



# sing yonder

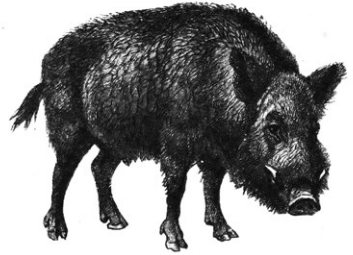
traditional folk song  
for beginners

vol. 3

simple contemporary settings for songs 21-30 in the Roud Index



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# introduction

So, the journey continues. We have a few extra passengers now, thank you to everyone who has been so kind to mention it to their friends and colleagues on the rickety, overburdened charabanc that is social media. It makes a huge difference in these kinds of endeavours, and most folk fans understand the importance of the kind of dogged word-of-mouth evangelising required to keep any kind of folk show on the road.

I'm writing this introduction having just returned from the Soundpost event of May 2022, held in an unlikely selection of halls (of the village and school variety, not so much Albert), tiny pubs and airy chapels in the bucolic sheep-strewn western outskirts of Sheffield. It's a wonderful weekend of singing, learning and friendship, and I have emerged from it inspired and energised, and it has been a joy to meet so many supporters of the project in real life. The feedback from everyone was overwhelmingly positive, and I made some very useful contacts that should hopefully push this thing on even further. I've even started work on a couple of interesting side projects - it's a little too soon to announce them here, but hopefully they will be even more helpful and inspiring resources for people new to folk music.

As for the content of this edition, I have mentioned elsewhere that I had assumed that the first few hundred songs in the index would be quite well trodden ground, partly because of the way that Steve Roud put the index together (that is, in a somewhat ad hoc fashion as he came across them - one might assume he would come across the most common and frequently performed ones first) and partly because there would have been people like me in the past methodically browsing the list and arranging them (up to the point they ran out of time or energy to do so). However as early as Roud 22, we are in almost uncharted territory, with a new version of the interesting and disturbing story of Gil Brenton. And then, still reeling from that surprise, just two short hops along the index and we find the even more obscure Roud 24, Erlinton - a tale so similar to Roud 23, The Douglas Tragedy, that many wonder why it has its own entry at all. Not a single tune has been written down for it anywhere\*. The disappearance of these two ballads from tradition before the advent of recording technology meant I had to be creative with their arrangements. I hope I have done them justice, and you enjoy singing and playing them as much as I do.

## ***Karl Sinfield, May 2022.***

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\* I was late coming to the special versions commissioned by the excellent Sheffield-based radio show from Sam Hindley and James Fagan, Thank Goodness it's Folk. Had I heard them before I might have been tempted to use their tunes, but I had already invented my own, so from having no tunes for these songs, we now have two for each! (It's fair to say, the amazing recordings by Nancy Kerr and Sam Baxter offer a more refined interpretation, if that's what you're after.)

# a note on the settings

My process to arrive at each arrangement was first to listen to every version I could find, although in some cases such as Rouds 22 and 24 these were thin on the ground. However, generally this is much easier these days thanks to streaming platforms\*, and I found I had at least thirty versions of each song at my fingertips. There might be the basis of something in there I can use, or at least over the course of a few listens, something might work almost untouched, something might need a bit of tweaking to fit, or if nothing else, just the general feeling of the song will lead me to a new version.

Of course, a huge help in the listening odyssey I have been on is the tireless work of Reinhard Zierke and his Mainly Norfolk site, which provides a great resource for finding tunes when the names vary (I have listed most of the alternative names underneath each song title to save you some time if you want to search for them yourself), and the site also includes a plethora of illuminating sleeve notes.

I have also suggested a few tracks for further listening. These might be related to the setting in some way, or a contrast, or just something I think is interesting. But do go out and find your own favourites, they are all good, even the bad ones.

Finally, this project has also hugely increased my knowledge and appreciation of these old stories (which is the main reason I started in the first place), and those singers that have carried them for us all for generations. I have included a list of some of the sources (there are lots more in earlier volumes if you want a fuller reading list) that have helped me on this journey at the end of the book.

## recordings

This book is aimed at people with basic skills, so as well as vocal lead sheets for the music readers (available for a small fee either with the Bandcamp album download, or you can email me), I have made some very rough homemade "guide recordings" to accompany this book, and these can be found, along with the book in PDF format, at the website [singyonder.co.uk](http://singyonder.co.uk). DISCLAIMER: It should be apparent that I'm no great singer, and my guitar skills are conspicuously average. Thus, I am the perfect test bed for these simple tunes - if I can play them, anyone can. And if I can play them in a way that's vaguely tolerable, I'm sure you will make them sound amazing.

I have used simple open chords for each setting in this book (plus alternates are given), to make everything playable for people of all skill levels. Where I have used a capo in the recording to make the song work for my vocal range, or to give easier access to embellishments, that will be noted on the song page.

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\* My current favourite platform is Bandcamp, it is the fairest way to support musicians,

# ROUD 21

## The Outlandish Knight

AKA: Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight, The Gowans Sae Gay, May Colvin, Fause Sir John, Pretty Polly, Three Long Hours Before Day, False Lover John, Miss Mary's Parrot, Castle by the Sea, The Willow Tree

### Summary:

One of a number of supernatural ballads that take the form of a mysterious figure from the outlands (a term used to describe the Scottish Border regions) trying to trick a woman into love, but really having murderous intent. In this telling, the woman, on realising the deceit, uses a diversionary tactic to escape the knight and return home to safety.

