COLD SNAP

PEGGY SEEGER  EWAN MacCOLL

traditional & contemporary songs and ballads
FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8765

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 (PS)
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 autoharps. 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, Neil (NB) and Calum (14).

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

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PEGGY SEEGER
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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8765
"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
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 event when the faciral junta demolished the Allende government.

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 and says, "If you got ideas,
We'll give 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 goon 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 bun 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 he needs a poet who won't take commands,
Who'd rather make love than war. (CHORUS)

4. JOHNNY SANGSTER

According to Gavin Grieve, this fine song is the work of William Scott who was born in Peterhead in the parish of Old Deer, Aberdeenshire, in 1790. Scott, who began life as a bawbee-fiddler, 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 season's o' the year when we maun work the safest
The harvest is the only time and yet it is the rarest,
We rise as soon as the mornin' light, ma craters can be blither
We buckie on oor finger-stools and follow oot the scyther.

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

A mornin' piece to linn o' the cheeks afore that we gae foder
Wi' cloths o' blue tobacco reeks we then set out 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 wheel and throw them,
I'm sure they winna time the grip hoovever weel ye draw them.'
'I'll lay my leg out ower the sheaf and draw the band sae handy
Wi' like stries as straight's a rash and that'll be the dandy.

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

A deainty cowl in the breg for butter and for cheeses
A grimphie feedin' in the sty wad keep the hoose in greases
A bonnie ewie in the bught wad help to create the lady
And we'll get ruffus O'Caun wad help to think the cradle.

mourn - moust; forward - forder; smoke; shout
strait as a rash - strett as a rash; as straight as a rash; shuick - shest.

bacht - fold; grees - grease; thacket - thatch
I forbid ye, maidens all That wear gown in your hair, 
Tae come oar gae by Carterhaugh. 
For young Tam Lin is there.

There's none that goes tae Carterhaugh But pays to him their fee, 
Either their rings or green mantles Or else their maidenheids.

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

She had nee pu'd a double rose 
A rose but and a brier. 
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 and? 
And why come ye tae Carterhaugh Without my command?'

'Carterhaugh is mine,' she said, 
My dadding gied tae us, 
And I will come tae Carterhaugh Without the lief o' thee.'

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

Janet has killed her green kirtle 
A little abune her knee, 
And she has gane tae her daddies' house 
As fast as she could hie.

There were tae-and-twenty ladys fair 
A-playin' at the ba', 
And Janet gied like any queen, 
A flower among the a'.

There were tae-and-twenty ladys fair 
A-playin' at the chess, 
And Janet gaed an' among the a' 
As green as any grass.

Oot spak then as auld grey knight, 
Stood ower the castle wa', 
And said, 'Alas, dear Janet, 
But I fear ye've gotten a fa'.'

Your petticoat is gay shorter 
And we'll be damned a.'

O haud your tongue, ye auld grey knight 
And an ill death may he dee, 
Father my bairn on wha I will 
I'll faither name on thee.'

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

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

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

'Why pu' ye the rose, Janet, 
Anang the leaves see green? 
A' for to kill the bonnie babe 
That we got up between.'

'Tell me, noo,' Tam Lin, she said. 
'For'm sake wha died on tree. 
Gin ever ye were in holy kirk 
O' else in Christendom.'

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

Av, 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 is in hell. 
Though at the end of o' seven year 
They pay their soul to hell.

The night it is awf awey hain 
When elfin folk do ride, 
And them that would their true-loves win 
At Miles Cross they must abide.

'But tell me noo, Tam Lin,' she said, 
'When ye're among the throng, 
How wi' I ken my true-lore 
Among that uncle band?'

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

The aa hand will be gloved, Janet 
The other will be bare, 
And by these tokens I'll give ye, 
Tell 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 sin o' thay.'

'Tell me ye tae my milk-white steed, 
And pu' me quickly doon, 
Throw your green kirtle ower me 
To keep me from the rain. 
They'll turn me in your arms, lady 
Tae an adder and a snake, 
But haud me fast unto your breast 
To be your worldly sake.'

'They'll turn me in your arms, lady 
A spottet toad to be, 
But haud me fast unto your breast 
I enjoy your fair body.'

'They'll turn me in your arms, lady 
A mither-naked man, 
Cast your green kirtle ower me 
To keep me frae the rain.

First put me in a stand o' milk, 
Syna in stand o' water, 
Haud me fast unto your breast 
I am your bairn's father.'

Janet has killed 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 sin o' thay.'

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

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

She's put him in a stand o' milk, 
Syna in stand o' water, 
She's haid him fast unto her breast, 
He was her bairn's father.

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

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

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 features in the story, the re-formation of Tam Lin, with Greek popular tradition older than Homer."

(F.J. Childs)

"I had kent, Tam Lin," she said, 
And I said, "Lady, would borrow thee, 
I would hae torn out thy two grey e'en 
Put in thee en o' a tree."

