

Born **RAY GALBRAITH FISHER** on 26 November 1940, Ray was the third child of Marion MacDonald and John Fisher. Marion, although born in Glasgow, was a native Gaelic speaker who spent most of her early years in Barra and Vatersay where her family had lived for several generations. John was a retired Police Inspector of the Marine Division in Glasgow. Prior to Ray's birth, John and Marion had had Jean and Archie; following on, there would be Joyce, Cindy, Audrey and Cilla. All seven children were born in Havelock Street in the west end of Glasgow. John Fisher once remarked that if you threw a stone in Havelock Street, you would hit a Fisher. That would be at your peril!

Music had always been in the Fisher home, with John singing light opera, and Marion with her Gaelic repertoire. Ray's musical introduction was probably down to brother Archie, who one day turned up with a guitar – origins unknown. After an initial foray into the skiffle phenomenon, they teamed up with a fiddler – the late Bobby Campbell – labelled themselves the Wayfarers, and launched into a mixture of American folk and Scottish material.

About this time, Ray was very much influenced by the late Norman Buchan, M.P. Norman, then a teacher, together with his wife, Janey, had been stalwarts of Glasgow's budding folk scene. On one occasion they invited a number of rising young singers to their Partick home to meet the great song carrier and traveller Jeannie Robertson (who later received an MBE for services to traditional music). Ray, in her final school year, was captivated by Jeannie and her singing style. Jeannie saw Ray's potential, and invited her to visit with her – an "apprenticeship". Ignoring prejudices about the traveller community, Ray stayed at Jeannie's Aberdeen home for some six weeks during the summer holidays.

Not long after learning from Jeannie, Ray, along with Archie, gained greatly from television exposure, particularly in "Here and Now", the Scottish regional variant of BBC TV's "Tonight" magazine programme. Ray's commercial recording debut came in 1961 with the duo's *Far over the Forth* EP, but she also recorded on a non-commercial basis for the School of Scottish Studies. Further exposure came through politics, whether singing for Labour Party or pro-CND and anti-Polaris events.

In 1962 she married Colin Ross, the fiddler, Northumbrian piper, pipemaker and future mainstay of the *High Level Ranters*. They settled on Tyneside. She contributed to Bert Lloyd's "The Iron Muse" (1963) and the radio ballads created by Ewan MacColl, Peggy Seeger and Charles Parker, "On the Edge" (1963). Never fond of the studio, she managed to avoid recording her solo debut until 1972. Produced by Ashley Hutchings, *The Bonny Birdy* teamed her with accompanists of the calibre of Martin Carthy, Alistair Anderson and Colin Ross from the *High Level Ranters*, as well as Liz and Stefan Sobell and Bobby Campbell. Better was to come, with *Willie's Lady* (1982). The title track is one of the Scots language's finest texts about the ancient belief system, and outwitting malice and witchcraft. Her third album, *Traditional Songs of Scotland*, emerged in 1991. Often viewed as being "under-recorded", Ray's own view was – "I don't feel the need to put things on tape; I don't feel the urge t record anything."

The English Folk Dance and Song Association honoured her with its highest accolade, its Gold Badge, for services to traditional singing, and in 2010 she was inaugurated into the Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame.

After a long illness, through diabetes and cancer, Ray died on 31st August, 2011. Ray is survived by her husband, Colin, and their three children, Andrew, Duncan and Fiona.



RAY FISHER ROSS 1940 - 2011 ..and some "Ray" favourite songs



I used tae think, when I wis wee, that it wasna really fair,
'Cos your parents tell you what to do, when to go and where,
It wis "Don't do that - behave yoursel' - quit pu'in' that lassie's hair -
Behave yoursel' and pull down your frock and stop sprawlin' on the flair".

I swore when I had kids of my ain that different things would be
I'd give them room tae express themselves and free spirits they would be.
I mind, in the supermarket, a harassed lassie I seen,
Wi' a bunch of kids that were runnin' amok like myself in days yestreen.
It wis "Don't do that - behave yoursel' - and get aff o' that push-chair
Behave yoursel and pull up yer socks and stop sprawlin' on the flair".