### Setting notes:

Folk song collector Cecil Sharp was of the opinion that, in his time, this was probably the widest travelled of any traditional song he had encountered. It can be found throughout Scandinavia and Germany, it is very commonly found in Poland, and even Southern Europe. The Dutch variant "Halewijn" contains many tantalising details not found in versions collected in the British Isles. English language versions are broadly split into the Scottish dialect ones with a "Aye as the gowans grow gay / On the first morning in May" interlaced refrain, and those without. The words given here are an example of the latter; an abridged version of those sung by Edward Warren in Wiltshire in the 1920s. In many English versions, including Warren's, there is a surreally comedic coda where on arriving back home the young woman confides in her parrot. I have left that out partly for space and time constraints\*. There are a diverse smörgåsbord of tunes to choose from; I have chosen the strand that stems from a 1952 recording of Shropshire farmer Fred Jordan (he describes learning it from travellers camped near his farm) from which many variants, especially those in the US (often under the "Castles in the Sea" title) seem to have descended, and no doubt have had some influence on me here.

### Suggested further listening:

"Castle By the Sea", Cath and Phil Taylor, *The Hind Wheels of Bad Luck*

"The False Hearted Knight", Jumbo Brightwell, *Songs from the Eel's Foot*

"The Outlandish Knight", Fred Jordan, *A Shropshire Lad*

"Outlandish Knight", Kirsty Merryn, *Our Bright Night*

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\* Also it's a bit odd, like the kind of jarring shift in tone normally found in daytime TV magazine shows, where a terrible story of a tragic illness might be followed by a waterskiing Jack Russell.

ROUD 21: THE OUTLANDISH KNIGHT

          G  
It's of a false knight, came from the north land  
                          D  
And he came a courting me  
          C                  G  
He promised to take me to that north land  
          D          C          G  
And there his bride make me

Alternate chords:

D		A
G		D
A	G	D

Go fetch me some of your mother's gold / And some of your father's fees  
And two fine horses from your stable / Where there stand thirty and three

She's mounted up on her milk white steed / And he on the dapple and grey  
And away they did ride to the great waterside / Hours before it was day

Jump off jump off your milk white steed / And deliver it unto me  
For six pretty maids I've drownéd in here / And the seventh one you shall be

Take off take off that silken gown / And lie it upon yonder stone  
For I think it's too rich and I think it's too rare / To rot in the salt sea brine

If I must take off my silken gown / Then turn your back upon me  
For I don't think it's fit that a villain like you / A naked woman should see

And stoop you down and cut that briar / That hangs right over the brim  
In case it should tangle my golden curls / Or tear my lily white skin

And then she gave him a push and a hearty push / And she pushed that old false knight in  
Oh help me, help me, my pretty fair maid, / Or drown-ed I shall be

Lie there, lie there you false hearted knight / Lie there instead of me  
If six pretty fair maids you've drownéd in here / Well the seventh one's drownéd thee

Then she's mounted up on her milk white steed / And she lead the dapple and grey  
And away she did ride to her father's own house / Two hours before it was day



# ROUD 22

## Gil Brenton

**AKA:** Lord Benwall, Lord Dingwall, Bothwell, Cospatrick, Aye the Birks are Bowing

### Summary:

A lord goes a-wooing, and weds a young woman. It becomes apparent that she is already pregnant by another man, although it eventually becomes clear that the other man was in fact the aforementioned lord himself, so they all live happily ever after.

### Setting notes:

I knew when I started this project that there were going to be some difficult episodes, and this is one of those. Not just problematic in the highly regressive subject matter\*, but also the ballad, the words of which were collected in eight lengthy versions by Francis Child, basically died out around 1800, leaving a contemporary arranger very little audio material to work from. Apart from a few valiant US Child ballad completists, the only contemporary version I can find in England is from Nancy Kerr, recorded exclusively for the excellent Thank Goodness it's Folk radio show in 2021 - it's as beautiful as you would expect from Nancy, but I wouldn't recommend it for beginners. Instead I started with the most palatable, concise and easiest to decipher; the one Child found in Elizabeth Cochrane's songbook (titled "Lord Benwall"), dated around 1730, and I condensed (and yes, censored) those fragmentary 32 verses to the bare bones of the story shown here. Thanks to Bertrand Bronson and his 1960s opus "The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads" I found a tune transcribed by one Robert Scott, the nephew of the earliest source (a Mrs Brown of Falkland). Unfortunately, Scott was by her own admission "a meer novice in musick"\*\*, so it's probably inaccurate, and almost certainly missed out an interlacing refrain of the "bowing down" variety found in other versions. However, I have taken that tune as a starting point, and then, in order to make something in keeping with this project, admittedly strayed quite a long way from it, but I promise you it was in the back of my mind.

### Suggested further listening:

"Gil Brenton", Nancy Kerr, *Thank Goodness It's Folk - Mayday 2021 edition* [Mixcloud]

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\* I have drawn a veil over some of the very worst aspects of this story. It's available in the original texts if you want to seek it out, or alternatively, read *The Handmaids Tale*.

\*\* I'm sure no offence was meant, but if you're holding this book, I hope you have some sympathy for enthusiastic amateurs everywhere.



## ROUD 22: Gil Brenton

Em D  
Gil Brenton he's a wooing gone,  
Em B  
bowing down bowing down  
Em D  
And he's taken with him all his merry men.  
B Em  
and aye the birch trees bow

### Alternate chords:

Am	G
Am	E
Am	G
E	Am

As he was walking down the Haleigh throw, bowing down etc...  
He spied seven ladies all in a row, and aye etc...

