

Where's that song from?

The Historical Links between Popular Song, Street Literature, and Oral Tradition.

by Steve Gardham.

Most of the opinions I will be expressing below have evolved over 40+ years of private study of the relationship between popular song, street literature and oral tradition. The process has been governed by my interest in these 3 genres in reverse order, i.e., an overwhelming obsession with folk song and its evolution and indeed the evolution of individual songs, which has led me to examine with equal fanaticism songs printed as street literature, and then in turn to a lesser degree to popular songs of earlier centuries. It is necessary here to explain what I mean by these three terms, as some of them mean different things to different people.

Popular Song

I'm not using this term in quite the same way as Professor Child used it to describe his great canon of English and Scottish Popular Ballads. My meaning here is much more in keeping with modern day usage, i.e., those songs created by professionals for a commercial market, i.e., Tin-Pan-Alley.

Street Literature has meant different things in different eras.

The True Lovers Joy:

O R, A Dialogue between a Seaman and his Love.

The Maid implores the aid of Charons Boat,
That to the gloomy shades her Soul might float,
With sighs and groans, much weary and opprest,
At last he heard her moan, and gave her rest,
From all pait dangers, and from future harms,
She safe arriv'd and anchor'd in his arms,
To a new Tune much in Request.



Oh wch has become of those hard hearts
of a Virgins takes no pity,
Ther's sailing to Virginia parts,
wherre Neptune hath built a City.
O Cupid hath wounded me,
and hath pierc'd my tender heart,
To call for one without I lov'd so dear,
whho cares but little for't.
Thus in the shades delov'd,
whe'l vbat the tedious hours
So full of winds, but sighs shall blow,
the Boat with Charons Oars.

His Answer.

Stay gentle Charon stay
and let the Boat alone,
Robb not the harmless Maid away
that sits and makes her moan.
For she that calls so fast,
and sighs so at the stay,
A Virgin is as pure as chaff,
as ere true Love did say,
She's no dear soul for'the,
let not her face in harm the,
Though from within the Boat there be
her beauty there may harm the.

O fair one, if you go;
im's more undone than you,
My heart doth equal forgoe knobb,
and kill my Love is true.
The shades you must not pass,
no mournful dayes till
Instead of fighting gales, alas!
A kiss will do as well.
You'd better say a Hoze,
and sing us a true Loves Song,

Printed for P. Brooksby at the Golden ball in Pye-corner.

It is enough, we need no more
to carry his Boat along.
No heart so hard I know,
but would gladly ease your pain,
Else heart let him to Virginia go,
and never return again.
If Cupid hath wounded you,
he had wounded me before,
If you love as you say you do,
I love you as much or more.
In Beds of softest Down,
we'l spend the best of our nights,
So full of Wind or Sigh shall blow,
the current of our delights.

Maid.

Come gentle Charon come
and me to shore remove,
The wind despairing sight did blow,
shall waite me unto Love.
How loth the Boats-man fears,
if he no faster fig,
My Love to ride me of my fears,
shall lend me his wings to see,
To thee dear Love I soar,
finding the just and true
And bid to Charon and his Boat,
eternally adieu.

Make hall, make hall my Dear,
for if thou longer stay,
Though the floods without all fears
my Arms shall make their way.
Welcome my Love to shore
I'll keep the from all harms,
And thou shalt ride for evermore
at Anchor in my arms.

Maid
Hark Charon come away
bring forth thy Boat and Oars,
and carry me poor harmless Maid
unto the Elizium Shoars.

Charon.
Altho Charon calls in haile,
whilst I sit here in pain
I carry none but pure and chaff
such as true Love hath gain.

I am come dear soul I come,
thy face doth so incharm me,
Come in my Boat and take thy room
no wind nor wave shall harm the,

Maid
How I am come in the Boat,
I am a Maid undone,
Sighing my heart is almost broke
for my Love he is from me gone.

Thus as I pass the shades,
I'll tell you a mournful tale,
So full of sighs as the do pass
shall serve us for a gale.

And so beguill'd the time,
I'll sing you a true Loves Song,
Whose eyes shall stobb a Sea of tears,
to carry the Boat along.

Fig A

In the 16th & 17th centuries it largely meant quite expensive products printed mostly in black letter, aimed at a mainly urban market of trades-people with some purchasing power. (Fig A)



