

# sing yonder

vol. 7

simple contemporary settings for songs 61-70 in the Roud Index



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# introduction

If you have read Volume 6, and are looking forward to settling down to read ten more tales of misery and abuse, I'm sorry to say you will be mostly disappointed. This volume features a higher-than-usual proportion of songs about lovers living happily ever after, generous\* acts of philanthropy, and one surprisingly open-minded king. Also, even if I were to finish the entire Roud Index and reach the 3800th\*\* volume of Sing Yonder, I would not be able to create a book with greater extremes of popularity; if you are looking for the widest range of songs, from the completely forgotten and vanishingly rarely performed, to one of the most ubiquitous songs in the English language in any genre, this could be the book for you.

One example of a song in the former category would be Roud 62, Brown Robin. It's a sweet tale of interclass love, including the young-man-dresses-as-a-woman-to-escape-her-bedchamber-and-actually-quite-enjoys-it trope that we all enjoy. I found an oblique reference to a recording and managed\*\*\* to track down one of the people behind it. That started a chain of events that ended with a unique and brilliant EP of traditional song meets global trance that was made in 2006 and never released now being available for all to download and listen to. Thanks to Sharron Kraus for her full-hearted involvement, and for honouring the memory of her late friend and brilliant musical collaborator David Muddyman. I dedicate this volume to him.

With other "lost" songs that I have come across, I have previously furnished them with my own tunes, and I will continue to do so where required, but I thought to introduce some variety (and save me a little bit of time) I would ask others to contribute. For this volume, I'd like to thank Helen Lindley, a singer from Lincolnshire working on her own project to summon unsung ballads of working women back into the folk repertoire. Helen has given us two brilliant tunes for Rouds 65 and 66, and also performed the heroic task of trimming them down to fit into the pages of this book. I've had the privilege to hear her sing both at the Royal Traditions folk club, and I can confirm that they would be an excellent addition to your local singaround. I'm looking forward to hearing her forthcoming album. For more information about Helen, and to read an interesting account of her experience bringing these songs back to life, visit her website at [helenlindleymusic.com](http://helenlindleymusic.com).

***Karl Sinfield, June 2023.***

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\* In one well-known case, arguably over-generous.

\*\* And counting. It's like Steve doesn't even want me to finish it.

\*\*\* With a little help - thank you, internet friends.

# a note on the settings

My process to arrive at each arrangement was first to listen to every version I could find, although in some cases these were thin on the ground, or totally absent. However, generally this is much easier these days thanks to streaming platforms\*, and sometimes I found more than 40 versions of each song at my fingertips. There might be the basis of something in there I can use, or at least over the course of a few listens, something might work almost untouched, something might need a bit of tweaking to fit, or if nothing else, just the general feeling of the song will lead me to a new version.

Of course, a huge help in the listening odyssey I have been on is the tireless work of Reinhard Zierke and his Mainly Norfolk site, which provides a great resource for finding tunes when the names vary (I have listed some of the alternative names underneath each song title to save you some time if you want to search for them yourself), and the site also includes a plethora of illuminating sleeve notes.

I have also suggested a few tracks for further listening. These might be related to the setting in some way, or a contrast, or just something I think is interesting. I have tried to straddle both new and old sources. But do go out and find your own favourites, they are all good, even the bad ones.

Finally, this project has also hugely increased my knowledge and appreciation of these old stories (which is the main reason I started in the first place), and those singers that have carried them for us all for generations. I have included a list of some of the sources (there are lots more in earlier volumes if you want a fuller reading list) that have helped me on this journey at the end of the book.

## recordings

This book is aimed at people with basic skills, so I have made some very rough homemade "guide recordings" to accompany this book, and these can be found, along with the book in PDF format, at the website [singyonder.co.uk](http://singyonder.co.uk). DISCLAIMER: It should be apparent that I'm no great singer, and my guitar skills are conspicuously average. Thus, I am the perfect test bed for these simple tunes - if I can play them, anyone can. And if I can play them in a way that's vaguely tolerable, I'm sure you will make them sound amazing.

I have used simple open chords for each setting in this book (plus alternates are given), to make everything playable for people of all skill levels. Where I have used a capo in the recording to make the song work for my vocal range, or to give easier access to embellishments, that will be noted on the song page.

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\* My current favourite platform is Bandcamp, it is currently the fairest way to support musicians, and traditional folk artists, especially the younger ones, are well represented there. This will no doubt change at some point as the world of commerce continues to pitch and turn in unpredictable directions, but it's what we have for now.

# ROUD 61

## The Gay Goshawk

AKA: The Jolly Goshawk, The Gay Goss Hawk, The Scottish Squire

### Summary:

The King of Scotland sends a talking goshawk\* with a message\*\* to his lover, who happens to be the King of England's daughter, asking her to join him in Scotland. The English king is unmoved, so all the daughter can do is beseech her father to bury her in Scotland upon the event of her death. She then takes a sleeping potion which gives her the appearance of death, and is subsequently, as promised, borne up to Scotland in a coffin. The King of Scotland kisses her, she is revived, and a happy ending ensues.

### Setting notes:

If you ignore the self-poisoning and almost-starving-to-death (and the molten lead poured on her to check her morbidity in some versions) this boils down to a relatively innocent love ballad in the mould of many examples where love is denied by protective parents. The most complete early version was collected by Sir Walter Scott, who took it from the human song encyclopaedia of the time, *Mrs Brown of Falkland* (three hundred ballads were taken down from her recitations) and combined it with another unnamed "manuscript of some antiquity" (and probably with some poetic editorialising of his own) to get a complete story. In terms of similar tales from elsewhere, there is a c15th century Irish fairy tale "The Adventures of Faravla" in which a woman courts a Scottish king using a human messenger who magically turns into a hawk, and a French ballad "Belle Isambourg" that recounts the tale of a woman feigning death in order for her "corpse" to be transported to her lover. Today *The Gay Goshawk* is very rarely recorded - only a couple of versions are available. For the version published here, I have anglicised, combined and abridged two of the early Scottish versions from Child. The tune is loosely based on Christie's twin-strain 1881 melody.

### Suggested further listening:

"Gay Goshawk", Pete Morton, *Trespass*

"The Gay Goshawk", Stone Angel, *Stone Angel*

"La belle qui fait la morte", Jean-François Dutertre, *Chansons traditionnelles de Normandie*

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\* The goshawk can be found in other ballads, primarily, as in Rouds 47 (False Foodrage) and 34 (The Broomfield Hill), used to denote a sprightly and vigorous young man.