He cast a lot among them all;  
Upon the youngest the lot it did fall.

He wedded her and brought her home,  
And by and by the way she made great moans

What ails my dearest and my daily flower?  
What ails thee to make such unhappy tears

I am with child, and it's not to thee,  
And oh and alas, what shall I doe!'

'As I was walking once late alone,  
I spied a lord, both brisk and young.

He kept me so long and so long,  
From evening late until the morning come.

'All that he gave me at our parting  
Was a pair of gloves and a gay gold ring.

If you will not believe what I tell to thee,  
There's my coffer key, so go and see.

His mother went, and she threw and flang,  
Till into her hand the ring it came.

Gil Brenton, will you tell to me  
Where is the ring that I gave to thee?'

Now I would give all my lands and tower,  
To have that lady here now in my bower.

You need not give all your lands and tower,  
For you have that lady here now in your power.

Then I shall clothe my lady in the silk,  
And feed my young son with the finest milk.

# ROUD 23

## The Douglas Tragedy

AKA: Earl Brand, Awake Awake, Lord Douglas, Arise Arise

### Summary:

A couple try to elope but are betrayed, and the bride-to-be's brothers and father are alerted and take pursuit. There is a fight, and, just for a change, they all tragically die.

### Setting notes:

A widely travelled ballad that seems to have started out in the Scottish border region, around the Douglas burn, a tributary of the river Yarrow (as immortalised in Roud 13). There are very similar stories told across Scandinavia, and it's fortunate, for it was not a popular ballad in England or Scotland past 1800, and a lot of the manuscripts were lost or damaged, but the Danish analogue, "Ribold and Guldberg" had survived intact, giving us the beginning of the story today. Most English language versions do not start with the elopement, but the arrival of the betrayer at the daughter's family home, thus most versions starting with "Arise, arise you slumbering sleepers,"\* or some similar line. Also many English language versions have the rose and briar ending similar to that famously found in Barbara Allen (Roud 54) seemingly tacked on to the end. Here I have updated, harshly edited and anglicised a version of the words\*\* given to William Motherwell by Mrs Notman in the west of Scotland in 1824. The tune is based on the one sung to Cecil Sharp and Maud Karpeles by Mr Alex S. Coffey in White Rock, Virginia during their 1916-18 Appalachian odyssey; a tune that has made more than one appearance back on this side of the Atlantic in recent years.

### Suggested further listening:

"Awake Awake", Burd Ellen, *Silver Came*

"Lord Douglas", Jim Moray, *Skulk*

"Awake Awake", The Full English, *The Full English*

"Awake Awake", The House Devils, *Crossing the Ocean*

"The Douglas Tragedy", Ewan MacColl, *Ballads*

"The Douglas Tragedy", Bella Higgins, *Hamish Henderson Collects*

"The Jolly Soldier", Paul Brady, *The Missing Liberty Tapes*

"Earl Brand", Gigspanner Big Band, *Natural Invention*

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\* Interestingly this double wake-up call first line appears in some versions of other songs, Roud 21, for example.

\*\* Why these words? you may wonder. I think what caught my eye was Douglas' macho insistence that the blood pouring down him was merely the sheen on his cloak.

## ROUD 23: THE DOUGLAS TRAGEDY

Am                          Em                  Am  
 'Rise up, rise up, my seven sons,  
     Dm                                  G                  E  
 And dress yourselves in armour bright;  
     Am                          Dm      Am                  Em  
 Earl Douglas will take our Lady Margaret  
 Am      C                  Em                  Am  
 Away before that it be light.

'O will you stand, fair Margaret,' says Douglas,  
 'And hold on fast to my milk-white steed,  
 Till I fight your father and your seven brethren,  
 By the stones of the boundary.

She stood and she held his milk-white steed.  
 She stood trembling all with fear,  
 Until she saw fall her seven brethren,  
 And her father that loved her dear.

He lifted her on a milk-white steed  
 And himself on a dapple gray;  
 They drew their hats over their faces,  
 And they both went weeping away.

'I'm afraid, I'm afraid Lord Douglas.' she said,  
 I am afraid that you are slain  
 I think I can see your bonny heart's blood  
 Runing down like a crimson rain.

'Oh no, oh no, my dearest Margaret,'  
 Oh no my love, I am not slain  
 'Tis but the sheen upon my cloak of scarlet,  
 Running down like a crimson rain.'

Lord William died before the day,  
 Lady Margaret died tomorrow;  
 Lord William died through loss of blood,  
 Fair Margaret died with sorrow.

The one was buried in St Mary's churchyard,  
 The other in St Mary's quire  
 The one sprung up a bonnie rosebush,  
 And the other a bonny briar.

These two grew, and these two blossomed;  
 Till they came to the top,  
 And when they could go no farther,  
 Then they cast the lovers' knot.

### Alternate chords:

Em	Bm	Em
Am	D	B
Em	Am	Em Bm
Em	G	Bm Em

# ROUD 24

## Erlinton

AKA: Erlington's Daughter, True Tammas, Robin Hood and the Tanner's Daughter

### Summary:

Another elopement story, this has so many elements in common with Roud 23 that Francis Child apparently considered lumping them together. He did not, nor did Steve Roud, so here we are again. This time our brave hero fights fifteen assailants, and kills all but one who is left alive to take to the news home to the girl's family. Unlike The Douglas Tragedy, all versions (though there are only a few) have the couple enjoying happy ending, which is the main distinguishing factor from all versions of the previous song.