Fig B

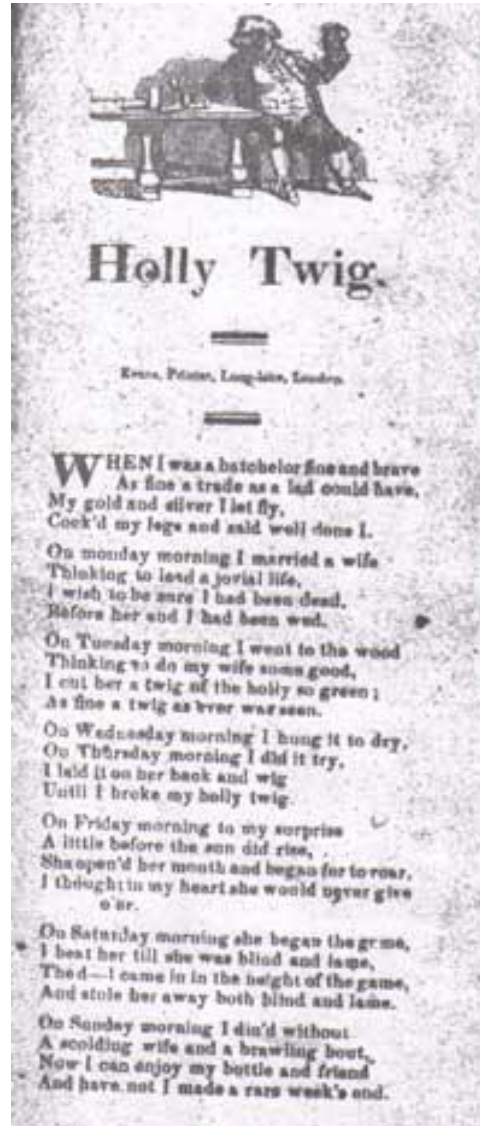


Fig C

The 18th century saw a movement towards printing collections of songs in garlands and songsters. (Fig B) Gradually filtering down to the much cheaper single song slips at the end of the 18th century, catering for increased literacy (Fig C)



THE
INDIAN LASS.

