



sing yonder

vol. 8

simple contemporary settings for songs 71-80 in the Roud Index

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introduction

In the intervening months between the publication of this and the previous volume, I seem to have accidentally started a record label, by way of releasing a compilation album of songs based on the arrangements published in Volume 1 of this series, performed by some of my favourite musicians. It was a long standing dream that I couldn't quite believe actually became a reality in the end, although it did take a full year from conception to release. Also it turns out that the practical, administrative and marketing burden of such an endeavour has distracted me from producing work for the printed page, so apologies to all of you who have been waiting patiently months longer than usual for this issue. However, here we are, and it is a veritable smörgåsbord of drama, death, myth and unreliable history. The first two ballads we can say are almost entirely fictional, coming as they do from the story universe of our most beloved and betighted redistributor of wealth, Robin Hood. The final eight are based on true historical events, with varying degrees of attachment to the thin thread* of reality that runs through this particular variety of song. These are always a gift to the folk music researcher as it gives us a metric for assessment and discussion, namely: what did the ballad writers choose to include from the known facts, and what did they confect for the purposes of adding melodrama and spice, presumably to aid sales and increase the possibility of performance and publication? It's normally a mystifying black-box-style process with no real answers, but if you were looking for those, as you should know by now, folk song probably isn't for you. But in our search for non-existent answers, we often uncover other truths, and explore dark and intriguing side alleys of the human roadmap that gave rise to these songs in the first place.

Other things have also happened in the meantime, including the appearance of a brilliant new podcast, *"In the Roud"* from English folk all-rounder Matt Quinn, based on the format of these books. Working through the Roud Index, starting at no. 1, *"The Raggle Taggle Gypsies"*, half of each episode looks at the origins and history of each song, and in the second half Matt discusses the musical aspects with a performer. I'm very happy to have inspired such a delightful spin off project, and Matt has assembled brilliant guests and helms the whole thing beautifully - I hope it will run and run. If you have enjoyed these books, please seek out the podcast and show Matt as much support as you have shown me.

Karl Sinfield, June 2024.

* Often these are actually multiple mismatched threads, woven haphazardly together into some kind of unwearable five-dimensional musical dressing gown.

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. **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.

* 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 71

Robin Hood And The Three Squires

AKA: Robin Hood rescuing the Widow's Three Sons from the Sheriff when going to be executed, Robin Hood rescuing the Three Squires from Nottingham Gallows, Robin Hood, Bold Robin Hood

Summary:

Robin Hood encounters a woman weeping in the forest. He learns that her sons had been caught poaching deer from the King, and were now sentenced to hang. Robin promises to free them and sets off to Nottingham. When Robin arrives (disguised in beggar's clothing he acquires on the way) he asks to be the executioner, seeking no fee other than a toot on a horn to signal the sons' imminent arrival in heaven. The Sheriff, thinking he has struck the deal of a lifetime, agrees. Once on the gallows, Robin blows his horn, signalling his men who swoop in and perform the rescue.

Setting notes:

This is one of the more popular* Robin Hood ballads, telling a fairly typical tale of the tight-wearing outlaw engaging in a little guerilla class warfare as a means of redressing the balance of power from the wealthy landowners to the common folk. It initially appeared in the popular 87 page ballad collection** "Robin Hood's Garland" which was first published in 1663, subsequently being reprinted in a similar form for hundreds of years. This slim volume is commonly viewed as the primary source for most of the extant Robin Hood mythos. The setting here has been evolved from the most prevalent recorded versions (particularly those from John Kirkpatrick, and The Songwainers) which was collected by George Gardiner in Hampshire in 1909 from a 75 year old Mrs Goodyear***.

Suggested further listening:

"Robin Hood Rescuing the Three Squires", John Kirkpatrick, *Ballads*

"Robin Hood Rescuing Three Squires", Charles Finnemore, [Youtube]

"Robin Hood Rescuing Three Squires", Paul Carbuncle, *Old Boots and Weasels*

"Robin Hood and the Three Squires", The Songwainers, *The Songwainers*

"Robin Hood", The Halliard, *The Last Goodnight!*

* Not a great boast, as it's rare for a Robin Hood ballad to be sung out anywhere today. Perhaps the outlaw's singular presence in popular culture has rendered songs in this category, for want of a better phrase, a bit naff.

** For various reasons, it's unlikely that these were published as folk songs in the traditional sense, more as escapist popular long-form poems for the middle classes to read as light relief.

*** Folk song collector Ann Gilchrist suggested that this tune appears to be based on a variant of "The Outlandish Knight" (Roud 21) discovered in 1906 by renowned Yorkshire collector Frank Kidson.

ROUD 71: ROBIN HOOD AND THE THREE SQUIRES

Dm C Dm
 I'll tell you a story of bold Robin Hood,
 G C Am
 Through the forest around ranged he,
 Dm Am C Dm
 And the first that he met was a gay lady
 Dm C Dm
 A-weeping all on the highway.

Alternate chords:

Am	G	Am
	D	G
Am	Em	G
Am	G	Am

"Oh why do you weep, gay lady?" he said / "Oh why do you weep?" said he.
 "Oh why do you weep?" said bold Robin Hood / "I pray thee, come tell unto me".

"I do weep," this lady she said / And bitterly she did cry,
 "Oh I do weep for my three sons / For they are condemned to die."

"Oh this they have done," the lady she said / "That they are condemned to die:
 They've stolen sixteen of the king's royal deer / And for that to be hanged on high."

"Oh go you 'way home, gay lady," he said / "Go you 'way home," said he.
 "Oh go you 'way home," said bold Robin Hood / "Tomorrow I set them free."

So bold Robin Hood he was galloping along / 'Twas in the best part of the day
 When there he did meet with an old beggar-man / Come begging all on the highway.

