



OLD SONGS & BOTHY BALLADS

*THE LITTLE BALL OF YARN*  
**SONG BOOK**

## **I: GREEN GROWS THE LAUREL - Len Graham**

There could hardly be a better known or more widely dispersed song. The song is sometimes said to have given rise to the word gringo often used in Latin America to refer to people from the United States. The term could certainly have originated during the Mexican War (1846-1848) when American Soldiers were heard singing *Green Grows the Laurel* or Robert Burns's *Green Grow the Rashies*, so inspiring the locals to refer to the Yankees as "gringos", or "green-grows". However it is pointed out that Gringo is a corrupted form of griego as used in the ancient Spanish expression "hablar en griego", that is, to speak an unintelligible language or "to speak Greek." Many of the versions of the song have political references in the last line of the chorus. So, Jacobites might "change the green laurel for the bonnets so blue" of the exiled Stewart monarchs of Scotland during the Jacobite Rebellions of the late 1600's - early 1700's. Scottish Lowlanders and Ulster Presbyterians later changed the green laurel of James II in 1690 for the "Orange and Blue" of William of Orange, and later on many of these Ulstermen would emigrate to America, and then "change the green laurel for the red, white and blue."

Len has collected versions of the song from Eddie Butcher from Magilligan, Co. Derry and John Campbell from Mullaghbawn, Co. Armagh and from Lizzie Clarke from Bennefreaghan, Co. Tyrone and also recorded the song in 1996 on Claddagh CC62CD. Roud 279.

1: 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: I once had a true love but now I have none,  
She's gone and left me and I'm all alone;  
Aye, and she's gone and left me, contented must be,  
She loves another far better than me.

### **Chorus:**

And it's green grow the laurel, 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.

3: Oh I pass my love's window both early and late,  
But the look that she gave me it did my heart break;  
Oh the look that she gave me would ten thousand kill,  
She loves another but I love her still.

4: Then I wrote her a letter in grand rosy lines,  
And the answer she sent back was twisted and twined;  
You write your love letter and I will write mine,  
You write to your love and I'll write to mine.

5: Oh I wonder, I wonder why women love men,  
I wonder and ever think why they love them;  
Women are faithful and kind as you know,  
But men are deceivers wherever they go.

6: Oh I once had a true love but now I have none,  
She's gone and left me and I'm all alone;  
Aye, and she's gone and left me, contented must be,  
She loves another far better than me.

### **Chorus:**

And it's green grow the laurel, 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**

This rather strange and beautiful song has often been collected in southern England and was recorded by Harry Cox in a recording made in London in 1934. The song is usually greatly treasured by traditional singers - and is also treasured by musicians and musicologists as being a fine example of a tune in 5/4 time. Roud 291; Laws O24

1: One 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.

2: "Morning to you bold fisherman, why come you fishing here?"

"Well I came a-fishing for your sweet sake all on this river clear,  
All on this river clear,  
Well I came a-fishing for your sweet sake all on this river clear."

3: He latched his boat up to a stem and to a lady went,  
Well he took her by the milk white hand, for it was his intent,  
For it was his intent,  
He took her by the milk white hand, for it was his intent.

4: "I'll take you to my father's hall and there make you my bride,  
Then you shall have a bold fisherman to row you by the tide,  
To row you by the tide,  
Then you shall have a bold fisherman to row you by the tide."

### 3: OLD YORKIE WATSON - Brian Dawson

A song collected by Brian Dawson.

1: 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

This song originates from around 1900 when the term nicky tams came into use. The phrase derives from the fact that when the farm servants trousers were tied up with straps or cords (taums) below the knee they looked similar to the then fashionable knickerbockers. The straps are sometimes called walltams - leather cords. The tune, a variant of a

Gaelic air common both in Scotland and Ireland, is very popular, probably because it adapts so readily to many different types of song.

The "grip and word" (verse two) is the authoritative command and hand shake of the fully-fledged horseman, obtained, allegedly, by gaining initiation in The Horseman's Word. The society, a primitive form of union, had ceremonies with witchcraft - the initiation ceremony involved "Shakin hands wi the Devil" - and supposedly gave the "made" horseman powers over horses and, for that matter, over women

1: 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.

2: But first I got on for bailie loon an syne I got on for third,  
An syne, of course, I hid tae get the horseman's grip an word;

A loaf o braid tae be ma piece, a bottle for drinkin drams,  
Syne ye canna gang throw the calf-hoose door athout yer nicky tams.

3: The fairmer I am wi ay noo, he's wealthy but he's mean.  
Though corn is cheap, his horse are thin, his harness fairly dern;  
He gars us load oor cairts aye fu an his conscience has nae qualms,  
When breist-straps brak there's naethin like a pair o nicky tams.