"I had kent, Tam Lin," she said, 
When first I came tae thee, 
I would hae torn out that hair o' flesh, 
Put in a hair o' stane."

kirtle - gown; en - very much; make - mate, equal; 
nae - then; sin - if; bairn - church; 
shoon - sharp; broun - must; ken - know; own; 
sin - unknown; en - one; in - 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 had been playing it ever since. It is undoubtedly put together from pieces of tunes I already knew so it sounds an older tune than it is. Playing it makes Mondays brighter!

7. THE LAG'S SONG

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

When I was a young lad sowteet, 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 courting, 
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, 
0 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 Keen in 1979 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 hire that will,
When economic crisis grabs the country by the ears,
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 per.

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:
Forward 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 Robbins building workers vote to go on strike
And brutal pickets interfere with honest blacklegs rights,
It's then that loyal Britshers ar called upon to fight
To defend free Enterprise and Law and Order
It's then that loyal Britshers 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 howl 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 money,
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

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 Broadhearts in the 17 and 1800s.

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 Scotch) text, however, Barbara was characterised as a spirited, pretty girl who returned a small slight with a large one, who "with scornful eye, looked down upon the corpse—her cheek with laughter swells". The ballad goes back to the late 1600s and it is a favourite pastime of many folklorists to try to place the ballad in the time of Charles II, whose last mistress Barbara Villiers, (died at 20 but her royal lover) is often thought to be the anti-heroine of the ballad. The fact that earlier texts portray Barbara as a woman of serious, uncompromising veracity, but even her lover, has 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 were swelling,
Sweet William on his death-bed lay
For the love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his man unto his lady
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-bed knocking
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, do 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 her a brier.
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 brier.

3. AS I CAME IN BY FISHERAW

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 unhygienic 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 curiously short stool (to show low stool) while her lover mounted a pillar.

As I came in by Fisheraw
Musselburgh was near me,
I took off my real-rock
And courted wi' my dearie, (chorus)

Upstairs, done stairs,
Timeer stairs fears me,
I thought it long to lie my lane (alone)
When I'm an near my dearie.

Had her apron bidden door
The kirn would me er have kenned it (church.known)
But since the word's gang through the toon
I fear I cannot send it (chorus)

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

4. SONG FOR CALUM

When Nellie 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; indeed, difficult to get along with. Mercifully, argumentative, he was neither man nor boy. When told he was at a 'difficult age', his immediate response was to ask, "When did he turn how many time?" This song was written on the 6th 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, they're 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 grannan and a kind 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 shiny, his shoes always dirty.
His hair is uncared and his jacket is torn.
His belongings are scattered far and wide.
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 right.
Keep raising your voice, insist that you’re counted
And if you’re wrong, the world sets you right.

Son of my heart, thoughtful and loving.
The image of life, and as enticing 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

Kerranguard Shropshire, commenting on this popular song, writes: “This grand old ditty is founded on a story in ‘Le Moyne de Fervain’, a book of which the extreme wit is at least equaled by it’s bravado.” It’s “grandness” does not appear to have affected the song’s popularity in any way.

It is one of the songs mentioned in Wedderburn’s “Complaint of Scotland” (c. 1541).

Oor gudwife’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 weary jing a leerie
And my weary jing a lass,
And my weary tootie, tootie,
In the mornin’.

O wake up now, myaul gudman.
O rise up, myaul 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 clothes.
And he’s awa’ to the fishy-dock
A’ tripping on his toes. (refrain)

The auld man he’s taen oot his purse
And bought the biggest yin.
And he’s roond it in his plaidie
And he’s gan toddlin’ home. (refrain)

Wael, first he put it on the shelf
Where it broke all the dishes.
Syne he put it the chomer-pot
Where the wifey pishes, (refrain)

The auld wife she rose in the night
And set tae tak’ her ease.
But the fishy-crab rose up
And took a nip between her thighs. (refrain)

O rise up noo, myaul gudman.
O help me noo for shame.
While you lie snorin’ in your bed
The auld man has grabbed me name. (refrain)

The auld man he got owre the bed
To loose the fish’s claws,
But the fishy-crab rose faster.
Tak’ the auld man by the nose. (refrain)

O curse the hau’; the auld man cried.
‘I bracht the crabfish hither.
For noo the dam’ thing’s (joined my rose
And my wifey’s tall thegither. (refrain)

6. WILLIE RILEY (Law 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-songs form the eternal triangle, it seems to me one of the most poignant, and that is because the dramatic-personata by means of conversation rather than description. The practice of getting rid of a wife whose worldly means do not match those of his intended has been a preoccupation of parents down through the ages. Even so, in modern Britain, cases do crop up in the tabloids and murder courts, and often the sequence in an elder-situation between the lovers in negligible, but “givie (7) is difference when it comes to the important matters like money and property.

This version is from George, but the song itself originates from Dundee, near the boundaries of the three counties of Berwick, Fife and Stirlingshire, 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 Riley, and come away with me,
Unto that foreign countryland and married we will be.