Now the beggar-man had an old coat on his back / Nor green, nor yellow, nor red,
 And thinks Robin Hood, 'twould serve him full well / To be in this beggar-man's stead.

"Oh, come change your apparel, old father," he said, / "Come change your apparel with mine;
 And here's twenty good shillings to drink your own health / In merry good ale and wine."

So they changed their apparel, they changed all their clothes / Till each wore the other's attire,
 And as much like a beggar did Robin Hood look / As the beggar-man looked like a squire.

So bold Robin Hood to Nottingham came, / To Nottingham town came he.
 And the sheriff did meet, and him he did greet, / Likewise the squires all three.

"Oh save you, oh save you, High Sheriff," he said, / "And I beg you all down on one knee
 That as for the death of these three squires / The hangman I might be."

"Soon granted, soon granted," the High Sheriff said, / "Soon granted unto thee.
 And you shall have all of their clothing so fine / And their money to be your fee."

"Oh, I want none of their clothing so fine / Nor their money to be my fee.
 But all I desire is to blast on my horn / That their souls to heaven may flee."

"Oh blow, then blow," the High Sheriff said, / "Blow, and have no doubt,
 I would have you blow well such a mighty fine blast / You'd blow both your blessed eyes out."

So Robin Hood climbed up to the gallows so high, / Went skipping from stock to stone.
 "By the faith of my body," the High Sheriff said, / "You're nimble for an old beggar-man."

So Robin blew once, Robin blew twice, / And Robin blew three times shrill
 Till a hundred and ten of Robin Hood's men / Came running all down the green hill.

"What men are those?" the High Sheriff said, / "What men are all those?" said he.
 "Oh, they're all of them mine and none of them thine / And they've come for the squires all three."

"Oh take them, oh take them," the High Sheriff said, / "And a curse on your bugle that blows.
 And curse every pocket in your beggar-man's cloak, / And curse you and your beggar-man's clothes."

Then bold Robin Hood he shot a fat buck, / Little John he shot a fat doe;
 And they are away to the merry green wood / With the three squires all in a row.

ROUD 72

Robin Hood and Queen Katherine

AKA: Renowned Robin Hood, His Famous Archery Truly Related

Summary:

King Henry's men have been relieved of five hundred pounds by Robin Hood, the cash being turned over as a gift to gain Queen Katherine's favour*. The King calls for an archery contest, and Katherine invites Robin and his men to compete in disguise. They win, and Robin is unveiled and invited to live at the Queen's court. Robin prefers the company of his merry men, and returns to the forest.

Setting notes:

This ballad, the third** in the trio of Robin Hood songs that appear together in the Roud index, is another episode of the saga that has failed to enter the oral song tradition in any lasting way. Many Robin Hood ballads, including this one, include a lot of named characters, often seemingly brought in as observers or commentators not entirely pursuant to the central plot - in this instance not just Queen Katherine (or Catherine in other versions) but King Henry, Dick Patrinton, Sir Richard Lee***, the Bishop of Hereford, and someone just called "Woodcocke". In the middle ages this may have given the tale the ring of authenticity, but with the benefit of historical research we can safely conclude this is just more of the usual practice of a ballad author plucking names out of the air that would have been recognisable to a lay audience, thus creating a more saleable narrative. The version presented here was condensed and composed by Matt Quinn in 2023, commissioned for this book.

Suggested further listening:

"Robin Hood and Queen Katherine", Matt Quinn, [Youtube]

* We will have to overlook the lapse in purity of Robin's "steal from the rich to give to the poor" mantra here.

** If you regard three Robin Hood songs together an egregious oversaturation of outlawry, be thankful I am not working through the Child Index of folk songs, as others have, only to reach number 117 and have thirty four highly unpopular yet brutally consecutive Robin Hood ballads to work through. The whole Sing Yonder project might already be self-destructively niche, but not even I would force three and a half volumes of swashbuckling beforested banditry upon you.

*** There was a Sir Richard Lee who was the Royal Engineer of Henry VIII. With this in mind it might be tempting to link this story to Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon; this particular royal couple was commonly used to bolster the narrative arc of fictitious ballads of the time. However, the prevalent theory of current medievalists is that "Robin Hood" was not a single person, but a *nom de guerre* used by generations of outlaws from possibly as early as the 12th century onwards, which brings into the frame other famous Henrys, including Henry II, Henry III, Henry V, and even King Henry II of France, and his fearsome queen, Catherine de' Medici.

ROUD 72: ROBIN HOOD AND QUEEN KATHERINE

G Am C G
Now listen you meek gentlemen,
G C D
A while for a little space
C Em7 Am G
And I shall tell you how Queen Katherine
C D G
Got Robin Hood his grace.

Alternate chords:

C Dm F C
C F G
F Am7 Dm C
F G C

King Henry waged five hundred pounds / "Queen Katherine, I say to thee,"
"That's a princely wager," says the Queen / "Between your grace and me."

"Where will I find archers?" says the Queen / "You've the flower of archery"
"Now take your choice" King Henry says / "Through all of our England free."

"All from North Wales to Westchester, / and also to Coventry;
and when you have chosen the best that you can, / The wager must go with me"

The queen is to her palace gone, / To her page thus she did say:
Come here to me, Dick Patrinton, / Trusted and true this day.

You must bring me all archer's names, / All strangers they must be,
All from North Wales to Westchester, / And also to Coventry

Now send a message to bold Robin Hood / And mark, page, what I say;
In London they must be with me / Upon St George's Day

To bold Robin Hood, the page he did go / These words from the Queen did say
At London you must be with her / Upon St George's Day

'She sends you here her gay gold ring / A token for to be,
And as you are a banished man, / She trusts to set you free.'

With hat of white and feathers black, / And bows and arrows keen,
Robin Hood set out to London Town, / To present Queen Katherine.

