

# OLD SONGS & BOTHY BALLADS



• • • • Nick-knack on the Waa • • • •

The recordings on this CD were made in May 2007 during a highlight of the year for Scotland's traditional song enthusiasts - the **Traditional Singing Weekend** at Colleslie in Fife.

Guest singers for the weekend included here are **Gordeanna McCulloch** from Glasgow who was first inspired to sing the ballads after hearing Jeannie Robertson in the 1960s; **Gordon Easton**, singer, fiddle player and raconteur from Tyrie in Aberdeenshire; **Elizabeth Stewart** from Mintlaw, many of whose songs came to her from her family the Fetterangus Stewarts; the world renowned singer and storyteller **Duncan Williamson** of Ladybank (who sadly passed away in November 2007) and **Ron Bissett** of Falkland, well-known in Fife for his repertoire of both ballads.

Many other singers took part in the weekend events and the CD captures some of these performances: retired farmer **Hector Riddell** from Banchory, butcher **Alex Clarke** from Dundee, **Jock Duncan** the great ballad singer from Pitlochry, **Vic Gammon**, folklorist, singer and Senior Lecturer in Folk and Traditional Music at the University of Newcastle, **Chris Miles** and **Aileen Carr** both members of **Palaver**, the Fife based song group, **Peter Shephard**, singer, folk song collector and an organiser of the weekend, **Steve Black**, a doctor from Arnforth in Lancashire and **Pete Coc**, folk singer and folk song enthusiast from Ripponden in Yorkshire.

- 1: **THE WEE TOUN CLERK • Gordeanna McCullough 2.55**  
As Mairsy she gaed up the street,  
The white fish for tae buy;  
The wee toun clerk he heard of it,  
An he's followed her on the fly.

The ballad is included in Francis J Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* as The Keach in the Creel (Child 281).

- 2: **BESIDE HER FAITHER'S COTTAGE • Alex Clarke 2.02**  
Beside her father's cottage at the bottom o the glen,  
I left ma bonnie lassie there in tears,  
Oh she nearly broke her hert when she said we had tae part,  
An I wad be awa for several years.

A song from the great Scots entertainer, Harry Lauder.

- 3: **FEE'D TAE THE DRUM • Gordon Easton 3.02**  
At ae Mairtinmas term, the grieve fae the Drum,  
Tappit me on the shouder and speired gin I'd come,

Tae watch his first pair for a winter half year,  
Wi a big cleekit horse and ringle-eed meer.

Composed by Frank Henry of the Cabrach. A young man goes to the feeing market tae look for a new job and agrees to a contract but gets more than he bargained for.

- 4: **THE GALLANT FORTY TWA • Elizabeth Stewart 3.48**  
Oh it's six weeks come Sunday since ma laddie's went awa,  
He's awa tae join the regiment o the gallant Forty Twa.  
Oh broken herted I may wander for the loss o ma true lover,  
He's awa tae join the regiment o the gallant Forty Twa.

A beautiful traditional song from Elizabeth's family repertoire.

- 5: **I MUST AWAY • Duncan Williamson 3.16**  
Oh it's seven long years since my true love left me,  
It is seven long years since he went to sea;  
But another seven I shall wait his pleasure,  
Till he comes home and he marries me.

The lover returns from the dead but is doomed to return to the nether world before dawn. A version of the Grey Cock (Child 248).

- 6: **THE MOSS O BURRELDALE • Hector Riddell 5.12**  
Hiv ye ever seen a tinker's camp upon a simmer's night,  
On a night afore a market, fan aa things gaun richt,  
Fan aa the tramps an hawkers they come fae hill an dale,  
Tae gaither in the gloamin on the Moss o Burreldale.

A favourite cornkister by George Morris of Oldmeldrum.

- 7: **I'M A PEER ROVIN LASSIE • Gordeanna McCullough 4.44**  
I'm a peer rovin lassie an my fortune's been bad,  
Since I fell in love wi a young sailor lad;  
I wis courted sae early by night and by day,  
And the lad I loe dearly lies a distance frae me.

A fine tune and the repeat chorus lines of *When I look tae you high hills* make this a great song for audience participation.

- 8: **THE BUREAU • Alex Clarke 2.18**  
We're the lads fae the tap o the hill,  
We never worked, never will,  
We're on the Bureau;  
We're the lads fae Mid Craigie,  
Whar there's work ye'll no see me,  
We're on the Bureau.