Noo that I have kids of my ain, I kept my former vow
And I gave them leave to express themselves and they're fine free spirits now
Last night, thro' a shimmering misty haze, cam an echo o' the past,
And I heard again my parents' words and the memories cam flowing fast,
I heard "Don't do that - behave yoursel' - quit pu'in' that lassie's hair -
Behave yoursel and pull down your frock and stop sprawling on the flair".
Wi' a smile o' nostalgia, I opened my eyes, remembering these words sae well
But they came from my son - and he was talkin' tae ME in the bar o' The Royal Hotel



Ray Fisher Ross

The Song of the Fisher Lassies

by Ewan MacColl



1. Come, a' ye fish-er lass-ies, aye, it's come a- wa' wi' me,
Fae Cairn- bulg and Gam- rie and fae In- ver- al- lo- chie,
Fae Buc- kie and fae A- ber- deen and a' the coun- try roon,
We're a- wa' tae gut the her- rin', we're a- wa' tae Yar- mouth toon.

Come a' ye fisher lassies, it's come awa' wi' me,
Fae Cairnbulg and Gamrie and fae Inverallochie,
Fae Buckie and fae Aberdeen and a' the country roon,
We're awa' tae gut the herrin', we're awa' tae Yarmouth toon.

Ye rise up in the morning wi' your bundles in your hand,
Be at the station early or you'll surely hae to stand,
Tak' plenty to eat and a kettle for your tea,
Or you'll mebbe die of hunger on the way to Yarmouth quay.

The journey it's a lang ane and it tak's a day or twa,
And when you reach your lodgin's sure it's soond asleep you fa',
But ye rise at five wi' the sleep still in your e'e,
You're awa' tae find the gutting yards along frae Yarmouth quay.

It's early in the morning and it's late into the nicht,
Your hands a' cut and chappit and they look an unco' sicht,
And you greet like a wean when you put them in the bree,
And you wish you were a thoo-sand mile awa' frae Yarmouth quay.

There's coopers there and curers there and buyers, canny chieils,
And lassies at the pickling and others at the creels,
And you'll wish the fish had been a' left in the sea
By the time you finish guttin' herrin' on the Yarmouth quay.

We've gutted fish in Lerwick and in Stornoway and Shields,
Warked along the Humber 'mongst the barrels and the creels;
Whitby, Grimsby, we've traivelled up and doon,
But the place to see the herrin' is the quay at Yarmouth toon.

Birnie Boozle



1. Gin ye'll mair-ry me, lass-ie, At the kirk o' Bir- nie Boo- zle,
Till the day ye dee, lass- ie, Ye will ne'er re- pent it.
Ye will wear when ye are wed A kir- tle an' a Hie- land plaid,
An' sleep up- on a hea- ther bed, Sae cou- thy an' sae cun- ty.

Chorus:

*Gin ye marry me lassie at the the kirk o' Birnie Boozle
Till the day ye dee lassie ye will ne'er repent it*

You will wear when you are wed a kirtle and a hielan' plaid
High upon the heather bed sae coothy and sae cantie
When ye gan wi' me lassie tae the kirk o' Birnie Boozle
Little brogues an' a lassie oh but you'll be cantie

Chorus:

Though your tocher is but sma' hodden grey will wear for a'
I'll save ma siler tae mak' ye braw you will ne'er repent it
When ye gan wi' me lassie tae the kirk o' Birnie Boozle
Little brogues an' a lassie oh but you'll be cantie

Chorus:

I'll hunt the otter and the brock the heart, the hare, the heather cock
An pu' ye limpets fare the rock tae mak' ye dishes dainty
Gin ye marry me lassie at the the kirk o' Birnie Boozle
Little brogues an' a lassie oh but you'll be cantie

Chorus:

Eence Upon a Time

1. Eence up- on a time, When I was young and bon- nie,
Eence I had a bon-nie lad, But noo I hae nae o- ny

2. When I was cook a- boot the hoose, And he was bit a lad- die,
I gied him a' my breid an' ale To be ' my bair-nie's dad- die.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Eence Upon a Time'. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has two staves of music with lyrics underneath. The second system also has two staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated above the notes: C, F, C, D7, G, F, C, Dm, C, F, C.

