



The Lark in the Morning

Dave and Toni Arthur

Accompaniments:

Toni concertina, Dave melodeon, Barry Dransfield fiddle

1. All Frolicking I'll Give Over
2. The Death of Queen Jane
3. Creeping Jane
4. The Merchant's Daughter of Bristol
5. The Bold Dragoon
6. Cold Blows the Winter's Wind
7. The Lark in The Morning
8. Poor Old Horse
9. Hey John Barleycorn
10. Bedlam
11. Admiral Benbow
12. Father Father Build Me a Boat
13. The Press Gang
14. Six Jolly Miners

Recorded by Bill Leader 1968/9

First Published By Topic 1969

Notes by Dave and Toni Arthur and A. L. Lloyd

Photograph Brian Shuel

The Artists

Dave and Toni Arthur make up the most admired duet team on the folk club scene. Dave was born in Cheshire, Toni in Oxford. They met in a London coffee-bar that Dave was managing, married, and now live in South-east London. Toni has formal music training, Dave not. Dave plays guitar though he uses it less and less; Toni plays concertina (and recorder when she has a mind to). Both like to liven their performance by dancing, Dave with Morris jigs, Toni with clog dances. They are accomplished solo singers, but are chiefly in demand as harmony singers (with trial-and-error harmonies that break plenty of rules but contain jubilant surprises). Few young performers in the folk song revival are so zealous in pursuit of valuable out-of-the-way songs, or so conscientious about the pieces they perform. Folk song absorbs them, they say, because they love people; and through folk song one can convey without bigotry so much of what people have gone through - emotionally, economically, politically even.

The Songs

1. All Frolicking I'll Give Over

Happy marriages, faithful lovers, and understanding parents, are seldom considered good news value. Our popular press shows it, and it was the same in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the running patterers hawked the latest ballads on cuckoldry, cruel parents, murders, and disappointed suicides. Our song was published as a broadside in Dublin in 1835, and rapidly became a favourite with stall-ballad printers in Britain and America, under the title of *The Girl I Left Behind*. It seems to have been a great favourite with English and Scottish farm workers, especially itinerant harvesters and threshers. In America it was popular with lumber jacks and cowboys, and even became a commercial hillbilly hit in the late 1920s. Perhaps it struck a chord in the hearts of young men who left their villages, to seek fortune in the towns, the services, or the colonies, hoping to return to a faithful girl.

2. The Death of Queen Jane

On October the 12th 1537, Jane Seymour presented Henry VIII with a son, later to become Edward VI. The birth was quite natural, but through bad nursing the Queen died twelve days later. Ballad writers of the day, obviously more concerned with drama than fact, ascribed her death to a caesarian operation. This myth was perpetuated in the Charles Laughton film 'The Private Life of Henry the Eighth'. The earliest record of the song seems to be the broadside, *The Lamentation of Queen Jane*, licensed in 1560. Francis Child printed nine versions in his *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, and it has remained a constant countryside favourite for some four hundred years. It is known in America too. A version collected from an Irish girl in Kentucky begins: *Jane was a neighbour for six months or more*, which shows how the words may be jumbled in oral tradition.

3. Creeping Jane

How old is this song? Possibly it originated late in the eighteenth century. English racing really began with the formation of the Jockey Club in 1750. There had of course, been racing of sorts before this: Charles the Second raced on Epsom Downs, for instance. The race mentioned in *Creeping Jane* is unknown, what matter? The appeal of the song is in the surprise victory of the underdog (underhorse?), who had been laughed to scorn by the fancy. It seems to have been a widespread song. Percy Grainger recorded this version from Mr. G. Leaning at Brigg, Lincolnshire, in 1906. It is almost identical to Joseph Taylor's well known version, which Grainger also collected, and which appeared on an HMV record some sixty years ago. Frank Kidson, H. E. D. Hammond, Cecil Sharp and Alfred Williams, all collected versions from districts as far apart as Yorkshire and Somerset. Henry Such, of London, produced a broadside of it. Although also known in U.S.A. (Michigan), *Creeping Jane* never achieved the fame of the other racehorse, 'Skewball', a Yorkshire beast that became a figure of U.S. Negro mythology.

4. The Merchant's Daughter of Bristol

This was collected by Lucy Broadwood from a fine singer, the Sussex cobbler and bell-ringer Henry Burstow. The rhythm gave Miss Broadwood trouble, and she transcribed it in different ways in different publications, but in fact it seems that this ballad, like so many others, is in a free rubato time with emphasis rather on the bar-lines of emotion than of academic theory. Except for the twist at the end, the words are typical of a large number of pieces on the rich-girl-poor-boy relationship, a favourite theme of the period 1750-1850. The motif of the murdered servant lover may derive from a Boccaccio story that circulated widely on English fairgrounds in chap-book form. *The Merchant's Daughter of Bristol* was first published (in 51 verses!) in 1777, and in sundry shapes it was reprinted over and over again, making its final appearance on a Such broadside in the 1880s.