The Bureau (the Unemployment Assistance Board) was set up in the 1930s to administer means tested family benefits. The lads are 'on the Bureau' when one job after another goes wrong.

- 9: **THE MUCKIN O GEORDIE'S BYRE** • **Gordon Easton 4.24**  
At a relic aul craft upon the hill,  
Jist roun the neuk fae Spottie's mill,  
Tryin aa his life the time tae kill,  
Wis Geordie MacIntyre.

A favourite cornkister by George Morris - one that Gordon feels captures the comedy of what could have been a true event.

- 10: **THE TWA BROTHERS** • **Elizabeth Stewart 4.24**  
O two pretty boys they were gaun tae the school,  
An they were comin home;  
Said the biggest boy to the littlest boy,  
"O can you throw a stone,  
O can you throw a stone."

Two brothers are enjoying a playful fight when one kills the other. Francis J Child thought the ballad was extinct in Scotland when he published his ballad collection in 1882 (Child 49).

- 11: **BOGIE'S BONNIE BELLE** • **Hector Riddell 3.29**  
Ae market day in Huntly toun, 'twas was there I did agree,  
Wi Bogieside the fairmer, a saxmonth for tae fee;  
For Bogie was a surly carle and I did know that well,  
But Bogie had a dother braw and her name it was Belle.

A true story that took place in Aberdeenshire in the 1880s.

- 12: **THE FARMYARD GATE** • **Jock Duncan 4.02**  
Oh that farmyard gate,  
Johnny was there both early and late,  
Whistlin an singin, "Are ye coming out Kate?"  
Down by the farmyard gate.

A song from John Strachan that Jock remembers him singing.

- 13: **THE WINTER IT IS PAST** • **Vic Gammon 2.58**  
Now the winter's gone and past, pleasant summer's come  
at last,  
And the small birds sing on every green tree;  
Oh it's man's the heart is glad, oh but my poor heart is sad.  
Since my true love's gone absent from me.

An old song that was known to Robert Burns who published his own version in The Scots Musical Museum in 1788.

- 14: **IT'S AA YIN TAE ME** • **Ron Bissett 2.06**  
It's aa yin tae me whether I mairry noo or no,  
Whether I mairry or I tarry or I bide a weaver O.

A little comic song that seems to have been quite well known in Fife and Tayside.

- 15: **PARTING SONG** • **Chris, Aileen & Gordeanna 3.52**  
Soon the morning sun will rise and dawn will bathe the sky,  
There's time for just this parting song before we say goodbye;  
So sing together one and all and raise a glass of wine,  
Here's hoping we shall meet again along the road of time.

A song composed by Dave Webber in 1993 in memory of a good friend John Purdy of Torquay.

- 16: **ROBIN HOOD AND THE PEDLAR** • **Peter Shephard 4.06**  
Oh its of a pedlar and a pedlar bold,  
Some fine pedlar he seemed for to be;  
He had a pack all at his back,  
And away went whistling right over the lea.

This rare ballad (Child 132) was recorded by Pete from Denny Smith a Romany traveller from Gloucester in 1966.

- 17: **NANCY'S WHISKY** • **Steve Black 3.07**  
I'm a weaver that follows weaving,  
I'm a young and rovin blade;  
To buy meself a new suit of clothing,  
To Stewarton, me way I made.

A Kintyre song from Willie Scott who picked it up from Willie Mitchell of Campbelltown at the 1968 Blairgowrie Festival.

- 18: **CATCH ME IF YOU CAN** • **Pete Coe 4.05**  
It was early, early all in the Spring,  
Down in those meadows all so green;  
There a pretty maiden I chanced to meet,  
And I asked her if she would walk with me.

Pete Coe recorded this song from Sophie Legg, a Romany traveller of Boddin in Cornwall, for Veteran Records in 1978.

**CREDITS:** Thanks to all the singers who have given free use of their recordings to the East of Scotland Traditional Song Group. *Recorded by Tom Spiers. Design & transcriptions by Peter Shephard.* All songs traditional arranged by the singer except where noted. *Full song texts* are at [www.springthyme.co.uk/ah06](http://www.springthyme.co.uk/ah06)

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*Live from the Traditional Singing Weekend, Collessie, Fife May 2008*



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