



COLD SNAP

PEGGY SEEGER

EWAN MacCOLL

traditional & contemporary songs and ballads

M
1746
S452
C688
1978

MUSIC LP

SIDE ONE

BAND 1: *THE RIDDLE SONG* sung by Peggy Seeger with psaltery (NM), and Appalachian dulcimer (PS)

BAND 2: *BRAVE HONEST JACK TAR* sung by Ewan MacColl

BAND 3: *ALLENDE'S SONG* sung by Peggy Seeger with guitars (NM, PS)

BAND 4: *JOHNNY SANGSTER* sung by Ewan MacColl, with mandolin (NM), concertina (PS), fiddle (IT)

BAND 5: *TAM LIN* sung by Ewan MacColl

BAND 6: *DULL MONDAY* with Appalachian dulcimer (CMO), mandolin (NM), 5-string banjo (PS)

BAND 7: *THE LAG'S SONG* sung by Ewan MacColl, with two guitars (NM, PS)

SIDE TWO

BAND 1: *THE PARLIAMENTARY POLKA* sung by Ewan MacColl with guitars (NM, AP) 5-string banjo (PS) and fiddle (IT)

BAND 2: *BARBARA ALLEN* sung by Peggy Seeger with guitar

BAND 3: *AS I CAME IN BY FISHERRAW* sung by Ewan MacColl with fiddle (IT) and autoharp (PSO)

BAND 4: *SONG FOR CALUM* sung by Peggy Seeger

BAND 5: *THE FISHY CRAB* sung by Ewan MacColl

BAND 6: *WILLIE REILLY* sung by Peggy Seeger with 5-string banjo

BAND 7: *THE ALE-WIFE* sung by Ewan MacColl with fiddle (IT) and concertina (PS)

BAND 8: *THOUGHTS OF TIME* sung by Peggy Seeger with guitar (CM) and autoharp (PS)

EWAN MacCOLL and PEGGY SEEGER have been the main folk duo in Britain for nearly twenty years. Peggy's field is American folk music, and she accompanies herself — and Ewan — on the guitar, the 5-string banjo, the Appalachian dulcimer, English concertina and autoharp. Ewan's specialty is Scots songs and ballads. He also sings English material. Both singers have in their repertoires a number of contemporary songs, many of which they have written themselves. Their work outside the performance field stretches to film, radio and television work, advisory and research projects, lecturing and teaching, compiling anthologies, field recording and writing. They are accompanied on several tracks of this record by their sons, Neill (18) and Calum (14).

ACCOMPANIED BY CALUM AND NEILL MACCOLL, ALAN PROSSER AND IAN TELFER.

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8765

COLD SNAP

Traditional & contemporary songs and ballads

sung by PEGGY SEEGER and EWAN MacCOLL

Accompanied by Calum and Neill MacColl, Alan Prosser and Ian Telfer

" NO MORE RECORDING STUDIOS FOR US NEXT SUMMER!"

That was the firm resolution made, more often than not, in the course of a recording session. There would be a fifteen-minute break and we'd emerge into the sunlight feeling like a couple of slugs that had crept from under a stone. There and then, we resolved to enjoy the following summer before returning to the stale limbo of the recording studio.

It was a sequence of events which was to repeat itself annually for almost twenty summers. Of course we did realise fairly early on that we were the victims of a conspiracy. How else could we explain the fact that all our recording sessions coincided with a heat wave?

By 1973, we had reached breaking-point. That year we dug our heels in, refusing to succumb to the temptation to record. Instead, we began work on a book and spent the summer sweating over a typewriter. "Never mind," we said, "It'll be different next year!" But it wasn't. Our publishers were insisting on having the manuscript in their hands by mid-September. So all THAT summer we worked against the clock.

By the time the following summer arrived, we were well on the way with a second book and working flat out to get the bulk of the work done before October, when we were due to begin a concert tour of Australia, where (sure enough) we spent long lovely hot days in air terminals, press conferences and radio and television studios!