London:—Printed & Published, by H. SUCH, 177, Union-street, Berd,—S.E.

~~~~~

AS I was walking on a far distant shore,  
I called at an ale-house to spend half-an-hour,

As I sat smoking,—beside me a glass,  
By chance there came by a fair Indian lass.

She sat down beside me and squeezed my hand,  
She said you're a stranger not of this land,  
I have fine lodgings if with me you'll stay,  
My portion you shall have without more delay.

With a glass of good liquor she welcomed me in,  
Kind sir you are welcome to have any thing,  
But as I embraced her, this was her tone,  
You are a poor sailor and far from your home.

We tossed and we tumbled in each others arms,  
And all that long night I embraced her sweet charms;

With rural enjoyment the time passed away,  
I did not go to leave her till nine the next day.

This lovely young Indian on the place where she stood,

I viewed her sweet features and found they were good,  
She was neat, tall and handsome, her eyes was sixteen,

She was born and brought up in a place near Orleans.

The day was appointed he was going away,  
All on the wide ocean to leave her to stay;  
She said, when you're over your own native land,  
Remember the Indian that squeezed your hand.

Early next morning we were going to sail,  
This lovely young Indian on the beach did bewail  
I took off my handkerchief and wiped her eyes,  
Do not go and leave me my sailor she cries.

We weighed our anchor, away then we flew,  
With a sweet and pleasant breeze, and parted me from her view,

But now I am over and taking my glass,  
Be here's a health to the young Indian lass.



THE BANKS OF  
**INVERNESS;**

OR  
**YOUNG WILLIAM'S DENIAL.**

I AM a jolly sailor bold, and just returned to shore,  
I was taking recreation to spend my gold in stores  
By chance I spied a dame all in a silken dress,  
I heard her say, my sailor gay, on the banks of the Inverness.

Embracing all my chances, I steered by that way,  
And found it was young Mary, and unto her did say  
Are you in love fair one? — she modestly said 'Yea,  
'Tis a sailor gay, that's far away, on the banks of the Inverness.

I said my charming fair maid, pray tell your lov name,

'Tis William, he has got a mark and I should kn the same,

It's on his little finger, may God my sailor bless,  
A ploughboy was young William, on the banks of the Inverness.

I then replied, young William, you ne'er will see no  
For he is bound in iron, upon a Turkish shore; (more,  
Said Mary, I will wander and mourn my love's distress,  
And in despair she tore her hair by the banks of the Inverness.

'Twas for my dearest William I my uncle's life did take  
And the squire so bold I heir'd his gold, all for my sailor's sake,

And now from him I'm parted it doubles my distress,  
I will wander broken hearted on the banks of the Inverness.

I gazed in rapture on her and could no longer stand,  
I shewed her my little finger and the mark on my left hand,

Says she, I've land and houses, throw off your tarry  
And put on the true blue trowsers, on the banks of the Inverness.

Then to cheer we hastened, and wed we was with speed,

Young sailors bore us company, we happy was indeed  
And we have gold in plenty for to relieve distress,  
How blest our lot in a rural cot, on the banks of the Inverness.



Fig D

And then into the prolific 19th century where the main customers were largely at the lower end of the social scale and the broadsheet with 2 to 4 songs in 2 columns was the main medium. (Fig D)

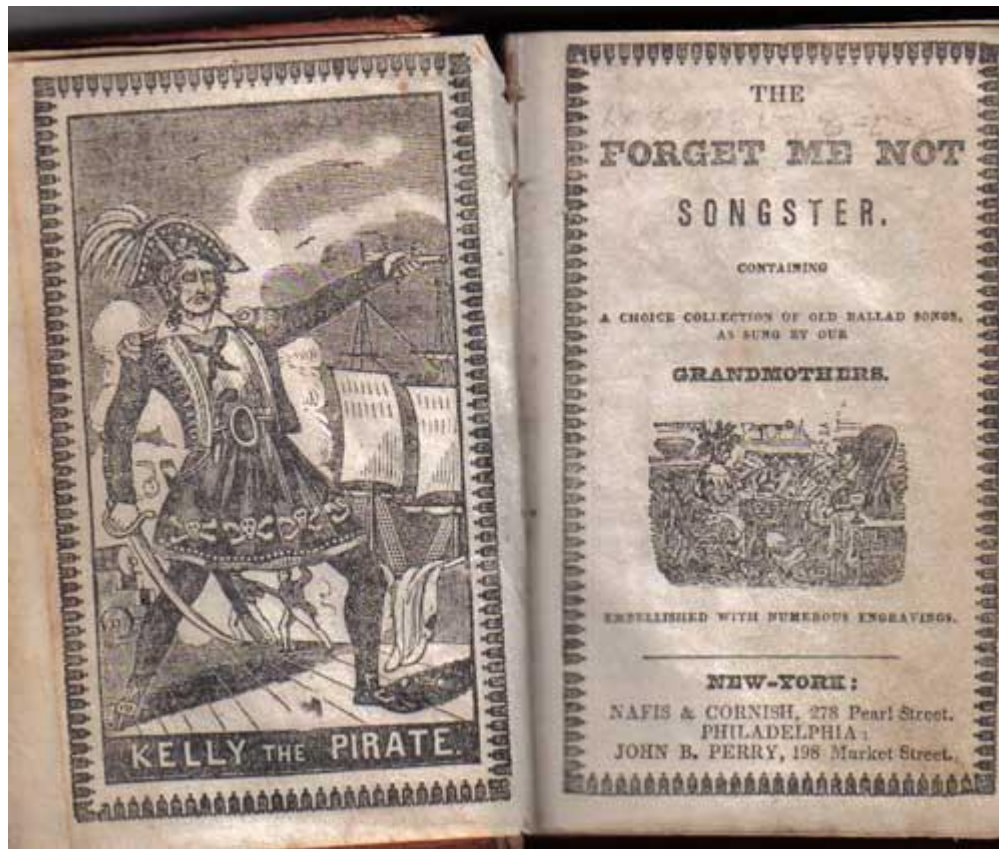


Fig E

But we mustn't forget the influence of the songsters here, little booklets of 2-300 songs and ballads sold all over the country to people of all classes, urban and rural. (Fig E)

### Oral Tradition

This is the one that needs careful clarification. I am here going to be referring to ENGLISH folk song, simply because although similar conditions applied in Ireland and Scotland and indeed further afield, I am aware of pockets of Scotland and Ireland where conditions produced a markedly different situation, the Bothy Ballads of North East Scotland, and the local song tradition among local poets in parts of Northern Ireland where there has been a strong tradition of making of new songs and their subsequent passing into oral tradition.

So when I refer to oral tradition and folk song I am mainly referring to that great body of material housed in manuscript form in Cecil Sharp House, i.e., the songs largely of southern England collected towards the end of the 19th century and continuing throughout the 20th century, and indeed still going on. The collections of Sharp, Hammond, Gardiner, Broadwood, Baring-Gould etc. in other words.

The statistical information I give below also excludes the following fairly autonomous genres in which others have greater expertise than I have; carols, shanties, children's lore and bawdry, for which different conditions have often applied.

I must at this point state that we know there was a constant interplay between print and oral tradition. Many of the broadsides themselves show marked evidence of having been taken from oral tradition, but these are rarely the earliest extant examples of a particular ballad. I must also point out we are here dealing with the probable origins of the songs and that modern scholarship states clearly that the origins of a song or ballad do not determine whether it is a folk song or not; this is solely down to transmission. Nor are we making any judgments about quality. The early collectors were very scathing about songs which appeared on broadsides, and claimed that those that were orally transmitted were far superior, but few of us today would argue that the real situation was this clear-cut. Even Professor Child's great collection, despite his scathing attacks on broadsides, has at least a third of its ballads that appeared on broadsides, and many undoubtedly originated in that medium.

