

Songs of the Open Road

Gypsies, Travellers & Country Singers

Bill Ellson, Mrs Mary Ann Haynes,
Joe Jones, Jasper Smith, Levi Smith,
Phoebe Smith, Wiggy Smith

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**'I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.
Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun
hath looked upon me...'**
The Song of Songs 1. 5-6

Gypsies, the 'Lords of Little Egypt', do not come from Egypt. If they come from anywhere, then it is from the Indus Basin and the Hindu Kush. In the 10th and 11th centuries they began one of their chief migrations westwards through what is now Turkey, then through the Balkans and into Europe; or south, along the Mediterranean coast of North Africa and up into Spain. In the mid-thirteenth century gypsies serving as armourers, blacksmiths and camp-followers of the Tartar invaders of South East Europe found their blood brothers already well established there in considerable numbers. By the year 1427 gypsies had arrived in Paris. A few years later they were in London. In 1492 the Royal Court of Scotland was to welcome Johnny Faa, one of whose relatives was later to become the 'Gypsy Laddie' of balladry. Such flirtations with royalty, however, were to be short lived. From the reign of Henry VIII to George III it was an offence, punishable by death, simply to be a gypsy; and during the 15th and 16th centuries hundreds of people died on the scaffold solely as a result of their birth.

It was the gypsy who was to become the Black Man of Scottish demonology. It was the gypsy who was to provide Shakespeare with his evil Egyptian sorcerers; and it was the gypsy, member of Europe's first coloured race, who was to become the scapegoat for British custom and society. Against such background it is rather surprising to realise that the British gypsy community - some 50,000 strong - whilst retaining its own identity and, to a lesser extent, its own language, has nevertheless assimilated itself into the community to such an extent that gypsies are today one of the prime carriers of our folk music tradition.

'Whenever gipsies are introduced in old plays, we find some allusions to their singing, dancing, or music, and generally a variety of songs to be sung by them.'

William Chappell
Popular Music of the Olden Time (1859)

Chappell was referring to 17th and 18th century European plays, but reference to gypsy musicians is made in even older texts. The Persian poet Firdusi, who lived c.1000AD, tells of Bahram Gour, a prince of the Sassanid dynasty (226BC - AD641) who entertained his people with 10,000 *Luri* musicians from India. However, according to Firdusi, the *Luri* became lazy and they neglected their tasks so that Bahram ordered their asses and musical instruments to be confiscated, and he directed that they should roam the countryside earning their living singing. Consequently the *Luri* roamed the world seeking employment by day and, Firdusi adds, thieving by night.

The *Luri* are the first known gypsies whose migration lasted until at least early 19th century when Sir Henry Pottinger met them in Baluchistan and Sind. According to Sir Henry, 'The *Loories* are a kind of vagabond people who have no fixed habitation and who, by this and many other reports, present a striking affinity with the European Gypsies. They speak a dialect of their own, have a king for each band, and a reputation as thieves and plunderers. Their favourite pastime is drinking and musik. In addition to their instruments, each troupe has half a dozen bears and monkeys, trained to do innumerable grotesque tricks. In each band there are two or three individuals who make a profession of fortelling the future by various means.'

History may record migratory patterns, but it does not tell us why gypsies became travellers. European gypsies often believe that they are the descendants of the biblical Cain, and that it is now they who carry God's curse. Wherever gypsies abound today, be it Roumania, Hungary or Southern Spain, blacksmithing and music-making are the main - sometimes the only - occupations open to them and interestingly the word *Cain* in some Semitic languages means 'blacksmith' or 'metal worker'. According to the Book of Genesis:

'When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth . . . and the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.'

Recently an Irish traveller, who was resident in London, was recorded singing the ballad of *Edward* (Child 13) which tells of the banishment of a young man who has slain his brother. After singing the ballad the traveller added, 'That's called *Cain and Able*, it's our story, you see.'

Other gypsies believe that it was an early gypsy who made the nails that were used to crucify Christ. The gypsy made three nails, which he gave to the Roman soldiers, and was working on the fourth nail when he was told for whom they were intended. That early tinsmith waited for the fourth nail to cool, but it would not cool, and so he poured cold water onto it. But the water turned to steam and evaporated; and still the nail glowed red. The gypsy, terrified, fled leaving the nail behind. Hours later he pitched his tent in the desert, many miles from Jerusalem, only to discover the glowing nail at his feet. Again he fled, but it was always the same. No matter where he camped, the fourth nail would appear. And so, gypsies believe, the fourth nail will follow them for ever, and because of this, they are condemned to be wanderers for as long as man shall inhabit the earth.