You remember 1976?...Summer began in early April and, for four-and-a-half months, the days dawned with clear blue skies and the sun shone and shone and shone while we typed and wrote and re-wrote and re-typed and swore, "Never again! No more books, no more recordings during the summer months!" And this time we meant it. We really meant it.

Early in May, 1977, we completed our second book and also our recording commitments. We were free to enjoy the summer!! But, where the hell WAS the summer? The East wind, which had started to blow in mid-March, was still blowing in May - it continued to blow throughout June and the first two weeks of July. Our favourite TV weather-caster smilingly referred to it as a "cold snap" Later it became a "cold spell" and, after a month it became "an extended cold spell". After that he just mumbled and tried to pretend it wasn't really happening.

But it was happening, it was happening to us. Some of our friends, well-versed in climatological matters, attempted to convince us that we were just experiencing a perfectly logical weather cycle. We knew better. The joker who had pursued our recording sessions with heat waves for twenty years could be described as spiteful, perverse or even malign.... but LOGICAL? Never!

Midway through July, we capitulated. Gave up. Or, perhaps as primitive peoples coax the elements with provocative, mimetic dancing, we convinced ourselves that by entering the airless, windowless sanctuary of the recording studio, we could charm the sun to shine.

The songs on this disc chronicle our 1977 surrender.

Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl

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3. ALLENDE'S SONG

Don Lange, who wrote this song in 1974, lives in Solon, Iowa where he combines truck-driving with song-writing. The song arose out of the 1973 events, when the fascist junta demolished the Allende government

side one

The night hawk swoops and the hoot-owl hoots
And we're drivin' on down the road,
And like it or not, it's country or rock
On the all-night radio show.
The announcer comes on, says "If you got ideas,
We'll file a patent for you -
For what good's an idea when it's not in the store-
Making a buck or two?"

CHORUS

It's a long way from the heartland to Santiago Bay
Where the good Doctor lies with blood in his eyes
And the bullets read "U.S. of A."
And the bullets read "U.S. of A."

We roll through the towns where the shutters roll down
And the all-night restaurant's closed.
It's the land of the free, of booze and TV
And a bum in each telephone booth.
But the stars and the trees, and the early spring breeze
Say "Forget what assassins have done.
And take our good land in the palm of your hand
And wait for tomorrow, son." (CHORUS)

The trucker's good life here includes a good wife here
She rides along on the rig.
And we move the goods, all the copper and wood,
And that makes America great.
But the dollars, like swallows, fly to the south
Where they know they got something to gain.
Allende is killed, Uncle Sam foots the bill,
And the truckers are rolling again. (CHORUS)

The night hawk swoops and the hoot-owl hoots
And we're drivin' on down the road,
The full moon reveals all the houses and fields
Where good people do what they're told.
A poet lies, with coins on his eyes,
And there's no-one around him to mourn,
But who needs a poet who won't take commands,
Who'd rather make love than war? (CHORUS)

4. JOHNNY GANGSTER

According to Gavin Grieg, this fine song is the work of William Scott who was born in Fetterangus in the parish of Old Deer, Aberdeenshire, in 1785. Scott, who began life as a herd-laddie, subsequently moved to Aberdeen where he was apprenticed to a tailor. Later he worked for a time in London and, after visiting the United States, returned to Old Deer where he spent the rest of his life.

O'a'the seasons o'the year when we maun work the sairest
The harvest is the only time and yet it is the rarest,
We rise as soon's the mornin' light, nae craters can be blither
We buckle on oor finger-steels and follow oot the scyther.

Chorus: For you, Johnny, you Johnny, you Johnny Sangster
I'll trim the gavel o'my sheaf for ye're the gallant bandster.

A mornin' piece to line oor cheeks afore that we gae forder
Wi' clouds o' blue tobacco reek we then set oot in order
The sheaves are risin' thick and fast and Johnny he maun bind them,
The busy group, for fear they stick, can scarcely look behind them.

I'll gie ye bands that winna slip, I'll pleat them weel and thraw them,
I'm sure they winna tine the grip hooever weel ye draw them.
I'll lay my leg oot owre the sheaf and draw the band sae handy,
Wi' ilka strae as straucht's a rash and that'll be the dandy.