5. The Bold Dragoon

When the news of Napoleon's escape from Elba reached Berkshire in March 1815, the Blues, who were stationed in Reading recalled their men, and they marched through the streets, headed by drum and fife bands. One group without a band, marched three abreast led by a fiddler playing *The British Grenadiers*. Such scenes were guaranteed to rouse the people to a frenzy of patriotism and admiration for the lads off to defend the country. If we believe the evidence of folk song, and Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* the soldiers were not slow to take advantage of the swooning young women. What young country girl could resist the magnificent uniforms of the Hussars and Dragoons. In the song the girl takes the initiative, and the bold dragoon is only too pleased to oblige. The tune used here is from the singing of Harry List, of Framlingham, Suffolk. The words from the Baring-Gould manuscripts are reprinted in James Reeves' *The Everlasting Circle*. F. J. Child prints three versions of the song as No. 299 in his *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, all three versions from Scotland, but England, Ireland and the upland American South had countless sets of this most popular song.

6. Cold Blows the Winter's Wind

The ballad, usually called *The Unquiet Grave*, concerns a person who feels bound to sit and mourn by his (sometimes, her) lover's grave for a period of time. In nearly all versions, the corpse complains of being disturbed, illustrating the ancient belief that excessive grief interferes with the peace of the dead. In archaic folklore, a constant concern, when faced with a death, is to try to ensure that the corpse makes a pleasant and reassured transit from the land of the living to the world of the dead. Otherwise the dead may return, uneasy and vengeful, to plague the living. Hence for instance, the jollification at Irish wakes, intended to cheer and embolden the dead. Singers have ended our ballad in various ways, sometimes heartbroken and disconsolate, sometimes more or less lightheartedly as: "But since I have lost my own true love, I must get another in time." Our tune is from Fred Hamer's collection, *Gamers Gay*. The words are from Alfred Williams' *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames*.

7. The Lark in The Morning

This rural idyll, well known throughout Great Britain and Ireland, originated in the early eighteenth century, a period of comparative well being on the land, and a great time for the production of sweet mild songs, inspired by a deep love for the soil. During the nineteenth century this love became tempered with bitterness and dissatisfaction with the low wages, long hours, and the misuse of the land. These grievances resulted in the formation of the agricultural unions in the 1870s, led by such as Joseph Arch, lay preacher and champion hedgecutter, who wrote an ironic grace which gained great popularity during the nineteenth century: O heavenly Father bless us and keep us all alive; there are ten of us for dinner and food for only five.

If the country was not so idyllic during the nineteenth century, nevertheless songs of this type went on being sung. Perhaps the cowmen and ploughboys were trying to convince themselves that things were not really so bad, and to make the most of a gray life with the help of a song, a mug of beer, and the old clay pipe. The words here are from Alfred Williams' *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames*. The air, which we learnt from our friend Barry Dransfield, is a common Irish one, used by Paddy Tunney and others.

8. Poor Old Horse

Frank Kidson declared in his usual categoric way, that *Poor Old Horse* is a purely humanitarian view of the fate of old worn-out horses. But in fact, in at least three counties, in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, and Wiltshire the song was an integral part of the Christmas Ritual performed by parties of mummers, with one of their number disguised roughly as a horse. Celebrated in Kent is the *Hooden Horse*, banned in 1834 for creating havoc among the elderly people, but now resurrected, (it accompanies the East Kent and Ravensbourne Morris Men). The notion of the sacred luck-bringing, even world-creating horse (or bull, ram or billy-goat) is spread throughout the primitive world. In Britain, the ancient Celts had their horse-rituals, and the idea was reinforced by invading Norsemen. There are still plenty of evidences to be seen, from the great Uffington White Horse to the fiery, fecund, May-day Padstow 'oss in Cornwall. Minehead has its town hobbyhorse, and in Wales at Midwinter the baleful Mari Llwyd appears with the dancer carrying a beribboned horse's skull. In Cheshire, the mild-eyed souling horses of Antrobus are famous. Not forgetting the horse-headed man engraved on a bone, found in Pinhole Cave, Derbyshire, the only palaeolithic representation of a human figure discovered in England. The words

sung here are from Alfred Williams' *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames*. The tune was sung at the Westmorland Festival of 1902 by a Mr. Barber, and noted by Frank Kidson, one of the Folk Song Competition judges. It appears in *Folk Song Journal* No. 5.



9. Hey John Barleycorn

This version of *John Barleycorn* from the singing of the road repairer George Attrill, of Fittleworth, Sussex, was collected by Tony Wales, of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, in July 1958. Mr. Attrill, with a repertory of over seventy songs, was a keen sportsman - cricketer, footballer, player of bowls and quoits, and an excellent shot with rifle or catapult. He also played Father Christmas in the Fittleworth Mumming Play. He died on 10th November 1964, aged 78. Mr. Attrill's version is more exultant than the usual sets of *John Barleycorn*. and has a good rousing chorus. It dwells less on the life cycle of the corn, to which has been ascribed various ritual meanings including the death and resurrection of the Corn God. Rather, it concentrates on extolling the virtues of English beer and its happy effects on the lucky imbiber. Robert Ford prints a Scottish version in his *Vagabond Songs and Ballads of Scotland*; he presumes it is of English origin though, of course, Burns refurbished a well known version (and did it no good). Certainly, the song seems to have been widespread in England since its first appearance on a blackletter broadside early in the seventeenth century.