But when they came to London town, / They fell upon bended knee;
Says, God you save, Queen Katherine, / And all of her dignity!

'Come here to me, Sir Richard Lee, / You are a knight full good;
And well it is known from your pedigree / You come from Gawain's blood.

'What will you bet,' says bold Robin Hood, / 'And stake it on the ground?'
'That I will do, fine fellow,' he says, / 'I will wager five hundred pounds.'

Then the queen's archers they shot about / Till it was three and three;
Then the lady's gave a shout, / Says, Woodcock, beware your eye!

'Well, game and game,' then said our king, / 'The third three pays for all;'
Then Robin rounded with our queen, / Says, The king's part shall be small.

Robin pulled forth a broad arrow, / He shot it underhand,
Say's the King unto the Queen / 'He's the best in all the land'

He truly is the best in the land / The flower of archery
If I thought it had been bold Robin Hood, / I would not have bet one penny.

'If you would leave your bold outlaws, / And come and dwell with me,
Then I would say you are welcome, sir, / The flower of archery.'

'I will not leave my bold outlaws / For the gold in England free,
In merry Sherwood I'll take my end, / Under my trusted tree.

ROUD 73

Hugh of Lincoln

AKA: Sir Hugh or the Jew's Daughter, Little Sir Hugh, The Jew's Garden, Fatal Flower Garden, Sir Hugh, It Rained a Mist

Summary:

Based on a supposedly true event from 1255, this ballad finds young Hugh playing ball with his friends when he mistakenly kicks it over a wall. In attempting to retrieve it, he is lured into a nearby house and subsequently murdered. His spirit speaks to his mother and guides her to the well where his body lies.

Setting notes:

All available evidence points towards this song starting life as a blood libel ballad; essentially a cynical method for the Protestant church to create anti-Semitic fear of the large Jewish community that existed in Lincoln in the 13th century, in order to increase their own wealth and power. This theory is supported by the large amount of New Testament imagery that can be found in the early versions of the ballad. As the song has evolved over subsequent centuries, and new demons are required, the evil-doers sometimes take different forms, including travellers, or just rich people; it's a small but significant leap from "The Jew's Garden" to "The Duke's Garden", for example. In US tradition, there is a well known lullaby version (normally under the title "It Rained a Mist" or "False Flower Garden") that removes all mention of murder altogether. The basis of the (surprisingly complete) version given here was taken down by American folklorist William Wells Newell in New York some time around 1880. The singer was an unnamed Irish schoolgirl living in a rough worker's encampment on the edge of Central Park, which was at the time a quarry being used to collect stone for the now highly desirable "brownstone" residential areas that can be found in East Manhattan. I have made some minor changes* to the text for regularity and clarity so it fits the tune that comes from Maggie Hammond of Appalachia, via the brilliant Cath and Phil Tyler.

Suggested further listening:

"Fatal Flower Garden", Nelstone's Hawaiians, *American Folk Music Vol. 2*

"Rained a Mist", Cath and Phil Tyler, *The Ox and the Ax*

"Little Sir Hugh", Steeleye Span, *Commoners' Choir*

* One significant change was to rename the boy back to the original Hugh; at some point in its journey to New York City, the boy had become "Harry Hughes".

ROUD 73: HUGH OF LINCOLN

C
It was on a May, on a midsummer's day,
F C
When it rained, it rained so small;
Am
And little Hugh and his playfellows all
C F G C
Went out to play the ball. / Ball ball, Went out to play the ball

Alternate chords:

G
C G
Em
G C D G

He knocked it up, and he knocked it down, / He knocked it o'er and o'er;
The very first kick little Hugh did take, / He broke the duke's windows all.

She came down, the duke's daughter, / She was dressed in green:
'Come back, come back, my pretty little boy, / And play the ball again.'

'I wont come back, and I daren't come back, / Without my playfellows all;
And if my mother she should come in, / She'd make my blood to fall.'

She took an apple out of her pocket, / And rolled it along the plain;
Little Harry Hughes picked up the apple, / And sorely rued the day.

She takes him by the lily-white hand, / And leads him from hall to hall,
Until she came to a little dark room, / That no one could hear him call.

She sat herself on a golden chair, / Him on another close by,
And there she pulled out her little penknife, / That was both sharp and fine.

Little Hugh had to pray for his soul, / For his days were at an end;
She stuck her knife in Harry's heart, / And the blood came very thin.

She rolled him in a quire of tin, / That was in so many a fold;
She rolled him to a little draw-well, / That was fifty fathoms deep.

'Lie there, lie there, little Hugh,' she cried, / 'And God forbid you to swim,
If you be a disgrace to me, / Or to any of my friends.'

The day passed by, and the night came on, / And every scholar was home,
And every mother had her own child, / But poor Harry's mother had none.

She walked up and down the street, / With a sally rod in her hand,
And God showed her to the little draw-well, / That was fifty fathoms deep.

'If you be there, little Hugh,' she said, / 'And God forbid you to be,
Speak one word to your own dear mother, / That is looking all over for thee.'

'This I am, dear mother,' he cried, / 'And lying in great pain,
With a little penknife lying close to my heart, / The duke's daughter has me slain.

'Give my blessing to my schoolfellows all, / And tell them to be at the church,
And make my grave both large and deep, / And my coffin of hazel and birch.

'Put my Bible at my head, / My testament at my feet,
My little prayer-book at my right side, / And sound will be my sleep.'

ROUD 74

Queen Eleanor's Confession

AKA: Earl Marshall, Queen Eleanor, Our Queen's Sick, The Dying Queen

Summary:

On her deathbed, Eleanor decides to confess her sins. The King plans to disguise himself and Earl Marshall as priests, and so take the confession themselves in order to learn her secrets. Marshall is initially reluctant, but the King swears a Royal oath that no harm will come to him. The Queen confesses* that she lost her maidenhead to Earl Marshall, and Henry was not the father of her child. The King throws off his robe in anger, saying he would have Marshall killed if not for his Royal oath.