If e'er it chance to be my lot to get a gallant bandster,
I'll gar him wear a gentle coat and bring him gowd in handfu's
But Johnny, he can please himsel', I wadna wish him blinket
Sae after he has brewed his ale, he can sit doon and drink it.

A dainty cowie in the byre for butter and for cheeses,
A grumphie feedin' in the sty wad keep the hoose in greases
A bonnie ewie in the bucht would help to crease the ladle
And we'll get ruffos o' canny woo' wad help to theek the cradle.

maun - must; forder - forward; reek - smoke;
ilka strae as straucht's a rash - every strand as straight as a rush;
gar - make; blinket - blinkered; grumphie - pig;
bucht - fold; crease - grease; theek - thatch

1. THE RIDDLE SONG

Riddling, as an entertainment, holds an honoured place in folk ritual, even among contemporary urban-dwellers.... "What lies at the bottom of the ocean and shivers? A Nervous Wreck!" In the olden-days, riddling was associated with creativity, with fecundity and fertility, with courtship and marriage, with sowing and reaping and, eventually, life and death. Most of the riddling ballads have, as protagonists, two lovers, or else a human being and the Devil-our little love song would seem to be taken from a longer ballad, possibly "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship" (Child: 46). It is also found as part of a children's play-party piece in Britain and America. Our version is from Kentucky.

I gave my love a cherry that had no stone,
I gave my love a chicken that had no bone,
I told my love a story that has no end,
I gave my love a baby with no cryin'.

How can there be a cherry that has no stone?
How can there be a chicken that has no bone?
How can there be a story that has no end?
How can there be a baby with no cryin'?

A cherry when it's blooming it has no stone.
A chicken when it's pippin' it has no bone.
The story that I love you it has no end.
A baby when it's a-gettin' there's no cryin'.

2. BRAVE HONEST JACK TAR

C.H. Firth, in the introduction to "Naval Songs and Ballads", writes: "Ill usage made volunteers scarce and increased the discontent of pressed men. Complaints against empressment and references to the abuses to which it gave rise, became increasingly frequent during the latter half of the 18th. century." This song is a fine example of the genre.

Brave honest Jack Tar, once more will you venture?
Press warrants they are out, I would have you to enter
Take some rich Spanish prize as we've done afore-O:
Ay, and be cheated of 'em all, as we were the last war-O.

No man that sails with me shall e'er be abused,
So Jack, come aboard, and you'll be well used.
You'll be bo'sun's mate Jack, so boldly come and enter
And not like a dog be hauled on board of the tender.

"Now Cap'n," he said, "don't you talk of pressing,
It 'ain't long ago I give six of 'em a dressing."
"I know that very well, Jack, and the truth I will tell you,
You're a bold-hearted fellow and that makes me want you."

"O Cap'n" he said, "if the truth I will tell ye,
I got so much of the last war it quite filled me belly,
For your damned rogues of officers they use men so cruel
That a man-o'-war is worse than hell or the devil."

The master's a-swearin', the bo'sun's a-growlin',
The midshipman is bawling out, "Take back that fore-bowline
If you speak but one word, you're a mutinous rascal,
Both legs laid in irons and tried by court-martial.

Now boys, we are pressed far from our habitation.
We leave wife and children in loud lamentation.
We risk our sweet lives in defence of our nation
And we get nothing for it but grief and vexation.

5. TAM LIN

"This fine ballad stands by itself and is not, as might have been expected, found in possession of any people but the Scottish. Yet it has connections, through the principal feature in the story, the re-transformation of Tam Lin, with Greek popular tradition older than Homer.

(F.J.CHILD)

I forbid ye, maidens a
That wear gowd in your hair
Tae come or gae by Carterhaugh
For young Tam Lin is there.

There's nane that gaes tae Carterhaugh
But pays to him their fee,
Either their rings or green mantles
Or else their maidenheid.

Janet has kilted her green kirtle
A little abune her knee,
And she has gane to Carterhaugh
As fast as she could hie

She hadnae pu'd a double rose
A rose but and a briar
When oot and started Young Tam Lin,
Says, "Lady, ye'll pu' nas mair."