\*\* In 1828 ballad publisher Peter Buchan understandably decided that the goshawk seemed an unlikely bird to be carrying a worded message, and changed it to a (maybe more plausible but less exciting) parrot.

ROUD 61: THE GAY GOSHAWK

Dm
Am
Dm
Am  
 'O where's my bonny gay goss-hawk, that can speak and fly;  
Dm
Am
G  
 He'll carry a letter to my love, bring another back to me.'  
Am
G
Am
Dm  
 Out then spoke a little bird as it sat on a briar:  
Am
Em
G
Am  
 What will I have, king of Scotland, if I your tidings will bear?

Alternate chords:

Am	Em	Am	Em
Am	Em		D
Em	D	Em	Am
Em	Bm	D	Em

'One wing of the beaten gold, and another of the silver clear;  
 It's all unto you, my pretty bird, if you my tidings will bear.'  
 The bird flew high, the bird flew low, this bird flew to and fro,  
 In England came to the King's daughter, who was sitting in her window.

'Here's a gift, a very rare gift, and the king has sent to thee;  
 He says if your father won't agree, you may come privately.'  
 She's away to her father dear, made a low bend on her knee:  
 'What is your asking of me, daughter? Queen of Scotland you'll never be.'

'That's not my asking of thee, father, that's not my asking of thee;  
 But that if I die in merry England, in Scotland you'll bury me.'  
 She is down her to her bed chamber, as fast as she could fare,  
 An she's taken a sleepy draught, that she had mixed with care.

She's laid her down upon her bed, and soon she's fallen asleep,  
 Soon over every tender limb, cold death began to creep.  
 Her mother went weeping round and round, She dropped one on her toe;  
 'Oh and alas,' her mother did cry, 'To Scotland she must go!'

Many a mile by land they went, and many a league by sea,  
 Until that they came to the King of Scotland, who was walking in his own valley.  
 'Here is a gift, and a very rare gift, and you to have made her your own;  
 But now she's dead, and come from her steed, and she's ready to lay in the ground.'

He has opened up the coffin lid, and likewise the winding sheet,  
 And thrice has kissed her cherry cheek, And she smiled on him full sweet.  
 'One bit of your bread,' she says, 'And one glass of your wine;  
 It's all for you and your sake I've fasted long days nine.'

'Go home, my seven bold brothers, go home and sound your horn;  
 An you may boast in southern lands your sister's played you scorn.'  
 'Go home, my brothers seven, tell my sisters to sew their seam;  
 And you may tell it in merry England That your sister she is queen.'

# ROUD 62

## Brown Robin

AKA: Brown Robyn, Brown Robyn and Mally, Love Robbie

### Summary:

The King's daughter is forced to wait on his noble friends while they drink and make merry, but her attention is drawn to the lowly Robin, who is mysteriously loitering outside in the rain. She sings a song out of the window, and they agree to meet, but in the morning\* they have to smuggle him out in women's clothing while she feigns drunkenness; in doing so they elope to the greenwood together, never to return.

### Setting notes:

Scottish song scholar Peter Buchan published a version of this rare ballad in 1828\*\* with a conclusion involving the triumphant return and marriage of the young couple, which Francis Child insisted was Buchan's own flourish, and that the ballad collected (again) from Mrs Brown of Falkland "undoubtedly stops at the right point". The only other known version comes from Christie's 1876 collection "from the recitation of an old woman in Buckie, Enzie, Banffshire," which includes a dramatic ending where Robin is shot by the King's servant, followed by the King vowing to hang the servant for upsetting his daughter. Lyrically we are following Mrs Brown (and Child) here with some abridgements for brevity and scansion. Musically, both the Buchan and Christie versions have *ad hoc* repeats and non-repeating six-line stanzas - I've included a more predictable repeat, and adapted the Christie tune for our use. In modern times, the ballad remains almost entirely unrecorded, though a 2006 global techno version from Birdloom (a duo that was comprised of the late Dave Muddyman from Loop Guru, with singer Sharron Kraus) exists, and I'm happy to say that as a result of my queries about it, can now be heard at Sharron's page on the Bandcamp website.

### Suggested further listening:

"Brown Robin", Birdloom, *Birdloom*

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\* This version contains a line recounting how the young lovers lay in bed in the morning as "the sun shone on their feet" - a piece of imagery that is surprisingly intimate compared to the usual love-language (either impassively functional or impenetrably metaphorical) found in the ballads in Child's collection. This evocatively corporeal turn of phrase does turn up in one other Child ballad - Lord Livingston (Child 262, Roud 3909).

\*\* Buchan's brief note on the ballad includes a bold but interesting claim that the Brown Robin of the ballad was actually Robert Stewart, a brown-clothing-clad low-status gardener to a large estate on the Tweed who married his master's daughter thus engaging in some fairly drastic and unusual social mobility for the time.



ROUD 62: BROWN ROBIN

G Em  
 The king and all his noblemen  
 G  
 Sat drinking at the wine;  
 C Em  
 He'd have none but his own daughter  
 C G  
 To wait on them at dine.  
 C Em D G  
 He'd have none but his own daughter, to wait on them at dine.

Alternate chords:

C	Am
C	
	F Am
F	C
F	Am G C

She's served them beer, she's served them wine, / All in a gown of green,  
 But her eye was on Brown Robin, / Standing low out in the rain.

She's down into her bed chamber, / As fast as she could ran,  
 An there she's opened her window, / And she's harped as she sang.

'There's a bird in my father's garden, / And o but she sings sweet!  
 I hope to live and see the day / When my love I will meet.'

'O if you like me as well / As your tongue tells to me,  
 What hour of night, my lady bright, / At your bower shall I be?'

'When my father and gay Gilbert / Are both set at the wine,  
 O ready, ready I will be / To let my true-love in.'

O she has plied her father's porter / With strong beer an with wine,  
 She took the keys to her father's gates / An let her true-love in.

When night was gone, and day was come, / And the sun shone on their feet,  
 Then out spoke him Brown Robin, / I'll be discovered yet.

Then out spoke that gay lady: / My love, you need no doubt;  
 For with a trick I've got you in, / With another I'll bring you out.

She's run down to her father's cellar, / As fast as she can fare;  
 She's drawn a cup o the good red wine, / And met with her father dear

'O woe be to your wine, father, / That ever it came over sea;  
 It's put my head in such a stir, / In my bower I cannot be.'