4: I'm coortin bonnie Annie noo, Rob Tamson's kitchie-deem,  
She is five-and-forty an I but seiventeen;  
She clairs a muckle piece tae me wi different kinds o jams,  
Aye, an tells me ilkie nicht that she admires ma nicky tams.

5: Ae Sunday mornin I set down, the kirkie for tae gang,  
Ma collar it was unco ticht ma breeks were nane ower lang;  
I had ma Bible in ma pooch, likewise ma buik o Psalms,

Fen Annie roart, "Ye muckle gype, tak aff yer nicky tams."

6: Though unco sweir, I took them aff, the lassie for tae please,  
But aye ma breeks they lirket up aroon aboot ma knees;  
A muckle wasp crawled up ma leg in the middle o the  
Psalms,  
Aye, nivir again will I enter yon kirk athoot ma nicky tams.

7: I've affen thoct I'd like tae be a bobby on the force,  
Or mebbe I'll get on the cars tae drive a pair o horse;  
Fitever it's ma lot tae be, the bobbies or the trams,  
I'll ne'er forget the happy days I wore ma nicky tams.

### 5: THE RUSSIAN JEW - Elizabeth Stewart

The song apparently derives, as a result of a misunderstanding of a Gaelic line, from a macaronic music hall song where the Gaelic line *Ciamar a tha sibh an diugh* (How are you today) becomes misunderstood as *Here comes a Russian Jew*.

Ciamar a tha = How are/ sibh = you/ an diugh = today.

1: Oh ma freens kens weel I'm a ceevil chap,  
I belang tae the Aiberdeen Force,  
And although I'm no jist awfa stout,  
I'm as strong as ony horse.

#### Chorus:

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."

2: Oh the Queen she came tae Aiberdeen,  
And she swore upon her soul,  
That I wisna like a man at aa,  
But a great lang telegraph pole.

3: If I see a man lyin beastly fu,  
I dinna say, "Hoo dae ye do?"  
But I gie tae him a gey roch shak,  
An I says, "Come a Russian Jew."

4: Oh there was a row got up ae nicht,  
And I wis there verra quick,

I took a man in ilkie hand,  
And I landed them in the nick.  
Oh each of them got forty days,  
And they lookit rather blue,  
Oh each of them got forty days,  
Says I, "I'm a Russian Jew."

#### Chorus:

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

This rather fine and rare ballad has been collected only a few times. Len first heard this song in the early 1960s from Jimmy McGinley from Ros Ghoill, Co. Donegal. Joe Holmes from Killyrammer, Co. Antrim provided Len with the all important verse five with the cock crowing motif. The drowned sailor, after a seven year absence, appears as a ghost at his true love's bedside in the middle of the night and, as with all ghostly beings, departs before the dawn.

The song appears as a broadside ballad in the nineteenth century and seems to borrow from the older 'night-visit' theme of the ballad - *Sweet William's Ghost* (Child 77). However, Bronson classifies the ballad along with *The Grey Cock* (Child 248) which also includes the night visit and cock crowing motifs. Len has recorded the song on Topic 12TS334LP (1976) and on Cranagh CMCD4453 (2010). There are several copies of *Willie O* in the Bodleian Library collection of Broadside Ballads. Child 77/ 248, Roud 50/ 179.

1: 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.

2: One night as Mary lay a-sleeping,  
A knock came to her bedroom door;  
Saying, "Arise, arise, my lovely Mary,  
Till you get one glimpse of your lover O."

3: Young Mary rose, put on her clothes,  
And out of her bedroom she did go;  
'Twas there she saw young Willie standing,  
Aye, and his two cheeks as white as snow.

4: Saying, "Willy dear, where are those blushes,  
Those blushes you had many years ago?"  
"Oh Mary dear, the cold clay has changed them,  
I am only the ghost of young Willie O."

5: "Oh Mary dear, I must be going,  
For now the cocks they're began to crow."  
And when she saw him disappearing,  
Down her cheeks the tears did flow.

6: "My body lies in the West Indies,  
My ghost shall guard you to and fro;  
So love, I fear that we are parted,  
No more will you see young Willie O."

7: "Had I all the gold and silver  
Or all the money in Mexico;  
I would grant it all to the King of Erin,  
For to bring me back my Willie O."

### 7: PRINCIE AND JEAN - Joe Aitken

Written as a poem in the 1960s by an Orkney man Geordie Corrigan, the "Bard of Ballarat". The poem, in praise of a ploughman's favourite pair of horses, soon became a song when set to a variant of the well known tune for the Road and the Miles to Dundee. Joe learnt the song from Tam Reid of Cullerlie who was crowned Bothy Ballad King after winning a competition held before a crowd of 10,000 on the Haughs of Turriff in 1977. The song was one of Tam's favourites.

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

2: And syne there as baillie he proved himsel canny,  
His waork conscientious, particular and clean;

Till ae day his maister says, "Wattie, ma mannie,  
Ye'll tak the third pair, they're ca'd Princie and Jean."