"Why pu' ye the rose, lady,
And why break ye the wand?
And why come ye tae Carterhaugh
Withooten my command?"

"Carterhaugh is mine," she said,
My daddy gied tae me,
And I will come tae Carterhaugh
Withoot the lief o' thee."

He's taen her by the milk-white haund
And by the grass-green sleeve,
And laid her doon upon a bank,
And didnae ask her leave.

Janet has kilted her green kirtle
A little abune her knee,
And she has gane tae her daddy's hoose
As fast as she could hie

There were fowre-and-twenty ladies fair
A-playin' at the ba',
And Janet gaed like ony queen,
A floofer amang them a'.

There were fowre-and-twenty ladies fair
A-playing' at the chess,
And Janet gaed amang them a'
As green as ony grass.

Oot spak then as auld grey knicht,
Stood owre the castle wa',
And said, "Alas, dear Janet
But I fear ye've gotten a fa',
Your petticoat is gey shorter
And we'll be blamed a'."

O haud your tongue, ye auld grey knicht
And an ill deith may he dee
Faither my bairn on wha I will
I'll faither nane on thee.

Then oot spak her auld faither,
Says, "Janet, you're beguiled.
Your petticoat is gey shorter
I fear ye gang wi' child."

"O if I gang wi' bairn faither,
It's I will tak' the blame.
There's no' a knicht about your ha'
Shall bear my bairnie's name.

Janet as kilted her green kirtle
A little abune her knee,
And she's has gane tae Carterhaugh
As fast as she could hie

"Why pu' ye the rose, Janet,
Amang the leaves sae green?
A' for to kill the bonnie babe
That we gat us between."

"Tell me, noo," Tam Lin," she said,
"For 's sake wha died on tree,
Gin ever ye were in holy kirk
Or else in Christendee."

Roxburgh was my grandfather
And wi' him I did ride,
And it fell oot upon a day
That wae did me betide.

Ay, it fell oot upon a day,
A cauld day and a snell,
Then we were fae the hunting come
That fae my horse I fell.

The Queen o' Elfinland passed by,
Took me wi' her to dwell,
E'en whaur there is a pleasant place
For them that in it dwell,
Though at the end of o' seiven year
They pay their soul to Hell.

The nicht it is auld Hallow E'en
When elfin folk do ride,
And them that would their true-loves win
At Miles Cross they maun bide.

"But tell me noo, Tam Lin," she said,
"When ye're amang the thrang,
Hoo whould I ken my ain true-love
Amang that unco' band?"

Some will ride the black, the black,
And some will ride the broon,
But I'll be on the milk-white horse
Shod wi' the siller shoon.

The ae hand will be gloved, Janet
The other will be bare,
And by these tokens I'll gie ye,
Ye'll ken that I am there.

The first company that passes by,
Say "na" and let them gae,
The second company that passes by,
Then let them gang their way,
But the third company that passes by
Then I'll be yin o' they.

Ye'll hie ye tae my milk-white steed
And pu' me quickly doon,
Throw your green kirtle owre me
To keep me from the rain

They'll turn me in your airms, lady
Tae an adder and a snake,
But haud me fast unto your breist
To be your worldly make.

They'll turn me in your airms, lady
A spotted toad to be,
But haud me fast unto your breist
T' enjoy your fair body.

They'll turn me in your airms, lady
Tae a mither-naked man,
Cast your green kirtle owre me
To keep me frae the rain.

First put me in a stand o' milk,
Syne in a stand o' water,
And haud me fast unto your breist
I am your bairn's father.

Janet has kilted her green kirtle
A little abune her knee,
And she has gane tae Miles Cross
As fast as she could hie.

The first company that passed her by
She said "na" and let them gae,
The second company that passed her by
She let them gang their way
But the third company that passed her by
Then he was yin o' they.

She's hied her to his milk-white steed
And pu'd him quickly doon,
Cast her green kirtle owre him
To keep him fae the rain.

They've turned him in his lady's airms
Tae a mither-naked man,
She cast her green kirtle owre him
To keep him fae the rain.

She's put him in a stand o' milk,
Syne in stand o' water,
She's held him fast unto her breist,
He was her bairn's father.

Oot spak the Queen o' Elfinland
Oot o' a bush o' broom,
O, wha' has gotten young Tam Lin
Has gotten a stately groom.

Oot spak the Queen o' Elfinland
Oot o' a thorny tree,
O, wha has gotten young Tam Lin
Has taen my love fae me.

"Gin I had kent, Tam Lin," she said
A lady would borrow thee,
I would hae torn oot thy twa grey e'en
Put in twa e'en o' a tree.

"Gin I had kent, Tam Lin," she said
"When first we come tae home,
I would hae torn oot that hairt o' flesh,
Put in a hairt o' stane."

Kirtle - gown; gey - very much; make - mate, equal;
syne - then; gin - if; Kirk - church;
snell - sharp; maun - must; ken - know; ain - own;
unco' - unknown; ae - one; yin - one

6. DULL MONDAY

This was the result of a boring Monday afternoon in 1965. It evolved while I was sitting around playing the banjo and I have been playing it ever since. It is undoubtedly put together from pieces of tunes I already know so it sounds an older tune than it is. Playing it makes Mondays brighter!

7. THE LAG'S SONG

Ewan MacColl wrote this song in 1965 for "In Prison" a BBC documentary film on Strangeways Prison, Manchester.

When I was a young lad sometimes I'd wonder
What happened to time when it passed,
Then one day I found out that time just lands in prison,
And there it is held fast.

When I was a young man, used to go courtin'
And dream of the moon and the stars,
The moon is still shining, the dreams they are all broken
On these hard iron bars.

Look out of the window, over the roofs there-
And over the wall see the sky-
Just one flying leap and you could make your getaway...
If only you could fly.

The prison is sleeping, the night watch is keeping
It's watch over seven-hundred men,
And behind every cell door, a sleepin' lag is dreaming,
O to be free again.

Go write me a letter, addressed to my number,
But say you remember my name,
So I'll be reminded of how the world outside goes,
And feel a man again.

Got time on my hands, I've got time on my shoulders
Plenty of time on my mind,
There's no summer or winter when once you land inside here,
Just that old prison grind.

side two

THE PARLIAMENTARY POLKA (OR PLEASE PLACE IN THE 1. APPROPRIATE RECEPTACLE YOUR GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER)

Written by Ewan in 1975 and, unfortunately, still completely topical..

When prices keep on rising and your backs are to the wall
And your kids are needing clothing and you lack the where-withal
When economic crisis grabs the country by the earholes
That's the time to rally round your leaders.
For the leaders of the nation,
The Employers' Federation
They know all the answers
And the Institute of Bankers
Know a way
To save the day,
YOU've only got to sacrifice your pay.

When miners start demanding astronomical amounts
To swell their private fortunes in their numbered Swiss accounts,
It's then you'll hear the mighty voice of Westminster announce:
Foreward to the pits to Get the Coal Out:
Chaps with bowlers, umbrellas,
Monday Clubbers (...Splendid Fellas)
Ministers and Royal Pages,
And they're not here for the wages
But because
The time has come
To show the miners how it should be done.

When money-grubbing building workers vote to go on strike
And brutal pickets interfere with honest blacklegs' rights,
It's then that loyal Britishers are called upon to fight
To defend free Enterprise and Law and Order
It's then that loyal Britishers are called upon to fight
To defend Free Enterprise and Law and Order.
Cops and TV Commentators,
Lawyers, building speculators,
Magistrates and judges,
Scabs who're paying off their grudges
Use the Law.
It has no flaw.
To serve their interests, that is what it's for.

When disaffected Mums and Dads begin to bawl and shout
Insisting that our education system's up the spout,
Remember Maggie Thatcher's there and she knows all about,
Everything concerning Education.
For she knows that kids of workers
Are just layabouts and shirkers
To teach 'em would be folly
And an utter waste of lolly,
Waste of time.
Save the dough
They're here to work that's all they need to know.

