

OLD SONGS & BOTHY BALLADS

*THE
LITTLE
BALL OF
YARN*

1: GREEN GROWS THE LAUREL - Len Graham

Green grow the laurel and soft falls the dew,
Sorry am I love I'm parted with you;
And it's sorry am I love, contented must be,
She loves another far better than me.

2: THE BOLD FISHERMAN - Emily Portman

On morning in the month of June down by a riverside;
There she beheld a bold fisherman come rowing by the tide.
Come rowing by the tide.
There she beheld a bold fisherman come rowing by the tide.

3: OLD YORKIE WATSON - Brian Dawson

There was old farmer in Temple Bruer dwelled,
His name was Yorkie Watson and we all knew him well;
He kept six chaps on bullybeef and stout,
And when you went to plough, lads, he made you dump it out.
With a fol da riddle I do, work it all the day.

4: NICKY TAMS - John Valentine

Fen I wis only ten year aul I left the pairish squeel,
Ma faither fee'd me tae the mains tae chaw his milk an meal;
I first pit on ma nerra breeks tae hap ma spinnle trams,
Syne bukkelt roon ma knappin knees a pair o nicky tams.

5: THE RUSSIAN JEW - Elizabeth Stewart

Oh ma freens kens weel I'm a ceevil chap,
I belang tae the Aiberdeen Forcé;
And although I'm no jist awfa stout,
I'm as strong as ony horse.
And I look sae weel fae heid tae heel,
In ma bonnie coat o blue,
And the kids aa cry when I pass by,
"Oh here comes a Russian Jew."

6: WILLIE O - Len Graham

Young Willie sails on board a tender,
And where he's bound I do not know;
Seven long years I've been constantly waiting,
Since he crossed the bay of Biscay O.

7: PRINCIE AND JEAN - Joe Aitken

I'll sing ye a sang o a canty auld body,
A speckle figure wis auld Wattie Broon;
A trustworthy hand at the Mains o Drumcloddie,
Since the day he began tae wark there as a loon.

8: O GOOD ALE - Emily Portman

Oh it's of good ale to you I'll sing,
And to good ale I'll always cling;
I like my mug filled to the brim,
And I'll drink all you like to bring.

Chorus:

O good ale though art my darling,
Though art my joy both night and morning.

9: THE OWLS AND THE MICE - Brian Dawson

There were three little owls sat a-singing in the barn,
Ding a ding a doo dum day
And they huddled up together for to keep their bodies warm,
Ding a ding a doo dum day
The song that they sang I shall now tell you,
It's a song that begins and ends, "Too Woo,"
A very, very pretty little song it is too,
Ding a ding a doo dum day

10: AIKEY BRAE - Duncan MacRae

'Twas on a Sunday mornin fair,
The sun was bricht, the sky was clear;
Three pals o mine they did appear,
And says, "We'll gang tae Aikey."

Chorus:

For at Aikey Brae, Aikey Brae,
There's been a horse market for mony's a day,
But listen and hear what I hiv tae say,
On the day we gaed tae Aikey.

11: TIME WEARS AWA - Emma Spiers

Oh but the hours rin fast awa, like the Kelvin tae the Clyde,
Sin on its bonnie gowan banks I wooed thee for my bride;
My ain dear love, sae sweet an young, sae artless and sae fair,
Then love was aa the grief we kent, and you my only care.

12: DOBBIN'S FLOWERY VALE - Len Graham

As I roved out one evening fair in the pleasant month of June,
The trees there were all in fragrant shade, the flowers all in
their bloom;
Down by yon grove as I did roam, no curse did me assail,
When a pair I espied by a riverside in Dobbin's flowery vale.

13: OUR CAPTAIN CALLS ALL HANDS - Emily Portman

Our captain calls all hands tomorrow,
To leave my true love behind in grief and sorrow;

"Dry up those briny tears and leave off weeping,
How happy we shall be, love, at our next meeting."

14: THREE SCORE AND TEN - Brian Dawson

Methinks I see some little craft,
Spreading their sails alee,
As down the Humber they do glide,
All bound for the Northern Sea;
Methinks I see on each small craft,
A crew with hearts so brave,
Going down to earn their daily bread,
Upon the restless waves.

Chorus:

And it's three score and ten,
Boys and men were lost from Grimsby town,
From Yarmouth down to Scarborough,
Many hundreds more were drowned;
Our herring craft, our trawlers,
Our fishing smacks as well,
They long defied the bitter night,
And battled with the swell.

15: MY LAST FAREWELL TAE STIRLING - Jimmy Hutchison

Nae lark in transport mounts the sky,
Or leaves wi early plaintive cry;
But I maun bid my last goodbye,
My last fareweel tae Stirling O.

16: THE LITTLE BALL OF YARN - Elizabeth Stewart

One fine day in May I took a walk one day,
Doun by ma grandfather's farm;
I met a pretty maid and this is what I said,
"May I wind up your little ball of yarn?"

17: THE DAY I MET WI HECTOR - John Valentine

For the sake o ma health I took a wauk one summer's day at dawn,
I met a man wi a horse an cairt on the road that I gaed on;
A friendly conversation passed atween that man and me,
The day 'at I met wi Hector and we both gaed on the spree.

18: THE BONNIE WEE SHIRT - Duncan MacRae

I remember weel the day that I was born,
It wis on a cauld and frosty winter's morn;

I wis lying in ma bed wi nothin on,
For ma mither left the blanket in the pawn.
Oh ma mother said, "I canna leave him nakit,
I'll need tae get him something, can't ye see?"
Aye, and there wis me a-lying lookin glaikit,
In the bonnie wee shirt ma mither made for me.

19: THE SWEET NIGHTINGALE - Emily Portman

"Well met pretty maid and be not afraid,
I mean you no mischief I vow."
"What is it you will?" "Come give me your pairl,
I'll take it safe home to your cow, cow,
I'll take it safe home to your cow."

20: OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY - Len Graham

Once there was a maiden fair,
Now she's widowed old and grey;
Her true love ploughs the salt sea spray,
Over the hills and far away.
She'll sit down on yonder hill,
And take her pen and write with skill;
Her love she'll raise all else above,
Her deeds she'll praise, his worth she'll prove.

Refrain:

Sé mo laoch mo Ghile Mear,
Sé mo Shaesar, Ghile Mear;
Suan ná séan ní bhfuairas féin,
Ó luadh i gcoéin mo Ghile Mear.

21: YE BOYS O CALLIEBURN - Shepherd, Spiers & Watson

John Blair and I hae taen the notion,
Tae cross the wide Atlantic ocean;
Rab MacKinlay's gaen afore us,
He will keep us aa in order.

Chorus:

Hame fareweel, freens fareweel,
And ye boys o Callieburn, fare ye weel.

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. *Photograph:* Elizabeth Stewart with Dave Stewart. *Design & transcriptions* by Peter Shephard. All songs traditional arranged by the singer except 7 G Corrigall; 17 S Brown. All Copyright Control/ MCPS. Full song texts and notes are at www.springthyme.co.uk/ah11

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- 21: YE BOYS O CALLIEBURN ♦ Peter Shepherd 5.11

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