Before disclosing my findings and opinions I also should point out I am aware that some scholars strongly disagree with these opinions and I respect their standpoints. As they rightly say I can offer little proof of my findings and most of the evidence I have is circumstantial. On the other hand they can offer even less evidence to counter my opinions.

It is my considered opinion after 40+ years of studying the supposed origins of what we today call English folk songs that upwards of 95% of them first saw light of day under commercial conditions and in an urban setting, i.e., not made up by Johnny behind the plough, Jack out at sea, or Nelly the milkmaid.

This may come as a shock or surprise so I will now attempt to flesh this out with some detail and some examples.

### **Popular Music**

I must confess here, Music Hall aside, this is the section I know least about and my studying largely consists of analysing the songs themselves, so I present no separate statistics on this one. It is also the most recent study area I have undertaken and in my opinion it would reward much greater detailed study. Again it is my considered opinion that many of the ballads and songs we now call folk songs started out as products of the pleasure gardens and London theatres like Ranelagh and Vauxhall and Sadler's Wells during the 18th century, e.g., Sweet Nightingale from Arne's Thomas and Sally. Many of those songs with formulaic introductions like 'As I walked out in the month of May' come from this arena, and those that include flowery descriptive elements of rural idyllic scenes, bright Phoebus adorning the hillside etc. Almost all of that category of hunting songs that give a vivid description of the scenery and the pleasures of the chase come from this source, as opposed to those hunting songs that tell of a day's hunt cataloguing all of the people present and all of the places passed through, which generally are the product of the huntsmen themselves; the Phoebes, Damons, Colins, Amyntas, all theatrical pieces, the Cupid's Garden types, those that talk in idyllic terms of shepherds and shepherdesses and milkmaids.

Into the 19th century we had a wide range of entertainment venues evolving in the larger cities, from the coal-hole cellars, to the supper rooms and gentlemen's glee clubs, catering each for their particular clientele. All of this contributed eventually its more popular material to our folk canon, items like G W Ross's 'Sam Hall'



Fig F

performed in the coal cellars originally, before he became famous. (Fig F)

**DAVE DURDEN,**

A Numerous Glee, arranged for Three Voices, with Piano-Forte Accompaniment.

Allegretto

1st TREBLE. *1. Dams Dur - den kept five sev - ing girls, To see - ry the milk - ing  
2. Dams Dur - den, in the morn - ing soon, She did be - gin to  
3. Two in the morn - ing of Ye - ses - day, The lady be - gan to*

2nd TREBLE. *Dams Dur - den kept five sev - ing girls, To see - ry the milk - ing  
Dams Dur - den, in the morn - ing soon, She did be - gin to  
Two in the morn - ing of Ye - ses - day, The lady be - gan to*

BASS. *Dams Dur - den kept five sev - ing girls, To see - ry the milk - ing  
Dams Dur - den, in the morn - ing soon, She did be - gin to  
Two in the morn - ing of Ye - ses - day, The lady be - gan to*

PIANO  
FORTE.

*all. She al - so kept five mil - ling men To see the apple and fall;  
all. To reap her sev - enth sheaf and soon, She did be - gin to haul;  
poco. Dams Dur - den's sev - enth sheaf and soon, They all be - gan to haul;*

*all. She al - so kept five mil - ling men To see the apple and fall;  
all. To reap her sev - enth sheaf and soon, She did be - gin to haul;  
poco. Dams Dur - den's sev - enth sheaf and soon, They all be - gan to haul;*

*all. She al - so kept five mil - ling men To see the apple and fall;  
all. To reap her sev - enth sheaf and soon, She did be - gin to haul;  
poco. Dams Dur - den's sev - enth sheaf and soon, They all be - gan to haul;*

Fig G

And the Spring Glee that finished up in the repertoire of The Copper Family among others, as with the celebrated glee 'Dame Durden'. (Fig G). In fact The Copper Family seem to have included a large number of this type of song in their family repertoire. Many of our slightly more risqué pieces started their life in the low dives of the city. The Gentlemen's clubs contributed many of our more sophisticated double-entendre songs.

**T I M O T H Y.**  
 A celebrated SONG, Sung by Mrs. JORDAN, in London. (1732)

MODERATE. As I was a walking one



morning in May, I heard a young assle, to figh and to fay, my true love has left me, 'twas but yesterday, he took his leave of me, and so went his way. The very next time that I did him see, he would be content, to conduct to me, I ask'd him his name, and he made this reply, viz T, I, M, O, T, H, Y.

Fig H



Fig I

Much of this whole material was published as actual sheet music, starting out in the 18th century as just one stage up from street literature with music and text on one side of a single sheet (Fig H) and developing into sophisticated expensive pieces with 4 or more pages and an elaborate coloured illustration of the artist in character on the cover. (Fig I)

The supper rooms produced items like 'Little Pigs' (Fig J) the prototype of Albert Richardson's famous 1920s revival 'The Old Sow'. For a fascinating contemporary account of the 1840s supper rooms I can recommend 'Tavern Singing in Early Victorian London, The Charles Rice Diaries', edited by Laurence Senelick and published by The Society for Theatre Research in 1997.