So just remember when you feel inclined to criticise
It's not for you to question or to ask the reason why,
Close your mouth and go on grafting till the day you die
And win the thanks of those who own the nation.
They will con you, they'll mislead you
They will rob you, they will bleed you,
With a smile they'll freeze your wages
Kill you off by easy stages
Till the day
You pull the chain.
And flush the whole caboodle down the drain:

2. BARBARA ALLEN

(Child 84)

I have known this song for as long as I can remember, but have probably changed it unconsciously over the years. It is a song which brings back many memories. My parents probably learned it from the singing of Bob Brown of Sour Lake in Texas, although there are versions of the ballad similar to this one all over the south and south-west of the United States. It is perhaps one of the most popular of the traditional ballads in America. It probably owes much of its popularity to its proliferation in print, in England and Scotland it appeared constantly on Broadsheets in the 17 and 1800's.

It has always seemed strange to me, as a woman singer, that Barbara should be branded 'hard-hearted' simply because she did not reciprocate a man's love. In the earlier (mostly Scots) texts, however, Barbara was characterised as a spiteful, pretty girl who returned a small slight with a large one, who "with scornful eye" looked down upon the corpse - "her cheek with laughter swellin'". The ballad goes back to the late 1600's and it is a favourite pastime of many folklorists to tie its events into the life of Charles II, whose last mistress Barbara Villiers (hated by all but her royal lover) is often thought to be the anti-heroine of the ballad. The fact that earlier texts portray Barbara as malicious may lend veracity to this theory, but time and tradition, however, have certainly made her - and the ballad - more romantic and soft-hearted.

In Scarlet Town where I was born
There was a fair maid dwelling,
Every youth cried well away,
Her name was Barbara Allen.

It was in the merry month of May
When the green buds they was swelling,
Sweet William on his death-bed lay
For the love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his man unto her then
To the place where she was dwelling,
My master's ill and he calls for you
If your name be Barbara Allen.

Slowly, slowly, rose she up,
Slowly came she nigh him,
All she said when there she came,
"Young man I think you're dying."

O Yes I'm sick, I'm very sick
And yes I know I'm dying,
No better, no better will I ever be
If I can't have Barbara Allen.

Don't you remember last Saturday night
When we was all a-drinking?
You drank a toast to the ladies 'round,
And you slighted Barbara Allen.

O I remember last Saturday, night
When we was all a drinking,
I drank a toast to the ladies 'round,
And my love to Barbara Allen.

He's turned his pale face to the wall
And he busted out a-crying,
No better, no better will you ever be
For you won't get Barbara Allen.

O she went out in the May morning
She heard the birds a-singing,
Every bird did seem to say,
"Hard-hearted Barbara Allen."

O she went home in the May morning
She heard his death-bell knolling,
Every bell did seem to say:
"Hard-hearted Barbara Allen."

O mother, mother, go make my bed,
Go make it long and narrow,
Sweet William died for me today,
I'll die for him tomorrow.

O father, father, go dig my grave,
Dig it long and narrow,
Sweet William died for pure true love
And I will die for sorrow.

They buried Sweet William in the old churchyard
Barbara Allen beside him,
From his grave is a deep red rose
And from hers a briar.

They grew and grew in the old churchyard
They could not grow no higher,
There they formed a true-lovers' knot
The red rose 'round the briar.

3. AS I CAME IN BY FISHERRAW

It is in songs such as this, that the 'Scottish Muse' is at its most eloquent. In three short stanzas, tenderness and irony combine to produce a short, sharp, social commentary on one of the Kirk's most unhappy traditions, i.e. the public confession of sexual intimacies outside wedlock. A young woman, whose passion had exceeded caution and who was showing the results of it, was made to sit before the elders of the Kirk on a cutty stool (a short low stool) while her lover mounted a pillar

As I came in by Fisherraw
Mussetburgh was near me,
I took off my meal-pock
And courted wi' my dearie, (chorus)

Upstairs, doon stairs,
Timmer stairs fears me,
I thocht it lang to lie my lane (alone)
When I'm sae near my dearie.