Centuries of isolation and social deprivation have, understandably, left their mark on gypsies in southern England - where these recordings were made. In a recent poem the singer Jasper Smith expressed his own opinion on the subject:

*'On old Epsom Downs you've got didies and liars,
They cook their old food on their smokey wood fires.
They've got pieballs, and skewballs, and flea-bitten greys,
And like some of their owners, they've seen better days.'*

Jasper's verse goes on to extol the gypsy for his independence, and for his unity within his own social order:

*'So look round the corner, 'cause here comes a cop.
Someone's been hit with an old kettle prop,
Travellers knows nothing, and travellers won't talk,
And the traveller that's done it is halfway to York!'*

English gypsies, or *Romanichals*, to give them their correct name, have retained a vast amount of folklore material. Fragments of early beliefs exist in songs such as *The Broomdasher* which Levi Smith sings in the creolised Anglo-Romani of the English traveller. Other Romani songs are difficult to date. Like the travellers themselves, they appear to be almost timeless, the product of a continuing culture rather than of a fixed period or era. In the minds of many singers the oldest ballad is only as old as yesterday. As well as being a fine singer Joseph Jones is also a skilful story teller whose tales about a crafty gypsy boy, who was 'known to several of my good friends', are in fact but stories concerning that same hero who climbed a bean stalk, and slew a giant, so many years ago.

Similarly Mrs Haynes believes that the events told in her version of *Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight*, or *The Young Officer* as she prefers to call it, occurred close by Shorncliff Army Camp in Kent. Mrs Haynes was born in a Faversham waggon - so named because of the district where they were made - on the 9th April 1903, 'on a plot of land behind the 'Coach and Horses' in Portsmouth'. Her father, Richard Milest, was a horse dealer who would spend the summer months travelling about the country buying and selling horses at fairs. 'We used to go to the 'Vinegar and Pepper' fair at Bristol. Then to Chichester, Lewis, Canterbury, and Oxford. Then up to Appleby, and back down to Yalding.' She now lives in a small, neat flat on the south coast. Several of Mrs Haynes' other songs are printed in the 1975 issue of the *Folk Music Journal* (vol 2 no 1).

Phoebe Smith has also settled into a sedentary life. Her recording of *Barbara Allen*, made in 1968 by Paul Carter, is a splendid example of the travellers' dramatic style of ballad singing. It is a style which is also employed by Mrs Haynes and is distinct from the 'crooning' of Irish tinkers. Phoebe Smith has sung at many folk clubs and festivals since her discovery by the BBC several years ago, and she has also recorded her own solo record album *Once I Had a True Love* (Topic 12T193).

Jasper and Levi Smith were living near Epsom when these recordings were made. They are brothers who travel together throughout south east England and, as is often the case with many gypsies who continue to follow the old way, they are no strangers to the indignity of officialdom, be it the police, council workers or County Court bailiffs. *Wiggy Smith*, a very distant relative of Levi and Jasper, also travels with his family, usually in the Vale of Evesham where he works as a seasonal labourer in the fruit and vegetable fields. *Joseph Jones* is aged about ninety and lives on a permanent camp site near Orpington. In his youth he was a friend of the well known singer George 'Pop' Maynard of Copthorne in Sussex. Joe would lodge with 'Pop' and the pair spent many a night together outwitting the Copthorne gamekeepers. Not surprisingly his repertoire of songs is very similar to that of his late friend, as also is his style of singing. The final singer, on this record, *Bill Ellson*, is now a horse breeder and dealer. Like Jasper Smith he is an outstanding performer on the mouth organ.

The songs on this record, with the exception of those sung in Anglo-Romani, belong to the common stock of English balladry and folksong. Illiteracy has not prevented gypsies from learning these songs - albeit often in somewhat confused forms - and it may well be that the singer's very lack of formal education has made him especially dependent upon his ears and memory.

This record is a companion to an earlier anthology of songs, *The Roving Journeymen* (Topic 12T84), sung by a family of gypsies in southern England. Fortunately, many of the songs which have been lost to most of us remain in the minds and heart of singers such as these and it is hoped they will now remain with us for many years to come.

It is characteristic of gypsy folksingers that they often sing fragmented and incoherent words to beautiful tunes. Just why this should be is not altogether clear. Even today many gypsies are illiterate, but then, so too were many of the singers who provide excellent song texts to collectors such as Cecil Sharp and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Several of the songs on this record are fragmentary and, at times, confused. For comparative purposes, some facsimiles of broadside texts are included in this booklet and additional verses added to the singer's texts where needed. Some of the songs are sung in Anglo-Romani and relevant glossaries are provided at the end of each song. However, as many Romani words have no standard spelling, alternative spellings are sometimes given.