### Setting notes:

Like Roud 22, this song basically died out in the early 19th century. It only exists as the words of a handful of Scottish versions, and a few from the US and Canada that are of questionable descent\*. Aside from some recent gallant attempts from Youtube Child Ballad completists (one of whom uses a tune from Roud 158, Willie Taylor), there is no tune recorded anywhere for this. Even the otherwise thorough Bronson in his epic series "Tunes of Traditional Ballads" goes nowhere near it, electing to skip past it and presumably hope no-one notices. So we will have to work with what we have, and make up the rest. Also in common with Roud 22, I would urge you to seek out the episode of Thank Goodness It's Folk from 2021 where Glossop folksinger Sam Baxter tackles this in a beautifully atmospheric fashion, full of complexity and variation. For this simpler version I have started with the words recorded in 1803 by William Scott, and taken my sword of abridgement and modernisation to them, lopping off the exposition at the beginning to get us more quickly to the meat of the elopement and ensuing violent confrontation. To the butchered remains, I have applied this simple original tune and accompaniment.

### Suggested further listening:

"Erlinton", Sam Baxter, *Thanks Goodness It's Folk*, 28.05.21 [Mixcloud]

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\* As well as its close relation to the previous ballad, it also seems to be almost the same story as Roud 321 "The Lady and the Dragoon"

ROUD 24: ERLINTON

D            A            G            D  
"O who is this at my bower door,  
D                            A  
That knocks so light upon the pane  
          Bm                    A            G  
"O it is Willie, your own true love,  
          A                    G            D  
I pray you rise and let me in!"—

Alternate chords:

G	D	C	G
G			D
	Em	D	C
	D	C	G

"But in my bower there is a wake / And at the wake my family bides;  
I'll come to the green-wood in the morn / Where blooms the briar, by early light."

At dawn she walked, her sisters by her / No not a mile but barely one,  
Till there was Willie, her own true love / Waiting by the briar blooms.

He took her sisters by the hand / He kiss'd them both, and sent them home,  
He mounted his true love right behind him / And through the green-wood they are gone.

They had not ridden all through the wood / No not a mile but barely one,  
When came fifteen of the boldest knights / That ever bore flesh, or blood, or bone.

The foremost was an aged knight / He wore the grey hair on his chin,  
Says, "Yield to me thy lady bright / And thou shalt walk the woods within."

"For me to yield my lady bright / To such an aged knight as thee,  
People will think that I've gone mad / Or all the courage flown from me."

But up then spoke the second knight / And he spoke right so boisterously,  
"Yield me thy life, or the lady bright / Or here the two of us shall die."

"My lady is my entire world / My life I will not yield to none;  
But if you be men of your honour / You'll only fight me one by one."

He lighted off his milk-white steed / And gave his lady him by the head,  
Saying, "Do not be so downhearted / Until you see my body bleed."

He set his back unto an oak / He set his feet against a stone,  
And he has fought these fifteen men / And killed them all but barely one:

For he has left that aged knight / And all to carry the tidings home.  
"Thou art my own, my life and love / Now we shall walk free and as one."



# ROUD 25

## The Flower of Northumberland

AKA: The Fair Flower of Northumberland, Floor o Northumberlan, The Betrayed Lady

### Summary:

A wily knight imprisoned in Northumberland, presumably for border reiving shenanigans, tricks a young maid into releasing him and returning with him to his native Scotland. However, things are not as they seem, and for various reasons\*, he sends the young woman back to Northumberland on foot, where her father chides her for her gullibility, and her mother commiserates with her because, well, who can resist a handsome Scotsman?

### Setting notes:

A popular ballad in Scotland in the 1800s, surprisingly, as it does not present Scottish men in a very good light, at least not by today's standards. It's certainly a very old song, as it is recorded in 35 verses as "The Maiden's Song" in Deloney's part poem / part novel "The Pleasant History of John Winchcomb" as being sung by girls working in a silk-weaving factory - "two of them singing the ditty and all the rest bearing the burden" - published around 1597. The most prevalent tune heard today is probably of 19th century origin, but by the end of the 19th century it had almost died out in the oral tradition, which might explain the lack of tune variants (and song titles for that matter). There is no need for variants here though; this insistent melody with its eminently singable internal refrain bounces along agreeably, and seems to be finding favour again with artists of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, with good reason. This is a highly abbreviated seven verse summation, the abridgement courtesy of Jim Reid, with the anglicised refrain taken from the version taken down in 1863 from James Gibb., from his mother's recollection of her mother's singing.

### Suggested further listening:

"The Flower of Northumberland", Jackie Oates, *Jackie Oates*

"Flower of Northumberland", Lizzie Higgins, *What a Voice*

"Flower of Northumberland", Jim Reid, *I Saw The Wild Geese Flee*

"The Flower of Northumberland", Alasdair Roberts, Amble Skuse & David McGuinness, *What News*

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\* The main one, as recounted in the original 35 verse setting, is that he already has a wife and five children in Scotland. Later versions have the knight suggesting that she might be a terrible cook, and thus of no use to him. Her reaction to this toxically patriarchal newsflash was to beg him to kill her as she would not be able to bear the shame of returning home. Thankfully, in all versions, he does not oblige, thus regaining a shred of honour for the Scots nation.