Had her apron bidden doon
The kirk would ne'er hae kenned it (church, known)
But since the word's gane through the toon
I fear I cannae mend it (chorus)

Noo ye maun mount the cutty-stool (must)
And I maun mount the pillar,
And that's the way the poor folks do
Because they hae nae siller. (chorus) (silver)

4. SONG FOR CALUM

When Neill was eleven years old, I wrote a song for him. When Kitty was born I wrote one for her, Calum asked when it was his turn. At twelve-and-a-half, he was difficult to write a song about and, indeed, difficult to get along with. Mercurial, argumentative, he was neither man nor boy. When told he was at a 'difficult age', his immediate response was "Well, let's face it, Mum, YOU'RE at a difficult age, too!" This song was written on the M-6 in twenty minutes.

O, I'm a young woman that's just hitting forty
I've a good loving man who's both sixty and young
Three children we've borne, their young lives we've guarded,
They strain at the leash ever ready to run.
I could sing of a baby, her laughter and prattle,
I could sing of a son who is nearly a man.
I could sing of their father, forever a lover,
But I'll sing of the boy who's just twelve and a half.

At running and jumping, at games of the season,
At swimming and football the best you have seen.
At arguing fine points of logic and reason,
His method is one of a boy of thirteen.

The smile of his mother, the face of his father,
The tongue of his granny and a mind of his own;
On every subject he holds an opinion
And he'll swear that he's right and the whole world is wrong.

He watches me closely, he gauges my temper -
He knows just the moment to ask for a lend.
He'll wash the car and wipe all the dishes
And then he'll complain about making his bed

His face always mucky, his shoes always dirty,
His hair is uncombed and his jacket is torn.
His belongings are scattered from basement to attic,
Yet he knows where they are like the crow finds the corn.

Son of my youth, so honest and open,
I'm proud of your will, your compulsion to fight.
Keep raising your voice, insist that you're counted
And if you're wrong, the world sets you aright.
Son of my heart, thoughtful and loving,
The image of life, and as elusive to hold.
Today I am weary, so man-child, please hear me:
No doubt you're right...but DO AS YOU'RE TOLD.

5. THE FISHY CRAB

Kirkpatrick Sharpe, commenting on this popular song, writes: "This gross old ditty is founded on a story in 'Le Moyen de Parvenir', a book of which the extreme wit is at least equalled by its beastliness." It's "grossness" does not appear to have affected the song's popularity in any way. It is one of the song titles mentioned in Wedderburn's "Complaynt of Scotland" (circa 1549).

Our guidwife's wi' bairn (pregnant)
And I hope it is a lad,
And she has taen a notion
For a wee bit fishy crab.

REFRAIN: Wi' my hey jing a learie
And my hey jing a loo,
And my hey tooral teerie,
In the mornin'.

O wake up now, my auld guidman,
O rise up, my auld lad:
I've taen a muckle notion
For a wee bit fishy crab. (ref)

The auld man he's got owre the bed
And he's put on his claes
And he's awa' tae the fish-dock
A'trippin' on his taes. (refrain)

The auld man he's taen oot his purse
And bocht the biggest yin,
And he's rowed it in his plaidie (wrapped)
And he's gan' toddlin' hame. (refrain)

Well, first he put it on the shelf
Whaur it broke all the dishes,
Syn he's put it the chaumer-pot (then)
Whaur the wifie pishes. (refrain)

The auld wife she rose in the nicht
And sat tae tak' her ease,
But the fishy crab rose up
And took a nip between her thighs. (refrain)

O rise up noo, my auld guidman,
O help me noo for shame.
While you lie snorin' in your bed
The deil has grabbed my wame. (refrain) (devil, womb, belly)

The auld man he got awre the bed
To louse the fish's claws,
But the fishy crab rose faster,
Took the auld man by the nose. (refrain)

"O curse the hour," the auld man cried
"I brocht the crab-fish hither.
For noo the damn thing's joined my nose
And my wife's tail thegither." (refrain)

6. WILLIE RILEY

(Laws M10)

Although I have only been singing this song for ten years, it is already a firm favourite. Of all the ballads in which boy-girl-parents form the eternal triangle it seems to me one of the most poignant, as it portrays the dramatis-personae by means of conversation rather than description. The practise of getting rid of a suitor whose worldly means do not match those of his intended has been a preoccupation of parents down through the ages. Even now, in modern Britain, cases do crop up in the tabloids and murder courts. And often the inequality in social-status between the lovers is negligible. But 'vive (?) la difference' when it comes to the important matters like money and property.