Setting notes:

The real Eleanor of Aquitaine married Henry II of England in 1162, when she was 30 and the young King only 19. Since Eleanor had already had two children to her previous husband, King Louis VII of France, this ballad must fall into the category of a fictional story** attached to real historical figures. This type of tale appears multiple times in literature throughout history and across Europe, and may well have its roots in a form of French medieval popular poetry called *fabliaux**** that was prevalent in the Northwest of the country between about 1150 and 1400. Its influence spread widely from these localised origins, and, for a quasi-historical Royal ballad not overflowing with melodrama, it has been surprisingly frequently recorded. Most recordings (and the version given here) use the only surviving original tune given in Bronson's "The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads", although there have been some interesting variations, and some of those are given in the examples below.

Suggested further listening:

"Queen Eleanor's Confession", Maddy Prior and Tim Hart, *Heyday*

"Queen Eleanor's Confession", Ewan & Kitty MacColl, *Blood & Roses Vol. 3*

"Queen Eleanor's Confession", Fay Hield, *Old Adam*

"Queen Eleanor's Confession", The Exiles, *The Hale and the Hanged*

* This being a folk song, there are multiple confessions, but the one given here is the most relevant to the plot.

** A prevalent (and very believable) theory is that disapproving Catholic sentiments are behind the besmirching of Eleanor's character that is the central theme of this ballad.

*** The particular *fabliau* that may have inspired this ballad is called "*Le Chevalier qui fist sa fame confesse*" or "The Knight who confesses his fame".

ROUD 74: QUEEN ELEANOR'S CONFESSION

C
Queen Eleanor was a sick woman
 F G
and sick just like to die,
 C Am G
And she has sent for two friars of France
 C G C
to come to her speedily.

Alternate chords:

G
 C D
G Em D
G D G

The King has called his nobles all, by one, by two, by three,
"Earl Marshal, I'll go shrive the Queen and thou shalt wend with me."

"Oh no, oh no," cried Earl Marshal, "such things can never be,
For if the Queen should get word of this then hanged I would be!"

"I swear by the sun, I swear by the moon, and by the stars on high,
And by my sceptre and my crown, Earl Marshal shall not die!"

So the King's put on a grey friar's gown and the Earl's put on another
And they are gone to fair London town like friars both together.

And when they came before the Queen, they fell on bended knee,
"What matter, what matter, our gracious Queen, you've called so speedily?"

"Oh, if you are two friars of France, it's you I wish to see.
But if you are two English lords, then hanged you shall be!"

"Oh, we are not two English lords, but friars both are we,
And we sang the Song of Solomon as we came all o'er the sea."

"Oh, the first vile sin I did commit I now will tell to thee:
I fell in love with the Earl Marshal as he brought me o'er the sea."

"Oh, that was a vile sin," said the King, "may God forgive it thee!"
"Amen, amen," said the Earl Marshal, with a heavy heart spake he.

"Oh, the next vile sin I did commit I will to you unfold:
Earl Marshal had my virgin dower beneath this gown of gold."

"Oh, that was a vile sin," said the King, "may God forgive it thee!"
"Amen, amen," said the Earl Marshal, for a frightened man was he.

"Oh, don't you see two yonder little boys a-playing at the ball:
Oh, that one is Earl Marshal's son and I like him the best of all.

"Oh, don't you see yon other little boy a-playing at the ball:
Oh, that one is King Henry's son and I like him the worst of all.

"His head is like a black boar's head, his feet are like a bear."
"What matter, what matter," cried the King, "he's my son and my only heir!"

And the King pulled off his grey friar's smock and stood in his scarlet so red,
Queen Eleanor turned in her bed and cried that she was betrayed.

And the King looked o'er his left shoulder and a grim look looked he,
"Oh, Earl Marshal, but for my oath, then hanged you would be!"



ROUD 75

Gude Wallace

AKA: A Sang o Gude Wallace, William Wallace

Summary:

William Wallace (the real life hero of the first wars of Scottish Independence) meets a woman on the road who tells him there are a number of Englishmen in a local inn who are looking for him. Wallace walks in and kills them all in a surprise attack*.

Setting notes:

This ballad is a version of a Wallace story taken from the epic poem written by a mysterious author known as Blind Harry in the 15th century, some 172 years after Wallace's grisly execution at the hands of forces loyal to King Edward I. At some point conventional wisdom suggests that, probably some time in the 18th century, this account was turned into a singable ballad format. Two tunes were collected around the beginning of the 19th century, one found by poet Robert Burns, another by antiquarian and collector C. K. Sharpe. The song was clearly fairly popular around Scotland, and collected from various working class persons including tinkers, old women and serving men. Despite the popularity** of Wallace, the song has not been widely recorded, the only official revival recording*** being that from Arctic marine biologist and Scottish folk song collector Max Dunbar, who used the Burns tune for his recording. In the great tradition of mashing sources together and calling it "the folk process", the words given here are an abridged and anglicised version of those discovered by Robert Burns, while the tune is based on Sharpe's.

Suggested further listening:

"Gude Wallace", Max Dunbar, *Songs and Ballads of the Scottish Wars*

* In one later version, there is a clearly post hoc addition (probably added some time in the 19th century) of the back story given in Blind Harry's epic, where William is forced to witness the execution of his mistress, and the trip to the hostelry thus portrayed as a more moral act of retribution.

** Thanks to the general antipathy towards the English, Blind Harry's poem was the second most popular book in Scotland after the Bible for several hundred years after its publication.