Eence upon a time,
When I was young and bonnie,
Eence I had a bonnie lad,
But noo I hae nae ony.

When I was cook about the hoose,
And he was but a laddie,
I gied him a' my breid an' ale
To be my bairnie's daddie.

My mistress oft times says to me,
And wed weel I ken she's richt-o,
That I maun be safe in the hoose,
More Afore 'twas candlelicht-o.

But Johnny took me for his ain,
And I was weel contented,
But noo those nichts are past and gaen,
It's oft times I've repented.

Noo Johnny he is long since gaen,
And thinks of me nae mair-o,
And I maim maun seek another lad,
To faither Johnny's bairn-o.

But dinna you think, my bonny lad,
That I am mad about ye,
For I can dae wi' a man,
And I can dae withoot ye.

So lasses all, tak' heed of me,
When the threshing time it fa's-o,
Be sure ye gaither in the grain,
And no' the chaff that blows-o.

For when I was cook about the hoose,
And he was bit a laddie,
I gied him a' my breid an' ale
To be my bairnie's daddie.

*Peter A. Hall, in his book The Scottish
Folksinger (Hall & Buchan)-*

*notes that this is a traditional song, but
only in verses 1,5 and 7. The remaining
verses are by Ray Fisher Ross*

The Forfar Sodger

*as learned from Jimmy McBeath. Written by David Shaw in 1800s, according to
collector Gavin Grieg*

In For- far I was born and bred, In faith I do think shame, sir, To tell the so- ber
life I led, Be- fore I left my hame, sir. Hur- rah, Hur- rah Sing twi- gie fa- lai- ril i- do.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'The Forfar Sodger'. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has one staff of music with lyrics underneath. The second system also has one staff of music with lyrics underneath. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8.

In Forfar I was born and bred
In faith I do think shame, sir.
The sober life afore I gaed.
Afore I come be-hame, sir.

Chorus:
*Hurrah. hurrah
Sing twi-gie fa-lai-ril id-do*

My father was a weaver poor.
That ever wove the spool, sir.
There wasna beef within the door.
But just a pound of gruel. sir.

Chorus:
At twelve they sent me to the school
To count the rule of three, sir.
A noble thought came in my head.
And a sodger I would be, sir.

Chorus:
I went in to Forfar Toon
And in the Forfar County.
Enlisted there wi Sairgeant Broom
For fifty pounds o' bounty.

Chorus:
They gave me white mittens to my hands.
And plates to hap my back, sir,
And they swore that I was the bravest man
In a' the toon o' Forfar

Chorus:

Through all the markets in the toon.
They marched me up and doon, sir.
Wi' strip-ed stockings on my legs
And feathers on my croon, sir.

Chorus:
They werna long they changed ma tune.
They sent me o'er to Spain, sir.
There was forty regiments in a raw.
Come a-marching o'er the plain, sir.

Chorus:
Twa long years we fought withain
But o it was in vain, sir.
Until a ball gaed through my leg.
And I up and fired again, sir.

Chorus:
When the doctor came to view my wounds.
He swore that I'd be lame, sir.
But I got a twa oexter staffs.
And I come limping hame, sir.

Chorus:
Through a' the hardships I came through.
It would hardly do to mention.
But I've come back to Forfar Toon
To live upon my pension.

Chorus:

The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry

Child Ballad # 113

Slowly

The image shows the musical notation for the first part of the song. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/8. The melody is marked 'Slowly'. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, providing a harmonic accompaniment. Chord symbols (D, Em, G, Em, G, Am, G) are placed above the notes. The lyrics are written below the notes.

An earth - ly nour - rice sits and sings, And aye she sings "Ba li - ly
wean, Lit - tle ken I my bairn's fa - ther, Far less the land where he dwells in."