'Go out, go out, my daughter dear, / Go out and take the air;  
 Go out and walk in the good green wood, / And all your maidens fair.'

She's down her to her bed chamber, / As fast as she could run,  
 And she has dressed him Brown Robin / Like any fair woman.

The gown she put upon her love / Was of the dainty green,  
 His hose was of the soft, soft silk, / His shoes the cordwain fine.

She's put his bow in her bosom, / His arrow in her sleeve,  
 His sturdy sword her body next, / Because he was her love.

Then she is to her bower-door, / A porter blocked her way;  
 'We'll count our maidens to the wood, / And count them back again.'

The first young maiden she sent out / Was Brown Robin by name;  
 Then out it spoke the king himself, / 'This is a sturdy dame.'

O she went out in a May morning, / In a May morning so gay,  
 But she came never back again, / Her father for to see.

# ROUD 63

## Johnny Scott

AKA: Johnie Buneftan, Johnny Scot, Johnnie Scott, John the Little Scot, Love Johnnie, McNaughtan, Young Johnny Scott

### Summary:

While handsome Johnny is separated from his beloved fair lady, he receives a message that he should urgently return to her. When he finds her in shackles as a result of their relationship, he is instructed by his lover's father, the king, to fight a great Italian knight. Johnny wins an unlikely victory by skewering the vast warrior on his sword. This removes all impediments to the lovers' marriage, and a wedding ensues.\*

### Setting notes:

Referred to in Frank Sidgwick's 1903 "Popular Ballads of the Olden Time" as "popular and excellent"\*\*, and by William Motherwell in 1827 as "very spirited and interesting... highly national... and full of bustle and action,"\*\*\* this is has not been popular in the 20th century, although its excellence\*\*\*\* remains undimmed. We have, thanks to collectors James Madison Carpenter, Helen Hartness Flanders, and Seán Corcoran several interesting early source recordings from Scotland, the US, and Ireland spanning from the 1930s to the 1970s. The latter version, beautifully sung by Mary Baylon of Ardee, County Louth in 1971, forms the basis of the version given here.

### Suggested further listening:

"Johnny Scott", Mary Baylon, *Early Ballads in Ireland*

"Johnie Scot", The Macmath Collective, *Macmath: The Silent Page*

"Johnny Scott", Susan McKeown, *Sweet Liberty*

"Love Johnnie", Bell Duncan, *{Vaughan Williams Memorial Library}*

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\* This ballad has some similarities to Roud 64, but in that tale, rather than combat, the king is swayed by the beauty of his daughter's suitor.

\*\* Sidgwick goes on to describe a two similar stories where large men were skewered in battle; first in a Breton ballad "Le Géant Les Aubrays", where dashing Seigneur Les Aubrays from the forest of Orléans kills the king's giant (whilst naked, incidentally), and then narrowly escapes being killed by the king for his trouble. The second reference is to a supposed battle where James Macgill in around 1679 kills his close friend Sir Robert Balfour as a result of an argument, and is subsequently pardoned by King Charles II, but only on the condition he fights a large Italian warrior. The King Charles part of the story is charitably referred to by historians as "unlikely".

\*\*\* In an extensive rant about the changing and embellishing of ballads from their precisely quoted sources, Motherwell goes on to describe ballad publishers as "Impudent, Dull-witted, Ignorant, Conceited, Trashy, Poetasters and Forgers". I'm trying not to take it personally.

\*\*\*\* Your perception of its excellence may vary, depending on your views on the violent skewering of Italians.

ROUD 63: JOHNNY SCOTT

Dm  
Johnny Scott's a-hunting gone  
Dm  
To the wildest hills and woods,  
C Am  
To the fairest young lady in all England,  
C Dm  
Young Johnny had a child.

Alternate chords:

Am  
Am G Em  
G Am

King Edward he wrote him a broad letter, signed it with his hand  
Saying, "Give you this to young Johnny Scott as soon as he does land."

And the very first line that Johnny read, his eyes they filled with tears,  
Saying, "Must I go back to far England? I fear I will never return."

And out bespoke his old age father from his chamber where he lay,  
Saying, "A thousand men I will send along with you for to bear you company."

As they were mounted on their milk-white steeds all comely to behold,  
And the hair that hung down over Johnny's shoulder shone like the beaten gold.

And the very first town that they rode through, they made the trumpets sound,  
And the very next town that they rode through, the drums they beat all around.

And the very next town that they came to it was to England town  
And who should he see but his fair lady and she lying in irons bound.

"Come down, come down. Lady Margit," he cried, "and speak one word to me!"  
"Oh how can I come down, Lord Johnny?" she cried, "King Edward has bolted me!"

"Oh my stockings are made of the cold iron, my boots of tethers brown,  
And my garters are made of the coldest steel that e'er was in England found."

And Johnny went to the King's hall door and jingled at the bell,  
And there was no one so ready as the old witch herself to rise up and welcome him in.

"Are you the King of Auburn?" she says, "or James our Scottish king?  
Or are you the bastard's father?" she says, "from Ireland has come?"

"I'm not the King of Auburn," he says, "nor James your Scottish king.  
But I am a noble prince," he says, "from Ireland has come."

"Well there is an Italian all in this house, he kills men three by three,  
And tomorrow morning at eight o'clock it's on his sword you'll be."

Well Johnny and the Italian fought til the blood flew like the rain  
'Til at length on the top of Johnny's broad sword the Italian was sorely slain.

He put his hand onto his sword and stroked it o'er the plain,  
Saying, "Is there any more of you English lords would like to be sorely slain?"

He put his hand onto his horn, he blew loud and high,  
"A priest, a priest!", Lord Johnny he cried, "for to wed my love and I!"



# ROUD 64

## Willie O'Winsbury

AKA: Tom the Barber, The Rich Shipowner's Daughter, There Was a Lady Lived in the West, John Barbour, Lord Thomas of Winesberry and the King's Daughter, William of Barbary, William of Winesbury, Johnny Barden

### Summary:

A king is imprisoned\* overseas for many years. On his return he finds his daughter looking pale, and asks if she is sick or pregnant. After a somewhat humiliating inspection of her body, and the latter is confirmed, the king is horrified to learn that his daughter's lover Willie is not of noble birth, and summons him for execution. However, when the king is confronted with Willie's astonishing beauty, he immediately relents, and offers not just his daughter's hand in marriage, but a lucrative lordship. Willie turns down the lordship, insisting that he and his wife will make it on their own.