*** There are several examples of the ballad being recited without melody over a backing of classical music. It's stirring work, and will be of interest to Scottish patriots everywhere, but no use to us here.

ROUD 75: GUDE WALLACE

Am Em F
Brave Wallace over yon river he came,
Am Em F
And he lighted low down on the plain,
Am Em F G
And he came to a gay lady,
Am G Am
As she was at the well washing.

'Some tidings, some tidings,' brave Wallace he said,
'Some tidings you must tell unto me;
Now since we are met here together on the plain,
Some tidings you must tell unto me.'

'O go you down to yonder ale-house,
And there are fifteen Englishmen,
And they are seeking for good Wallace,
And him to take and him for to hang.'

Well he leapt twofold o'er a stick,
And he leapt threefold o'er a tree,
And he's gone away to the little ale-house,
The fifteen Englishmen to see.

When he came to the little ale-house,
He walked in, says, Decency be there!
The English proud captain he answered him,
And he answered him with a grand demeanour.

He's taken the captain out o'er the blade,
Till a bit of meat he never did eat more;
He sticked all the rest as they sat around,
And he left them all a sprawling there.

'Get up, get up, good wife,' he says,
'Get up and get me some dinner in haste,
For it is now three days and nights
Since a bit of meat my mouth did taste.'

The dinner was not made ready,
Nor was it on the table set,
Till another fifteen Englishmen
Were a'parading about the gate.

'Come out, come out now, Wallace,' they cried,
'For this is the place you are sure for to die;'
'I trust not so little to good,' he says,
'Although I be but ill-wordy.'

The landlord ran out, the good wife ran in,
They put the house in such a fever!
Five of them he sticked where they stood,
And other five he smothered in the gutter.

Five he followed to the merry greenwood,
And these five he hanged on a bough,
And by the morn at ten o'clock
He was with his men at Lochmaben.

Alternate chords:

Em	Bm	C
Em	Bm	C
Em	Bm	C
Em	C	D
Em	C	D
Em	C	D

ROUD 76

Johnnie Armstrong

AKA: Johnnie Armstrong's Last Farewell, Johnnie Armstrong's Last Goodbye, Johnny He's A-Ridin', The Betrayal of Johnnie Armstrong

Summary:

Border reiver John Armstrong of Gilnockie is summoned to meet the King, where he assumes he will be pardoned for his services to the Scottish cause. Instead, the King executes Armstrong and 36 of his men for treason.

Setting notes:

Like the previous ballad, this concerns a real person, and, further, an actual event that has corroborating historical accounts. King James I of Scotland had become tired of the diplomatic issues that Armstrong was causing with his cattle-rustling and protection racket, and decided he had to make a gesture to the English monarchy by stopping the reiver's incursions, which he did in 1530. There is even a quote from Armstrong's final speech used in the ballad, namely the "I have asked grace of a graceless face" verse. The main contested part of the ballad is the King's deception that the meeting with Armstrong would lead to a pardon - this is not mentioned in historical accounts, and would seem to be a poetic flourish. The first mention of Armstrong in a musical context comes in "The Complaynt of Scotland"* an anonymous anti-English propaganda piece that was published in 1549, where a number of Scottish Border dances and ballads are named, one of which is "Ihonne Ermistrangis Dance" - unfortunately no tune or words are given, so whether it relates to those we know of today we will never know, though it seems unlikely, as all the collected versions are of a similar, later style. The tune for this version is based on a group of similar Scottish airs that all appeared some time in the early 19th century, and the words are anglicised and abridged from a 1724 anthology by Allan Ramsay, who wrote "*This I copied from a Gentleman's Mouth of the Name of Armstrang, who is the 6th Generation from this John.*"

Suggested further listening:

"Johnnie Armstrong", Willie Beattie, *Up in the North and Down in the South*

"Johnnie Armstrong", Jim & Susie Malcolm, *Auld Toon Shuffle*

"Johnnie Armstrong", Steeleye Span, *Dodgy Bastards*

"The Betrayal of Johnnie Armstrong", David Wilkie and Cowboy Celtic, *The Drover Road*

* As well as containing very early mentions of some ballads, the Complaynt is also a rich source for etymologists, as it contains the first recorded mention of a surprisingly diverse selection of words, including *axis*, *barbarian*, *buffoon*, *cabinet*, *crackling*, *decadence*, *excrement*, *heroic*, *humid*, *imbecile*, *moo*, *parallel*, *robust*, *suffocation*, *superb*, *timid* and *water-lily*.

ROUD 76: JOHNNIE ARMSTRONG

D Bm D A
Some speak of lords and some speak of lairds,
D G A D
And some speak of men of high degree.
 Bm G
Of a gentleman I sing a song,
D G A D
Sometimes called Laird of Gilnockie.

The King he writes a loving letter.
In his own hand so tenderly;
And he has sent it to Johnnie Armstrong,
To come and speak with him speedily.

Elliots and Armstrongs did convene,
They were a gallant company;
"We'll ride and meet our lawful King,
And bring him safe to Gilnockie."

When Johnnie came before the king
With all his men so brave to see,
The king he moved his bonnet to him
He saw he was a king as well as he.

"May I ask grace, my sovereign liege,
Grace for my loyal men and me?
For my name it is but Johnny Armstrong,
And a subject of yours, my liege," said he.

"Away, away, you traitor strong,
Out of my sight soon may you be;
I've never granted a traitor's life.
And now I'll not begin with thee."

"To seek hot water beneath cold ice,
Surely is a great folly;
I have asked grace of a graceless face,
But there is none for my men and me.

"But had I known before I came
Just how unkind you'd be to me
I would have kept the Border side
In spite of all your strength and gear."

John was hung at Caerlanrig,
And all his men so grieved to see;
All of Scotland was never so pained,
To see so many brave men die.