Before moving on to the Music Hall era I ought to mention another genre, burlesque. I gave a presentation on this at the TSF meeting in Newcastle in 2008 so I don't intend to go into detail here. Most of you will be aware of the interplay between print and oral tradition and the fact that it was to some extent a two-way process. Once ballads and songs had entered oral tradition they often found their way back into print again. Not so well-known is the interplay between oral tradition and popular music. For many centuries pop-song writers had taken popular traditional ballads and presented them on stage in a burlesque fashion, sometimes without altering the words or tune, simply relying on comedy costume and gesticulation and the rather sparse story line so typical of traditional song. In some cases they altered the dialect of the ballad or introduced comic verses, taking a rise out of the original. Even Child ballads were treated in this way, e.g., Lord Lovel, Barbara Allen, Lord Randal, George Collins (Fig K).

In fact there is some evidence to suggest the much parodied and burlesqued George Collins was itself a burlesque of some earlier ballad. This burlesquing reached a peak in the mid 19th century, just as the Music Hall was starting to blossom, and artistes like J W Sharp, Sam Cowell and Fred Robson who went on to star in the Music Halls were also masters of burlesque with such pieces as Villikins (William and Dinah) (Fig M), Billy Taylor and Molly the Betrayed, a burlesque on 'The Gosport Tragedy'. Even that venerable old broadside piece 'The Lover's Lament for her Sailor', dating back to the seventeenth century, didn't escape. Sam Cowell sang it in pathetic character as 'Ah my Love's Dead' (Fig N) and it was actually the burlesque that ended up in folk song collections and in America and Ireland became the folk song 'I never will marry'.

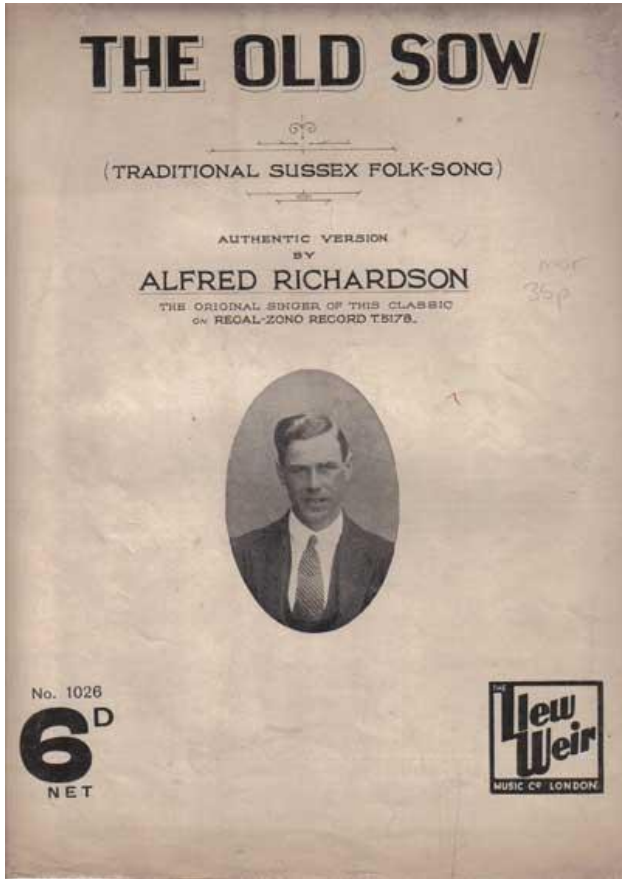


Fig J



Fig K



Fig L



Fig M

**WOMAN'S RESOLUTION,**  
OR THE  
**SOBER SECOND THOUGHT**  
Popular Comic Song  
COMPOSED BY  
**L. HEATH.**

**Ladies' Comic Songs in The Musical Bouquet.**

1891. WOMAN'S RESOLUTION, BY THE SHEARER THOMAS. 1892. RISE ME AND CALL ME YOUR OWN. 1893. THE HARBORING LOVER. 1894. BE QUIET DO, DO, CALL ME MISTRESS, J. F. THOMAS. 1895. THE GAY DECIDER. 1896. M. H. MONTGOMERY. 1897. THE SPOON WITH A WINKER. 1898. MY FAVORITE. 1899. I AM A PRETTY WIDOW. 1900. J. BUCKLEY. 1901. JOHNNY WAS A SPOONWAZER. 1902. TOMMY. 1903. I SHALL NOT MARRY MORE. 1904. MONTGOMERY. 1905. WHY ARE YOU WANDERING HERE? 1906. WITHIN. 1907. WHERE ARE YOU GOING MY PRETTY MAID, & IN A WAY DAY MORNING EARLY. 1908. THE FEMALE AUCTIONEER. 1909. BY MY ANKLES.

LONDON  
PUBLISHED BY C. SHEARD, MUSICAL BOUQUET OFFICE 192, HIGH HOLBORN  
CITY WHOLESALE AGENTS, E. W. ALLEN, 11, AVE MARIA LANE, and F. PITMAN, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW

Fig N

**JIM THE CARTER LAD,**  
Written and Sung  
WITH IMMENSE SUCCESS,  
BY  
**HARRY LINN,**  
Composed by  
**ROWLAND HOWARD.**

ENT. STA. HALL. COPYRIGHT.  
PUBLISHED BY  
GEORGE BELL, MUSIC PUBLISHER, COVERED MARKET,  
LEEDS.

Fig O

**THE FARMER'S BOY,**  
"YR HOGYN GYRUR WEDD"  
Old English Rustic Ballad,  
*The Original Melody & Words, including the Welsh Translation by*  
MNYDDOG.  
SUNG BY  
M<sup>r</sup> T. J. HUGHES, M<sup>r</sup> THORNTON WOOD  
Arranged by  
**JOSEPH SKEAF.**

*at Sea Hall* COPYRIGHT *Price 3/-*

Liverpool,  
JOSEPH SKEAF, 63, GROVE STREET,  
AND ALL MUSIC SELLERS.

*Just Published.*  
"THE RUSTIC WEDDING" DESCRIPTIVE PARTIAL, FOUND IN THE OLD ENGLISH MIDDY THE FARMER'S BOY. 4/-  
*Popular Recitations, by Joseph Skeaf.*  
SABBATH EVENING CHIMES (BALLS OF AMERDOYER) 4/-  
JENNY JONES 4/-  
MARCH OF THE MEN OF HARLEIGH (DESCRIPTIVE BATTLE FANTASIA) 4/-  
THE FISHERMAN (DESCRIPTIVE PARTIAL BY THE SCOTCH SONG, CALLER HERRING) 4/-  
THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR (DESCRIPTIVE FANTASIA) 4/-

Fig P

**BARBARA ALLEN,**  
The Celebrated  
Old English Ballade  
SUNG AT  
**PUBLIC CONCERTS.**

LONDON  
PUBLISHED BY C. SHEARD, MUSICAL BOUQUET OFFICE, 192, HIGH HOLBORN  
CITY WHOLESALE AGENTS & E. W. ALLEN, 11, AVE MARIA LANE, and F. PITMAN, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW

Fig Q

Some of the Music Hall era pieces also passed readily into oral tradition. Many of the songs of its biggest stars such as Arthur Lloyd, Harry Clifton and J. B. Geoghegan can be found in the collections from oral tradition made at the end of the nineteenth century and in fact some are still being sung today. Despite the fact that quite understandably the early collectors like Sharp discounted the Music Hall pieces they encountered a few slipped through the net. For instance Lucy Broadwood's 1893 English County Songs contains a song called 'I'll tell you of a fellow', in other collections 'Common Bill'. It was a Music Hall song written 37 years earlier in 1856 as 'Women's Resolution' (Fig O). Harry Linn's 'Jim the Carter lad' (Fig P) is another prime example found in nearly every collection. Songs like 'The Farmer's Boy' (Fig Q), even 'Barbara Allen' (Fig R) in both its forms, were published as sheet music throughout the nineteenth century as 'Old English Songs'