YOU SUBJECTS OF ENGLAND

sung by Jasper Smith, Surrey

Of all poaching songs known to Southern English gypsies none has proved so popular as this ballad of *William Taylor*. Structurally, the song is based on *The King and the Keeper* (Track 10 on this collection) and I have found that most gypsies who know it also know part, if not all, of the older ballad as well. The late 'Pop' Maynard of Copthorne had a very fine version of the song. In completer sets, Young Taylor is caught by the keepers, but at his trial he refuses to lay information against his mates, hence 'before I would round I would die for you all.'

- 1 Come all you young subjects, and listen awhile,
Now a story I will tell you, I'm sure that you'll smile.
We'll go to some cover where there's luck for us all,
Our guns they will rattle and pheasants will fall.
- 2 Now we haven't been in there not a scarce half-an-hour,
Oh the woods they were mine, soon them keepers draw near
But it's just like Young Taylor, that's my time to call,
Before I would round, I would die for you all.
- 3 Now the woods they were mine, and the keepers also,
As we fought through those covers some winters ago.
But it's just like Young Taylor, that's my time to call
Our guns they did rattle and pheasants did fall.

LITTLE DUN DEE
sung by Mary Ann Haynes, Sussex

The Little Dun Dee appeared on numerous 19th century broadsides, sometimes with the title *l'Anson's Racehorse* after the well known Yorkshire family of horse breeders. Gypsies have long associated themselves with horse racing, and events such as Derby Day would be sadly lacking without the presence of gypsy tipsters and fortune tellers.

- 1 Oh my uncle died and he left me forty quid,
I'm going to venture this all on Little Dun Dee.
I know that my pony'll be swift and sure,
'Cause she's eating no grass for this ten long years.
Chorus
Singing wack fol loddy, fol the i diddle i day
- 2 Now away they went galloping up the green moor,
A-taking the wager as they passed by.
I'll bet you this wager'll be ten to one,
Then me little dun mare she wins this run.
- 3 Now away they come galloping up the green moor,
Now that lively bay she gallops so strong.
That lively bay she gallops so strong,
And left Little Dunny three-quarters a mile.
- 4 Oh the rider, the rider he twiddled his whip,
He made Little Dunny to hop and skip.
He made Little Dunny to hop and skip,
And she just nipped in before your....
- 5 Oh now that your pony have won this race,
No wonder she stop in this place.
No more do she stop in this place,
'Cause it's taken Little Dunny to cart it away.

HARTLAKE BRIDGE
sung by Jasper Smith, Surrey

In October 1858, during a violent thunderstorm, the river Medway burst its banks just south of the village of Hadlow in Kent. During the storm a wooden bridge was washed away at a time when thirty gypsies and Irish hop-pickers were being driven across the bridge in a horse-drawn cart. The victims were later washed up at a spot called Golden Green and they are buried together in Hadlow Parish churchyard. It would seem likely that this song was composed locally shortly after the event. Although I have been told by older gypsies that other verses exist, I have been unable to collect a fuller version than this one sung by Jasper Smith. The song's tune is often used by gypsies for the song Dear Old Erin's Isle.

- 1 Now seven and thirty strangers, oh, a-hopping
they had been;
They were 'plied by Mr Cox's, oh, near old
Golders Green.
It were in the parish of Hadlow, that's near old
Tonbridge Town,
But to hear the screams from those poor souls
when they were going down.
- 2 Now some were men and women, and the others
girls and boys;
They kept in contract [contact?] with the bridge
'till the horses they took shy.
They kept in contract [contact?] with the bridge
'till the horses they took shy.
But to hear the screams from those poor souls
as they were going down.
- 3 Now some were men and women, the others
girls and boys,

They were 'plied by Mr Cox's, oh, near old
Golders Green;
It was in the parish of Hadlow, that's near old
Tonbridge Town,
But to hear the screams from those poor souls
when they were going down.

THE YOUNG OFFICER

sung by Mary Ann Haynes, Sussex

The ballad of *Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight*, to use Professor Child's title, has often been collected from gypsies. Most versions stem from the broadside issued in the early 1800s by John Pitts of London, although the story was old when Pitts first issued his sheet. Recent research links the ballad with Saint Ladislas, an 11th century King of Hungary, who is depicted in medieval church frescoes lying asleep beneath a tree in whose branches hang the severed heads of his previous victims. His would-be victim, who is depicted delousing his hair, is forewarned of her impending fate when she glances upwards seeing not only the severed heads, but also the King's concealed weapons. Elsewhere in Europe representations show not Ladislas but a Tartar or Scythian warrior, suggesting that the ballad's origin is buried even deeper in ancient history.