Alternate chords:

G	Em	G	D
G	C	D	G
	Em	C	
G	C	D	G

ROUD 77

The Death of Queen Jane

AKA: Queen Jane, The Duke of Bedford, Queen Jeanie, Jane Was a Neighbor, Death of the Royal Queen Jane

Summary:

Queen Jane is in labour, but it is not progressing well. After six weeks she seems like she will not survive, so sends for her husband King Henry. She begs him to cut her open to save the baby, and he initially refuses, but in the end the surgery is performed, and some time after Queen Jane dies.

Setting notes:

It is well known that Jane Seymour, the third wife of Henry VIII, died twelve days after giving birth to her only child, the future King Edward VI. That is about all we know, however, and modern historians are reasonably convinced that she died from an infection, rather than as a result of attempted surgery*. However, as usual this inaccuracy has not limited the spread of this popular ballad. One possible explanation for its fame, as well as the tragedy and horror of the situation (which often seems to aid the longevity of a ballad), and its relative brevity and simplicity, is Henry's romantic declaration that he must not lose his wife or he will lose everything**. Musically, a number of tunes were collected between 1820 and the early 20th century, but none really carried through to the recorded era. A modern tune written by Dáithí Sproule in 1971 (and a few years later popularised by The Bothy Band) has taken root, and is the most likely version you will find. As this is so popular and prevalent in the modern recorded era, easy chords are widely available. Instead, here is a simple little version collected in Devon in 1893 by Sabine Baring-Gould, from a singing mine-worker called Sam Fone.

Suggested further listening:

"The Death of Queen Jane", The Bothy Band, *After Hours*

"Death of Queen Jane", Martin Carthy & Dave Swarbrick, *Straws in the Wind*

"The Death of Queen Jane", Cyril Tawney, *The Outlandish Knight*

* The grim truth is that, while caesarian sections were not unheard of in the 16th century, due to the extreme dangers of surgery at the time, they were only normally performed when the mother had already died.

** Again, there is some contested historical record around this, with some sources suggesting that Henry actually made the opposite pronouncement - ie. Jane should be sacrificed to save the life of his heir. Given his well-documented utilitarian approach to marriage, this might seem to be the sadder, but more plausible reality.

ROUD 78

The Duke of Grantham

AKA: The Duke of Bedford, Six Dukes, Six Dukes Went a-fishing

Summary:

Six Dukes out walking find a dead body washed up on the shore. It turns out to be their friend, another Duke*. They remove his entrails and ship him home for a lavish funeral.

Setting notes:

In Francis Child's collection of ballads this was only worthy of a footnote, as he viewed it a crude plagiarism of the previous entry, "The Death of Queen Jane" (Roud 77). This seems somewhat unfair as it's a completely different story, and is probably more a reflection of Child's dim view of broadside ballads, a 1690 example of which seems to be the original source of the ballad. It seems to have been a fairly popular song, no doubt helped by the gruesome tabloid details of the poor Duke's disembowelling, and was clearly favoured by the working classes as two of the most well known early 20th century sources of the song being sung are from workhouse residents. One of these was a great Lincolnshire character called George Gouldthorpe**, a labourer and lime burner whose humble charm seemed to have profoundly affected the song collector Percy Grainger, for whom we have to thank for his 1906 phonograph recording of Gouldthorpe, upon which this setting was based.

Suggested further listening:

"Six Dukes Went a-Fishing", A L Lloyd, *Traditional English Songs*

"Six Dukes", Misshaped Pearls, *Thamesis*

"Six Dukes", Lisa Knapp, *Wild and Undaunted*

* The identity of said Duke was speculated upon at length by Lucy Broadwood in the early 20th century. She came to no definite conclusion, other than it could be the stories of a mishmash of unfortunate Dukes, including William de la Pole (the first Duke of Suffolk) who was exiled and beheaded at sea, the Duke of Grafton (the illegitimate son of Charles II, who died by falling of his horse, and whose death was recounted in the 1690 broadside, albeit inaccurately) and the son of the Duke of Bedford who also died falling off a horse in 1767. The moral of the story is, if you are a Duke, avoid horses, at least two thirds of the time.

** Grainger's description of Gouldthorpe is the usual academic song-collector mix of admiring, grateful, and just a little patronising: "His child-like mind and unworldly nature, seemingly void of all bitterness, singularly fitted him to voice the purity and sweetness of folk-art. He gave out his tunes in all possible gauntness, for the most part in broad, even notes; but they were adorned by a richness of dialect hard to match. In recalling Mr. Gouldthorpe I think most of the mild yet lordly grandeur of his nature."

ROUD 78: THE DUKE OF GRANTHAM

Em D
Six dukes went a-fishing
G D
Down by yon seaside.
Bm D
One of them spied a body
A D
Lain by the waterside.

The one said to the other,
These words I heard them say:
“It’s the Royal Duke of Grantham
That the tide has washed away.”

They took him up to Portsmouth
To a place where was known;
From there up to London
To the place where he was born.

They took out his bowels,
And stretched out his feet,
And they ’balm’d his body
With roses so sweet.

Six Dukes stood before him,
Twelve raised him from the ground,
Nine Lords followed after him
In their black mourning gown.

Black was their mourning,
And white were the wands,
And so yellow were the flamboys
That they carried in their hands.

Now he lies betwixt two towers,
He now lies in cold clay.
And the Royal Queen of Grantham
Went weeping away.

Alternate chords:

	Am	G
C		G
	Em	G
	D	G

ROUD 79

Mary Hamilton

AKA: Mary Hamilton, The Four Marys, The Queen's Marie, The Purple Dress, Mary Mild, The Duke o' York's Dother

Summary:

A handmaiden of Mary Queen of Scots, one of four named Mary, has been found to have borne and murdered an illegitimate child. Consequently, she is executed.