## Print

Moving on now to print, the broadside influence, and starting with a fact rather than an opinion this time. About 90% of the previously described English folk song canon actually survives on street literature and in fact this forms its earliest extant appearance. About 5% has actually been traced back to seventeenth century broadsides, items like Oxford City, The Bloody Miller, The Bold Grenadier, Farewell He, My Bonny Boy, The Jovial Beggar, The Bold Benjamin, Died for Love, The Blacksmith, Waly Waly, The Foggy Dew. Some of these we know the authors of as they were so celebrated that they were allowed to have their initials appended to the sheets. Among the most prolific and celebrated were friendly rivals, Martin Parker and Lawrence Price.

Parker gave us:

'The Distressed Virgin' of 1629 which is still in tradition in Scotland and forms part of Waly Waly. (Rawlinson 566. 160, Bodleian Broadside Ballads website)

'John and Jone', 1634, which became our 'John Appleby', Roud 1292. (Olson website, Scottish Songs, p120)

'Neptune's raging Fury', 1635 which is 'You gentlemen of England' (Pepys Ballads, Volume 4, p201) and a similar piece 'Sailors for my Money' which was the prototype of Campbell's 'Ye Mariners of England' related to Roud 524 and 1803. (Pepys Ballads, Volume 2, p420)

'A Pennyworth of Good Counsel', 1638 which is our 'Oh, Dear, Oh'. Roud 870. (Pepys Ballads, Volume 1, p168)

'A True Tale of Robin Hood', 1632, which is Child 154. (Pepys Penny Merriments, Thompson, p56)

'The Wooing Maid', 1636 which is 'The Old Maid in the Garret/Don't let me die an Old Maid'. Roud 802. (Pepys Ballads, Volume 5, p194.)

While Price gave us:

'Love's Fierce Desire', 1656 which is 'My True Love I've Lost' Roud 587. (Pepys Ballads, Volume 3, p104)

'The Famous Flower of Serving Men', 1656, which is Child 106. (Pepys Ballads, Volume 3, p142)

The Bristol Bridegroom, or The Ship carpenter's Love to the Merchant's Daughter', c1656, which was rewritten as 'The Valiant Virgin' and then became 'The London Heiress' Roud 2930. (Roxburghe Ballads, Volume 8, p146)

'Robin Hood's Golden Prize', 1656 is Child 147. (Pepys Ballads, Volume 2, p114)

A Warning for Married Women', 1657, became 'The Demon Lover', Child 243. (Pepys Ballads, Volume 4, p101)

As you see this last one is actually titled a 'Warning' which is what some of these ballads were intended as.

Another example is the earliest extant manifestation of 'The Cruel Mother' Child 20, called 'The Duke's Daughter's Cruelty' (Fig S) which was a warning to well-heeled young ladies to avoid liaisons with servants. A lot of these warning ballads contain supernatural elements in accordance with the beliefs of the time.

**The Duke's Daughter's Cruelty?**

1294

OR, THE

Wonderful Apparition of two Infants whom she Murder'd  
and Buried in a Forrest, for to hide her Shame.

To an excellent new Tune.

Licenc'd according to Order.

There was a Duke's Daughter lived in York,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 So secret she lov'd her Father's Child,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 She liv'd him long and many a day,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 Till by and by she went away,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 She went to the wild Wilderness,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 Poor she was to be pitied for her heaviness,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 She cutt her back against a Tree,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And there she end it'd much misery,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 She lean'd her back against an Oak,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 With bitter flath she words the spoke,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 She set her face against a Thorne,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And there she had two pritty Babes born,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 She took her blissing off her head,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And she cutt them hard and leg,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 She had a Pen-knife long and sharp,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And there she stuck them to the heart,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 She dig'd a Grave, it was long and deep,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And there she laid them into sleep,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 The coldest Earth it was their Bed,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 There on Gra's was their Coverlid,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 She cutt her hair and changed her Name,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 From Elizabeth to Sweet Illiam,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 As she was a younging by her Father's hall,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 She set three Children a playing at ball,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 One was still in Scarlet fine,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And the other was as ere they was born,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*

O Mother, O Mother, if these Children were  
*Come head, &c.*  