ROUD 25: THE FLOWER OF NORTHUMBERLAND

D Bm D A  
A maid went a-walking by the prison door,  
D A  
O but her love it was easy won  
Bm A D A  
And she spied a prisoner all a-standing there  
D G A D  
A-wishing he was in fair Scotland.

Alternate chords:

G	Em	G	D
G			D
	Em	D	G D
G	C	D	G

It's, "Oh fair maid would you pity me?"  
O but her love it was easy won  
"Would you steal the key and let me go free?  
And I'll make you my lady in fair Scotland."

She went unto her father's stable,  
O but her love it was easy won  
And she's stolen the steed that was both quick and able,  
To carry them on to fair Scotland.

And when they came into a moss,  
O but her love it was easy won  
He's bade her get aff her father's best horse,  
And return again to Northumberland.

And when she came to her father's hall,  
O but her love it was easy won  
She stole her way in amongst of them all,  
Although she's the flower of Northumberland.

Then up spoke her father and he did speak bold,  
O but her love it was easy won  
"How could you do so at fifteen years old  
And you the flower of Northumberland."

Then up spoke her mother she spoke with a smile,  
O but her love it was easy won  
"Oh you're not the first one that he has beguiled,  
And you're welcome back home to Northumberland."

# ROUD 26

## The Cruel Brother

**AKA:** The Three Knights, The Rose and the Lily, Green Grow the Lily, The Three Sisters, Gulliver Gentle and Rosemary, The Three Maids, The Three Maidens, There Waur Three Ladies in a Ha, Flowers in the Valley, Lily O

### Summary:

This song concerns a custom whereby it was essential for a suitor to obtain the consent of his beloved's brother. Failure to do so (and in many variants even invite him to the wedding) in this case turned out to be a fatal oversight, as the brother kills his own sister\* before she can be wed. In her dying breaths she pronounces a number of bequests and curses.

### Setting notes:

It's easy to see how this ballad almost died out in the 1800s, despite being a relatively late entrant into the ballad sphere - the earliest version is found in 1760. To a greater extent than today, ballad singers would have in some way to be invested in their subject matter, so a song that hinged on such an archaic custom would not be a popular choice. However, it did survive, mostly in Scotland where it seems to hail from and was originally most popular, although by the early 20th century we have evidence of its further spread with the 1939 Polly Johnson recording from Virginia, USA. The song gained some good traction during the second folk revival, and that has continued today with some really fascinating and engaging interpretations. The setting given here is an anglicised re-telling based on a version from a fine Scottish band called The Gaugers who were operating in the 1960s and 70s (the version below is well worth seeking out for some fine communal singing). The Gaugers' setting took hold in the tradition, and was later recorded by Archie Fisher, Dick Gaughan, and many others.

### Suggested further listening:

"The Three Maids", Polly Johnson, *Virginia Traditions*

"The Cruel Brother", LAU, *Folk Songs*

"The Cruel Brother", Maeve MccKinnon, *Don't Sing Love Songs*

"The Rose and the Lily", Eliza Carthy and Norma Waterson, *Gift*

"The Cruel Brother", The Gaugers, *[Youtube video]*

"The Cruel Brother", Dick Gaughan, *Prentice Piece*

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\* An extreme reaction based on the sensibilities of today, but apparently not unprecedented in the time. Some scholars suggest that it might have been a crime of passion, one of jealousy for the sister's romantic relationship, but the balance of opinion seems to be if that were the case, the ballad writer would almost certainly not be shy about expressing that incestuous affair more explicitly.



## ROUD 26: THE CRUEL BROTHER

D G D  
There were three sisters lived in a hall  
G A  
Oh the rose an the lily o  
D Em G D  
And it's down came a knight and he courted them all  
D Em G D  
And oh the rose is the redder o

The first one she was dressed in red, Oh the rose etc.  
An the second one was dressed in green, And oh the rose is etc.

The third one she was dressed in white  
"Would you come with me and be my bride?"

"You must ask my father the king  
And you must ask my mother the queen"

"And you must ask my sister Anne  
And don't forget my brother John"

He asked mother sister father and all  
But he forgot her brother John

Her father he led her thro the hall  
And her mother she danced before them all

Her sister Anne led her through the close  
And her brother John helped her on her horse

Then he's taken his sharp penknife  
And there he's taken her of her life

And as we came by St Evron's close  
Our bonnie bride she fell aff her horse

"And it's what will you leave to your father the king?"  
"The bonnie steed that I ride on"

"And what will you leave to your mother the queen?"  
"The bloody robes that I lie in"

"And what will you leave to your sister Anne?"  
"My good lord to be her man"

"And what will you leave to your brother John?"  
"The rope and the halter to hang him on"

### Alternate chords:

G C G  
C D  
G Am C G  
G Am C G



# ROUD 27

## The Banks of Fordie

AKA: Babylon, Bonnie Banks of Airdrie, Bonny Banks of Virgie, Three Young Ladies, The Duke of Perth's Three Daughters, The Burly Burly Banks of Barbree-0

### Summary:

A tragic robber-ballad, where a highwayman somehow\* manages to murder two of his three sisters before the third reveals her identity to him. Stricken by grief, the brother takes his own life.