This version is from Georgia, but the song itself originally comes from Bundoren near the boundaries of the three counties of Donegal, Fermanagh and Sligo, where a young Catholic Irishman fell in love with the daughter of a powerful Protestant local Squire.

O, early one morning, so sound as I did sleep,
I heard the voice of my love a-calling at my feet.
O rise up, Willy Reilly and come away with me,
Unto that foreign countryland and married we will be.

I'll leave my father's dwelling, forsake my mother's fee
Go through a howling wilderness and married we will be.
Her father followed after with seven armed men
Overtaken was poor Reilly with his lovely Polly Ann.

O, early next morning, the jailer's son came down,
O rise up, Willy Reilly, your trial is at hand,
Before the judge and jury, your trial you must stand,
I'm afraid you'll suffer sorely for your lovely Polly Ann.

Up spoke her aged father, and these words he did say,
"He stole from me gold watches, he stole from me gold rings,
He stole a silver brooch-pin, was worth a thousand pounds,
I'll have the life of Reilly if I spend ten-thousand pound."

Then upspeke her aged lawyer, and these words he did say,
"To hang a man for love, boys, I calls it murderee,
To hang a man for love, boys, that's murder you can see,
O, spare the life of Reilly, let him leave his counteree."

Here is a ring among the rest I'd have for you to wear,
My ring has forty diamonds, it's plaited with my hair,
Now when you wear it, Reilly, wear it on your right hand,
And think of my poor broken-heart when you're in that foreign land.

Over Reilly's routes and travels, it can't near all be told,
My Reilly he's a handsome man, right neatly to behold,
His hair hangs round his shoulders, like many links of gold,
He loved McAllens's daughter, she was glorious to behold.

7. THE ALE-WIFE

The male drunk is frequently encountered in Scots song. The drunken wife, although less common, is by no means a stranger there. Generally, she is portrayed as a loud-mouthed harridan who, after being tricked into sobriety by her long-suffering husband, is eventually transformed into a suitably docile spouse. Here, the mood is completely different; our ale-wife is a compulsive drinker. She cannot help herself and though her husband is at his wits end he still appears to love her.

CHORUS: The ale-wife, the drunken wife,
The ale-wife she deaves me (worries)
My wifie wi' her barralie
She'll ruin and she'll leave me.

She takes her barrel on her back,
Her pint-stoup in her hand,
For she is to the market gane
To set up her stand. (chorus)

And when she comes hame late at nicht
She wades through girse and corn (grass)
Says, "I maun hae anither pint (must)
Though I should dee the morn." (chorus) (tomorrow)

The ale-wife, the drunken wife
Aroond the folk a'ken,
I cannae keep my wife (chorus)
Oot amang the men.

Written to celebrate my fortieth birthday.

When first we loved and when our life was new
Time lay around us like the space around a star-
But time moves faster than it used to
Thoughts of time will break my heart.

We've been through every weather, you and me,
Forever twining ourselves together till death will us part
But death is nearer than it used to be,
O thoughts of time will break my heart.

We know our children will take wing and fly,
Ties will be broken and a circle torn apart-
But to know our children will grow old and die,
Thoughts of time will break my heart.

When our time is gone and other's time begun,
Our lives swept aside and others lives about to start,
Then we'll join the past as countless more have done,
Thoughts of time will break my heart.

If we joined a dream, we also joined a fear
That one will be left behind, the other will depart,
But we've been in love for more than twenty years,
Thoughts of time will break my heart.

Our dream is old, the dream is always new,
A dream ever with us, it was with us from the start,
A dream that all could live as lovers do,
A dream coming nearer though it always seems afar,
But to die before we see our dream come true,
Only that could break my heart.

NOTES BY THE SINGERS

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