



sing yonder together

simple traditional songs for communal singing

vol. 1

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introduction

When I started the Sing Yonder project, I aimed to present each song in the Roud index in such a way that they could be easily sung and played, be it alone or in a group setting. However, as I work through the index, I'm discovering a subset of songs which, by virtue of their refrains or repeated lines, might be even more quickly adopted in a communal singing environment, or in the set-list of a singer wanting to incorporate more audience participation into their set. With that in mind, I have started this series, which will run alongside the main Sing Yonder imprint, and will be freely available by download from singyonder.co.uk/together for as long as I am alive and able to pay for the web hosting.

I had two main inspirations for this - the first was hearing Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger guiding an enthusiastic pubfull* of singers through a mighty communal rendition of Willie's Lyke-Wake (Roud 30) on their 1978 album "Saturday Night at the Bull and Mouth". It's a ballad that is quite rarely performed these days, for some reason; the content is quite mild** in comparison to a lot of the misogyny and death found in the vast majority of Child ballads, and it has a compelling tune that's easy to grasp. Anyway, it's a great album I always recommend to anyone interested in the topic of communal folk song.

The second was the magical evening I spend at Royal Traditions, a folk night run by Jon Boden, that takes place on a reassuringly unpredictable schedule at a tiny country pub called The Royal Hotel, that nestles otherwise quietly among the bucolic outskirts of Sheffield. The idea of "house tunes" that are always sung (around two sets of music from an invited guest) is inspired, as a way of getting everyone involved and encouraging a feeling of togetherness. And the free-for-all sing at the end is dominated by great chorus songs. Any small thing I can do to encourage that sort of behaviour has to be a positive, and, having done most of the work already as part of the wider Sing Yonder project, it is not too burdensome, time-wise, the greatest difficulty being what to write about in the introduction. Although I seem to have managed that, just about.

Karl Sinfield, September 2022.

* No, it's not a word according to the dictionary, but when referring to a group of folk singers, I think we can all agree it's fairly accurate.

** I wouldn't recommend faking your own death to win the heart of a fair maiden, although I've never tried it myself, as I prefer to rely on my charm, good looks, and ability to speak boringly about folk music for hours.

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 these were thin on the ground. However, generally this is much easier these days thanks to streaming platforms, and I found I had in some instances more than 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, 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. 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. instrumentalists who might rely on that sort of thing.

ROUD 9

The Cruel Mother

AKA: Greenwood Sidey, The Lady of York, There Was a Lady Dressed in Green, The Sun Shines Fair on Carlisle Wall, Down by the Greenwood Sidey O, The Rose and the Lindsey O, The Cruel Mither, Fine Flowers in the Valley, Rose o Malindie, She's Leaned Her Back, All Alone and Lonely, Old Mother Lee, The Trajedie O Twa Bairns of Newark, Three Little Children Sitting on the Sand, Babes in the Greenwood, The Rose O' Balindie, The Duke's Daughter's Cruelty, Lily of the Lowlands

Summary:

A particularly grim tale of a mother's infanticide, and the subsequent meeting with the wandering spirits, who, unmoved by her tenderness towards them, condemn her to eternity in hell. Seemingly a popular story in 17th century England, when infanticide was sadly a common concern for the authorities of the day.

Setting notes:

The story of this song contains a lot of ancient folklore - some of it in common with folk beliefs of Scandinavia, leading some to speculate that it might have been brought over to England by invading Norsemen. The earliest it can be definitively traced back to is the 17th century broadside ballad, where it had the somewhat cumbersome title (spoiler alert): "The Duke's Daughter's Cruelty: or the Wonderful Apparition of Two Infants whom she Murdered and Buried in a Forrest, for to Hide her Shame". Wherever it comes from, it's desperately bleak, even by folk song standards. But as great sadness can often inspire great art, there's a plethora of beautiful interpretations to choose from. There are a number of interesting variations in the repeated refrains, I have stuck with the one most prevalent in England: "All alone and a-lonely / Down by a greenwood sidey". For the tune I have gone back to the seminal singing of Cecilia Costello, one of England's finest traditional singers, for inspiration. The magnificent recording she made in 1951 has a lovely spoken introduction by Cecilia that is worth seeking out.

Suggested further listening:

"The Cruel Mother", Lizzie Higgins, *O'er His Grave The Green Grass Grew*

"The Cruel Mother", A. L. Lloyd, *English and Scottish Folk Ballads*

"Cruel Mother", A Different Thread, *Some Distant Shore*

"The Lady of York", Will Hampson and Bryony Griffith, *Lady Diamond*

"Cruel Mother", Fay Hield, *Wrackline*

"The Cruel Mother", Alasdair Roberts, *No Earthly Man*

"The Cruel Mother", Jon Wilks, *[Youtube Video]*

ROUD 9: THE CRUEL MOTHER

Dm C
There was a lady that lived in York
Dm
All alone and aloney
Dm F C
She proved a child by her own father's clerk
Am Dm
Down by a greenwood sidey

Alternate chords:

Am	G	
	Am	
Am	C	G
Em	Am	

She leaned her back against the oak...
She thought three times that her back would be broke...

She leaned her head against a thorn
There her three fine sons they were born

She pulled out her long penknife
And there she took away their three lives

Years went by and one summer's morn
She saw three boys, they were playing bat and ball

Oh my fine boys if you were mine
Sure I'd dress you up in silk so fine.

Oh mother dear when we were yours
You did not dress us in silk so fine.

You pulled out your long penknife
And there you took away our three lives.

Oh my fine boys what will become of me
You'll be seven long years a bird in a tree.

You'll be seven years more a tongue in a bell
And you'll be seven long years a porter in hell.



ROUD 11

The Baffled Knight

AKA: The Shepherd Lad, Blow the Winds, Clear Away the Morning Dew, Dew is on the Grass, The Shepherd's Son, The Brisk Young Gamekeeper, The Courteous Knight, The New Mown Hay

Summary:

A knight (or in later versions, a shepherd) comes across a woman skinny-dipping out in the countryside. He suggests a romantic liaison, she is understandably reticent, but invites him to take her to another venue, normally her father's house or an inn, where she promises him everything he wants, plus a large sum of money. Once they arrive, she nips inside, locks him out, and mocks him for his lustful foolishness.

Setting notes:

As it was originally written in 1609, the story was much more convoluted than the one shown here, and ended with a troublesome moral, suggesting the knight missed his opportunity by asking consent. I, along with many contemporary interpreters, make no apology for having none of that, preferring to allow the woman to gain the upper hand and leaving it there. There is a magical 1950s recording of Emily Bishop singing this truncated version for the BBC using almost the same tune. Many modern versions use this jolly setting, and as it is refreshingly upbeat, easy to sing and play, and has a rhythmic and highly catchy refrain, it would be remiss of us to ignore it here. For contrast, try one of the Scottish interpretations, like that employed by Mr MacColl*. Unusually for a song of this vintage the original 1609 text (namely "Deuteromelia" by composer Thomas Ravenscroft) includes a tune**. For an accurate rendering of this, check the version by City Waites, listed below.

Suggested further listening:

"The Shepherd Lad", Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, *The Wanton Muse*

"The Baffled Knight", City Waites, *Lusty Broadside Ballads & Playford Dances from c17th England*

"Blow the Windy Morning", Emily Bishop, *Good People Take Warning*

"The Baffled Knight", Lucy Ward, *Liberty To Choose*

"Dew is on the Grass", Lisa Knapp, *Wild & Undaunted*

* Warning: may contain high concentration of fol-de-riddle-di-does.

** It's a very medieval-sounding tune - I would attempt it but I simply don't look good in tights.

Alternate chords:

G			
C	Am	D	
G			
C	Am	D	G

ROUD 11: THE BAFFLED KNIGHT

D
 There was a shepherd and he did keep sheep upon the hill
 G Em A
 And he would go each May morning all for to drink his fill.
 D
 And it's blow the windy morning. Blow the winds high-o.
 G Em A D
 Clear away the morning dew, and sweet the winds shall blow.

So he walked out upon one day, and leant upon his crook
 And there he spied a pretty maid a washing at the brook.
 And it's blow the windy morning. Blow the winds high-o.
 Clear away the morning dew, and sweet the winds shall blow.

And then they went along the road 'til they came into the inn.
 And ready was the waiting maid to let the lady in.
 And it's blow the windy morning. Blow the winds high-o.
 Clear away the morning dew, and sweet the winds shall blow.

So she jumped off her milk white steed, and stepped into the inn,
 Crying you were just a rake without, and I'm a maid within
 And it's blow the windy morning. Blow the winds high-o.
 Clear away the morning dew, and sweet the winds shall blow.

You may pull off your shoes and hose and let your feet go bare.
 But if you meet a pretty girl, you touch her if you dare
 And it's blow the windy morning. Blow the winds high-o.
 Clear away the morning dew, and sweet the winds shall blow.

I won't pull off my shoes or hoes, or let my feet go bare
 and if I meet with you again, be hanged if I despair
 And it's blow the windy morning. Blow the winds high-o.
 Clear away the morning dew, and sweet the winds shall blow.
 Blow the windy morning. Blow the winds high-o.
 Clear away the morning dew, and sweet the winds shall blow.

ROUD 12

The Tri-coloured House

AKA: The Elfin Knight, Scarborough Fair, The Fairy Knight, Rosemary Lane, Rosemary and Thyme, The Cambric Shirt, Petticoat Lane, The Lover's Tasks, True Lover of mine, Love's Impossibilities, Strawberry Lane, The Lover's Tasks, Whittingham Fair, The Tasks, The Wind Hath Blown My Plaid Away, Every Rose Grows Merry in Time, Sweet Lover of Mine

Summary:

A suitor attempts to trick a woman into love by setting them a series of impossible tasks. The woman responds with various impossible tasks of her own. The full 17th century original text ends with the knight revealing himself as an already married malign spirit, and thus the woman's clever escape*. The story turns up all round the world, but all modern English language versions of the song omit the folkloric ending.

Setting notes:

Most of the world knows this as Scarborough Fair, thanks to Paul Simon "borrowing" an arrangement from Martin Carthy (who had learned it from Ewan MacColl's songbook, who in turn had recorded it sung by lead miner Mark Anderson in 1947) during the 1960s folk revival. I didn't feel the universe needed another herb-influenced** version, so here is a comparatively rare alternative, collected in Ireland in 1973 from traveller Mary Kate McDonagh, and recently rendered in glorious multi-part harmony by the excellent Dublin outfit Lankum. Having no Irish heritage myself I sometimes feel a bit of an imposter tackling Celtic arrangements, but this mournful waltz seems to work beautifully in any accent, and it certainly deserves to be sung more often.

Suggested further listening:

"The Elfin Knight", Martha Reid, *Songs and Ballads from Perthshire*

"Rosemary Lane", Elizabeth Jefferies, *As Me and My Love Sat Courting*

"The Cambric Shirt", Artus Moser, *North Carolina Mountain Folksongs and Ballads*

"Rosemary Lane", James Yorkston, *Someplace Simple*

"Whittingham Fair", Eliza Carthy and Nancy Kerr, *Eliza Carthy and Nancy Kerr*

"The Tri-Coloured House", Lankum, *Cold Old Fire*

"The Elfin Knight", Norma Waterson and Eliza Carthy feat. The Gift Band, *The Elfin Knight*

"The Elfin Knight", Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, *Classic Scots Ballads*

"Rosemary Lane", Bellowhead, *Revival*

* No, it doesn't make any practical sense. Dating was different back then, I imagine.

**The four herbs in question are either a) magical potions to ward off spirits b) genitalia symbolism or c) a recipe for a 16th century spiced ale, depending on, I suppose, each historian's specific penchants.

ROUD 12: THE TRI-COLOURED HOUSE

Dm F
Were you ever down at the tri-coloured house,
C

where every rose grows merry and fine

Dm
It's there you will meet with a neat bonnie lass,
F Am C Dm
will you tell her she'll be a true love of mine

Will you tell her to make me a fine new shirt, where every...
Without any seams nor needlework, and its then she will be...

Oh and tell her to wash it in yon spring well...
Where water never sprung nor never fell...

And tell her to hang it on yon whitethorn...
Where there ne'er grew a thorn since Adam was born...

Will you tell her to iron it all with a millstone...
And when she has it done for to send it right home...

Where you ever down at the tricoloured house...
It's there you will meet with a neat bonny lad,
Will you tell him he'll be a true love of mine

Will you tell him to farm an acre of land...
Between the salt water and the sea sand...

Oh and tell him to plough it all with a deer's horn...
And tell him to sew it with one grain of corn...

Will you tell him to thrash it on that castle wall...
And to let neither chaff nor corn fall...

Were you ever down at the tri-coloured house...
It's there you will meet with a neat bonnie lass...
will you tell her she'll be a true love of mine

Alternate chords:

Am C
G
Am
C Em G Am

ROUD 16

The Frog and the Mouse

AKA: Kitty Alone, Froggie Went A-Courtin', The Frog's Wedding, Mr Froggie, Cuddy Alone, King Kong Kitchie Ki-Mi-O, Frog's Courtship, Kemo Kimo

Summary:

A whimsical tale of a mouse agreeing to marry an amorous frog, and their ensuing convoluted wedding plans. In most versions the denouement involves the blissfully happy couple both being perfunctorily devoured by some larger predator native to the area in which the song is being performed.

Setting notes:

An example of a song that these days is rarely acknowledged in the English tradition, while flourishing in the US both as a children's song, and a country blues standard in its "Froggie Went a-Courting" form. It first appeared as a broadside in London in 1580*. We could speculate on the reasons it hasn't fully taken hold in England; it contains no great moral lesson or tragic injustice, and it generally has a wholesome "Wind in the Willows" bucolic charm, so it's easy to see why it didn't gel with the sometimes darkly serious intentions of the English folk revival. However, a Cheshire farmer called Leslie Haworth reclaimed it in the 1950s and made his own hyper-local version that tells the original animal story, but also helpfully extols the virtues of Cheshire farm produce in its rousing chorus. He taught it to Pete Seeger and thus gained a very specific kind of immortality, for both himself and for Cheshire cheese. The tune is close to the "King Kong Kitchie Kitchie Ki-Me-O" variant popular in the US, so it's a good example of an Americanised English folk song being re-anglicised, in this case for fairly blatant sales and marketing purposes.

Suggested further listening:

"King Kong Kitchie Ki-Mi-O", Ed Badaux, *American guitar*

"Frog Went a'Courting", Careful, *Because I Am Always Talking*

"Frog Went a'Courtin'", Eef Barzelay, *Fan Chosen Covers 3*

"The Frog and the Mouse (Live)", Pete Seeger, *Pete Seeger in England*

* There's a passing reference to an earlier frog/mouse Scottish song in Robert Wedderburn's important piece of Scottish propaganda "The Complaynt of Scotlande", 1549. The song, "The Frog cam to the Myl dur" (no lyrics recorded, sadly) has been suggested to be a political satire regarding the proposed marriage of Princess Mary (later Mary Queen of Scots) - "Mrs. Mouse" - to the son of King Henry II of France, the "frog". Interesting idea - we know this kind of toxic nationalism is not a new phenomenon, but despite the keen back-projection of some historians, in fact the xenophobic use of the word "frog" did not occur until the mid 17th century.

ROUD 16: THE FROG AND THE MOUSE

D G A
Oh, there was a little frog who lived in a well
D A
Ding dang dong go the wedding bells.
D G A
And a pretty little mouse lived under a mill
D A D
Ding dang dong go the wedding bells.

[CHORUS]

D
Well here's to Cheshire, here's to cheese.
G A
Here's to the pears and the apple trees,
D G A
And here's to the lovely strawberries.
D A D
Ding dang dong go the wedding bells.

Alternate chords:

G C D
G D
G C D
G D G

[CHORUS]

G
C D
G C D
G D G

Well froggy went a courting and he did ride / Now Miss Mouse, you must decide.

I'll have to ask my Uncle Rat / And see what he does say to that.

Uncle Rat says, "I'm much afraid / If you don't marry froggy you'll die an old maid."

Well the knot was tied secure and fast / She's off her uncle's hands at last.

Open the oysters, spill the champagne / Never will there be such a feast again.

As they were going it hot and strong / The good grey cat came prowling along.

Uncle Rat like a hero stood / Puss wet her whiskers in his blood.

Miss Mousie made a dive for a crack / Puss made a pounce and broke her back.

Where was the valiant frog the while / He just about broke the four-minute mile.

Well this is the end of him and her / There won't be no tadpoles covered in fur.



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*

* 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 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*

* 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 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*

* 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 dizzyingly 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*

* 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 31

The Trees They Do Grow High

AKA: The Young Laird of Craigstoun, Long a-Growing, Young and Growing, Daily Growing, The College Boy, Young But Daily Growing, The Bonny Boy

Summary:

An arranged child marriage ends in tragedy.

Setting notes:

Despite never have been included in Child's famous collection of ballads*, this has been a very popular song in the British isles, from the 18th century right up to the modern day. It seems to have originated in Scotland; an early manuscript collection belonging to accountant and apparently extremely dour song collector David Herd in 1776 notes just two verses, but it's clearly recognisable as this song. Some have attributed the story to an account of the marriage of the young Laird of Craigstoun (Aberdeenshire) in the 17th century, but there is no definitive evidence of this even happening, and marriages of convenience of both boys and girls of young ages have been an effective method of consolidating wealth and power since the middle ages, so tying this to a specific event seems as impossible and unnecessary as usual. The age of the boy at the start of their relationship has varied through the varying attitudes of the folk tradition of the time - it mostly ranges from twelve to eighteen. The other main variation is the "Growing, growing..." refrain, a form of which first appeared in James Maidment's 1824 "A North Countrie Garland"; it's an enjoyable addition to proceedings, especially if sung communally. Other than these, there are few other variations in printed texts, and by-and-large an orthodoxy has arisen over the tune, an orthodoxy hugely influenced by Martin Carthy's 1965 recording, and an orthodoxy that I have followed here.

Suggested further listening:

"The Trees They Do Grow High", Martin Carthy, *Martin Carthy*

"Young and Growing", Harry Cox, *What Will Become of England*

"Daily Growing", Altan, *The Blue Idol*

"The College Boy", Lizzie Higgins, *Princess of the Thistle*

"Young But Daily Growing", Bob Dylan, *Live in New York 1961*

"Daily Growing", Stuart Macdonald, *Leave it There*

* It's always fun to ponder why Francis Child chose to omit certain ballads from his list. We know he disavowed anything comical, bawdy or otherwise frivolous. This for the most part is none of those things. However, there is one salacious verse in many versions where the reluctant bride sleeps with the young boy, and suddenly all her complaints about his youth are extinguished. Perhaps the implications of this were too much for Child to bear.

Alternate chords:

Am	Dm	Am		
C	G	Am		
Am	Dm	Am	Em	
C	Dm		Am	
C	G	Am	Dm	Am

ROUD 31: THE TREES THEY DO GROW HIGH

Em Am Em
 The trees they do grow high and the leaves they do grow green,
 G D Em
 The day is past and gone, that you and I have seen.
 Em Am Em Bm
 It's a cold winter's night, my love, when I must lie alone.
 G Am Em
 The bonny boy is young but he's growing.
 G D Em Am Em
 Growing, growing, my bonny boy is young but he's growing

“Oh father, dearest father, you've done to me great wrong,
 You married me a boy and I fear he is too young.”
 For he is only sixteen years and I am twenty one
 The boy he is too young and still growing / Growing etc..

“We'll send him off to college, for another year or two,
 And then perhaps in time, my love, he will do for you
 I'll buy a bunch of white ribbons to tie about his waist
 To let the ladies know that he's married.” / Married etc...

Now as I was a-walking all by the college wall
 I saw four and twenty college boys a-playing ball
 And there I spied my own true love, he's the fairest of them all
 And I said he was a long time a-growing. / Growing etc..

At the age of sixteen, oh, he was a married man,
 And at the age of seventeen she brought to him a son.
 At the age of eighteen, green grass grew over him
 Sudden death had put to an end to his growing. / Growing etc..

She made her love a shroud of the holland oh so fine
 And every stitch she put in it, the tears come trinkling down.
 Crying once I had a sweetheart but now I have got none,
 So fare you well my love, you were growing. / Growing etc..

Now he's dead and buried and in the churchyard laid
 The green grass is all over him so very, very thick
 Oh once I had a sweetheart but now I have got none,
 But I'll watch over his son while he's growing. / Growing etc..

ROUD 44

Fair Janet

AKA: Liv'd Ance Twa Luvers In Yon Dale, Sweit Willie, Love Willie, Young Janet, William and Annet, Fair Janet and Young James

Summary:

Fair Janet, pregnant with sweet humble Willie's child, is betrothed by her ambitious father to a rich French lord. Janet and Willie attempt to elope, but Janet gives birth to a baby boy, which is taken to Willie's mother for adoption. Janet is then carted off to the arranged wedding to the Gallic nobleman, and attempts to prove the fact that she hasn't just had a child by throwing down some high-spirited dance moves. This turns out to be too much for her physical frame to bear, and she dies. Willie perishes in grief*.

Setting notes:

This, I'm afraid to say, is yet another example of a ballad that shows how pregnant women were used as pawns in the cynical wealth-seeking games of powerful men. It is also one that has proved steadfastly unpopular, with only three official contemporary recordings that I can find, none of which (while all superb in their own way) would be suitable in this context. The eight versions found in Child's ballad collection, all written down in Scotland between 1769 and the mid 19th century, are all not only too long to be included here, but also in some way or another deficient or otherwise unsatisfactory**. Rather than try and abridge something already lacking, I decided to take the bare bones of the story, and a handful of the more useful verses, and weave a hybridised old/new song around this sparse skeleton, with a new refrain.

Suggested further listening:

"Fair Janet and Young James", Jack Rutter, *Gold of Scar and Shale*

"Fair Janet", Corinne Male, *To Tell the Story Truly*

"Fair Janet", Peggy Seeger, *Blood and Roses Volume 2*

* A couple of the versions end with a rose and the briar growing from their respective graves and intertwining, a common trope found most famously in Barbara Allen (Roud 54), but also a number of others including, in this very book, Lord Lovel (Roud 48).

** "This ballad has had the misfortune in common with many others, of being much mutilated by reciters" wrote John Finlay of this ballad in his 1808 book "Scottish Historical and Romantic Ballads", before presenting his own much mutilated version. And now, with apologies to Mr Finlay, you can add mine to the list.

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

singyonder.co.uk/together*

For references and a host of recommendations to enrich your folk music credentials, and a lot more songs with and without choruses and refrains, please refer to the Sing yonder books freely available from **singyonder.co.uk**.

Here's a fairly random selection of brilliant and inspiring folk musicians working today - if you aren't already familiar with them, go and find them, be it on the internet, at their gigs, at a folk festival, or wandering blearily round the motorway services at 1am**, and let's all keep this music alive and thriving for the next generation.

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Burd Ellen	Jez Lowe	The Shovel Dance Collective
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Finally, to support this project, please consider donating or buying the printed books. An even better way to support the project is to take this collection, find some friends and make some music, and let us (and the world) know what you have been up to.

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* If you are from the future and have 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.

** OK, maybe not the best time to approach any musician, to be honest. Though if you offer to buy a CD or three, they might forgive you.

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