- 1 There was a young officer from the North Camp,
And he (runned into plight on a-me?)
And he swore he would take me down by the seaside
He said, 'Tonight I'll make you my bride'.
- 2 'Go and get me some of your father's gold,
And some of your mother's money;
And two of the very best horses he's got,
A-tween fifty to forty to three'.
- 3 'On horse, on horse, my fair pretty maid,
On horse, on horse', cried he.
Now all your riches in gold I must take away,
And your body shall flow in the sea'.
- 4 'Now take me off your fine linen gown,
Now deliver it over to me.
'Cause I really do think that's too rich and too good
For to rot all in the salt sea'.
- 5 'Now take me off your fine holland stays,
Just deliver them over to me.
'Cause I really do think they're too rich and too good
For to rot all in the salt sea'.
- 6 'Now take me off your fine linen shift,
And deliver it over to me,
For I really do think that's too rich and too good
For to rot all in the salt sea'.
- 7 She says, 'If I am to take off my white linen shift
Will you please turn your back upon me,
For I really do think it's an unfitting thing,
For a naked young woman to see'.
- 8 He turned his back on the fair pretty maid.
As he gazed at the waters so clear
Oh she bundled him round her middle so sure
And she bundled him into the sea.
- 9 He swam-ed high and he swam-ed low.
He swam 'till he came to the side.
'Give me hold of your hand, my sweet pretty maid,
For this night I will make you my bride'.
- 10 (She says) 'Lay there, lay there, you false-hearted man
You lay there instead of me;
For it's six pretty maidens you have drown-ed here ~
And the seventh has drown-ed thee'.

-
- 11 Oh, she jumps on the milky white grey,
And she hold tight to the tabby old bay.
Oh, she rid till she come to her father's own house,
One hour before it was day.
- 12 The parrot sat up in the window so high
Just to listen what she had to say.
He said, 'Where have you been in some bad company,
Or have someone stole you away?'
- 13 'Don't tittle, or tattle, my pretty Polly,
Don't tell any tales upon me;
For your cage shall be built of the glitters in gold
And your door of the best ivory.'

ALL THROUGH MI RAKLI

sung by Mary Ann Haynes, Sussex

This short Anglo-Romani song is typical of the songs which English gypsies have kept to themselves. Like *The Broomdasher* it is a gypsy composition and is relatively well known among southern English gypsies.

Now, all through mi rakli,
Kicking up a goudli;
Like my dear old dadus boy
I'll leave her in the tan.
Mandi went to wesh one night;
To chin a bit o' cosh;
'Long come a baulo.
Lelled mandi opre.
Mandi's lifted up the mush
And delled him in the pur;
Says, 'Like my dear old dadus boy,
You can kor well!'
All through mi rakli,
Kicking up a goudli;

Like my dear old dadus boy.
I'll leave her in the tan.

mi rakli = my girl
goudli (or *gouggeli*) = fuss, noise

dadus = father

tan = place (i.e. atchin tan - camp site)

mandi = I, me

wesh = wood or forest

to chin = to cut

cosh = wood (the substance)

baulo = policeman (also incidentally the Romani word for a pig!)

Lelled mandi opre = took me up i.e. arrested me

delled him = gave him (one)

pur (or *per*) = stomach (literally 'tripe')

kor = fight

AT THE ATCHIN TAN

sung by Mary Ann Haynes, Sussex

Society has often compelled gypsies to become introverted in their ways. Many songs, composed by gypsies themselves, are common enough to the gypsies though little known to outsiders. Mrs Haynes usually prefaces *At the Atchin Tan* with the lines:

I was born in an old gypsies waggon,
In fields and by hedges so green;
And down by that old gypsies waggon,
Is the little tent that I was christened in.

- 1 When it starts raining my first thing in mind
Is my ridge pole, my tent rods, my bedclothes to find.
I put the straw down for my chavvs to lay on;
I give 'em their supper, and put 'em to bed.

- 2 I feather me old pony's legs, there let him go;
So where shall I find him, the Lord only knows?
I got up next morning, I searched round and round,
And when I found me old pony he was in the pound.
- 3 Oh, I goes to the house, and I gives a bold knock;
'My old pony you have-a got here?'
'Yes', said the farmer, 'there's one pound to pay.'
'If you give me m'pony, and there let me go,
- 4 I will 'sure you my gentlemen, you've not seen
before.'
He gave me m'pony, and there I did go,
I travelled all day till I found a sure spot,
I unshipped me pony and unload me lot.

atchin tan = camping place
*chavv*s = children

THE OAKHAM POACHERS

sung by Wiggy Smith, Gloucestershire

It is surprising that *The Oakham Poacher* is seldom encountered today. The Manchester printer, Pearson, printed it in the 1870s as did Henry Parker Such of London. George Gardiner noted the song twice in Hampshire in 1908, but Wiggy's powerful version seems unique in placing the captured poachers in Stafford gaol.