3: Noo in aa bonnie Scotland there wisnae a human,  
Sae happy as Wattie wi his dandy pair;  
And he seen taen his place wi the lave as a plooman,  
And, oh, he wis prood o his gelding and mare.

4: A grand pair o blacks, no their likes in a hunner,  
Wi coats o a rich glossy ebony sheen;  
And at plooin matches for years worthy winner,  
Wis Wattie, for groomin, wi Princie and Jean.

5: Noo Wattie aye bidit content wi his duties,  
Bit life's fu o changes as aabody kens;  
Decrepit auld age claimed the baith o his beauties,  
And tractors began tae appear at the Mains.

6: Noo a steerin wheel Wattie just widna be grippin,  
He wrocht on as orraman – didna compleen;  
Bit aabody noticed dounhill he was slippin,  
Dounhill he was pinin for Princie and Jean.

7: And noo he's awa, aa his trauchles are ended,  
A God-fearin body wha aye did his best;  
His life was a sermon, the mourners aa kent it,  
On Tuesday last week when we laid him tae rest.

8: And we aa had a thocht, though we didna divulge it,  
As wi hankies we dabbit the tears fae oor een;  
That if He wha was born in a manger sae wills it,  
They'll be waitin for Wattie – his Princie and Jean!

### 8: O GOOD ALE - Emily Portman

There could hardly be a more widely known drinking song - in this case made popular in the English folk scene from the singing of the Copper Family of Rottingdean who recorded the song in the 1950s. The song was widely published in broadsheet format in the 1800s and has often been collected. There are Scottish versions in Greig-Duncan under the title *The Braw Black Jug*. Roud 203, GD 3.590

1: 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 thou art my darling,  
Though art my joy both night and morning.

2: I love you in the early morn,  
I love you daylight, dark or dawn;  
And when I'm weary, worn or spent,  
It's turn the tap and ease the vent.

3: Oh it's you that makes my friends my foes,  
It's you that makes me wear old clothes;  
But since you come so near my nose,  
It's up you comes and down you goes.

4: Now if all my friends from Adam's race,  
Were to meet me here all in this place;  
I would part from all without one tear,  
Before I'd part from my good beer.

**Chorus:**

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

**9: THE OWLS AND THE MICE - Brian Dawson**

Brian was given this song in the late 1970s by an old lady Mrs. Ethel Rudkin of Toynton-all-Saints near Spilsby, Lincolnshire who was in her 80s at the time. She said that it was the only song she could remember learning as a little girl - in the early 1900s. Brian used to go and stay with Mrs Rudkin for a few days every summer for a number of years - and remembered most of the song and tune one year and more during the following visit. In this recording Brian missed out the second verse, shown here in brackets.

1: 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.

[2: They were three little owls sat a-singing in the barn,  
Ding a ding a doo dum day  
And the owls eat mice and the mice eat corn.  
Ding a ding a doo dum day  
And the moon it shone in the sky so bright,  
That it made the whole world look quite bright,  
And owls, as you know, only sing at night.  
Ding a ding a doo dum day]

3: There were three little mice sat a-listening to that song,  
Ding a ding a doo dum day  
Now, they knew what they were doing was very, very  
wrong,  
Ding a ding a doo dum day  
The old mice said, "Little mice, beware!  
When the owls come a-sing that song, take care,  
For their song is nothing more nor less than a snare."  
Ding a ding a doo dum day.

4: Those three little mice they thought they'd have a lark,  
Ding a ding a doo dum day  
And they crept out softly just as it was dark,  
Ding a ding a doo dum day  
They found that song - Too Woo - so nice,  
That closer and closer crept the three little mice,  
Till the owls came and gobbled them all up in a trice,  
Ding a ding a doo dum day.

5: Then those three little owls went back into the barn,  
Ding a ding a doo dum day  
They said, "Those little mices made us feel so nice and  
warm."  
Ding a ding a doo dum day  
Then they went on a-singing, "Too Woo!"  
Now, I don't think much of this song, do you?  
The only, only thing is it's perfectly true,  
Ding a ding a doo dum day.

**10: AIKEY BRAE - Duncan MacRae**

The horse fair at Aikey Brae, two miles south of Maud

between New Deer and Auld Deer in the heart of the Buchan countryside, was held once a year on a Wednesday in July from the mid 1800s and a fair with rides and stalls was added to the event in the early 1900s on the Sunday before. The last real horse fair at Aikey took place in 1946. The event attracted folk from far and wide including many of the Scottish traveller fraternity, dealing in horses and selling the usual trinkets, baskets, pegs and tin ware. The song is typical of the later cormiskers and was composed by George Morris who had a hotel on Oldmeldrum and who recorded the song on a 78 on the Beltona label. He and his brother-in-law Willie Kemp wrote many such songs which managed to catch the atmosphere of life on the north east fairn touns.

1: '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."  
Says I, "I'll be there, niver fear,  
And I'll stand yes aa a bottle o beer,  
For I'm sellin the clip [colt] and the auld grey mare,  
On Wednesday first at Aikey Brae."

**Refrain:**

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.

2: Says Jock, "Man, Tam, we come the day,  
Tae tak ye ower tae Aikey Brae,  
On Wednesday we may be far away,  
So this day we'll gang tae Aikey."  
They wudna hear o nae denial,  
So I shifted ma claes and I scrapit ma dial,  
An a clairted ma heid wi the laddies hair ile,  
An awa we gaed tae Aikey Brae.

**Refrain:**

For at Aikey Brae, Aikey Brae,  
Aff we set on the Sabbath day;

And the sicht was enuegh tae pit hens aff their lay,  
On the day we gaed tae Aikey.

3: There wis motor cars and charabancs,  
Dakers gigs and caravans,  
Auld folks in Fordies and bairnies in prams,  
Aa on the road tae Aikey.  
And when we landed at the Brae,  
I stood and I glowerit in great dismay,  
I said, "Can this the Sabbath day?"  
On the day we gaed tae Aikey Brae.

**Refrain:**

For at Aikey Brae, Aikey Brae,  
There's Scots wha hinnae and Scots wha hae,  
And the sound was enuegh tae pit hens aff their lay,  
On the day we gaed tae Aikey.

4: There were fishers fae Buckie and trawlers fae Hull,  
Herrin gutters fae Torry and sailors fae Hull;  
Pick-pockets and sharpers, the saft mans tae gull,  
At the Sunday fair at Aikey;  
Fairm Jocks and their Jeanies, they come tae the fair,  
And lairds fae the castle, their kilted knees fair,  
The tramps and the hawkers enjoyed themselves there,  
At the sunday fair at Aikey Brae.

**Refrain:**

For at Aikey Brae, Aikey Brae,  
Fit the Deil would oor forfathers say,  
If they could arise fae aneth the clay,  
And see a Sunday at Aikey.

5: An evangelist singing oot Happy Days,  
Stand next til a fiddler playing Clean Pease Strae,  
While Bashin the Bruiser saying, "Ye'll step this way,"  
At the Sunday fair at Aikey.  
Cheapjohns and flash doctors in grand array,  
Were daein a roarin trade that day,  
I may be auld fashioned but still I wad say,  
Fit way its allowed on a Sabbath day.

**Refrain:**

Oh at Aikey Brae, Aikey Brae,  
Ma lugs kept a buzzin for mony a day,

I'll go back to the market but on a week day,  
If I ever gang tae Aikey.

### 11: TIME WEARS AWA - Emma Spiers

A song from the repertoire of the border shepherd Willie Scott who remembered the song from his mother's singing.

1: 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.

#### **Chorus:**

Time wears awa, time wears awa,  
And winna let us be;  
It stole the wild rose frae my cheek,  
And the blythe blink frae your ee.

2: When woods were green an flooers fair and ye were aa my ain,  
I little thocht what years would bring o poortith, toil an pain;  
Some wayfu hours hae flapped their wings, dark shadows ower oor lot,  
Sin like twa cushats o the glen, we strayed in this dear spot.

3: The voices o these happy days steal on oor dreams by nicht,  
An cherished memories rise and glow wi their departed licht;  
But still the birds and burnies sing their wildered melodies,  
As in the gowden dawn o life when we were young and free.

#### **Chorus:**

Time wears awa, time wears awa,  
And winna let us be;  
It stole the wild rose frae my cheek,  
And the blythe blink frae your ee.

### 12: DOBBIN'S FLOWERY VALE - Len Graham

Dobbin's Flowery Vale belongs to a extensive family of

folk songs where the narrator while out walking observes two lovers talking. The flowery vale of the song is an area of parkland beside the Ballinahone River in Armagh given to the city by Leonard Dobbin, High Sherriff and MP for the city in the 1830s. Len learned the song from Geordie Hanna and his sister Sarah Anne O'Neill from Derrytresk, Co Tyrone, who in turn learned it from their father. Len sings their air but has altered the words in places from other sources.

Roud has 14 instances of this song, most from the north of Ireland, with three from Canada - and there was a Dublin broadside printing. Sam Henry notes that it was written by McGowan, shoemaker, of Chapel Lane, Armagh - though he doesn't say when. Seán O'Boyle recorded it from Robert Cinnamon (Ballinderry, Co Antrim) and Sarak Makem (Keady, Co Armagh) and Seamus Ennis recorded it from Bob McCreesh also in Co Armagh, and Paddy Tunney sang it on The Flowery Vale (Topic 12TS289). Len has also recorded the song on Cranagh CMCD4453. Roud 999, Laws O29, Henry SH25.

1: As I roved out one evening fair in the pleasant month of June,  
The trees they 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.

2: I sat me down for to rest a while beneath yon spreading tree,  
And the gentle breeze blew softly by conveyed these words to me;  
"Adieu sweet maid," the youth he said, "For soon I must set sail,  
Aye, and bid adieu to Armagh and you, aye and Dobbin's flowery vale."

3: "O cease to grieve that you're alone or think my love untrue,  
For wheresoever I chance to go my thoughts are all of you;

There's not a flower in yonder bower in meadow hill or dale,  
That will me remind of the maid behind in Dobbin's flowery  
vale.

4: 'Twas mutual love together true, aye, and fondly they  
did embrace,  
And the tears like drops of morning dew rolled down each  
other's face;  
She tried in vain him to detain but while she did bewail,  
He bid adieu, aye, and I withdrew from Dobbin's flowery  
vale.

### 13: OUR CAPTAIN CALLS ALL HANDS - Emily Portman

This song is found in various forms, often with variations on this distinctive melody which was noted down by Vaughan Williams and slightly adapted to John Bunyan's words from Pilgrim's Progress to form the hymn He Who Would Valiant Be / To Be a Pilgrim. With a different opening verse, the song often comes with the title A Blacksmith Courted Me - often with a longer text. Emily's version is essentially from George "Pop" Maynard who was recorded by Mervyn Plunkett singing the song in The Cherry Tree, Copthorne, Sussex, in September 1956, later included in 1998 on the Topic anthology Come Let Us Buy the Licence (The Voice of the People Volume 1). Roud 602

1: 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."

2: "How can you go abroad fighting for strangers?  
Why don't you stay at home free from all dangers?  
I'll roll you in my arms, my own dearest jewel,  
So stay at home with me, love, and don't be cruel."

3: "When I had gold in store, you used to invite me,  
But now I'm low and poor you seem to slight me;  
You courted me a while just for to deceive me,  
But now my heart you've won you're going to leave me."

4: "Here's adieu to all my friends, both father and mother,  
Grieve not for me at all for you have no other;

Grieve not, grieve not for me for I am a-going,  
Into everlasting joy where fountains flowing."

### 14: THREE SCORE AND TEN - Brian Dawson

The song in memory of the fishermen of Grimsby and Hull who lost their lives in the gale of 8th and 9th of February 1889 was composed as a poem by Grimsby fisherman William Delf who published the text as a broadsheet. After losing a few verses and acquiring a fine chorus and tune, the song was collected in 1957 from master mariner J Pearson of Filey, a member of the Filey Fishermen's Choir who had preserved the song in their repertoire. The Watsonsons recorded the song and it became widely known in the folk revival of the 1960s.

William Delf was born at Wangford, Suffolk in 1851. As well as Three Score and Ten (not his title), he wrote verses about other fishing and lifeboat disasters at Hull, Withensea, Filey and Southport. In the original broadsheet of the song he lists some of the fleet that went down - The Eaton, John Witheringham, Sea Searcher, Sir Fred Roberts, British Workman, Kitten, Harold, Adventure and Olive Branch. In verse 3, like other Grimsby singers of today, Brian has taken some words from the original to add to the collected version.

1: Methinks I see some little craft,  
Spreading their sails a-lee,  
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.

2: Methinks I see them yet again,  
As they leave the land behind,  
Casting their nets into the deep,  
The herring shoals to find;  
Methinks I see them yet again,  
And all on board's all right,  
With the sails close reefed and the decks cleared up,  
And the side lights burning bright.

3: Me thinks I've heard the skipper say,  
"Me lads, we'll shorten sail,  
The sky to all appearances,  
Is like an approaching gale."  
Methinks I see them yet again,  
And the midnight hour has passed,  
And the little craft was battling there,  
All with the icy blast.

4: October's night was such a sight,  
'Twas never seen before,  
There were masts and spars and broken yards,  
Came drifting in to shore;  
There was many a heart in sorrow,  
There was many a heart so brave,  
There was many a valiant fisher lad,  
Did find a watery grave.

**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**

Jimmy learned his version of the song from Charlie Murray  
of Craigeassie by Forfar when he was a guest at the early

TMSA Blairgowrie Festivals in the 1960s. Charlie was born  
in 1916 in the Black Isle, Ross-shire, and worked on farms  
there, in the Lothians and in Forfar. He remembered hearing  
the song in his younger days, but he learned the words from  
a version printed in Ewan MacColl's book *Scotland Sings*  
(1952). That version had been collated by Hamish Henderson  
from two versions he had recorded for the archives of the  
School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh.

1: 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.

**Chorus:**

Though far awa ma herts wi you,  
Our youthfull hours upon wings they flew;  
But I maun bid my last adieu,  
My last fareweel tae Stirling O.

2: Nae mair I'll meet ye in the dark,  
Or gang wi you to the king's park;  
Or hunt the hare oot o his flap,  
When I am far fae Stirling O.

3: Nae mair I'll wander through the glen,  
And raise the roosts o pheasant hen;  
And chase the rabbit tae his den,  
When I am far fae Stirling O.

4: There's one request that I do have,  
And that is tae my comrades all;  
Ma dog and gun tae keep for me,  
Till I come back tae Stirling O.

5: Noo fare ye weel my Jeannie dear,  
For you I'll shed a bitter tear;  
And I hope ye find anither dear,  
When I am far fae Stirling O.

6: So fare ye weel for I am bound,  
For twenty years tae Van Dieman's Land;  
But speak of me and what I've done,  
When I am far fae Stirling O.

**Chorus:**

Though far awa my herts wi you,  
 Our youthfull hours upon wings they flew;  
 But I will bid a last adieu,  
 My last fareweel tae Stirling O.

**16: THE LITTLE BALL OF YARN - Elizabeth Stewart**

This widely known humorous, erotic song very likely derives from a song known to Robert Burns as *The Yellow Yellow Yorlin* that is included in the *Merry Muses*. Elizabeth had her version from her mother Jean and aunt Lucy whose version was collected by American folklorist Kenneth Goldstein from the family in 1959 and which he included in his *Buchan Bawdry* manuscript. There are many versions known throughout the British Isles and in North America and the song has often been recorded. Roud 1404 Kennedy 180

1: 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?"

2: I took this pretty maid underneath the shade,  
 Not intending for tae do her any harm;  
 But I took her by surprise and I layed between her thighs,  
 And I winded up her little ball of yarn.

3: This pretty maid she raise and she pulled doun her claes,  
 And it's straight to her grandma she did rin;  
 But for me I wis never seen as I skipped across the green,  
 After winding up her little ball of yarn.

4: Come aa you young men, never stop oot aifter ten,  
 Not intending for tae do any harm;  
 For as soon as they lie doun, you've got tae pey your sweet  
 half croun,  
 For the winding of the little ball of yarn.

5: Come aa you young maids tak a warnin tae what I say,  
 Never rise up too early in the morn;  
 For like the blackbird and the thrush, there'll be someone  
 behind the bush,

That will wind up your little ball of yarn.

**17: THE DAY I MET WI HECTOR - John Valentine**

A recent cornkister composed by Simon Brown of Aberchirder (known as *Foggyloan*) in Aberdeenshire under the full title *Hector Hosie and Auld Broon*. The song tells of Hector Hosie, a character from *Foggyloan*, when he and his pal Auld Broon go on a drinking spree. Text transcribed as is sung by John Valentine.

1: Fur 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.

2: Says he look man jump onto the cairt, it'll tak ye aff o  
 the road,  
 The horse'll pul the two o us, it'll nae be heavy load;  
 He then produced a bottle and we drank most cheerily,  
 The day 'at I met wi Hector and we both gaed on the spree.

3: Says I, "Look man yer horse is tired, it must be very old,  
 It must be a five an a thirty year since that poor beast was  
 foaled;  
 It used tae pul the hearse awa back in the year o forty  
 three."  
 The day 'at I met wi Hector and we both gaed on the spree.

4: The harness it wis unca grey for it nivir saw a clean,  
 The strae hung oot o the collar and the saidle wis fairly  
 deen;  
 It wis battered up wi rivets and tied wi baler twine ye see,  
 The day 'at I met wi Hector and we both gaed on the spree.

5: The cairt wis unca shaky but it wis made o the best o  
 wood,  
 Aye, it had been in action since the time o Noah's flood;  
 He seldom greased he's aixles but one year oot o three,  
 The day 'at I met wi Hector and we both gaed on the spree.

6: As we cam in be Netherdale an in tae Foggie toon,  
 The folk aa stood an gaped at us an lookit us up an doun,  
 Bit the horsie stopped at the New Inn door, he'd bin there

afore ye see,  
The day 'at I met wi Hector and we both gaed on the spree.

7: Noo Hector's horsie it is dead an his cairt has gone for scrap,  
An Hector hee's a mechanised an he disnae care a rap;  
But we'll nae forget the happy days o the horse an cairt ye see,  
An we'll meet again wi Hector and we'll both go on the spree..

### 18: THE BONNIE WEE SHIRT - Duncan MacRae

A music hall song attributed to Harry Wincott (1867-1947), one of the world's best known music hall comic song writers, born Alfred James Walden in Camberwell, London. An American recording by Bradley Kincaid on the Bluebird label in 1933 contributed to its popularity. Kincaid, in his biography maintains that he learned this song from other musicians on the National Barn Dance broadcast by WLS-AM in Chicago, Illinois starting in 1924 - one of the first American country music radio programs and a direct precursor of the Grand Ole Opry. However, the text here diverges from the well known texts after the first few lines - so perhaps was recomposed for the Scottish music hall.

1: 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.  
In the bonnie wee shirt ma mither made for me.

2: I remember weel when I wis only three,  
Oh ma mammie held a pairty for ma tea;  
Oh she made for me some dumplin and a cake,  
For oh! how ma mammie she could bake.  
The bairns fae aa aroond were aa invited,  
The lassies were as bonnie as could be;  
Aye, and there wis me sittin fair excited,

In the bonnie wee shirt ma mither made for me.  
In the bonnie wee shirt ma mither made for me.

3: I remember weel ma summer holidays,  
Oot across the briny ocean I did gaze,  
Oh the sea it was so calm and oh so bright  
Tae go and hae a swim it just seemed right.  
Aa the lassies on the beach were at me starin,  
And some were takin pictures, I could see,  
'Twas a jolly guid job for me that I was wearin,  
The bonnie wee shirt ma mither made for me.  
Aye, the bonnie wee shirt ma mither made for me.

4: Aye, well noo I'm twenty one and I'm a man,  
An I'm gonnnae mairry Bonnie Jean McCann,  
I'll be happy on the day she takes her vow,  
Aye, an when I think of it I can see her now.  
As she walks doun the aisle she'll never fatter,  
She'll be like a fairy on the Christmas tree,  
Aye, an there will I be standin at the alter,  
In the bonnie wee shirt ma mither made for me.  
In the bonnie wee shirt ma mither made for me.

### 19: THE SWEET NIGHTINGALE - Emily Portman

The song was first published in Robert Bell's Ancient Poems of the Peasantry of England (1857) with the note: "This curious ditty—said to be a translation from the ancient Cornish tongue ... we first heard in Germany ... from four Cornish miners, who were at that time, 1854, employed at some lead mines near the town of Zell. The song is not the innocent pastoral idyll that it looks at first glance - to "hear the nightingale sing" is clearly a euphemism for lovemaking in the same way that the Cuckoo's Nest is euphemistic in the well known Scottish song, Roud 371

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

2: "O leave me alone, I've hands of my own,  
I need none of your assistance I vow;

I vow and protest, I'll never be kissed,  
By such a proud fellow as thou, thou,  
By such a proud fellow as thou."

3: "Well hark, my love hark, for yonder's the lark,  
She warbles and pleases me so;  
And the beautiful tale of the sweet nightingale,  
As she sings in the valley below-ow-ow-ow,  
As she sings in the valley below."

4: "And down in yonder grove there sits an old crone,  
And violets around her do spring;  
Just by in a bush, there sits a song thrush,  
It'll charm you to hear how she sings, whistles and sings,  
It'll charm you to hear how she sings."

5: So they both did agree, next morning with speed,  
To get married as soon as 'twas day;  
Now she no more's afraid to go down to the shade,  
To hear the birds whistle and sing, whistle and sing,  
To hear the birds whistle and sing, whistle and sing,  
To hear the birds whistle and sing.

## 20: OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY - Len Graham

Many Jacobite songs are found in the Irish song tradition in both English and Irish. Here Len has taken a text in English and borrowed the refrain of the Irish Jacobite song - *Mo Ghile Mear* by the eighteenth century Munster bard Seán Cláirach Mac Domhnaill.

The maiden fair of the opening line, now old and grey, is Éire and in the song she laments the loss of her lover, Bonnie Prince Charlie, exiled across the sea in his youth. The song air is also found in Scotland. The *Séarlas Óg* (meaning Young Charles in Irish) refers to Charles Edward Stuart - Bonnie Prince Charlie (1720 - 1788) and *Mo Ghile Mear* of the refrain can be translated as - *my bright hero* - that again is Bonnie Prince Charlie.

Len added the 'peace' conclusion from Robert Burns's song of 1794 - On the Seas and Far Away. Len has also recorded this song on Cranagh CMCD4453 (2010)

1: 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 bhfuaires féin,  
Ó luadh i gcéin mo ghile mear.

### Translation:

He is my hero my Ghile Mear,  
He is my Caesar my Ghile Mear;  
Sleep or happiness I have not,  
Since my Ghile Mear has gone away.  
*[Mo Ghile Mear - my bright hero  
that is: Bonnie Prince Charlie]*

2: Whoever is brave, whoever is free,  
Will join and come along with me;  
Oh Geordie we'll beat, he may not stay,  
Or take to his heels and run away.  
Over the mountains high and steep,  
Over the waters wide and deep;  
Oh Séarlas Óg will win the day,  
Over the hills and far away.

3: She hopes to see her love one day,  
When bells shall ring and drums shall play;  
Pipes will skirl and bugles play,  
Over the hills and far away.  
Peace, your olive branch extend,  
And bid mad war its ravage end;  
Man to brother, man to meet,  
And as a brother kindly keep.