 I would dress them in Scarlet fine,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 O Mother, O Mother when we was thine,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 You did not dress us in Scarlet fine,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 You set your back against a Tree,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And there you ender'd great misery,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 You set your face against a Thorne,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And there you had us pritty Babes born,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 You took your blissing off your head,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And there you bound us hard to leg,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 You had a Pen-knife long and sharp,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And there you stuck us to the heart,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 You dig'd a Grave, it was long and deep,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And there you laid us into sleep,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 The coldest Earth it was our Bed,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 There on Gra's was our Coverlid,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 O Mother, O Mother for your sin,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 Heaven-gods you shall see us in,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 O Mother, O Mother for your sin,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 High-gods stands upon to let you in,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 The Lady's cheeks look'd pale and wand,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 Alas! what have I done?  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 She tore her tiken locks of hair,  
*Come head, &c.*  
 And she set us in full despair,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*  
 Young Ladies all of beauty bright,  
*Come head and leg as in the Run of Time,*  
 Take warning by this ball good-night,  
*Gentle Heart, &c.*

Printed for J. France, at the Sign of the Angel in Gresham-Bar-Bar.

Fig R

Of course as I've pointed out these ballads were not pitched at those at the bottom of the social scale. They would not have been able to afford them even if they could have read them. They entered oral tradition later via filtering down the class system or by cheaper reprints of later centuries.

The eighteenth century is a 'work in progress' I'm afraid. Both Steve Roud and I have made some slight inroads into the enormous piles of material on the dusty shelves of the British Library. What is slowly emerging is that many of the ballads we assumed were late eighteenth/early nineteenth century in origin actually have earlier, usually longer variants. A typical example is 'Bold William Taylor', previously mentioned as the burlesque 'Billy Taylor'. There is a garland version dated 1748 with twenty double stanzas ( Douce Collection PP 183). The reason why you won't find many eighteenth century copies in recent print and online is that their main format was the 8/16/32 paged garland/songster and these were often still uncut or were bound tightly together in small volumes making them difficult to copy other than laboriously with pencil and paper, which is what Steve and I are currently engaged in, BUT we could certainly do with some assistance if anyone is just coming up to retirement.

Another good example would be 'Bruton Town/The Bramble Briar'. The original broadside has not yet turned up but looking at the very longest American versions from early 19th century manuscripts, I'd say it was a typical mid 18th century broadside set in Bridgwater and undoubtedly based on the well-known 'Isabella and the Pot of Basil' story, Many of the ballads of the mid 18th century were based on stories like this from the continent, those printed by the likes of William and Cluer Dicey of Aldermay Church Yard, Bow Lane, London.

Coming into the early nineteenth century, the Pitts/Catnach era, we have a massive burgeoning of cheap street literature and this is where most of what we now call folk song originated, in towns, written by broadside hacks. Some of these hacks may well have been born in rural settings or have been employed in some of the settings they describe, but most of them lived close to their buyers, the printers, in the towns and cities. Though we are talking here about commercial enterprise, the poets were paid a shilling and the sheets sold in the streets for a pittance, we are talking about the very bottom of the market as described in great detail by Henry Mayhew in London Labour and London Poor. Some of you may well feel this is low enough down the pecking order to be included in the folk process. Most of the hacks of course are anonymous. Some of them as we have already

seen were recycling older material, but when they claimed their shilling from the printer they were very much part of a commercial market and in many cases writing to order.

I said we know little about these writers, but one such London hack was accorded the honour of being allowed to have his name printed on many of his pieces, and he alone, John Morgan, has given us something of his life history in the Catnach biographies, and more recently James Hepburn has carried out a lot of research into his life which can be seen in his 2 volume set *A Book of Scattered Leaves*, Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg, 2000, Volume 1, pp49-57. Titles we would recognize as part of the folk song canon with Morgan's name attached include:-

Caroline and her Young Sailor Bold  
The Rose of Britain's Isle  
Blow the Candle in, a parody on Blow the Candle Out  
Billy Barlow's Breeches  
The Rambling Soldier, precursor it is said of the Rambling Sailor and others similar.  
The Gallant Female Sailor.

Many minor poets were known to have made a bob or two in this way in leaner times, even some not so minor, like Swift, Hogg, Moore, Kirke-Whyte, and sometimes even the printers themselves tried their hand.

But enough of the theorizing. I can't think of a better way to illustrate my point than to present a broadside ballad from my own home city, Hull. It tells a true story of a shipwreck and attempted rescue that took place off Spurn Point in 1819. It is almost word for word the newspaper report that appeared in local newspapers contemporary with the event, except that the account has been placed in the mouth of one of the lifeboatmen.