### Setting notes:

There has been much analysis of this ballad in modern times, mostly focused on the king's admission that "Had I been a woman as I am a man, / My bedfellow you would have been"; an extremely rare and uniquely direct expression of bi-curiosity in the Child ballads. In the recorded era, thanks to Andy Irvine supposedly flipping over the wrong page in Bronson, this ballad's most enduring 1968 version is sung to the tune of False Foodrage (Roud 57). The version given here is based on a tune collected from a Mr Gordge of Bridgewater by Cecil Sharp, via the singing of Ken Wilson and Ian MacFarland, but using Andy Irvine's version of the words, which were mostly based on Child's "A" version\*\*. I've added the repeated last line to fit the tune.

### Suggested further listening:

"Tom the Barber", Cohen Braithwaite-Kilcoyne, Outway Songster

"Willie o' Winsbury", Anaïs Mitchell & Jefferson Hamer, *Child Ballads*

"The Rich Shipowner's Daughter", Robert Cinnamon, *You Rambling Boys of Pleasure*

"Johnny Barden", Mary McGrath, [*Youtube video*]

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\* In some versions he is hunting, in others simply absent. The "Tom Barber"/"William Barbary" family of titles for this ballad has led some to speculate that there might be a connection with the famed Barbary pirates who operated off the North African coast from the 16th-19th century, especially since many versions of the ballad have the King returning from Spain, very much within their zone of influence. We'll never know of course, but it's certainly an intoxicating notion.

\*\* Sometimes in this process, it can be painful not to use a very well known version within these pages. In this case, the chords and melody for the Andy Irvine version can be found readily elsewhere (notably among tunes for False Foodrage) but the lyrics assembled by Irvine are the most succinct and well formed to be found anywhere. With that in mind, I thought it would be apposite to reunite Irvine's words with a "correct" tune.



# ROUD 65

## Willie O' Douglas Dale

AKA: Dame Oliphant, Douglass Dale, Willie of Duglass Daill, The Earl of Douglas and Dame Oliphant

### Summary:

Willie and his heavily pregnant sweetheart are prevented from being together by her protective family. They elope, thanks mainly to the content of Dame Oliphant's purse as well as her adventurous character, and she gives birth to their child during their escape (unsurprisingly after hurdling over a castle wall). Once they have commandeered a passing shepherdess to be their nanny, they continue on to Scotland where they become the happily married Lord and Lady of Douglas Dale\*.

### Setting notes:

This wholesome tale has only ever been collected in Scotland\*\*, and not frequently even there. Its lack of popularity\*\*\* continues today, with very little in the way of audio material. Previously in this situation I have offered a tune of my own, but in a quest for some variety I asked Helen Lindley (who has been creating tunes for a number of ballads that have previously lacked them) to compose a tune for this one, also taking care of the considerable abridgement required. Helen decided to pass over the two tunes offered by Bertrand Bronson in his "Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads", and I'm glad she did as we now have a very enjoyably singable new entry in the traditional folk catalogue.

### Suggested further listening:

"Willie O' Douglas Dale", Helen Lindley, [Youtube]

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\* A place name in a ballad always sends me to Google Maps on a usually fruitless or ambiguous search for some geographical touchstone. In this case it's somewhat the latter - there is the village of Douglas in Lanarkshire, the area around which is sometimes referred to as Douglasdale; but the same term has been used for the area around the town of Castle Douglas further south in Dumfries and Galloway. However, Castle Douglas' history is relatively recent (it was established in 1792) while Douglas village was site of a castle that was captured in 1307, an act which helped to elevate the Douglas clan to an Earldom, thanks to Robert the Bruce - tales of whom will surely have inspired early Scottish balladeers.

\*\* There is one brief and anticlimactic mention of the ballad in Tristram Coffin's "The British Traditional Ballad in North America". Coffin briefly cites one woman who had heard it but couldn't remember any of it - a feeling I can sympathise with, and which also demonstrates the process of a ballad travelling, then fizzling out, possibly for the reason suggested in the next footnote.

\*\*\* Again we have an unpopular tale of a woman with agency and means loving an honourable man, and we are forced to contemplate the potentially self-destructive predisposition of humans to bad behaviour.

ROUD 65: WILLIE O' DOUGLAS DALE

Alternate chords:

D		
G	A	
D		
G	A	
D		
G	A	
D		Bm
G	A	Bm

G  
Oh Willy was as brave a lord  
C D  
As ever sailed the sea,  
G  
And he has gone to the English court  
C D  
To serve for meat and fee.  
G  
He had not been at the King's court  
C D  
A twelve-month and a day,  
G Em  
Till he longed for a sight of the King's daughter,  
C D Em  
But her he could never see.

One day she's gone to the green wood. / Willy followed by moonlight  
He bowed so low as by her he did go / She said, "What's your will, Sir Knight?"  
'Oh, I am not a Knight, Madam, / Nor ever think to be;  
For I am Willy O'Douglas Dale, / And I serve for meat and fee.'

She says, 'I'll gang to my bower,' / And I'll pray both night and day,  
To keep me from your tempting looks, / And from your great beauty.'  
Oh in a little after that / He kept Dame Oliphant's bower,  
As the love that passed between these two, / It was like paramour.

'Oh Willy, narrow is my gown, / That used to be so wide;  
And gone is a' my fair colour, / And low laid is my pride.  
'But when my father gets word of this, / He'll never drink again;  
And when my brothers get word of this, / I fear, Willy, you'll be slain.'

'O will you leave your father's court, / And go along with me?  
I'll carry you unto fair Scotland, / And make you a lady free.'  
She put her hand in her pocket / And gave him five hundred pounds:  
'And take you that now, Squire Willy, / Till away that we do run.'

When day was gone, and night was come, / She leapt the castle wall.  
But Willy caught his gay Lady, / He was loath to let her fall.  
He's made a fire for his love, / And bed to lay her down.  
He's picked roses that grew beside, / And fetched water in his horn.

He came back to his Lady, / And a son to him she bore.  
And he's taken his son and his Lady gay, / Wrapped them to keep them warm.  
He met a maid a-feeding sheep. / And said, "Will you come with me?  
And will you serve my Lady fair? / We'll give both meat and fee."

She came before the Lady fair / And said, "You're a Dame, I see."  
"Yes, I'm Oliphant, the King's daughter, / Will you come to Scotland with me?"  
So the maid she held the bonny boy / And Willy led his Lady.  
He's made her lady of Douglas Dale, / And the Lord of the Dale was he.