### Setting notes:

Most likely Scottish in origin, due to the inclusion of the place name Fordie (Perthshire) in the oldest versions of the title. At some point Airdrie (50 miles to the south, just East of Glasgow) was substituted. Many US versions go on to substitute Virgie, a town in Kentucky\*\*. There are a host of analogues to be found in Sweden ("Pehr Tyrsons Döttrar i Wänge"), Denmark ("Hr. Truels's Døttre"), Iceland ("Vallara kvæði") and the Faroe Islands ("Torkils døtur"). Scottish versions most commonly have a 2nd and 4th line interlaced refrain similar to the Cruel Mother's famous "All alone and aloney", but traveller John MacDonald gave it to Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger in 1969 with a repeated 2nd line followed by a 4th line refrain, which contemporarily is more or less as often found as the interlaced approach. I've chosen the MacDonald pattern (interlaced refrains are well represented elsewhere), but used the words mostly from Francis Hindes Groome's evocative 1880 account\*\*\* of the singing of English traveller Sinfì.

### Suggested further listening:

"Babylon", Cohen Braithwaite-Kilcoyne, *Outway Songster*

"The Bonnie Banks of Fordie", Dick Gaughan, *No More Forever*

"Banks of Virgie", Pete Coe, *In Paper Houses*

"The Bonnie Banks of Fordie", Trimdon Grange Explosion, *Trimdon Grange Explosion*

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\* One of the most gaping plot-holes in folk music. Yes, the brother may have been disguised in classic be-masked highwayman garb, but how he didn't recognise his own sisters remains a mystery. To be charitable, he could have approached them from behind, but many versions have him turning the women around, so even that isn't an explanation. There's definitely a 3000 word research paper to be written on this, if anyone at EFDSS fancies it.

\*\* 3723 miles to the west, if you're counting.

\*\*\* From Groome's book, "In Gipsy Tents": 'This, surely, was the "werry lonesome death-song, about a yard and a half long," of which the old Gipsy spoke to Mr Leland. Only that "had no tune in pertick'ler," while this was sung to a kind of monotonous chant, sad and suggestive as a river's flow. And Lancelot played a masterly accompaniment, that pled for the murdered, raved at the murderer, and moaned for his remorseful suicide.'

ROUD 27: THE BONNIE BANKS OF FORDIE

Am C G  
“There were three sisters going from home,  
Am C Em  
They met a man, and he made them stand  
Am G Em  
They met a man, and he made them stand  
Am C Em Am  
Down by the banks of Fordie, oh.’

Alternate chords:

Em	G	D	
Em	G	Bm	
Em	D	Bm	
Em	G	Bm	Em

“He took the first one by the hand,  
He turned her round, and he made her stand x2, Down by the banks etc.

“Saying, ‘Will you be a robber’s wife?  
Or will you die by my penknife?

“Oh! I won’t be a robber’s wife,  
But I will die by your penknife

“Then he took the second by her hand,  
He turned her round, and he made her stand

“Saying, ‘Will you be a robber’s wife?  
Or will you die by my penknife?

Oh! I won’t be a robber’s wife,  
But I will die by your penknife

“He took the third one by the hand,  
He turned her round, and he made her stand

“Saying, ‘Will you be a robber’s wife?  
Or will you die by my penknife?

Oh! I won’t be a robber’s wife,  
And I won’t die by your penknife

If my two brothers had been here,  
You would not have killed my sisters two

What was your two brothers’ names?  
One was John, and the other was James

Oh, what did your two brothers do?  
One was a minister, the other such as you

Oh, what is this that I have done?  
I have killed my sisters all but one

And now I’ll take out my penknife,  
And here I’ll end my own sweet life



# ROUD 28

## Hind Horn

AKA: Hynd Horn, The Pale Ring, The Cowboy's Wedding Ring, The Old Beggar Man

### Summary:

Hind Horn falls in love with the King's daughter but the King, presumably unimpressed with Horn's social standing, sends him away to foreign lands. Before he goes, the daughter gives Horn a magical ring studded with coloured gems, and she tells him that if the colours fade, it means she has fallen for another man. When that inevitably happens, Horn returns. He disguises himself as a beggar and manages to obtain a glass of wine from the palace, insisting it be delivered by the bride. Fortunately for the story, she obliges, he drinks the wine and drops the ring into the empty glass, and with that pointedly unfolkie act of James Bond-esque cool, they are reunited in love.

### Setting notes:

This dramatic romance, strikingly absent from fatal consequences\*, is based on part of the epic legend of King Horn, related in texts as early as the 13th century, spanning between 100 and 5000 verses. Francis Child devoted thirty pages to describing the lineage of the ballad, but this clear enthusiasm has not translated to universal popularity today. Of the eight versions recorded by Child, six have an interlaced refrain normally of the "hey lilly lu and a hey loon lan" variety. The others lack this refrain\*\*, but the most complete at 34 verses would be too long here. This short version is mostly from Thomas Edward Nelson of New Brunswick (but of Irish heritage), collected in the 1929 book "British Ballads in Maine" - for clarity I have tinkered with it a bit, collecting some parts from elsewhere, and chopping out a line or two for concision. The tune is very loosely based on a 1963 recording of Joe Estey, also from New Brunswick.

### Suggested further listening:

"Hind Horn", Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, *Blood and Roses Vol. 3*

"Hind Horn", Spiers & Boden, *Fallow Ground*

"The Old Beggar Man", Edward "Sandy" Ives, *Folk Songs of Maine*

"Hind Horn", Brian Peters, [*Youtube video*]

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\* I'll be honest, I haven't read all 5000 verses of the legend, but it's easy to imagine a postscript to this song where the spurned bridegroom goes on a murderous revenge-spree. That would be a natural folk song conclusion, but perhaps, like me, they enjoy a happy ending from time to time.