Setting notes:

While Mary Queen of Scots did indeed have four handmaidens named Mary when she was sent to France in 1548, none of them were named Hamilton, nor were any executed for infanticide. This detail has come from elsewhere* and been incorporated into this sad ballad. As usual, such a minor detail as gross historical inaccuracy are no barrier to effective ballad transmission, and this has been a popular song, especially in Scotland. Since the revival era, thanks mainly to a haunting version by Joan Baez, this is a very commonly recorded song today. Most follow the melody used by Baez, although Bronson in his "Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads" found a dozen quite diverse tunes. The version given here was found by early 20th century Scots collectors Gavin Greig and Alexander Keith. Greig and Keith recorded a man called William Wallace in Aberdeenshire in 1900 singing this plaintive rendition, which he had learned from his mother some 70 years previously.

Suggested further listening:

"Mary Hamilton", Joan Baez, *Joan Baez*

"Mary Mild", Ellen Mitchell, *Have a Drop Mair*

"Mary Mild", Alasdair Roberts, *Grief in the Kitchen and Mirth in the Hall*

"Mary Hamilton", Katherine Campbell, *The Songs of Amelia and Jane Harris*

* There are two main candidates vying for this dubious honour. One is an unnamed French woman who had an affair with the queen's apothecary while in service, and was subsequently hanged. Another is a woman called, coincidentally, Mary Hamilton, who was a handmaiden of Empress Catherine of Russia, and in 1719 was executed for infanticide. Both stories have their obvious merits; neither is supported by any conclusive evidence for historical truth.

ROUD 79: MARY HAMILTON

D
Oh word's gone up and word's gone doon
A
And word's gone through the hall,
D Bm A
That Mary Mild is great with child,
Bm G
To the highest Stewart of all.

Oh they sought it east, they sought it west,
And in the unmade bed,
And there they've found this fair child
A-wallowing in its blood.

"It's lie down by me oh Mary Mild,
Oh lie you down be me,
And every favour you might ask,
Then I might grant to thee."

"It's happy, happy is the maid
That is born of beauty free,
For it's been my red and rosy cheek
That has been the death of me.

"For often have I dressed my queen
And put gold in her hair,
But now I've got for my reward
The gallows to be my share.

"It's little did my mother think
On the day she cradled me
O the lands I was to travel in
And the death I wis to die."

"Will you put on the black, the black,
Or will you put on the brown?"
"Oh, no, I'll put on the sky blue silk
And I'll shine through Edinburgh Town.

"Yesterday the queen had four Marys,
And tonight she'll have but three,
There was Mary Seaton, and Mary Beaton,
Mary Carmichael and me."

Alternate chords:

G
D D
G Em D
Em C

ROUD 80

Edom O'Gordon

AKA: Adam Gordon or The Burning of Cargarff, Adam Gorman, Sick Sick, Captain Car, Adam McGordon

Summary:

Edom O'Gordon* sees his opportunity to take the strategically-located castle of his enemy while the men and warriors are away fighting other battles. He suggests the women and children sheltering there should surrender, but the formidable lady of the house responds by firing shots from a pistol from the castle wall, injuring Gordon. Enraged, Gordon orders the castle to be burned, killing all of its 27 inhabitants.**

Setting notes:

Another historical ballad, and this time it is mostly true. Many versions have names and places changed, and there is a grisly fictionalised event involving a small child being pierced on a sword, but otherwise this tells a fairly truthful account of the burning of Corgarff Castle, ancestral home of the Forbes family, in 1571. There is a manuscript of this ballad from 1579***, giving us a very close view of the actual events, although it still manages to include the inaccuracies mentioned above. In recording terms, this is mostly a ballad of concern to the people of Scotland, and our modern recordings reflect that. Ewan MacColl sang a version in 1976 with an unknown tune, and this is the version that seems to have prevailed in the modern era, and also the version given here. I have anglicised the words for my own purposes - if you prefer the original Scots, they are easy to find.

Suggested further listening:

"Edom o Gordon", Ewan MacColl, *Blood and Roses Vol. 1*

"Edom o Gordon", Malinky, *The Unseen Hours*

"Edom o'Gordon", Folkal Point, *Folkal Point*

* For reasons known only to the original ballad writers, Adam Gordon of Auchindoon is rechristened Edom O'Gordon in almost every version.

** One 1755 version includes a quite extensive and highly melodramatic coda where the Lord returns to the burning castle and throws himself onto the flames in despair. This appears in a 28 page pamphlet where the poem is reproduced on its own, and one might be tempted to surmise that these verses may have been added by the publisher to pad out the page count.

*** This is an interesting and unique version for a couple of reasons, namely the plaintive "Syck sicke" refrain, and the dream premonition of the Lord that his house was burning and he should return (too late) to his wife.

ROUD 80: EDOM O'GORDON

G Em C G
It fell about the Martinmas time
G D
When the wind blew shrill and cold,
G Em C G
Said Edom o' Gordon to his men,
D G
"We must draw to some hall.

Alternate chords:

C Am F C
C G
C Am F C
G C

"What hall, what hall, my merry men? / "What hall, what hall?" said he.
"I think we'll go to Towie's hoose, / "And see his fair lady."

She thought it was her own dear lord / That she saw riding home;
But 'twas the traitor, Edom o' Gordon / That felt no sin nor shame.

"Come down, come down, Lady Campbell," he said, / "And give your house to me;
"Or else this night I swear I'll burn / You and your children three."

"I will not come down," the lady said / "For lord nor yet for rogue,
"Nor yet for any rank robber / "That comes from Auchendown.

"Come here, come here, my Jock," she cried, / "And give my gun to me.
"This night I'll make a Gordon bleed, / "A false traitor to die."