# ROUD 66

## Tom Potts

AKA: Thomas of Potte, The Lovers Quarrel or Cupid's Triumph, The Two Constant Lovers in Scotland, The History of Tommy Potts

### Summary:

The Earl of Arundel\* betroths his only daughter Anne to wealthy Lord Fenix. As a result, Anne is forced to admit she has been loving a man with only three coins to rub together, the titular Tom Potts. While the Earl furiously leaves to discuss the matter with Lord Fenix, Anne sends a letter to Tom, both to let him know, and to test his true intentions. Tom passes the test and arranges to fight Fenix for the love of his life. After trading painful blows, the Lord has to yield, and Anne chooses Tom to be her husband.

### Setting notes:

Sometimes it can feel unjust or confusing when certain ballads have seemingly inexplicably failed to be seized upon by the tradition and transmitted orally across generations for our enjoyment and appreciation today. After ploughing through the approximately 100 highly repetitive verses of the originally collected versions of this wholesome tale of class-transcendent romance, I can confidently assert that this is not one of those occasions. However, *Sing Yonder* is not about casting these bloated corpses of balladry aside, but instead acting as a loving, respectful balladic mortician; squeezing out their excess bodily fluids, combing their hair, and hopefully making them into something that people will want to cast their eyes over again. Thanks go to Helen Lindley, who, as with the previous ballad\*\*, has done just that, and beautifully so.

### Suggested further listening:

"Tom Potts", Helen Lindley, [Youtube]

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\* The Earl of Arundel is a title that has existed since 1138 - there had been around thirty individuals holding the title up to the time that this ballad appeared, so plenty of room for speculation as to a real life inspiration. Equally, Lord Fenix could be a corruption of Fenwick - another common name, and there is a branch of nobility carrying that moniker, so inevitable connections can be made, but as usual, nothing has been recorded that exactly fits with this story. Another link to reality comes in the form of the locations mentioned - namely "Guilford Green" - possibly related to Guildford and "Strawberry Castle" a gothic villa located in modern day Twickenham. All of these locations being in the south of England (and within striking distance of Arundel Castle) certainly might mean something, or equally it could just be a collection of names plucked out of the imagination, or even inspired by locally available foodstuffs.

\*\* But in this case, more so.



ROUD 66: TOM POTTS

Dm
C
Am  
 In Scotland there are Ladies fair,  
 Dm
 C  
 Those of honour and high degree.  
 Dm
 C
Am  
 But one excels above all the rest,  
Dm
C
Dm  
 Earl of Arundel's only child is she.  
 F
 C
Dm
Am  
 Knights and Lords courted Lady Anne / But none she liked enough to wed.  
Dm
C
Dm
Am
Dm  
 Then came the day Anne had to choose / "You must choose Lord Fenix." Earl Arundel said.

Alternate chords:

Am	G	Em
Am	G	
Am	G	Em
Am	G	Am
C	G / Am	Em
Am	G / Am	Em Am

Poor Anne had tears coming from her eyes / "You are my father, who dear loves me.  
 But I love a serving-man so poor / And all he has is but pounds three."  
 Her father was angry, to Fenix he rode / And Anne called up her servant boy.  
 "To Strawberry Castle please will you ride, / Where my Tom Potts is in employ?"

"Take this letter that's writ in my hand / And watch when Tom it looks upon.  
 And if he laughs or if he smiles / I must seek a new love and Tom will be gone."  
 "But if he has tears within his eyes / To Tom I'll be true for all my life.  
 But tell him that in just seven nights / I must be Lord William Fenix's wife."

So Jack rode off to see Tom Potts / Saying, "Read this letter from your love, Anne."  
 The tears ran from poor Tom Potts eyes / He said, "Fenix must win her by his own hand."  
 "On Guilford Green I will him meet / And stay the wedding or lose my life."  
 Young Jack raced back to his mistress Anne / Saying Tom wanted her for his wife.

Tom Potts went to his master's door / Saying, "I have a lady true to me,  
 And unto her I'll ne'er be false / But must lose my love to poverty."  
 "Lord Fenix will have her as his wife." / "Now hold your tongue!" his master cried.  
 "There's something I will do for thee: / Give Strawberry Castle for you and your bride."

"I've horses, spears and armour too. / And I'll ride as your man at your rear."  
 "Thank you, dear master, for your kindness / I'll just take a nag and a single spear."  
 Tom early rode out to Guilford Green / Told Fenix "You're taking my true love from me."  
 Lord Fenix was angry, said "Heaven forbid! / A serving man won't take my lady."

Early next morning both Fenix and Potts / Met at Guilford Green full eagerly.  
 Fenix speared Potts right through his thigh / But Tom soon sprang up with energy.  
 Tom speared Fenix straight through the arm / Saying "Fight or yield the Lady to me."  
 "I can't hold my spear so the Lady I'll yield / I won't keep this man from his Lady."

"To save my honour, let Lady Anne choose. / We'll stand at each end of Two Mile Lane,  
 And set the Lady in our midst. / If she chooses you the Lady you'll gain"  
 The Lady and maids walked Two Mile Lane / Anne said, "Tommy Potts, I'll be your bride."  
 And to all you Ladies of high degree / Marry for love, not money or pride."

# ROUD 67

## The Shepherd's Daughter

AKA: The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter, Earl Richard, The Beautifull Shepherdesse of Arcadia, Shepherd's Tochter, Earl Richard, Earl Lithgow, Earl Richmond, Sweet William, The Forester, The Royal Forester

### Summary:

A "noble" lord sexually assaults a beautiful woman in the woods. She pursues him all the way to the King's castle, only to be scorned by him. Some versions end with the knight being forced to marry the woman, and others go on to reveal the woman is actually very a very rich woman herself, and the Knight sometimes is revealed as a poor labourer in disguise, thus completing the reversal of fortune narrative.

### Setting notes:

This ballad was apparently alive and well in the 18th and 19th centuries\*, most versions having been found in Scotland, but also appearing in the form of a broadside and in the oral tradition in the south of England. It has also been found in a couple of instances across the Atlantic. It's fairly unusual for these kinds of Child ballad to have refrains, but a good proportion of this one does, and there's quite a variety of them, from the nonsense-style, such as "Sing trang sil do lee", to this version (that bears a passing resemblance to some versions of The Baffled Knight\* (Roud 11)) which was collected in Middle River, Victoria County, Nova Scotia from ex-sawmill worker Nathan Hatt in 1954. 84 year old Hatt was fairly deaf and unable to read or write, but apparently took great pleasure from the songs that he had learned. While succinct enough to fit on these pages - \*spoiler alert\* - Hatt's telling lacks any of the happier and more satisfying conclusions found in some collected versions.

### Suggested further listening:

"The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter", 5 Hand Reel, *Five Hand Reel*

"Sweet William", Nick Hart, *Eight English Folk Songs*

"The Royal Forester", Andy Irvine, *Old Dog Long Road Vol 2*

"The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter", John Roberts and Tony Barrant, *Spencer the Rover is Alive and Well*

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\* A 1719 historical text points out that this ballad was popular in the time of Queen Elizabeth I, and there's an even earlier mention in the 1621 play "The Pilgrim" by John Fletcher. For it to be quoted in a play in the manner it was, it must have been quite widespread.

\*\* This version also may have picked up some sea-song influence on its voyage to the maritime province of Nova Scotia, with its "Go no more a-roving" refrain, although another early Scots version collected by Motherwell also contains a lot of roving.

ROUD 67: THE SHEPHERD'S DAUGHTER

Alternate chords:			
D			
G	Bm	D	G
	D		
	G	Bm	A D

G  
'Tis of a shepherd's daughter, kept sheep upon the hill  
C Em G C  
A noble lord come a-riding by and he swore he'd have his will:  
G  
With your roses all in bloom  
C Em D G  
Go no more a roving so late in the afternoon.

And when he'd had the will of her and everything was done  
She tucked up her apron, at the horse's side she run

And when she's come to the river wide she's laid on her breast and swam  
And when she's come to the other side she took to her heels and run

And when she's come to the King's castle, she's tingled on the ring  
There was none so ready as the King himself to rise and let her in

Oh, it's King, oh it's King, it's noble King, it's noble King, said she  
You have a lord in your castle this day has robbed me

Did he rob you of your purple robe, did he rob you of your pall  
Did he rob you of the gay gold ring you had on your finger small?

He neither robbed my purple robe, nor robbed me of my pall  
He robbed me of my virgin bloom, and that's the worst of all

Well if he is a married man, all hanged he shall be  
And if he is a single man, then his body belongs to thee:

If I call down my merry men, what would you know him by?  
I'd know him by his curly locks and the rolling of his eye

Then he's called down his merry men, by one, by two, by three  
Knight William was the foremost man, the very same man was he

Why should I drink the water, when I can get the wine?  
If you was but a beggar's brat, why did ye be wanting mine?

If I was but a beggar's brat, as you make me out to be  
When I was out a-roving, why didn't you leave me be?

Oh God forbid, oh God forbid, oh God forbid, cried he  
Oh little did I think that the beggar's brat would have to make a wife for me

# ROUD 68

## The Twelve Days of Christmas

AKA: Partridge in a Pear Tree, The Yule Days, The Six Days of Christmas, The Christmas Presents, What My True Love Sent, Christmas Song

### Summary:

The well known account of some duodecimal Yuletide extravagance.

### Setting notes:

Almost certainly stemming from the ancient rituals surrounding the winter solstice that have been practised across Northern Europe\* for millennia, this song is now one of the most well known (and most parodied) of all songs of any genre in the entire Anglosphere. Since its late 18th century publication in a small book of children's rhymes with the austere title "Mirth without Mischief", and the subsequent memorable tune applied by composer Frederic Austin in 1909, its ubiquitous fate was sealed.

There have been a number of recorded variations in the gifts\*\* and their order, some of them probably cultural, but in many instances, perhaps a lapse of memory from the singer has led to a reordering, or maybe some fast-thinking improvisation. I felt there was little point in giving the Austin version here, as it can readily be found elsewhere for those that require it. Instead, this is the version that has been sung for generations by the Copper Family of Rottingdean, East Sussex. The melody is not radically different to the Austin version, but it's enough of a variation to make singing it a refreshing experience, and the list of gifts differs slightly, which keeps you on your toes. It does contain a reference to the barbaric practice of bear-baiting - I hope this comes as not too much of a shock, though I doubt it considering the parade of barbarity the Roud index has treated us to thus far.

### Suggested further listening:

"The Twelve Days of Christmas", Martin Carthy, Shirley Collins et al, *Classic Nursery Rhymes*

"The Twelve Days of Christmas", The Copper Family, *Coppers at Christmas*

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\* Strong links can be made with a France especially, since the French word "peirdrix" meaning partridge is quite homonymous with "pear tree", and a very similar French folk song called "La Perdriole" (another word for partridge) follows a very similar format. Author/scholar/adventurer Lina Eckenstein in her 1906 book "Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes" made a good case for all of the European variants having descended from ancient religious incantations that follow the same pattern of cumulative repetition.

\*\* It has been suggested that the numbered gifts are representations of Christian tenets (such as the ten lords-a-leaping representing the ten commandments, and the two turtle doves being the Old and New Testaments of the Bible), and the song had been used as a way for persecuted Catholics to worship in by way of this "secret" code. This idea only seems to be a few decades old, however. But it makes a good story, and I won't begrudge anyone that.

ROUD 68: THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

C Am C Am  
 On the first day of Christmas my true love sent to me  
 C G C  
 A partridge in a pear tree.  
 C Am C Am  
 On the second day of Christmas my true love sent to me  
 G  
 Two turtle doves  
 C G C  
 And a partridge in a pear tree.  
 C Am C Am  
 On the third day of Christmas my true love sent to me  
 C  
 Three French hens,  
 G  
 Two turtle doves  
 C G C  
 And a partridge in a pear tree.  
 C Am C Am  
 On the fourth day of Christmas my true love sent to me  
 C  
 Four canary birds,  
 C  
 Three French hens,  
 G  
 Two turtle doves  
 C G C  
 And a partridge in a pear tree.  
 C Am C Am  
 On the fifth day of Christmas my true love sent to me  
 Am F G  
 Five gold rings  
 Am  
 Four canary birds,  
 F  
 Three French hens,  
 G  
 Two turtle doves  
 C G C  
 And a partridge in a pear tree.

[Final rounds]

C  
 Six geese a-laying,  
 Seven swans a-swimming,  
 Eight deers a-running,  
 Nine lads a-leaping,  
 Ten ladies skipping,  
 Eleven bears a-baiting,  
 Twelve parsons preaching.

Alternate chords:

G Em G Em  
G D G

G Em G Em  
D  
G D G

G Em G Em  
G  
D  
G D G

... and so on



## ROUD 69

# Johnny O'Breadislee

AKA: Johnie Cock, Johnie of Braidislee, Johnnie o' Cocklesmuir, Johnnie Brod, Johnnie o' Braidiesley, Johnny the Brine, James o' Broodies, Johnnie of Cockerslee, Fair John and the Seven Foresters

### Summary:

Intrepid hunter Johnny decides to take his hounds into the woods to poach the huge deer that has been seen there, against his mother's advice. After felling the mighty beast, he and his canine companions gorge themselves on the meat and blood of their prey, and fall into a deep sleep. They are rudely woken by seven angry foresters. Johnny kills six of them and wounds the other.

### Setting notes:

Song collector Francis Child was clearly very fond of this popular tale, describing it as a "precious specimen of the unspoiled\* traditional ballad". Most of the collected versions hail from Scotland, and the story bears all the lawless swashbuckling hallmarks of a classic Border ballad. As usual, author, poet and possibly over-keen historian Sir Walter Scott was insistent that this is based on a real person, an outlaw who lived in Morton Castle, Dumfriesshire\*\*. Whether or not that is actually the case, its heroic story and enjoyable melody has seen it thrive in the repertoire of many a source singer, which subsequently sparked a healthy interest during the 1960s folk revival, and this has continued until today. One remarkable source recording was made by Scottish traveller Jeannie Robertson, who actually recorded the song several times in the middle of the 20th century. Her words, with a tune from a 1951 recording of Aberdeenshire singer and farmer John Strachan, form the basis of the concise version\*\*\* given here.

### Suggested further listening:

"Johnny the Brine", Jeannie Robertson, *Scottish Ballads and Folk Songs*

"Johnny of Brady's Lee", Planxty, *The Woman I Loved So Well*

"Johnny o' the Brine", Alasdair Roberts, Amble Skuse & David McGuinness, *What News*

"Johnnie o Breadisley", Iona Fyfe, *Ballads vol. 1*

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\* He goes on to share thirteen versions of the ballad, many of which are fragmentary, and one having what Child scathingly refers to as a "silly" conclusion involving a talking bird - a phenomenon found in several of his collected ballads.

\*\* As usual, no actual historians share his insistence. However the idea of a poacher being set upon by angry foresters is not the most outlandish one to be found in folk music, and certainly will have happened to someone, and the chances of them having a song written about them, especially in the Border region, were high.

\*\*\* The endings of this ballad are various, from Johnny's brutal victory here, to him dying of his wounds, and another version (see first footnote) where he is pardoned by the king via a talking parrot.

ROUD 69: JOHNNY O'BREADISLEE

Dm F  
Johnny he rose one May morning,  
C

Cold water to wash his hands,

Dm  
Roaring, "Bring to me my two greyhounds

Dm G Am Dm C Dm  
That are bound in iron bands, bands, That are bound in iron bands."

His old wife she wrung her hands, / "To the greenwoods do not go  
For the sake o' the venison. / To the greenwoods do not go...

But Johnny went up through Monymusk / And down all through the woods,  
And it was there he spied a dun deer leap, / She was lying in a field o birds...

The first arrow he fired at her, / He wounded her on the side.  
And between the water and the woods / For his groundhounds laid her pride...

Johnny and his two greyhounds / Drank so much of her blood  
That Johnny an his two greyhounds / Fell a-sleeping in the woods...

By came a silly old man / And an ill death may he die,  
He went up and told the first forester / And he told what he did see...

"If that be the young Johnny the Brine / You'd better let him be.  
If that is young Johnny the Brine / You'd better let him be...

He went up and told the seventh forester, / He was Johnny's sister's son,  
"If that be young Johnny the Brine / To the green woods we will gang...

The first arrow they fired at him, / They wounded him on the feet,  
And the second arrow they fired at him / For his heart's blood blind his eye...

But Johnny rose up with a angry growl / For an angry man was he.  
"I will kill all you six foresters / And break the seventh one's back in three...

He placed his foot upon a stone / And his back against a tree,  
An he kilt all the six foresters / And broke the seventh one's back in three...

Johnny broke his back in three / And he broke his collar-bone.  
An he tied him on his grey mare's back / For to carry the tidings home...

Alternate chords:

Am C  
G  
Am  
Am D Em Am G Am

# ROUD 70

## A Gest\* of Robyn Hode

AKA: The Lytelle Geste of Robyn Hode

### Summary:

An eight part, 456 verse epic romance poem about the exploits of Britain's favourite tight-wearing wealth-redistributor.

### Setting notes:

Certainly the longest traditional ballad in Francis Child's collection, this makes Tam Lin look like a radio jingle, and in truth is more of an epic poem designed for reading, rather than something that was ever sung in a tavern. Theories\*\* on its origins are myriad, but the balance of opinion is that the eight "fits" or sections had been assembled from a number of unknown earlier sources sometime during the 15th century. Unsurprisingly it does not have a great presence in the oral tradition\*\*\*, although there are a couple of examples of it in performance. In 2001, American folk singer Bob Frank recorded it in its entirety, in a "talking blues" style, over the course of one long album, and on the internet you can find Australian folk enthusiast Raymond Crooke (who has attempted his own version of every Child Ballad) recorded around one hour's worth (to the tune of Matty Groves) before the limits of online video were reached. Obviously it's neither practical nor desirable to emulate those feats here, so I have abridged the first section, which is concerned with Robin and friends helping an impoverished knight settle his debt with a rich abbot. The original poem was never published with a tune, but the melody is very roughly based upon tune-collector Bertrand Bronson's nearest guess, actually a given tune for Roud 1621, AKA "Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar".

### Suggested further listening:

"A Little Gest of Robin Hood", Bob Frank, *A Little Gest of Robin Hood*

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\* "Gest" or sometimes "Geste" or "Geste" almost certainly means "guest" - at the beginning of the story Robin requests a guest to join him for dinner - although some have suggested it could also be an old form of "jest" as in a jolly story, or a contraction of the Latin *res gestae* meaning "as it is told". My opinion is that it's probably a case where Occam's razor applies, and we need look no further than the most obvious theory.

\*\* It being about Robin Hood, and one of the main sources of the whole Robin Hood Industrial Complex, there is a wealth of pontification about the Geste, and entire books and articles have been written about it. If this has whetted your appetite for more, I would recommend the 2012 book about the ballad by Robert B Waltz. Waltz's modernised text of the ballad forms the basis of the song given here.