\*\* The excellent Spiers and Boden version, set to a French-Canadian melody, cleverly uses a 10-lines-per-verse format that combines both refrained and refrainless formats. I have consulted the Folk Rule Book, and yes, that is definitely cheating, and so the case has been referred to the Folk Police for swift and violent Folk justice.

ROUD 28: HIND HORN

D G A  
Where were you bred and where were you born?  
D G A  
In dear old Ireland, where I was bred and born.  
D G D  
I'm going for to leave you, so love, do not mourn,  
D A G  
Until the day when I do return.

The king's daughter gave him a jewelled ring,  
And the virtue of the ring was above all things.  
"If this ring stays both bright and true,  
You'll know that your love is true to you;

But if this ring turns pale and wan,  
Your true love's in love with another man."  
Well he set sail and off went he,  
Until he came to a strange country;

He looked at the ring, it was pale and wan,  
His true love was in love with another man.  
He set sail and back came he,  
'Til that he came to his own country,

And as rode he met an old beggar man.  
"What news, what news, you old beggar man?"  
"No news, no news," the beggar man did say  
"But tomorrow's your true love's wedding day."

"You lend me your begging shawl,  
I'll beg from the highest to the lowest of them all;  
But from them all I will take none  
Until I come to the bride's own hand."

She came a-trembling down the stairs,  
Rings on her fingers and gold in her hair,  
A glass of wine all in her hand,  
Which she did give to the old beggar man.

He took the glass and drank the wine,  
And into the glass he slipped the ring.  
"Where got you this, by sea or by land,  
Or did you get it off a drowned one's hand?"

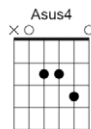
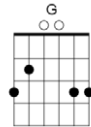
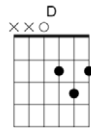
"Neither I got it by sea or by land,  
Neither did I get it off a drowned one's hand;  
I got it in my courting gay,  
And I gave it to my love on her wedding day."

Between the kitchen and the hall  
The beggar's coat he did let it fall,  
All a-shining in gold amongst them all,  
And he was the fairest in the hall.

Alternate chords:

G	C	D
G	C	D
G	C	G
G	D	C

Playing note: On the recording, I keep the D note on the 2nd (B) string of the guitar ringing for the whole song, so I'm effectively playing D, G, and Asus4 chords, like this:



# ROUD 29

## Bold Sir Rylas

AKA: Sir Lionel, Wild Hog, The Jovial Hunter, Rurey Bain, Bangum and the Bo', Wild Hog in the Woods, Rackabello, Isaac-a-Bell and Hugh the Graeme, The Jovial Hunter of Bromsgrove, Brangywell, Bangum and the Boar, Ole Bangum, Old Bang 'Em, Wild Boar

### Summary:

A hunter comes to the aid of a woman in a tree who is being terrorised by a fearsome wild boar. After a struggle, the hunter slays the boar, to the chagrin of its understandably peeved owner, whom he subsequently also slays.

### Setting notes:

This story is likely descended from the 14th century medieval English romance "Sir Eglamore of Artois", where the boar's keeper is a giant, although subsequent incarnations of the song tend to use "a wild woman" in this role\*. Its recorded history as a song goes as far back as the early 17th century where it appeared in the Percy Manuscript collection, where it bears the name "Sir Lyonell". As a well travelled ballad, contemporary versions vary considerably, reminding us that the Roud numbers do not signify songs as such, but the stories that they tell. In more recent times, the story has been claimed by Bromsgrove, a market town southwest of Birmingham. An 1856 book by Jabaz Allies "The British, Roman, and Saxon Antiquities and Folklore of Worcestershire" contains some enjoyable yet tenuous speculation that this is the home of the real Sir Rylas, based on the fact that there is a stone crest bearing a boar's head in Bromsgrove church. To honour such bold commitment to local folklore, I decided to go "the full Bromsgrove" here; the great folklorist and song historian Roy Palmer cemented this song's Midlands heritage by including it in his 1972 book "Songs of the Midlands", with a tune collected, not in the Midlands, but in Banffshire in 1850. Slightly later in 1975, Derby-born folk singer Roy Harris gave it his own Midlands twist, and it's on this version I have based the words and tune given here.

### Suggested further listening:

"The Jovial Hunter", Roy Harris, *Champions of Folly*

"Rackaballo", Waterson:Carthy, *Essential*

"The Jovial Hunter of Bromsgrove", Jon Wilks, *Up the Cut*

"Wild Hog in the Woods", The Furrow Collective, *Wild Hog*

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\* It might be marginally more realistic that a wild woman in the woods, rather than a giant, would be the guardian of a killer wild boar, but it sows (wordplay intended) some confusion in many versions of the narrative, as a cursory listen might give you the impression that the bold hunter has slain the woman he was rescuing. Which would be a strange turn of events, even in the world of traditional folk.

ROUD 29: BOLD SIR RYLAS

Am  
Sir Robert Bolton had three sons,  
F Am  
Wind well the horn good hunter  
F C  
Sir Rylas was the eldest one.  
Em Am  
And he was a jovial hunter

He ranged all round down by the wood, Wind well etc...  
Till a maiden in a tree he spy'd, And he was etc...

He said 'Fair maid what brings you here?'  
'It is the wild boar that drove me here'

Well, he's put his horn up to his mouth,  
And he's blown it north, east, west and south.

The wild boar heard him in his den;  
And he made the best of speed to him.

He's wetted his tusks to make them strong,  
He thrashed down trees as he charged along.

They fought five hours all through the day,  
Till the wild boar would have run away.