- 1 It was on last February,
Against our laws con-ter-ary;
Three brothers being wet and weary,
Off a-poaching they did go.
- 2 Off to Oakham Wood they rambled,
And among those briars and brambles;
And it's outside but near the centre,
Off into ambush they did lie.

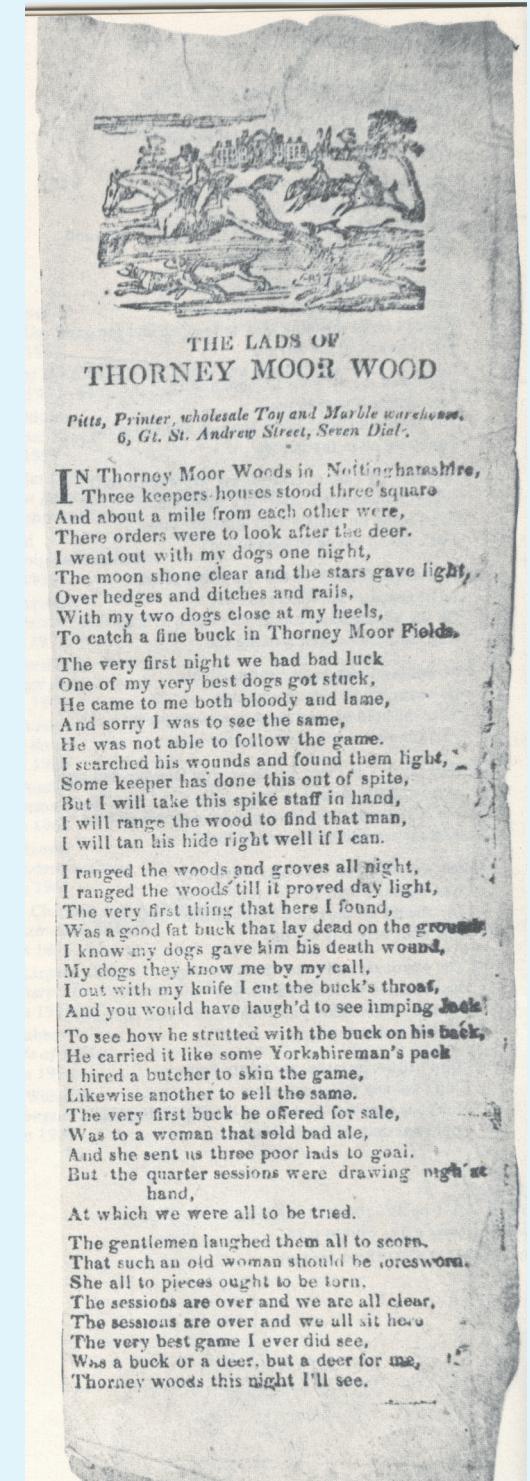
- 3 These three brothers being brave hearted,
They boldly kept on firing;
Until one of them got the fateful blow
And it showed they was overthrown.
- 4 Off to Stafford gaol they then were taken,
And so cruelly were they beaten.
For it's in Stafford gaol (they) do now lie
Until their trial it does come on.
- 5 Now all you jolly poachers,
That does hear of we three brothers;
For there is our brother's sakes
Makes our heart ache
And they begged would us to die.

THORNEYMOOR PARK

sung by Jasper Smith, Surrey

Thorney Wood Chase, once a part of Sherwood Forest, was enclosed sometime around 1790. Twenty years later John Pitts issued our present song on a broadside which was reprinted by several later printers. The song is often sung by gypsies today, although their texts are usually garbled. For comparative purposes a facsimile of the Pitts sheet is included in this booklet.

- 1 Now it's Thorneymoor Park in Buckinghamshire,
The keepers houses lays in squares.
Their orders were to look after the deers
Right fol the rol diddle ol day.
- 2 So me and my dog went out one night,
A-right fol lor ol right fol arity.
Oh, me and my dog went out one night
To catch a fine buck was my delight,
To catch a fine buck in Thorneymoor Park,
Right fol the rol diddle ol day.



- 3 Up jumped an old deer lay flat to the ground,
And my little bitch she pulled him down,
I picked him up and cracked his crown,
Right fol the dol diddle ol day.
- 4 Then my dog came back so sorry and lame,
And sorry was I to see the same,
As he was-a-not able to follow the game,
Right fol the dol diddle ol day.
- 5 The Sussex assizes was drawing near,
He would not allow the old woman to swear.
She had four more pints in Buckinghamshire,
Right fol the dol diddle ol day.
- 6 I'll take a short staff in my hand,
I'll range the woods 'till I find the man;
I'll tan his old hide I would if I can,
Right fol the dol diddle ol day.

THE FARMER OF CHESTER

sung by Joseph Jones, Kent.

The Farmer of Chester, in common with another ballad *The Boy and the Highwayman*, is related to the ballad of *The Crafty Farmer* (Child 283) in which a farmer outwits a would-be robber. The precise relationship between these three 18th century ballads has never been successfully established. Some scholars believe that as the central characters of the plot are different, then so too are the ballads. Others, however, believe them to be basically identical because all three ballads are sung to the 17th century tune *The Rant* which, in 17th century ballad operas, was better known as *Give Ear to a Frolicsome Ditty*. For some reason *The Farmer of Chester* is a song which has proved especially popular among gypsies, and is frequently met with today.

- 1 There was an old farmer in Chester,
To market his daughter did go;
Thinking there's nothing should happen,
Oh way she had been there to and fro.
- 2 She met with three awful highwaymen,
Three pistols they held to her breast.
They stripped the fair damsel stark naked,
She gave them her horse for to hold.
- 3 She put the left leg in the stirrup,
She mounted her horse like a man.
Over hedges and ditches she galloped,
'You catch me you bold rogues if you can.'
- 4 The rogues they could not overtake her,
It caused them to puff and to blow;
Her horse never ceased of its galloping
'Till she got to her great father's home.
- 5 'Dear daughter, dear daughter, what's happened?
What's made this late market today?'
'Dear father I've been in great danger,
But the rogues they've not done me no harm.'
- 6 She put the white horse in the stable,
She spread the white sheet on the floor.
Ten thousands of pounds she did count so,
To keep the cold wind from the door.

THE KING AND THE KEEPER

sung by Joseph Jones, Kent

One popular blackletter broadside theme was that of the king who would disguise himself in order to mix freely with his subjects. Early forms of this theme, such as *King Edward the Third and a Shepherd* and *King Edward and a Hermit*, exist in manuscripts which were written about 1450.

In 1564 the ballad of *King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tamworth* was licenced to be printed, while our present story was printed about a hundred years later by C Bates of Pye-Corner, London, under the title *The Loyal Forrester*, or *Royal Pastimes*. The singer, Joe Jones, was a friend of the late 'Pop' Maynard of Copthorne in Sussex, and it is interesting to compare Joe's fragment of the ballad with the set that Ken Stubbs noted from 'Pop' in 1960, and which is printed in *The Life of a Man*.

- 1 The suit of grey russet King William put on.
'And now,' said Queen Mary, 'where are thou a-going?
'Do you think I'm a fool, or a very unwise man
Unto tell my counsel unto some woman?'
- 2 'I don't want your horse, neither want your hounds,
And I won't have your money if you fling it down.'
'Here is fifty bright shillings down to you I will fling,
If you will provide that to William our king.'
- 3 He ordered his horse, oh likewise his two hounds,
Likewise a revolver unto pull them down.
You begone, you bold fellows you
will have no course here
Without the leave of King William to hunt a fat deer.'
- 4 Repeat v. 2.

The complete blackletter broadside clarifies the story:-

You Subjects of *England* come listen a while,
Here is a new ditty to make you smile;
It is of the King and a Keeper also,
Who met in a Forrest some winters ago.

O Early, O Early, all in a morning,
King *William* rose early all in a morning,
And a gown of grey russet King *William* put on,
As tho' he had been but some silly poor man.

The hounds was made ready prepar'd for the game,
No Nobles attended of Honour and Fame;
But like a mean Subject in homely Array,
He to his own Forrest was taking his way.

O then bespake *Mary* our Most Royal Queen,
My Gracious King *William* where are you going
He answer'd, I count him to be no wise Man,
That will tell his council to a Woman.

The Queen with a modest behaviour reply'd,
I wish that kind providence may be thy guide,
To keep thee from danger my Sovereign Lord,
The which will the greatest of comfort afford.

He went to the Forrest some pleasure to spy,
The Grey-hounds run swift, & the keeper drew nigh,
Who cry'd you bold fellow how dare you come here,
Without the King's leave to chase his fair Deer.

I am one of his subjects I am one of his force,
And I am come hither for to run a course,
Get you gone bold fellow you run no course here,
Without the leave of King *William* forbear.

Here is my three hounds I will give them to you,
And likewise my hawks they're as good as e'er flew,
Besides I will give thee full forty shilling,
If thou'l not betray me to *William* our King.

All that I have offer'd I prithee now take,
And do thy endeavour my peace for to make;
Besides forty shillings I'le give thee a Ring,
If thou'l not betray me to *William* our King.

Your three hounds I tell you I never will take,
Nor yet your three hawks your peace for to make,
Nor will I be brib'd by your forty shilling,
But I will betray you to *William our King*.

As I am a Keeper I'le not be unjust,
Nor for a Gold Ring will I forfeit my trust;
I'll bring you before him as sure as a Gun.
And there you shall answer for what you have done.

Thou art a bold fellow King *William* reply'd,
What dost thou not see here the star at my side,
This Forrest is mine I wou'd have you to know.
Then what is the reason you threaten me so.

With that the bold keeper he fell on his knees,
a trembling fear his spirits did seize,
The picture of death too appear'd in his face,
He knew not at first that the King was in place.

O pardon, O pardon my Sovereign Leige,
For your Royal pardon I beg and beseech,
Alas my poor heart in my breast it is cold!
O let me not suffer for being so bold.

Get up honest keeper and shake off thy fears,
In thee there's nothing of folly appears
If every one was as faithful as thee,
O what a blest Prince King *William* would be.

Because I'd encourage such persons as you,
I'll make thee my Ranger, if that will not do
Thou shalt be a Captain by Sea or by Land,
And high in my favour thou ever shalt stand.

The keeper reply'd my great Sovereign Lord,
Sure I am not worthy of such a reward,
Yet nevertheless your true keeper I'll be
Because I am fearful to venture by sea.

At which the *K*, laugh'd till his sides he did hold,
Then threw him down 20 bright Guinies of gold
And bid him make hast to *Kingsington Court*;
where of this true jest he wou'd make pleasant sport.

And when you come thither pray ask for long *Jack*,
Who wears a Pumgranet of gold at his back,
Likewise a green Pheasant upon his right sleeve,
I'll warrant he's a true man you may him believe.

He's one of my Porters that stands at my Gate
To let in my nobles both early and late;
And therefore good fellow come up without fear,
I'le make thee my Ranger of Parks far and near.

GEORGIE

sung by Levi Smith, Surrey

Scholars have long argued over the origin of the ballad of *Georgie*. It exists in two basic forms, one, from Scotland, is apocryphally ascribed to an incident involving George Gordon, fourth Earl of Huntley, who fell from Royal favour in 1554, while the other possibly stems from two English 17th century blacklister broadsides which, between them, supplied most of the verses used by later printers such as Henry Parker Such. Levi Smith's tune, in common with most of those which are associated with this ballad, is particularly fine.

- 1 What did Georgie done on Shooter's Hill?
Did he stole or murder by many?
Yes, he stole sixteen of the Lord Judge's deers
And we sold them down under the valley.
- 2 'Come saddle to me', said my lilly white breast
Come saddle to me', said my pony.
With bright guns in his hand and his sword by his side,
For I spare me the life of my Georgie.

-
- 3 For as Georgie were laying in the frames of gold,
For the frames of gold you can't find many,
For he's willing to part that's all she have got
If you spare her the life of my Georgie.
 - 4 For it's what did Georgie done on Shooters Hill?
Did he stole or murder by many?
Yes he stole sixteen of the Lord Judge's deers,
And he stole them down under the valley.
 - 5 For as Georgie is the father of six babes, love.
For the seventh one into her body.
For he's willing to part that's all he has got,
If you spare me the life of my Georgie.

THE HAYMAKERS

sung by Levi Smith, Surrey.

The Haymakers stems from a long blacklister broadside, *The country peoples Felicitie, or A brief Description of Pleasures*, first licenced to the printer Francis Grove on March 12th 1656. It has lasted well in tradition, having been noted by most collectors in southern England. Levi Smith has the song in a somewhat fragmentary form, although he insists that his version is complete. Grove's broadside includes the following lines:

Sweet jug, jug, jug, jug, jug, jug
the nightingale did sing,
whose noble voice, made all rejoice;
as they were hay-making.

which explains that the *jug* is the song of the nightingale and not the beer receptacle of Levi's song.

- 1 For it's all in the pleasure of month of May,
In the springtime of the year.
For over yonder meadow, boys,

There runs a river clear.
For you see those little fishes.
For you see those (them) sport and play
But there's many lads and bonny lads,
We was bought (?) to making hay.

- 2 Now there comes Paul and Peter,
With their pitchforks and their rakes.
For likewise dark-eyed Susan
For the hay we have to make.
For she pulled out the pipe of ivory
And this is what she reply,
But we all chucked down our forks and rakes,
And we left off making hay.
- 3 Oh jug, oh sweet jug,
Oh drink to the morning dew.
But we all chucked down our forks and rakes,
And we left off making hay.

THE BROOMDASHER

sung by Levi Smith, Surrey

Levi Smith and his brother Jasper have two versions of this song. In common with other gypsies they believe that a naked poacher is invisible at night, a belief that is also held in parts of India and the Middle East, *likewise* in the Balkans.

