

INDEX OF SONGS

W elcome to the arcane but absorbing world of traditional song. Most songs in this book have no single recognised writer or tune. They were passed down orally, each singer hearing them sung, taking a fancy and learning the words for themselves. Along the way, the songs might mutate as singers wrote fresh lines or inserted verses from elsewhere. Local entrepreneurs would publish versions as broadsides: cheap songsheets sold in the street. In time, collectors would fish out the songs from that old woman in the village – last link to the oral tradition – or through moth-eaten broadsides from the junkshop or the Bodleian Library. Today, there are armies of amateur sleuths, who love tracking the precise genealogy of lyrics. Many’s the time someone has collared me in a folk club saying, ‘That ballad you just sung, you know you got the third line of the fourth verse wrong...’

The online home of these experts is mudcat.org, aka *The Mudcat Café*. Here you’ll find decade-long discussions of single ballads. It’s a wonderful community and resource. Another fine place is mainlynorfolk.info – a warren of nutritious detail about songs and recordings. And as big libraries share more online, it’s easier to view original broadsides and songsters. That’s how I found the obscure gem about the Gold Rush *Coming Around the Horn*.

One of the best online resources is The Full English – a recent gift from the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS). You can browse not just thousands of songs but also dances, tunes and customs, gathered by great English collectors like Cecil Sharp, Lucy Broadwood and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Say, for example, you’re interested in the song *All Around My Hat*. Within seconds of entering The Full English you can view an original early Victorian printing of a music hall song of that title – featuring spoken cockney asides such as *She had a nice wegitable countenance*,

turnip nose, redish cheeks and carotty hair and *Here's your valnuts, crack 'em and try 'em, a shilling a hundred*. These jokey street cries bear little relation to the song sung today, but they bring odour of the well from which it sprung.

Of course, you don't have to be a trainspotter to love travel. This world is open to all. Why not see what songs or stories take your fancy, then follow where they lead? As I hope this book shows, it's never just about the song.

I've deliberately not given music or chords, as these can put off non-musicians (and are easy to find online). I'd rather present the popular songs – the survivors – as true words of the people: storied thoughts whose genetic vigour has enabled them to survive the crowd's indifference and to entice singer after singer to make them their own.

Many songs could command their own chapter of provenance: try browsing discussions about *John Kanaka* or *Amazing Grace*. I have sought to be accurate, and to summarise judiciously where there is acres of debate, but this index may still contain mistakes. For which, apologies. But if you want to dig, you've got to get your hands dirty.

*NB Most songs feature a **Roud Number** from the Roud Folk Song Index, created by the remarkable modern folklorist Steve Roud to standardise references to folk songs.*

A Dhomhnaill, a ghràidh mo chridhe This bitter lament that Islay has lost its youth is quoted by John Prebble in *The Highland Clearances*, during his chapter on The White Sailed Ships. I've not found it quoted elsewhere.

All Around My Hat (Roud 22518) This popular English love song, made famous by Steeleye Span in 1975, draws on the habit of wearing green willow sprigs in one's hatband to symbolise

mourning. There are many versions. This wording, sung by my colleagues Chris Hayes and Jan North, stems from a cockney music hall broadside from the 1830s. See Mudcat and Mainly Norfolk for a lot of discussion on this song.

Amazing Grace (Roud 5430) This Christian hymn was published in 1779 by clergyman John Newton, who'd long witnessed horrors upon the seas. First pressed into the Royal Navy, Newton later worked in the Atlantic slave trade before a sharp spiritual conversion led him to ordination in the Church of England. We don't know what melody, if any, accompanied the words in his English parish of Olney, but the hymn soon became associated with the Shapenote tune *New Britain* (today's standard tune for it) and spread widely in the US during the early 19th century.

The Birkenhead Drill Taken from Rudyard Kipling's 1893 poem *Soldier an' Sailor too*, a tribute to the Royal Marines.

Blow Boys Blow (Roud 703) A halyard shanty sung on merchant ships while pulling a halyard (rope) which typically raised a sail. Some say this shanty arose in the slave trade and the Congo River, that the 'black sheep' were African slaves and the 'embargo' was the Royal Navy's work to enforce abolition of the slave trade.

The Bristol Bridegroom or *The Ship Carpenter's Love for the Merchant's Daughter* (Roud V24910) Heavily contracted here, this version of the ballad came from a 1791 Irish chapbook (cheap booklet of poetry). It is quoted in Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry*, 1650-1850, University of Chicago 1996.

By the Hush This title is a corruption of the Irish phrase *Bi i do thost*, which means Be Quiet. Also known as *Paddy's Lamentation*, the song has been collected in Canada and printed as a broadside ballad. As Jeff Warner wrote in the sleevenotes of his album *Long Time*

Travelling, ‘The realization that Irish immigrants were essentially drafted off the ships into the Union Army during the Civil War provides the distressing backdrop for this song. General Meagher led the renowned Irish-American 69th Brigade from New York.’

Carrying Nelson Home Copyright MJ O’Connor 12th February 2001. Reproduced with permission. Written by singer Mike O’Connor who explains, ‘the song describes a coastal passage from Gibraltar to Portsmouth, starting with backing the foresails to initiate the turn off the outer mole at Gibraltar. The various references are to battles Nelson took part in. The languages of the chorus are those of the main combatants at Trafalgar.’

The Coasts of High Barbary (Roud 134) Based on Child Ballad 285, sung frequently in the UK as *High Barbaree*, this version was popular in America between 1795 and 1815, when Barbary pirates often preyed upon American ships.

Coming Around the Horn (Roud 15539) The text of this typical Gold Rush song appeared in *Put’s Original California Songster*, San Francisco, 1854, which suggested the tune *Dearest Mae*, which appeared later in *Minstrel Songs Old and New*, Boston 1882. Quoted in Black & Robertson’s *The Gold Rush Song Book*, San Francisco 1940.

Dean Cadalan Samhach Gaelic lullaby, widely sung and recorded. Collected by John Lorne Campbell in Nova Scotia in 1937.

Female Transport (Roud BV1284) Earliest version 1819-1844 in the Bodleian ballad collection, said to be contemporaneous with other famous transportation ballads eg, *Van Diemen’s Land* and *Young Henry the Poacher*; this version from *Victorian Street Ballads*, London 1937.

The Flying Cloud (Roud 1802) This version is based on the ballad *William Hollander* as was noted in 1906 for the Greig-Duncan

Collection. For much detail, and opinion, check out the thread on Origins: The Flying Cloud at mudcat.org.

Goodbye My Riley-O Originally from the Gullah: descendants of enslaved Africans who lived in the low country regions of Georgia and South Carolina, including both the coastal plain and the Sea Islands. More information, and a different version of this song, in Lydia Parrish's *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands*, 1942.

Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still (Roud 4353) These are the lyrics of the 1864 song written by WT Wrightson & JE Carpenter; there's a lovely version collected by Anne & Frank Warner from Eleazar Tillett and Martha Etheridge in 1951; I first heard it sung by the great Jeff Warner.

I Am a Poor Wayfaring Stranger (Roud 3339) Some ascribe this song to Bishop Richard Allen, born a slave, who formed his first congregation in 1787; it appears as both white hymn and black spiritual during the nineteenth century.

Jim Jones at Botany Bay (Roud 5478) Mainly Norfolk dates this transportation ballad to c1830 as it mentions Jack Donahue, who was shot that year. There's a great version by David Jones, one of my favourite singers, on his album *From England's Shore*.

John Kanaka (Roud 8238) Stan Hugill's *Sea Shanties* 1977 says this halyard shanty is an anglicized polynesian work-song, a rare survivor of that breed, and very popular on mid-19th century American ships.

Mamma Mia Dammi Cento Lire Popular 19th century emigration song from Northern Italy, said to be inspired by the ballad *Maledizione Della Madre*.

Matroos Af-Scheyt First published in 1696 in Amsterdam. Translated here by Martin Cleaver. The song appears on the Dutch

early music group Camerata Trajectina's *Van Varen en Vechten, Liederen van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Globe, 2002.

Mr Tapscott (Roud 616) This version developed from various songs include *Mr Tapscott*, *Heave Away My Johnnies* and *The Irish Girl*. Often sung to the tune of *New York Gals*.

No More Auction Block for Me (Roud 3348) Spiritual popularised by black regiments during the American Civil War; memorably recorded by Paul Robeson, Odetta and Bob Dylan. A rare spiritual in that it refers specifically to the life of a slave.

The Press Gang (Roud 662) Also known as *The Man-o'-War*. Sung by Ewan MacColl on his 1966 album *Manchester Angel*.

The Scolding Wife (Roud 2132) Origins unknown; listed in the Greig Duncan Collection and *The Singing Island, a collection of English & Scots Folksongs*, compiled by Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl.

Shanghai Passage Cicely Fox Smith (1882–1954), from her 1931 collection of sea poems *Sailor's Delight*; I have sought and failed to find the copyright holder of this work but, should further information emerge, will be happy to amend future editions.

The Slave's Lament (Roud 29702) Robert Burns, 1792; recorded widely as a song, particularly by Eliza Carthy 1994 on *Waterson: Carthy* and Coope Boyes & Simpson 2010 on *As If*.

The Slave Ship Ballad (Roud V6025), available in Bodleian Ballads online.

The White Cockade (Roud 191) Taken from the version passed down through the remarkable Copper Family from Sussex, whose Bob Copper sang it for the BBC in 1955. AL Lloyd wrote that the song, 'was a favourite with the peasantry in every part of England but more particularly in the mining districts of the North.'