An earthly nourris sits and sings,
And aye she sings, "Ba lilly wean,
Little ken I, my bairns father,
Far less the land that he staps in."

Then ane arose at her bed fit,
And a grumly guest I'm sure was he,
Saying "Here am I, thy bairns father,
Although I am not comely."

I am a man upon the land,
I am a silkie in the sea,
And when I'm far frae every strand,
My home it is in Sule Skerry."

"It was na weel", the maiden cried,
"It was na weel, indeed" quo she,
"For the Great Silkie of Sule Skerrie,
To hae come and aught a bairn to me!"

Then he has taken a purse of gold,
And he has laid it on her knee,
Saying, "give to me, my little young son,
And take thee up thy nouriss fee.

It shall come to pass on a summer's day,
When the sun shines hot on every stone,
That I shall take my little young son,
And teach him for to swim the foam.

And thou shalt marry a proud gunner,
And a very proud gunner I'm sure he'll be,
And the very first shot that e're he shoots,
He'll kill both my young son and me."

They're Tearin Doon the Buildin' next tae Oors

by Adam McNaughtan

Noo ah'm a workin' gent, ah live in a tenement,
In the heart o' one o' Glasgow's biggest slums
But they're goin' tae improve, and so we've been tellt tae move,
By these mansion-dwellin' Corporation bums.

Chorus

Oh! they're pullin' doon the buildin' next tae oors,
An sendin us tae green belts, trees an' flooers
But we do not want tae go, an' we daily tell them so,
While they're pullin' doon the buildin' next tae oors.

Chorus

Noo oor faimilie's the lot, who've been stayin' in this spot,
For nearly sixty years without a break,
When they ordered us tae go, we just tellt them point blank "no!,
Ye can go an' jump in Scotland's only lake".

Chorus

Noo many folks have laughed an' they've said that we were daft,
No' tae go where everything was new an neat,
But we're happy where we are, think we're better aff by far,
Wi' a pub an every corner o' the street.

Chorus

Well they ordered us tae quit, at last we had tae flit
It took four removal vans tae shift the load,
We just moved yesterday but it's no sae far away
It's the buildin' facin' oors across the road.

Final Chorus

They're pullin' doon the buildin' facin' oors,
An sendin us tae green belts, trees an' flooers
But we do not want tae go, an' we dailly tell them so,
While they're pullin' doon the buildin' facin oors.



A Lum Hat Wantin' a Croon

by David Rorie

The burn was big wi' spate
And there cam tumblein' doon,
Topsalterie, the half of a gate
An auld fish-hake, and a great muckle skate,
And a lum hat wantin' a croon

The auld wife stood on a bank,
As they gied swirlin' roon,
She took a guid look, and syne says she,
"There's food and there's firin' gaen tae a sea,
And a lum hat wantin' a croon!"

So she gruppit a branch of a saugh,
And she kickit off ane of her shoon,
An' she stuck oot her fit, but it caught in the gate,
An' awa' she went wi' a great muckle skate,
An' a lum hat wantin' a croon!

She floated fu' many a mile,
Past cottage and village and toon,
She'd an awfu' time astride of the gate,
Though it seemed t'gree fine wi' a great muckle skate,
And the lum hat wantin' a croon!

A fisher was walkin' a deck,
By the licht of his pipe and a moon,
When he sees an auld body astride of a gate,
Come bobbin' along in the waves wi' a skate,
And a lum hat wantin' a croon!

"There's a man overboard!" cries he,
"Ye hear?" quo she, "I'll droon!
A man overboard? It's a wife on a gate!
It's auld Mistress Mackintosh here wi' a skate,
And a lum hat wantin' a croon!"

Was she nippit tae death at a Pole?
Has India bakit her broon?
I canna tell that, but whatever her fate,
I'll wager ye'll find t'was shared by a gate,
And a lum hat wantin' a croon!

There's a moral attached tae my song:
On greed ye should aye gie a froon!
When ye think of the wife that was lost for a gate,
An auld fish hake and a great muckle skate,
And a lum hat wantin' a croon!