The lady, free the battlements, / Two bullets she let flee;
But she missed her mark with Gordon / For it only grazed his knee.

"Now, Lady Campbell," the Gordon cried, / "That shot will cost you dear."
And he has called the lady's man / To bring the faggots near.

"For seven years," the lady said, / "I paid you well your fee;
"And would you now turn Gordon's man / "And burn my babes and me?"

For seven years I served you well / And you paid me well my fee;
But now I am turned Gordon's man, / I must either do or die.

Then out it spoke her youngest son, / Sat on the nurse's knee:
"Open the door and let me out, / "For the smoke is choking me."

"I would give all my land," she said, / "My gear and all my fee,
"For one blast of the westlin' wind / "To blow the smoke from thee."

Then out and spoke her daughter dear / She was both slim and small:
"O, roll me in a pair of sheets / "And throw me over the wall."

They've rolled her in a pair of sheets, / And thrown her over the wall,
But on the point of Gordon's sword / She's got a deadly fall.

Then Gordon turned her o'er and o'er, / And O, her face was pale;
You are the first that e'er I slew / I wished alive again."

O, woe to see yon castle burned / That was built with stone and lime;
And woe for Lady Campbell herself / Burnt with her children nine.

Three of them were married wives, / And three of them were bairns,
And three of them were loyal maidens / That ne'er lay in men's arms.

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 1-7**:

Books:

- "Robin Hood's Garland", author unknown
- "The Beggars of England in Prose and Poetry", Albert Tschopp
- "Robin Hood: The Shaping of the Legend", Jeffrey Forgeng
- "The Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntington", Anthony Munday
- "The Blood libel legend : a casebook in anti-Semitic folklore", Brian Bebbington
- "Games and songs of American children", William Wells Newell
- "The Book of Scottish Ballads", Alexander Whitelaw
- "Life of Sir William Wallace, or, Scotland five hundred years ago", Thomas Murray
- "The Scottish Musical Museum", James Johnson
- "The Complaynt of Scotland", author unknown
- "Poetic Origins And The Ballad", Louise Pound
- "Scottish Ballads and Songs, Historical and Traditional", James Maidment
- "Ancient poems, ballads and songs of the peasantry of England", Robert Bell
- "Ancient Scottish Ballads", George Kinloch
- "The Ballad Tree", Evelyn K Wells
- "Weep Not For Me", Deborah A. Symonds
- "More Traditional Ballads of Virginia", Arthur Kyle Davis
- "Tudor Songs and Ballads, Peter J. Seng (ed.)

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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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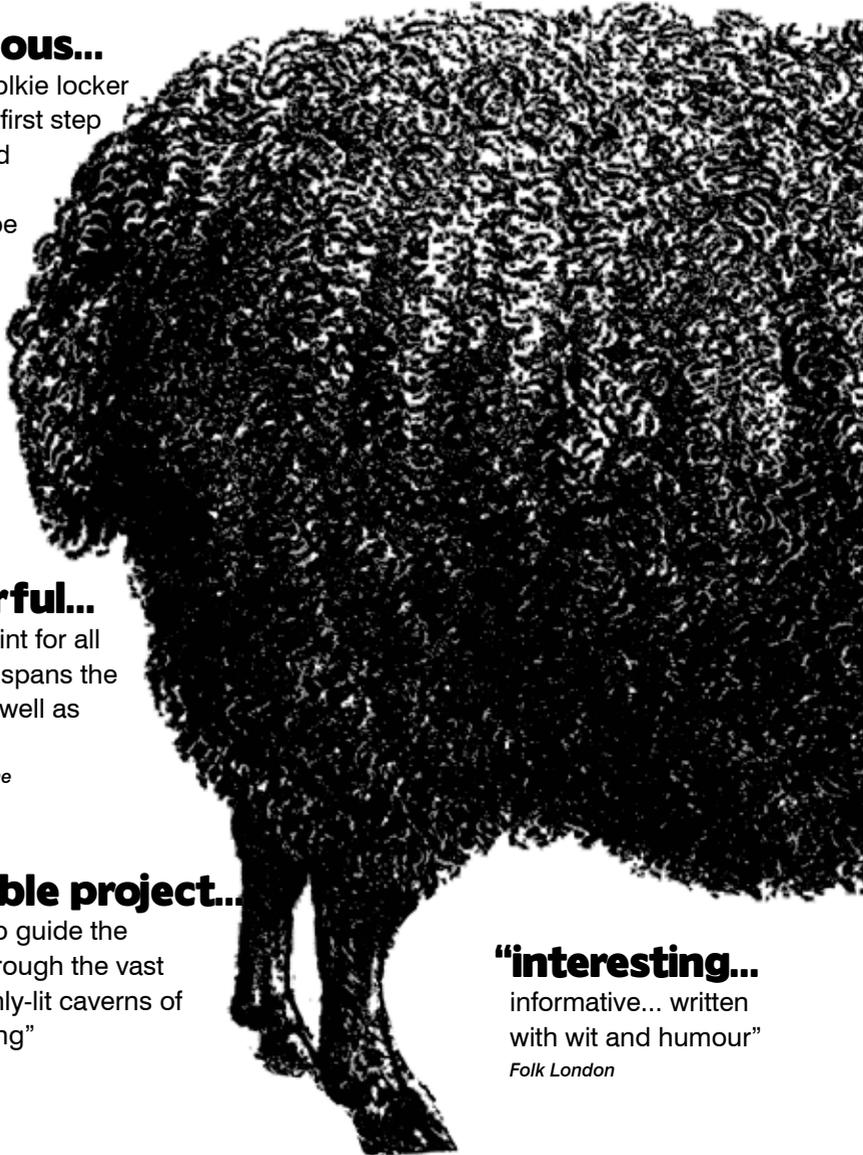
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