\*\*\* By my estimation it would take 2-3 hours to sing in its entirety. A bold move in your local singaround, and, as welcoming as they are, probably not one that will win you many friends..



ROUD 70: A GEST OF ROBYN HODE

G C G  
Robyn stood in Barnsdale  
D G  
And leaned against a tree,  
C G  
And by him stood there Little John,  
C D G  
A good yeoman was he.

Alternate chords:

D G D  
A D  
G A D G D

And also did good Scarlock, / And Much, the miller's son.  
Every inch of his body / Was worthy of a man.

Then bespake him Little John / All unto Robyn Hood,  
"Master, if you would dine soon / It would do you much good."

Then bespake him good Robyn, / "To dine have I no lust,  
Until I have some bold baron / Or else some unknown guest.

"Until I have some bold baron / That can pay for the best,  
Or some knight or else a squire / That dwells here in the west."

"Be he earl or any baron, / Abbot or any knight,  
Bring him here to lodge with me. / He'll dine with us tonight."

They went up to the Saylis, / These yeomen all three.  
They looked east, they looked west, / But they could no man see.

But as they looked into the Barnsdale, / Down the darkest street,  
There came a knight a-riding. / Full soon they would him meet.

Little John was full courteous / And got down on his knee.  
"Welcome be ye, gentle knight, / Welcome are ye to me.

"Welcome be thou to green wood, / Gracious knight and free.  
My master fasting waits for you, / Sir, all these hours three."

Forth then went this gentle knight / With careful cheer he'd ride.  
The tears out of his eyes did run / And fell down by his side.

They brought him to the cottage door. / When Robyn him did see,  
Full courteously took off his hood / And got down on his knee.

"Welcome, sir knight," said Robyn Hood. / "Welcome art thou to me.  
I have waited for you fasting, sir, / All these hours three."

They washed together and wiped their hands / And sat down to their dinner.  
Bread and wine they'd right enough, / And organs of the deer.

"Now pay before ye go," said Robyn. / "I think it's only right.  
It was never the custom, by dear God, / For a yeoman to pay for a knight."

"I have nothing in my coffers / "That I may offer for shame."  
Little John, go look," said Robyn. / "If not, he'll bear no blame."

Little John spread out his mantle / Full fair upon the ground,  
And there he found in the knight's coffer / Nothing but half a pound.

"Now I have no goods," said the knight. / "But my children and my wife,  
God has shaped such an end, / Till he may amend my life."

"In what manner," said Robyn Hood, / "Have you lost your riches?"  
"To a rich abbot hereabouts / Of Saint Mary's Abbey."

"What is the sum?" said Robyn Hood. / "How much do you owe?"  
"Sir," he said, "four hundred pounds. / The abbot told me so."

"Come now forward, Little John, / And go to my treasury  
And bring me four hundred pounds. / Well counted it must be."

Forward then went Little John, / And Scarlock went before.  
He counted out four hundred pounds, / By eighteen and two score.

"I'll lend thee Little John, my man, / He'll be thy knave indeed.  
In a yeoman's stead he may thee stand / If you ever have great need."

More info and the audio files that accompany this book can be found at

**singyonder.co.uk\***

Some things that helped me and/or you might enjoy, in addition to those found in Volumes 1-6\*\*:

**Books:**

- "Folk ballads and songs of the lower Labrador coast", MacEdward Leach
- "The perilous hunt: symbols in Hispanic and European balladry", Edith Randam Rogers
- "The new American songster", Charles W Darling
- "Rise up Singing", Peter Blood
- "Some British Ballads", Arthur Rackham
- "The Book of British Ballads", S C Hall
- "True Thomas the Rhymer, and other tales of the lowland Scots", Heather Scott
- "Songs of the People: Selections from the Sam Henry Collection", John Moulden
- "Chapbooks of the eighteenth century", John Ashton
- "Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes" Lina Eckenstein
- "Stories of the Scottish Border", William Platt
- "Illustrated British Ballads", George Barnett Smith
- "The Gest of Robyn Hode: A Critical and Textual Commentary", Robert B Waltz

**Online:**

Queerfolk - resources for LGBTQIA+ folksingers: [www.queerfolk.co.uk](http://www.queerfolk.co.uk)

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\* If you are from the future and found a rare hard copy version at the back of a dusty loft, and none of the links or email addresses work, it's possible I have either died, or otherwise departed from the internet to live in a log cabin somewhere. Either way, don't try and find me, go and learn some folk songs instead.

\*\* You can find the full list of references at <http://singyonder.co.uk/references>



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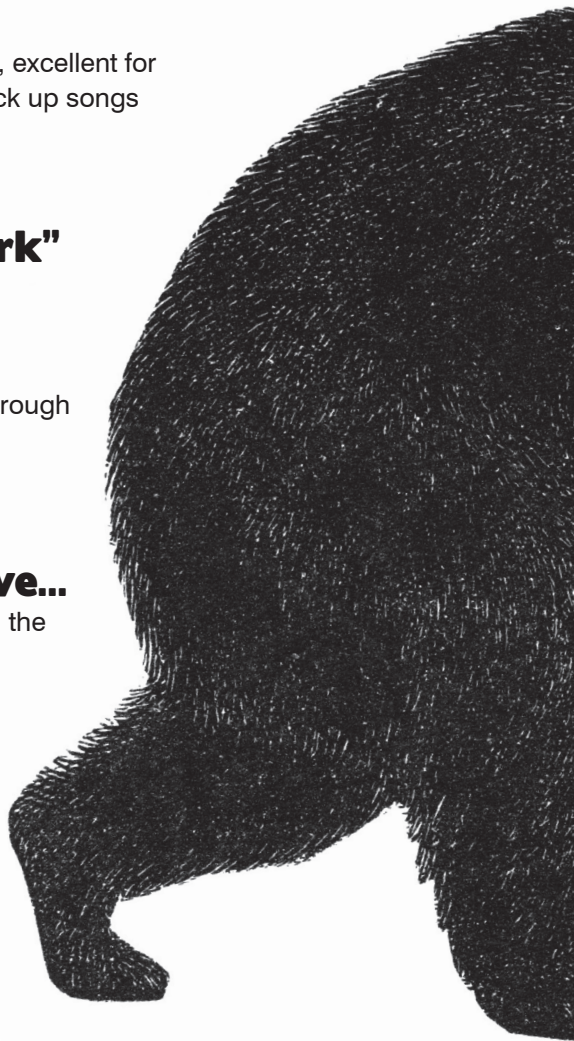
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