Coulters Candy

Musical notation for 'Coulters Candy' in G major, 2/4 time, Moderate tempo. The melody is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below the staff. The notation includes chord symbols (D, G, A) above the notes and a double bar line at the end of the piece.

Al - ly bal - ly al - ly bal - ly bee, Sit - tin' on yer mam - mies knee.
Grec - tin for a wec baw - bee, Tae buy some Coul - ter's can - dy.

Chorus:

Ally, bally, ally bally bee,
Sittin' on yer mammy's knee
Greetin' for anither bawbee,
Tae buy mair Coulter's candy.

Ally, bally, ally, bally bee,
When you grow up you'll go to sea,
Makin' pennies for your daddy and me,
Tae buy mair Coulter's Candy.

Chorus:

Mammy gie me ma thrifty doon
Here's auld Coulter comin' roon
Wi' a basket on his croon
Selling Coulter's Candy.

Chorus:

Little Annie's greetin' tae
Sae whit can puir wee Mammy dae
But gie them a penny atween them twae
Tae buy mair Coulter's Candy.

Chorus:

Poor wee Jeannie's lookin' awfy thin,
A rickle o' banes covered ower wi' skin,
Noo she's gettin' a wee double chin
Wi' sookin' Coulter's Candy.

Chorus:

Note: Ewan MacVicar tells us that In the 1870s, Robert Coultart, a mill worker in Galashiels, made aniseed-flavoured toffee in his house and sold it around all the fairs and markets in the Borders. He played his whistle and made up his song to call the children to buy his sweets.

The Spinners Wedding

by Mary Brooksbank



1. The gaff-er's look-ing wor-ried, The flett's a' in a steer,
Jes-sie Bro-die's gett-in' mer-ried, And the morn she'll no be here.
Ch. Hur-rah, hur-ro, a dadd-die-o,
Hur-rah, hur-ro, a dadd-die-o,
Hur-rah, hur-ro, a dadd-die-o,
Jes-sie's gett-in' mer-ried-o.

The gaffer's looking worried,
The flett's a' in a steer,
Jessie Brodie's gettin' merried,
And the morn she'll no be here.

Chorus :

Hurrah, hurro, a daddie o, Hurrah, herro, a daddie o,
Hurrah, hurro, a daddie o, Jessie's gettin' merried o.

The helper and the piecer went
Doon the toon last nicht,
Tae buy a wee bit present
Tae mak' her hame look bricht.

Chorus :

They brocht a cheeny tea-set,
A chanty fu' o' saut,
A bonnie coloured carpet,
A kettle and a pot.

Chorus :

The shifters they're a' dancing,
The spinners singing tae,
The gaffer's standing watching,
But there's naething he can dae.

Here's best wishes tae ye, lassie,
Standing at yer spinning frame,
May ye aye hae full and plenty
In yer wee bit hame.

Ye'll no make muckle siller
Nae maitter hoo ye try,
But hoard ye love and loyalty,
That's what money canna buy

Note : 'The Spinner's Wedding' started life as a poem by former Dundee jute mill worker Mary Brooksbank and appeared in her collection 'Sidlaw Breezes'.



The Gallowa' Hills

as sung by Jeannie Robertson

I'll tak' my plaidie contented tae be,
A wee bittie kilted abune my knee,
An' I'll gie my pipes anither blaw,
An' I'll gang oot ower the hills tae Gallowa'.

Chorus:

Oh the Gallowa' Hills are covered wi' broom
Wi' heather bells in bonnie bloom,
Aye wi' heather bells an' rivers a'
An' we'll gang oot ower the hills tae Gallowa'.

Come on bonnie lassie will ye gang wi' me
And share yer life in a far country
Aye an' share yer life though doon fa's a'
An' we'll gang oot ower the hills tae Gallowa'

Chorus:

I'll sell my rock, I'll sell my reel,
I'll sell my granny's spinning wheel,
Aye I'll sell the lot tho' doon fa's a'
An' we'll gang oot ower the hills tae Gallowa'

Chorus: