode 'til he came to a brook
He saw a fisherman a-fishing with an 'ook
Singing

Oh fisherman, fisherman, tell to me
Have you a crabfish for my tea
Singing ...

Oh yes, said the fisherman, I've got two.
One for me and the other for you
Singing ...

So he took that crabfish by the back bone
Flung on his shoulder and buggered off home
Singing ...
Now when I got home well I couldn't find a dish
So I put it in the pot where the missis takes a piss
Singing ...

Well everything was all right
'Til the middle of the night
The missis she arose and she
Want to take a shite
Singing ...

Oh Husband, Oh Husband, as sure as I was born
There's a devil in the pisspot
Giving me the 'orn
Singing

So she grabbed the brush, oh
And I grabbed the broom
We ... the bleeding crabfish
Around, around the room
Singing ...

So we kicked it in the head, and we kicked it side
We kicked it in the bollocks
'Til the poor bugger died
Singing ...

David: I remember standing at the bar in *The Eight Bells*, Goudhurst with Henry Ridley, and we were really singing for each other. There was a tableful of travellers making an awful din roaring country and western songs, but one saw the tape recorder, came to the bar, and sang a good - and to me unusual - version of the *Crab Fish*, bought a round, and returned to murdering

country and western songs. Henry didn't know his name but reckoned he was a cousin of 'Joe and Pat' who lived locally and had originally stayed on in the area after hopping many years before. Although thought of locally as 'gypos' (Joe worked on 'my' farm), Henry, a Romany, didn't even think of them as 'poshrats' - but even lower down the social scale, mere 'Londoners'!

A fairly popular song with 84 Roud entries, mainly from England, both north and south. Unusually, we know of only one broadside publication, found in the 16th C *Percy Folio MS*.

Almost half the entries are sound recordings, although only those by Danny Brazil (MTCD345-7); Percy Ling (MTCD339-0); Dan Tate (MTCD501-2); Harry Cox (TSCD673T); Nora Cleary (TSCD657) and Mickey Connors (Pavee Point PPCD 004) remain available on CD.

15 - **The Game of All Fours** (Roud 232)

As I went a-walking one midsummer's morning
As I went a-walking all on the highway
Now who should I spy but a sweet pretty damsel
And she was a-walking all on my way.

“Oh where are you going my fair pretty damsel,
Oh where are you going so earlye this morn?”
“Well, I'm going to a place,
It's a town they call Glasgow
That's the sweet pretty town where I was born.”

So they walked and they talked
For a long while together
They walked and they talked
'Til they came to a shady green tree
Now she sat herself down and I sat down beside her
And the game that we played
Was One, Two and Three.

“Now it's your turn to deal then,
It's my turn to shuffle.
I'll show you the best card there is in the pack.”
Now she laid the ace down,
I put the jack down beside it.
Which left me to play
High, Low, Jack and the Game.

So I took off my hat and I bid her good morning
Saying “You are the best that I've met at this game.”
She said “Thank you, kind sir,
If you come this way in the morning
We'll play that game over and over again.”

On the surface we are dealing with card play, and Hoyle's *Rules of Games* (1955) indeed lists *All Fours*. In her edition of *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs* (1974), Maud Karpeles places in the section devoted to sports and pastimes *The Game of Cards*, a version of the song Hoyle noted in 1908. Yet this is a transparently erotic piece which had to wait until 1960 to appear in respectable print, in James Reeves's anthology of English traditional verse, *The Everlasting Circle*. That it was well known a century earlier is attested by the broadside issued by Henry Disley of London, a political adaptation or parody dealing with Garibaldi's struggle for Italian unity under the title of *The Game of All Fours*. At much the same time, the catalogue of the Manchester ballad printer, T Pearson, included the original *Game of All Fours*, twinned with *The Steam Loom Weaver*.

A fairly widely collected song, found only in the southern half of England, with 75 Roud entries, the most northerly being from Staffordshire and Norfolk. It seems to be very popular amongst Travellers and George Dunn, Charlie Wills and Sam Lerner are about the only *Gorgios* amongst the singers named. Vic Legg informs us that *All Fours* is still played in a number of pubs in the

china-clay areas near St Austell in Cornwall; indeed, they have a League - for the card game, that is.

Other recordings on CD: Sam Lerner (MTCD3690); Phoebe Smith (MTCD356-7); Tom Willett (MTCD361-2); Hiram Brazil (MTCD345-7); Caroline Hughes (MTCD365-6); George Dunn (MTCD317-8); Sarah Porter (MTCD309-10); Levi Smith (TSCD 661).

16 - **The Old Miser** (Roud 3913)

There was an old miser who in London did dwell
He had but one daughter, a most beautiful girl
And when that old miser was out of the way
She was courted by a sailor boy
Both by night and by day.

Now when that old miser he became for to know
Straight away to a captain, straight away he did go
Saying “Captain, oh captain, good news I've to tell
For I have got you here a sailor boy
A transport for to sell.”

“Now how much will you give me?”
That old miser did say
“I will give you ten guineas for to take him away.”
“I will take him, I will send him far over the main,
And he'll ne'er return to England
For to court her again.”

Now when that young damsel
She became for to know
Straight away to that captain,
Straight away she did go
Saying “Captain, oh captain, bad news I've to tell
For you've got here my sailor boy
A transport for to sell.”

Then out of her pocket drew forth handfuls of gold
Down under the quarter deck ten hundred she told
“I will give you all this money
And twice as much more
If you will give to me my sailor boy,
He's the lad I do adore.”

“Oh no then,” said the captain, “that never shall be
For your father has sold him a transport to me,
I have ta'en him I have sent him far over the main
And he'll ne'er return to England
For to court you again.”

“Put a curse on my parents wheresoever they be
For I know in my own heart they're the ruin of me
Now I'll go home to my cottage
And set myself down
And I'll weep there for my sailor boy
‘Til the day he do return.”

This song is almost certainly of broadside origin (almost half of Roud's 37 entries); the theme of the rich man who has his daughter's humble suitor pressed to sea is one of the commonest of 18th century song subjects.

Despite being a good story, set to a gorgeous tune in most cases, it was not much taken-up by traditional singers, although the 14 named in Roud are spread right across the southern half of England. There is also one American sighting, and two from Tristan da Cunha.

Other versions available on CD: Sam Lerner (MTCD3690); Chris Willett (MTCD361-2); Mary Ann Haynes (MTCD320).

17 - Riding Down to Portsmouth (Roud 1534)

Oh as I was a-riding along
In the height of my glory
Oh as I was a-riding along
You shall hear of my story
How I fell in love with a fair, pretty maid
And I asked her if she'd go along with me
Some pleasure and some pastimes to see
Whilst a-riding down to Portsmouth

“Oh, sailor if I go along with you well,
It's I must be a-carried
Oh, sailor if I go along with you
Oh it's I must be a-married”
So she slept all in me arms that night
And there we did sport 'til break of day
When she left me with the reckoning bill to pay
Whilst a-riding down to Portsmouth

“Oh Landlord tell me what there is to pay
For it's I might be a-missing
Oh Landlord tell me what there is to pay
For I might be a-jogging
For she's robbed me of me gold watch and purse
And she's give to me what is ten times worse
Oh Landlord don't you think that I'm under a curse
Whilst a-riding down to Portsmouth

“Oh saying damn me to myself
How I've paid for my kissing
Saying damn me to myself
How I've paid for my learning
I shall leave you my horse here in pawn
I pray you, keep it from the wars I do return
When all gallus girls I shall scorn
And I'll ride no more to Portsmouth”

Cecil Sharp, Percy Grainger and Ralph Vaughan Williams all collected versions of this song during the early days of the 20th century - the latter from May Bradley's mother, Esther Smith. The only known broadside is a Victorian sheet, without printer's imprint, in the Harris Library collection in Preston. Although this song is rare - only 22 Roud entries and 8 named singers - its theme is, of course, a common one.

Other CD recordings: Tom Willett (MTCD361-2); Mary Ann Haynes (MTCD320).

18 - The Banks of the Nile (Roud 950, Laws N9)

“Hark, hark the drums do beat, my love,
And I must haste away.
The bugle sweetly sounds
And I can no longer stay,
I am called up to Portsmouth
Oh it's many a weary mile
All for to be on board, my love,
All for the banks of the Nile.”

“Oh Willie, dearest Willie
Don't you leave me here to mourn
Don't you leave me here to curse the day
That ever I was born
For parting with my Willie dear
It's like parting with my life
So stay at home, dear Willie,
Oh, and make me your lawful wife.

“Else I'll put on my velveteens
And I'll go along with you.
I'll voluntee my services
And go to Egypt too.

I'll fight beneath your banner, Love,
And fortune it may smile
And I'll be your loyal comrade
All on the Banks of the Nile.”
“Oh Nancy, dearest Nancy,
Such things can never do.
The government has ordered
No women there to go;
The government has ordered
The King he doth command
Oh, and I am bound on oath, my love,
To serve on a foreign land.

“Beside your waist it is much too slender,
Your complexion it is too fine,
Your constitution it is too weak
To stand the hard campaign.
The sultry suns of Egypt
Your precious health would spoil
And the sandy desert places
All on the Banks of the Nile.”

“Oh cursèd cursèd be the day
That e'er this war begun
For it's taken out of England
Many a bonny young man
It's ta'en from us our life guards
Protectors of our isles
And their bodies feed the worms upon
The Banks of the Nile.”

This song, for which David can't remember his particular source, is fairly well-known with 129 Roud entries. Songs on the theme of a young woman pleading with her soldier/sailor lover to be allowed to accompany him to the wars have appeared in various forms down the ages, one of the earliest of these being *The Undaunted Seaman who resolved to fight for his King and Country, Together with His Love's Sorrowful Lamentation at their Departure*, which is dated around 1690. The subject has given rise to such songs as *Manchester Angel*, *Lisbon and High Germany*. *The Banks of the Nile* has been identified with the battle of Aboukir, Egypt, which took place in 1801, during the Napoleonic wars.

Other recordings on CD: Pat MacNamara (MTCD331-2); Un-named singer (possibly recorded by Vaughan Williams), *A Century of Song*, EFDSS CD02.

19 - The King of the Gypsies (Roud 229, Laws O4)

Now me father is the king
Of the Gypsies that is true
Now me mother she taught me
Some camping for to do.

So I took me pack all on me back,
And they all wished me well
And I went up to London Town
Some fortunes for to tell.

Now as I went a-walking
Down fair London streets
Why a handsome young squire
He chancèd for to meet
Her viewed my pretty nut-brown cheeks,
And these he liked full well
Said he “My pretty Gypsy girl,
Can you my fortune tell?”

“Oh yes, kind sir, give me a hold of your hand.
Why you have gotten houses,
You've got riches and you've land
But all those pretty fair maids
You must put to one side

For I'm the pretty Gypsy maid
Who is to be your bride.

"Now once I was a Gypsy girl
But now a squire's bride,
I've servants for to wait on me,
And in a carriage ride."
Now the bells they played so merrily,
And the band so loud did play
Oh and such a jolly time we had
On the Gypsy's wedding day.

A version of the song, for which David can't remember his particular source, usually called *My Father's the King of the Gypsies* - from its first verse - or *The Gypsy Girl* or *The Gypsy's Wedding Day*. It was widely printed on broadsides, but has only been found in the oral tradition in central England and the USA. A surprisingly well-known song - 109 Roud entries - given that it has only four remaining CD recordings available: George Dunn (MTCD317-8); Joseph Taylor (TSCD651); Jasper Smith (TSCD661) and Percy Webb (Neil Lanham CD NLCD3).

20 - La de da de da de da de dum (Roud 25276)

Now on the 17th of March in La de da de da
A son was born to Mrs Da de dum
He had two arms, two legs, eyes and ears and mouth
And the usual la de da de da de dum.
Now as he grew older his la de da de da
Grew faster than his other da de dum
And when he was sixteen everyone remarked
On his great big la de da de da de dum.

But he met a girl in La de da de dum
She was pretty, though a trifle la de dum
But the reason that he loved her was because
She did not mind about his la de da de dum.

So now they got married in the spring
Of la de da de da,
They honeymooned in lovely Da de dum
Everything was all right 'cept they
Couldn't use the double bed
For his great big la de da de da de dum.

So now they decided la de da de da
To use two single beds instead of one.
They slept together and they used the other bed
Just to rest his la de da de da de dum.

Now he took ill in the winter at La de da de da
With an attack of the dreaded da de dum
So they tied him up in bandages that ended in bow
Round his la de da de da de da de dum.

But he died in the spring of la de da de da
A victim of that dreadful da de dum
So they put him in a coffin,
But they couldn't close the lid
For his great big la de da de da de dum.

Now you can read on his tombstone
'La de da de da
The son of la de da de da de dum,
Here lies his body, and in the
Next grave up but one
Lies his la de da de da de da de dum.

David: I learned this from Morag (last name forgotten), a young Scottish nurse who was working for a while at the Hadasah Hospital in Jerusalem. She sang with us in the Taverners occasionally, and later married an Irish UN worker, with whom she moved to the west of Ireland.

It's a new entry to the Roud *Index* - so I can tell you nothing more about it.

21 - Lovely Joan (Roud 592)

It's of a fine young man indeed
He was mounted on his milk white steed
He rode, he rode himself all alone
Not stop 'til he came to Lovely Joan.

"Good morning to you, my pretty maid"
"And twice good morning Sir," she said.
He gave her a wink and she rolled her dark eye
Said he to himself "I'll be there by and by."

"Oh don't you think those stooks of hay
A fair pretty place for us to play?
So come with me like a sweet young thing
And I shall give to you my golden ring."

From off his hand he drew a ring of gold
"My fair pretty miss do this behold.
I'll freely give it for your maidenhead."
And her cheeks they blushed like the roses red.

"Pray give that ring into my hand
And I shall neither stay nor stand,
For that ring will do far more good to me
Than twenty maidenheads," said she.

But as he made for those stooks of hay
She leaped on his horse and she rode away.
He called, he cried, but 'twas all in vain
For she never stopped nor looked back again.

She didn't think herself quite safe
Not until she had reached her own true love's gate
She'd stolen his horse and his golden ring
And left him to rage in the meadows so green.

Another well-known song not much taken up by the oral tradition - 75 Roud entries, but only 10 named singers and just two sound recordings; that by Ray Driscoll is on Artesion CD 703. David learned it in his youth from the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* and sang it in 1968 when he met Deborah in Jerusalem. Perhaps because Joan was both her and her mother's middle name, it was one of her favourites, so he re-learned it for this 'birthday special' CD.

22 - The Roving Journeyman (Roud 360)

I am a roving journeyman and
I roam from town to town.
Oh, and when I gets a job of work
I'm ready to set down.
With me bundle all on me shoulder
And me stick all in me hand,
And round the country I shall go
Like a roving journeyman.

Now when I arrived in Brighton Town
All the girls they jumped for joy
Said one unto the other
"Here comes the roving boy."
Now one handed me the bottle,
The other held the glass
And the toast goes round the table
"Here's good luck to a journeyman".

Now I hadn't been in Brighton Town
But days scarce two or three

Before me master's daughter
She fell in love with me.
She asked me for to dine with her
And she took me by the hand
And boldly she told her parents
That she loved the journeyman.

“Oh, get away you foolish maid,
Such folly speak no more,
For he's only a roving journeyman
That you've never seen before.”
“But Mother sweet, in do entreat
I'll love him all I can,
And round the country I shall go
Like a roving journeyman.”

David: I learned this song from the Topic LP by the Willett Family.

Roud has 118 instances of this song, of which 30 are sound recordings. Many of the named singers have Gypsy or Traveller surnames.

The song was thought to be Irish in origin and the text often refers to the locality of Carlow, though only seven of Roud's singers are from Ireland.

Other CD recordings: Tom Willett (MTCD61-2); Danny Brazil (MTCD345-7); Mary Doran (TSCD677T); Paddy Doran (Saydisc CD-SDL 407).

23 - **The Trees they do Grow High** (Roud 31, Laws O35)

The trees they do grow high
And the leaves they do grow green
And many's the long and winter's night
My love and I have seen.
It's a cold winter's night, my love,
You and I must lie alone
For my bonny boy is young but he's growing.

“Now Father, dear Father,
You've done to me great wrong
For you've gone and got me married
To one who is too young
For he is only sixteen years and I am twenty one,
Oh my bonny boy he's young but he's a-growing.”

“Oh Daughter, dear Daughter,
I'll tell you what we'll do
We'll send your love to college
For another year or two
And all around his college scarf
We'll tie the ribbons blue
For to let the ladies know that he's a-married.”

Now so early, so early, so early the next day
This couple they arose and went sporting in the hay
And what they did there she never would declare
But she never more complained of his a-growing.
Now at the age of sixteen he was a married man
And at the age of seventeen the father of a son
But at the age of eighteen years growth
Grew over his tombstone;
Cruel death had put an end to his a-growing.

So now my love is ended and in his grave do lie
I'll sit here and mourn his death until the day I die
And I'll sit here and mourn his death
Until the day I die
And I'll watch all o'er his son
Whilst he's a-growing.

David learned this one from Joe Dolan, his sometime tent-mate, as mentioned in the Masada section, above.

