

# New Voices

## an Album of First Recordings

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First issued by Topic in 1965

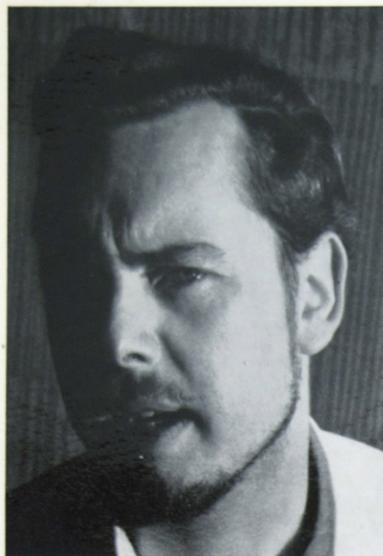
Recorded by Bill Leader in 1964

Harry Boardman accompanying himself on 5-string banjo was recorded in Manchester, Maureen Craik was recorded in Stanley, County Durham and the Watsons in London.

Notes by A L Lloyd

Front sleeve photographs by Brian Shuel

Harry Boardman



# New Voices

an album of first recordings by  
**HARRY BOARDMAN**  
**MAUREEN CRAIK**  
**The WATERSON FAMILY**



The Waterson Family Photo Brian Shuel



Maureen Craik

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The voices are new on record, though familiar in folk song clubs and not only in their own localities. They're northern voices, from Yorkshire, Lancashire and Tyneside, and they're distinctive. They're voices that have attracted special attention among the connoisseurs of the folk song scene, and now are fast becoming known and appreciated by wide audiences. TOPIC are delighted to introduce them to record-buyers. It's customary for recording companies to blow big fanfares when introducing new artists and to use windy words such as "honour" and "pride". Well, it is an honour, and TOPIC are proud to present these singers, but we feel their own songs and singing are their best recommendation, and they need no other.

**THE WATERSON FAMILY** comprises Norma, Michael and Elaine, with their second-cousin John Harrison. They come from Hull and the three, orphaned early, were brought up by their grandmother, a second-hand dealer. They're partly of Irish gipsy descent. Like thousands of others they came to folk song through an early interest in jazz and skiffle. They formed a group called The Mariners and played for a while in a coffee-house. Then, as their style became progressively less 'popped-up', more serious, they decided to start a folk song club. At present they're singing to capacity houses on Sunday nights in the largest available pub room in Hull, at the 'Bluebell'. They have a wide repertory but their abiding interest is in the songs and customs of their native East Yorkshire. They make their own harmonies to the songs and in all the world of the folk song revival there's nothing quite like the 'Waterson sound'.

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**HARRY BOARDMAN** was born in 1930 in Failsworth, a cotton town near Oldham, Lancs. His grandparents and his mother were weavers and spinners. Harry himself, formerly a railway worker, is now a printer. Local history and traditions, especially the traditions and songs of the cotton industry have fascinated him for years and he is devoted to the task of reviving interest in the fine dialect poets of his native region. Many local songs that had lingered in obscurity for generations have been restored to vigorous life through the Manchester folk song club that Harry has been leading for over ten years (it was one of the first clubs in the North of England).

**MAUREEN CRAIK** lives in Newcastle. She was born in 1944, and sang for the first time in public at the Miner's Welfare Institute in Birtley, County Durham in the company of the well-known singing family of colliers, the Elliotts. She became a helper in the organising side of the Birtley folk song club, and since then has sung in many clubs throughout Britain, and has appeared on television - in the TV studio this quiet modest-looking girl positively electrified the technicians by the sudden vigour and candour of her singing and at rehearsal the camera crews quite forgot their job, stood spellbound, and burst into applause at the end of the song which was, as it happened, The White Cockade which appears on this record.

**BOSTON HARBOUR** *The Waterson Family*

The bold Captain W. B. Whall was the first to print this song in his pioneer collection of Sea Songs and Shanties. He says: 'It is evidently the work of a seaman... and was very popular between the years 1850 and 1870'. It's a foc'sle song, a forebitter, not a shanty. The Bow-wow chorus is borrowed from an influential music-hall song of the mid-nineteenth century.

**TO THE BEGGING** *Harry Boardman*

What was it in Scots history that gave the beggar such an important place in society across the Border? Nearly all the good songs about beggars are Scottish in origin and this one is no exception though a version of it was printed in London in 1719, in Vol. III of Durfey's Pills to Purge Melancholy. This version was obtained by Ewan MacColl from Beckett Whitehead, an amateur local historian and geologist of Delph, near Oldham.

**THE WHITE COCKADE** *Maureen Craik*

This song, also called It was one summer morning, is deep-rooted in Maureen's native Tyneside. As early as 1821, Blackwood's Magazine printed it in a version received from Thomas Doubleday, a Newcastle soap-boiler and fiery radical who was also an excellent collector of Northumbrian song (the fine Captain Rover is one of his discoveries). The Yorkshireman Frank Kidson noted a version of The White Cockade (not quite so good as this one) from his mother who heard it sung in Leeds about 1820. The tune is probably older than the words, which belong to the closing years of the eighteenth century.

**OWDHAM** *Harry Boardman*

To some the industrial landscape has more charm than green nature ever possessed. The writer of this wry tribute to Oldham was such a one. His name is unknown. He signed the verses with his initial, 'H', and the poem was published in a local compilation called The Lancashire Miscellany. It appears here by permission of the publishers, set to a tune adapted by Harry Boardman, ripe to take up its place as a firm part of the Lancashire tradition.

**THE GREENLAND WHALE FISHERY***The Waterson Family*

How old is this song? In the Watersons' version the date 1864 is given, which is thirty years too late for Greenland whaling, for by 1830 the Greenland grounds were fished out and the expeditions had transferred their attention to the seas of Baffin's Bay. In any case, we know the song is very much older than it seems, for it was already in print as a broadside before 1725. The Dutch and English had opened up the Greenland grounds (where, by the way, they fished for right whales, not sperm whales) early in the sixteenth century so the song came into being some time between then and the opening years of the eighteenth. It remained a great favourite, being reprinted over and over again by broadside publishers, and many versions of it have been collected from country singers during the present century. It's one of the great sea songs.

**HARD TIMES** *Harry Boardman*

The song tells its own story, and a bitter story it is at that. The words are by Harry B. Whitehead, a living Lancashire dialect poet. The tune is by Harry Boardman.

**THE SANDGATE GIRL'S LAMENT** *Maureen Craik*

Till the middle of the nineteenth century the Tyne was too shallow for sizeable ships to come upriver and load the coal direct from the riverside staiths. Instead, the coal was sculled from the staiths downriver by means of flat barges called 'keels'. The keelmen were notoriously a rough independent vivid lot, and songs about them are numerous, in praise or otherwise. This one is otherwise. The genial and somewhat eccentric John Bell first collected the song when he was scouring the northeastern countryside to put together his collection of Rhymes of Northern Bards (1812).

**THREE SCORE AND TEN** *The Waterson Family*

The text was written by William Delph, a Whitby fisherman and song-maker. It commemorates a freak storm in 1889. The song circulated along the Yorkshire coast as a broadside, and the Watersons learnt it from a tape-recording of some Whitby singers.

**THE BROOM OF COWDENKNOWES**

*The Waterson Family*

In the "Symptoms of Love" section of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (1652) we read: 'The very rusticks and hog-rubbers have their wakes, Whitsun ales, shepherds' feasts, country dances, roundelays. They have their ballads, country tunes, O the broom, the bonny, bonny broom.' This is the song that the gipsy Alice Boyce is said to have sung before Queen Elizabeth, and it has remained a favourite ever since. It was originally a Scots song though we can't be sure if the old tune to it (the one the Watersons use here) isn't in fact English. It was published in London, in Playford's Dancing Master in 1650, whereas the first Scottish publication of Cowdenknowes (to another, more modern tune) wasn't till 75 years later, in the Tea Table Miscellany. Anyway, English or Scots, it's a good old tune.

**BONNY AT MORN** *Maureen Craik*

Northumbria is the only part of England with its own regional music-dialect, its own stock of melodies that are distinct in style from tunes anywhere else in the country. And of this style, Bonny at Morn is one of the masterpieces. Its peculiarity no doubt derives from the character of the local northeastern bagpipe, and the tune was surely an instrumental one before words became attached to it. A great, if neglected, pioneer folk song collector, John Bell, noted the song at the outset of the nineteenth century, but it wasn't printed until 1882, in The Northumbrian Minstrelsy. The poem takes a curious twofold form; in part it's a lullaby addressed to a baby, and in part it's reproach to a lazy son who is 'ower lang' in his bed and won't get up.

**THE HAND-LOOM VERSUS THE POWER-LOOM**

*Harry Boardman*

Handloom weavers were generally poor but at least they had a measure of independence, whether they were itinerate or working at home in their own cottages. But with the coming of the Industrial Revolution and the machine-looms, their independence went and they had to crowd into factories under the eye of the overseer. This song relates to the switchover from hand-weaving to power-weaving was taking place. It's printed in Harland's Ballads and Songs of Lancashire, with a note that it was sung by John Grimshaw, better known by his soubriquet of "common", of Gorton, near Manchester.' The words of the last verse are related to another ballad: The Weaver and the Factory Maid (recorded on The Iron Muse Topic 12T86). The tune here is adapted by Lesley Boardman.

**ALL HINNY BURD** *Maureen Craik*

'Hinny' means honey; 'burd' means girl. It's another song whose tune is affected by the Northumbrian small-pipes, and this one too, like *The Sandgale Girl's Lament*, *Bonny at Morn* and many other fine characteristic Tyneside songs, comes originally from the collection of John Bell. It's a sweet anthem in praise of the Tyneside locality of which Northeasterners are so proud. Some humble local poet made the words probably in the latter half of the eighteenth century. 'Trolleybags', by the way is another word for tripe.

**THE SHURAT WEAVER** *Harry Boardman*

Shurat was the East India Company's depot near Bombay. When the ports of the U.S. South were blockaded during the Civil War, very little American cotton could reach Lancashire. Such cotton as arrived from other parts of the world was mostly poor in quality, and notably that from India. Unemployment among spinners and weavers was rife, and such work as could be obtained was with such poor cotton that the workers' pride was wounded and their pockets sadly affected, for the stuff was hard to work up and this often resulted in "batings" (pay-deductions for poor work). The words were written by a Yorkshireman Sam Laycock, a weaver who became librarian at the Stalybridge Mechanics' Institute. In Laycock's day the song was sung to the tune of *Rory O'Moore*, but in this instance Harry Boardman has supplied a melody of his own.

**KING ARTHUR'S SERVANTS** *The Waterson Family*

Versions of this old nursery song are spread from Scotland to Sussex, and it has even cropped up as a ritual piece in one or two sword-dance plays. It's hard to say how old it is, but it seems to have first appeared in print in *Gammer Gurton's Garland* at the end of the eighteenth century, though doubtless it has been on the go long before then. This particular version of it comes from Northumberland, from Miss M. H. Mason's *Nursery Rhymes and County Songs*, and is apparently from family tradition. Miss Mason's mother was of the Mitford (Lord Redesdale's) family, of which the present generation of girls achieved fame (or notoriety) as 'Hons and Rebels'. Miss Mason's version was reprinted in W.G. Whittaker's *North Countrie Ballads, Songs and Pipe-Tunes* and that's where the Watsonsons got it from.

**THE WEAVER OF WELLBROOK** *Harry Boardman*

The words of this song, with its fine use of weaving terms and tool names in the chorus, are by the Radical weaver-poet Ben Brierley, born at Failsworth near Oldham in 1825. Brierley was a self-educated man who had started work at the bobbin-wheel at the age of five. His poem appeared in *Harland's Modern Songs and Ballads of Lancashire* nearly a hundred years ago. The tune is one adapted by Harry Boardman.

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