10. Bedlam

Henry VIII destroyed most of the monastic hospitals, but left, St. Thomas's, St. Bartholomew's, and the Bethlehem Hospital, called Bedlam. With the dissolution of the monasteries vast numbers of poor people, cut off from charity, became street beggars, adopting various guises to obtain pity. A favourite 'cheat' was to feign madness. These people were known as Bedlam Beggars, and are mentioned by Shakespeare in *King Lear*. From Elizabeth's time till the end of the 17th century, mad songs remained very popular. One of the most famous was Tom a Bedlam which appeared in 1626 in *Giles Earle's Songbook*. Another favourite was *To Find my Tom of Bedlam, Ten Thousand Miles I'll Travel* to be found in *Durfey's Pills to Purge Melancholy*, Vol IV, (1719). Cecil Sharp, who collected many examples, remarked that even in the twentieth century English folk singers were still very fond of songs of madness. The version sung here is from *Folk Song Journal* No. 7. The tune was noted from a Cornish singer named Boaden. The words come from a garland in the British Museum, as Mr Boaden was unable to remember more than the refrain.

11. Admiral Benbow

John Benbow, the son of a tanner, was born in 1653. From being a butcher's apprentice, he rose to be Vice-Admiral in command of the West Indian Fleet in 1702. The song concerns Benbow's engagement with the French Fleet under Admiral du Casse. The English Fleet outnumbered the French seven to four, but only Captain Walton of the *Ruby* agreed to fight alongside Benbow's flagship. The five captains who refused to fight were later court-martialled, and two of them executed. The *Ruby* was early disabled, and Benbow chased the French singlehanded. During the action Benbow was fatally wounded by chain-shot. He died at Port Royal on November 4th, 1702 and was buried at Kingston, Jamaica. The version sung here is from Chappell's *Old English Popular Music* and is in a different metre from the usual one. The tune is a variant of *Love Will Find Out The Way*, first published in 1651. Originally, it circulated in the world of fashion, but after 1680 it seems to have passed almost exclusively into the keeping of agricultural workers. Chappell collected it from hop-pickers in the mid-nineteenth century, and Lucy Broadwood found it in Sussex in 1898.

12. Father Father Build Me a Boat

This song appears in various versions, under such titles as: *Sweet William* and *A Sailors Life*. It has been collected all over Great Britain, America, and Canada. In Wisconsin it became adapted to the life of the loggers and raftsmen. The words used here were collected by Frank Kidson from Mrs. Hollings, a Lincolnshire charwoman. Mrs. Hollings had three verses we do not sing. In these, the young girl writes an anguished letter about the loss of her true love, and is found hanging from a beam by her father. We have added a verse from Gavin Greig's *Folk-Song of the North-East*. The tune is in *Folk Song Journal* No. 3 under the title of *A Sailors Life*. It is reproduced in Ralph Vaughan Williams and A. L. Lloyd *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, p.94.

13. The Press Gang

Considering the dreadful conditions in the Navy during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is not surprising that it was necessary to recruit men forcibly, by means of the Press Gang. Whole villages were cleared in the dead of night, and as Frank Kidson said, 'With such happenings in their midst, the folk song makers had no lack of thrilling and appealing material'. The circumstances made it easy for the fathers of marriageable girls to betray the unwanted suitor and have him pressed away to sea. In many of the numerous songs on this theme, the romantic element is not missed, and the girl dressed as a man, sails in search of her love. The words here are from the *Journal of The Folk Song Society* No. 31 and were collected by Cecil Sharp in Somerset. They comprise a shortened version of a broadside text, *The Sailors Misfortune and Marriage* in which the sailor's disguised love, who claims a knowledge of Astrology, tells his fortune and in so doing exposes her own identity.

14. Six Jolly Miners

At Christmas time in the Sheffield area, children used to go round the pubs dressed as miners, with blackened faces, picks and shovels. They sang a begging song beginning: Six jolly miners, we're not worth a pin. But when we get a bit of coal we'll make the kettle sing. And we'll riddle and we'll fiddle, and we'll make the world go round. If you don't mind your troubles, you will have a motty down. (A motty is a miner's tally disc, to fix on the tubs, so that he can be paid according to the number he has filled.) When A. L. Lloyd was collecting material for his *Come All Ye Bold Miners* in 1951, he obtained two Scottish versions of the song, called *Six Jolly Wee Miners*. Apparently the song has been favoured by Scottish miners since the 1830s. The American collector George Korson found versions in Canada and U.S.A., though one of his sets, from Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, had been carried over the Atlantic from Scotland by Lloyd's informant Mrs. Cosgrove, of Midlothian, who had accompanied her miner husband to Nova Scotia some years previously. The only southern English version we know is the one sung here. George Gardiner first noted it from a singer in Cheriton, Devon, in 1905.

The Lark
in the Morning

10



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