Sir Rylas drew his sword with might,  
He's fairly cut his head off straight.

There came a wild woman from the wood:  
Saying 'You have killed my pretty little pig!

Then at him did this wild woman go,  
And he clove her all from head to toe.

In Bromsgrove church they both are lain;  
And the wild boar's head is drawn on stone.

Alternate chords:

Em	
C	Em
C	G
Bm	Em



# ROUD 30

## Willie's Lyke-Wake

AKA: Among the Blue Flowers and the Yellow, The Sun Shines over the Valley, For Seven Long Years I Courted a Maid, Willie Willie

### Summary:

Unable to entice a young woman into marriage by conventional means, poor lovelorn Willie is persuaded by his mother to feign his own death. As he lies prone in the coffin, the grieving woman leans in to kiss him, at which point he "awakes", grabs her and confesses his love. In a surprising turn of events, rather than advising him to sling his hook or suing him for emotional trauma, she agrees to marry him.

### Setting notes:

Another ballad whose origins lie in Scotland, its earliest appearance is from Scottish collector Sir Walter Scott in 1810. Several other early 19th century collectors have recorded it, and they all recount very similar versions, which is a sign it has never been widely sung and therefore not rewritten, abridged or expanded upon. Although it's not widespread in the English language, it's clear that morbidly pranking potential spouses is a popular idea elsewhere, as the same story crops up in songs found in Russia, Sweden, Hungary, France, Italy, Bulgaria, and especially frequently in Denmark, where there have been at least fourteen versions in circulation. On the excellent 1977 live album "Saturday Night at the Bull and Mouth" there's a recording of Ewan MacColl leading a session\* with this ballad, demonstrating what a great candidate it is for communal singing, and in the sleeve notes MacColl makes clear that it was reliably popular in their sessions, despite it being rarely sung elsewhere. I have used mostly MacColl's unaccompanied tune, but I've also taken rhythmical inspiration from Si Barron's modern and dizzily skilful guitar accompaniment.

### Suggested further listening:

"Willy's Lyke-Wake", Si Barron, *A Merry Convoy*

"Willy's Lyke Wake", Jez Lowe, *The Jez Lowe Fellside Collection*

"Willie's Lyke Wake", Lucy Pringle & Chris Wright, *The Speaking Heart*

"Among the Blue Flowers and the Yellow", Ewan MacColl & Peggy Seeger, *Saturday Night at the Bull and Mouth*

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\* The recording also gives an insight into MacColl's character, and his strident passion for communal singing, as he mercilessly whips the assembled singers into shape.



ROUD 30: WILLIE'S LYKE-WAKE

C G C  
'O Willie, Willie, what makes you so sad?'  
C F C G  
As the sun shines over the valley  
Am F C G  
'I have loved a lady these seven years and mair.'  
C G C  
Among the blue flowers and the yellow

'O Willie, lie down as though you were dead, And the sun...  
And lay a white sheet all over your head. Among the...

'And give to the bellman his belling-groat,  
To ring the death-bell at thy love's bower-gate.'

He laid him down as he were dead,  
And he drew the white sheet all over his head.

He gave to the bellman his belling-groat,  
To ring the dead-bell at his love's bower-gate.

When that she came to her true lover's gate,  
She dealt the red gold and all for his sake.

And when that she came to her true lover's bower,  
She had not been there for the space of half an hour,

Till that she came to her true lover's bed,  
And she lifted the white sheet to look at the dead.

He took her by the hand so meek and so small,  
And he cast her over between him and the wall.

'Tho all your friends were in the bower,  
I would not let you go for the space of half an hour.

'You came to me without either horse or boy,  
But I will send you home with a merry convoy.'

More info and the audio files that accompany this book can be found at

**singyonder.co.uk\***

Some things that helped me and/or you might enjoy, in addition to those found in Volumes 1 and 2:

**Books:**

"British Ballads from Maine", Barry Phillips

"The Ballad of Tradition", Gordon Hall Gerould

"The British, Roman, & Saxon antiquities & folklore of Worcestershire", Jabaz Allies

"In Gipsy Tents", Frances Hindes Groome

"Traditional Tunes", Frank Kidson

**Websites:**

<http://woods.taunyo.org/> - W is for the Woods, Traditional Adirondack Music

<https://dsl.ac.uk/> - Dictionaries of the Scots Language

**Audio\*\*, Podcasts, etc:**

Thank Goodness it's Folk

EFDSS magazine and podcasts

Handed Down podcast

Folk London magazine

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Continuing gratitude to those who buy these books, I am humbled and amazed. Thanks to Folk London for the first "in print" review - I now have to contend with the fact that this is a real thing. Also, thanks to everyone at Soundpost (I include Chris Orme in this; while not an official volunteer, he is a great ambassador for the event, and he was a genial and helpful companion while I was there) for making such a wonderful weekend, and giving me the energy and inspiration to keep going. I also had a lovely time at the Shepley Spring Festival - it's great to see these gatherings returning, and I'm well aware they need our support, so please do what you can to patronise your local festival or folk club, they are not just a joy for the performers and audience alike, they are the very essence of what folk music is about.

Written and designed by Karl Sinfield

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\* If you are from the future and found a rare hard copy version at the back of a dusty loft, and none of the links or email addresses work, it's possible I have either died, or otherwise departed from the internet to live in a log cabin somewhere. Either way, don't try and find me, go and learn some folk songs instead.

\*\*Please also wherever possible follow/support your favourite folk artists on social media and buy their stuff.



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