The earliest extant copy of the broadside is that printed by John Forth of Pocklington in the East Riding c1850 but I first came across it on a broadside printed by his younger brother, William, in Hull c1870. Their father, also William, was printing in Bridlington a few miles up the coast at the time of the event and no doubt he first printed the ballad, although very little of the father's output has survived. Oral versions were published in *English County Songs*, Lucy E. Broadwood and J. A. Fuller Maitland, Leadenhall press, 1893, p180 and the following *Journals of the Folk-Song Society*, Volume 1, No. 5 (1904), p228; Volume II, No. 3 (1906), p178; Volume II, No. 4, (1906), p246; and in *Yellowbelly Ballads*, Part 2, O' Shaughnessy, Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts, 1975, p40 as collected by Grainger in North Lincolnshire; and versions are still turning up in North Yorkshire.

#### Wreck of the Industry

All on Spurn Point a vessel lay,  
All on Spurn Point, aye all that day,  
A vessel called the Industry  
Was lost upon the raging sea.

At seven o' clock on Sunday night  
The ship ran aground all on Spurn point.  
The swelling waves ran mountains high,  
In dismal state the ship did lie.

And when on shore we came to know  
To her assistance we did go;  
We manned the lifeboats, stout and brave,  
Expecting every man to save.

We hailed the Captain who stood astern,  
'We've come to save you and your men.'  
'We want no help,' the Captain cried,  
'We shall come off with the next tide.'

'Heave us a line,' we once more did say,  
'That alongside of your ship we'll lay.'  
'We want no help,' again he cried,  
'I'd thank you to move immediately.'

In the space of half an hour or more  
Our lifeboat it had reached the shore.  
We watched her till eleven that night  
When in distress she showed a light.

Into the lifeboat once more we got,  
And hastened to that fated spot.  
We thought to save all that ship's crew,  
But the light disappeared then from our view.

And then we heard one poor man cry,  
'For God's sake help me or else I'll die,  
Me messmates drowned and so must I,'  
And down he went immediately.

The Captain was the cause of it,  
Into the lifeboat he wouldn't get,  
Or else all hands we might have saved,  
And kept 'em from a wat'ry grave.

Whilst in my opinion the vast majority of our folk song canon originated in this way I would like to conclude by having a brief look at the other 5% that appears to have originated in the oral tradition itself. Most of these are songs rather than ballads and they are frequently of the catalogue type where stanzas can be added at will. Many bawdy songs are of this type. I earlier mentioned Bothy Ballads which started out strictly as local pieces written by disgruntled farm workers telling of the poor working conditions on a particular farm. These male workers lived communally in the bothy and were hired out on an annual basis at Martinmas fairs so that they moved frequently from one remote farm to another. It is easy to see how these songs would be readily adapted to different farms and new stanzas composed. My own ancestors worked in similar conditions on remote farms on the Yorkshire Wolds. It was here a particular bothy ballad was composed and subsequently passed in the same manner from farm to farm until practically every farm labourer in the East Riding knew a version. I had heard tell of a version that had 50 verses or more but the most I ever encountered in the sixties was about a dozen. One of the longest versions I recorded a couple of years ago is to be heard on the Yorkshire Garland website, [www.yorkshirefolksong.net](http://www.yorkshirefolksong.net) but for now here is my version I learnt in the sixties.

#### Mutton pie

Come, me bonny lads, if you want ti larn ti plough,  
Go ti Farmer Brown's an' he'll show you how.  
If that there be true, me lads, as I've heard 'em say,  
He wants you ti plough fower acre in a day.  
    Ti me whack, fol, the diddle-all-the-day,  
    Ti me whack-fol-the-diddle all the day.

Our ord maister he went ti the fair,  
Bowt fower 'osses an' yan was a mare,  
Yan was blind an' t'other couldn't see,  
An' t'other 'ad 'is 'eard where 'is arse o't ti be.

He's got fower 'osses an' they're all very thin,  
Their ribs're right tight up ti their skin.  
There's yan knocker-kneed an' t'other swung i't back,  
An' he wants 'em ti goo with a 'Whoa, gee-back!'

Our ord missis has a maid called Alice,  
Thowt she were fit for ti live iv a palace,  
Live iv a palace and be like a queean.  
I'm damned if she were fit ti be seean.

Our ord missis thinks she's givin' yer a treat,  
She bakes sike cakes as no-one can eeat,  
Pies made of iron, cakes made o' clay,  
They rattle in yer belly for a month an' a day.

Up comes boss an' this he did say,  
'There's a yow been dead for a month an' a day,  
Fetch her up, bullocky, fetch her on the sly,  
It'll mak these lads some rare mutton pie.'

Bullocky fetched her up, he fetched her on the sly,  
Ti mak these lads some rare mutton pie,  
There were mawks bi hundreds, thousands, millions thick,  
An' Bullocky were wallop'in' 'em off wi' a stick.

When the ord cow died we had some stew,  
When the ord sow died we had bacon too,  
Then the ord missis she took sick,  
I left that place, lads, damn near quick!

( I added the last stanza myself based on an old joke much used in other songs.)

*This presentation was given by Steve Gardham at The Broadside Day at Cecil Sharp House, 26th Feb 2011*