Roud shows this song to be widely known, with 264 entries from right across the Anglophone world, and with the majority from England. It is most usually titled *The Trees they do Grow High*, but examples along the lines of *Long a-Growing* are also very frequent. Clearly its popularity endured until recently, since about one third of the entries are sound recordings.

Although the sad tale of such failed arranged marriages was universal, Aberdeenshire claims it firmly for the marriage, and death three years later, of the young Laird of Craigston in 1634, as attested by James Maidment in *A North Country Garland* (1824).

Other versions available on CD: Caroline Hughes (MTCD365-6); May Bradley (MTCD349); Mary Ann Haynes (MTCD320); George Dunn (MTCD317-8); Ellen Mitchell (MTCD315-6); Lizzie Higgins (MTCD337-8); Harry Brazil (MTCD345-7); Fred Jordan (VTD148CD), Joe Heaney (TSCD518D), Harry Cox (Rounder CD1839), Walter Pardon (TSCD514), Duncan Williamson (Kylloe 101).

24 - **McCaffery** (Roud 1148)

Kind friends take warning now by my sad tale
As I lie here in Strangeways Jail,
My thoughts, my feelings no tongue can tell
As I lie listening to the prison bell.

Now when I was seventeen years of age
Into the army I did engage,
I did enlist with good intent
To join the fortysecond regiment.

Now to Fulwood Barracks then I did go
To serve some time there at that depot,
But from trouble there I was never free
Because my own captain he took a dislike to me.

Now when I was stationed on guard one day
Some soldiers' children they came round me to play
My captain from his quarters came
And he ordered me to take their parents' name.

Now my officer's orders, oh, now I must fulfil
But I took their names against my will,
I took one name instead of three,
'Neglect of duty' was the charge against me.

In the orderly room next morning, oh, I did appear
My commanding officer refused my plea to hear.
Oh, and quickly he did sign my crime
And to Fulwood Barracks I was close confined.

Now with loaded rifle I did prepare
To shoot my captain on the barrack square,
It was Captain Neal that I meant to kill
But I shot my own colonel against my will.

Oh I done the deed, oh yes I shed the blood,
At Liverpool Assizes my trial I stood.
Now the judge he said “John McCaffery,
Prepare yourself for the gallows tree.”

Now I have no father to take my part
I have no mother to break her heart.
I have one friend, oh a good woman is she,
Would lay down her life for John McCaffery.

Now at Liverpool Assizes this young man stood trial
In Strangeways, Manchester, his body now lies.
So come all you young soldiers as pass by his grave
Pray Lord have mercy on John McCaffery.

Many traditional singers were uneasy about this song - it carries its own stories and superstitions. There was a strongly held (but quite erroneous) belief that it was illegal to sing *McCaffery* in public. This may account for the fact that Roud has only 49 instances of a song which, in my experience, almost all singers used to know. It's also surprising that there appears to have been only one broadside printing.

Other available CD versions: Caroline Hughes (MTCD365-6); May Bradley (MTCD349); Danny Brazil (MTCD345-7); Bill Smith (MTCD351); Tommy Connolly (MTCD367-8); Jimmy McBeath (Rounder CD 1834); Paddy Grant (TSCD673T).

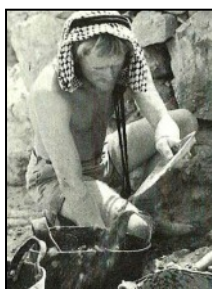
Credits:

Firstly, of course, thanks to **David Stacey** - for the singing, the bulk of the text in the first part of the booklet, and for all the photos. Also:

- Danny Stradling - for song transcriptions and proof reading.
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CDs: editing, production by Rod Stradling

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David, seiving at Masada



Albert Brazil at his son's wedding



Eli Frankham singing *The Barley Mow*



Eli Frankham, right, in the Princess Victoria, next to him is Gordon Boswell



Eli playing mouthorgan; in the middle a



Johnny Mathews and family outside the



David and Henry Ridley in *The Vine*



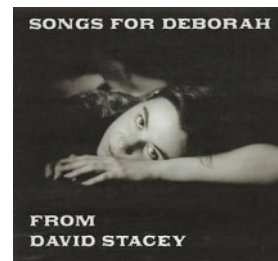
Ambrose Cooper



Walter Jarvis



David and Johnny Mathews



The original CD cover



Henry Ridley at Horsemonden



Nancy Webb and Tony



Masada



The Taverners