### Refrain:

Sé mo laoch mo ghile mear,  
Sé mo Shaesar ghile mear etc.

## 21: YE BOYS O CALLIEBURN - Shephard, Spiers & Watson

The small farming community of Callieburn is in the hills a few miles north of Campbeltown and the song tells of emigration from an area that suffered hardship in the 1830s and 1840s - especially during the 'hungry 40s' when the West Highlands had a famine almost as severe as that in Ireland.

Pete learned the song from the singing of the Mitchell Family of Campbeltown in Kintyre (father, mother, daughter and son-in-law) when they were guests at the TMSA's Blairgowrie Festival in 1968. The family were invited on the recommendation of Hamish Henderson who had come across Campbeltown butcher and amateur folksong collector Willie Mitchell in 1956 during a lecture tour in Argyll organised by the WEA. The Mitchell's singing of several Kintyre songs provided a most memorable highlight of that gathering in 1968 - two songs in particular - *Nancy's Whisky* and the local Kintyre emigration song *Ye Boys o Callieburn* (Roud 6932) that he had collected from Mr Reid, the farmer at Callieburn. Willie Scott was also a guest that same year and, after a wonderful informal Saturday afternoon ceilidh in the Sun Lounge of the Angus Hotel and with the texts from Willie Mitchell, he quickly took both songs into his repertoire.

Pete (lead vocal) with Tom (fiddle and vocal) and Arthur (whistle and vocal)

1: 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.

2: We leave the land of our forefathers,  
Knowing not what may befall us;

America, 'twas thee that wiled us,  
For tae leave oor agèd parents.

3: We leave the land where we were born,  
Oor parents standing all forlorn;  
This is a song of oor own composing,  
Comrades dear, come join the chorus.

4: Machrihanish, bright and bonnie,  
It's o'er thy beach the waves are rolling;  
Machrihanish I adore thee,  
Never more shall I be o'er thee.

5: Callieburn I'll mind thee ever,  
From your lands I now must sever;  
May thy people dwell in thee for ever,  
But may they gain a greater favour.

6: Now in America we have arrivèd,  
And of oor freends we are deprivèd;  
We leave them aa behind us sighing,  
Maybe yet we'll meet in Zion.

7: John Blair and I hae taen the notion,  
Tae cross the wide Atlantic ocean;  
This is a song of oor own composing,  
Comrades dear come join the chorus.

### **Chorus:**

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

## **Credits & Link to the CD:**

If you have freely acquired this Song Book but do not have the CD then go to [www.springthyme.co.uk/ah11/](http://www.springthyme.co.uk/ah11/)

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 by Davey Stewart. *Design & transcriptions* by Peter Shephard. All songs traditional arranged by the singer except 7 G Corrigan; 17 S Brown. All Copyright Control/ MCPS.

- 1: GREEN GROWS THE LAUREL ♦ Len Graham 3.53
- 2: THE BOLD FISHERMAN ♦ Emily Portman 2.45
- 3: OLD YORKIE WATSON ♦ Brian Dawson 2.44
- 4: NICKY TAMS ♦ John Valentine 2.37
- 5: THE RUSSIAN JEW ♦ Elizabeth Stewart 3.48
- 6: WILLIE O ♦ Len Graham 3.04
- 7: PRINCIE AND JEAN ♦ Joe Aitken 3.59
- 8: O GOOD ALE ♦ Emily Portman 2.15
- 9: THE OWLS AND THE MICE ♦ Brian Dawson 2.01
- 10: AIKEY BRAE ♦ Duncan MacRae 4.37
- 11: TIME WEARS AWA ♦ Emma Spiers 3.57
- 12: DOBBIN'S FLOWERY VALE ♦ Len Graham 2.49
- 13: OUR CAPTAIN CALLS ♦ Emily Portman 2.47
- 14: THREE SCORE AND TEN ♦ Brian Dawson 5.20
- 15: MY LAST FAREWELL TAE STIRLING ♦ Jimmy Hutchison 4.37
- 16: THE LITTLE BALL OF YARN ♦ Elizabeth Stewart 2.30
- 17: THE DAY I MET WI HECTOR ♦ John Valentine 2.28
- 18: THE BONNIE WEE SHIRT ♦ Duncan MacRae 4.52
- 19: THE SWEET NIGHTINGALE ♦ Emily Portman 3.04
- 20: OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY ♦ Len Graham 2.59
- 21: YE BOYS O CALLIEBURN ♦ Peter Shephard 5.11

*Live from the Fife Traditional Singing Festival, May 2011*

#### **AUTUMN HARVEST**

Balmalcolm House, Balmalcolm, Cupar, Fife KY15 7TJ Scotland

tel: ++44 (0) 1337 830773 • internet: [www.springthyme.co.uk](http://www.springthyme.co.uk)

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