For there was a nasty broomdasher,
Shabbin' through the crack;
With his vans and his under-potter,
With his vans up on his back.
For he met with the yogger,
For he stamped and he swore:
'You can believe me, Mister Yagger,
I've never be(en) here before.'
As the broomdasher rises up on his feet,

He did pogger him nice and neat,
And 'way went the broomdasher
Shabbin' for his life.
He said there was a farmer in the field,
But he hollered to his wife:
He said, 'There goes a stark-naked broomdasher
Shabbin' for his life!'

Broomdasher = rabbit catcher (literally a man who hits rabbits on the head with a piece of wood)

Shabbin' (or *shavin'*) = going away, escaping
crack = wood

vans = things i.e. possessions under-potter = underclothes

yogger = gamekeeper
pogger = hit

BARBARA ALLEN

sung by Phoebe Smith, Suffolk

The 'favourite ballad of Barbara Allen', as Samuel Pepys called it in 1666, is today the commonest and most widely distributed of all the 'classic' ballads which Professor Child included in his *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Perhaps to some ears the story has become faded, the narrative trite and commonplace. Nevertheless Phoebe Smith's singing, with all its grandeur and dignity of style, is possessed of the strength and power of the master performer that she is, and indeed it is doubtful whether this ballad has ever been sung so superbly. *Barbara Allen* appeared frequently on broadsides, but few singers have retained the story in so complete a form as Mrs Smith.

- 1 In North town I were bred and born,
And Cambridge I went dwelling,
Till I fell in love with a pretty fair maid
And her name were Barbara Allen.

- 2 It were early into the month of May,
When the green leaves they were budding,
When a young man on his death bed laid,
For the love of Barbara Allen.
- 3 He sent round one of his servant men,
To the place where she were dwelling,
And says, 'Young woman I been sent for thee,
If your name are Barbara Allen.'
- 4 Slowly she put on her clothes,
And slowly she walked to him.
Then she turned her back a-wards him
And a-saying, 'Young man, you are a-dying.'
- 5 'Dying, miss now that never can be,
One kiss from you will save me.'
'One kiss from me you never shall have,
Since my poor heart you have ruined.'
- 6 'You remember that last Saturday night,
In the alehouse you were drinking;
You drank your health with all fair maids,
And you daunted Barbara Allen.'
- 7 'Mother dear, come make my bed,
And make it long and narrow,
For as I may lay and take a rest,
And think of Barbara Allen.'
- 8 'Mother dear, look at my bedside,
You will see a watch a-hanging.
There's a guinea gold watch and a diamond ring
Hung there for Barbara Allen.'
- 9 She were walking through the old footpath,
She heard the church bells a-tolling;
And the more they tolled, so loudly rolled,
Hard haunted Barbara Allen.

-
- 10 She were walking down a road,
She met the corpse a-coming;
And the nearer she got to the corpse,
The further he drew from her.
- 11 'Set him down, my six bonny lads,
And let me gaze all upon him;
For this young man has died for me,
And I shall die tomorrow.'
- 12 He died on (to) one grey day,
And she died on the other.
They were both buried in (to) the old churchyard,
Both under the big laurel.
- 13 Out of her sprang a red rose tree,
And out from him a briar.
They grow, they grow, to a steeple tall,
And the red rose covered the briar, briar,
And the red rose covered the briar.

LAVENDER

sung by Bill Ellson, Kent.

'Let none despise the merry, merry cries
of famous London Town.'

So runs one blackletter broadside in the Roxburghe collection. At one time merchants and labourers would advertise their wares and services by singing their respective cries in the streets. It was a practice that lasted from the reign of Queen Elizabeth until the early years of the present century, when the street cries began to wane (though there is a record of a gypsy lavender seller singing in London - outside Broadcasting House, as late as 1951, and the lavender song was heard at times in the Greenwich and Deptford area in the 1960s. Bill Ellson learnt his song about 40 years ago from his father, who would cross the Thames from his

camp site at Mitcham Common to sell lavender in the more affluent streets of Chelsea.

Will you buy my sweets blooming lavender,
For there's sixteen blue branches for one penny all in
full bloom.
You'll buy it once and you'll buy it twice,
For it makes your clothes smell sweet and nice.
For there's sixteen blue branches for one penny all in
full bloom.
Now all you young ladies that make no delay
For the moths are about in your clothes they may stay.
You'll buy it once and you'll buy it twice,
For it makes your clothes smell sweet and nice.
For there's sixteen blue branches for one penny all in
full bloom.

THE SQUIRE AND THE GYPSY

sung by Jasper Smith, Surrey.

The Gypsy's Wedding Day appeared on a broadside during the early 1700s. It was reprinted frequently up to the 1880s when the Such family of south London included it in their series of songsters. In North America, Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers recorded the song on a 1920s record which, on a re-issue LP, still sells well in the Southern Appalachian mountains. Undoubtedly, the song remains popular with gypsies in southern England, and most of the singers on this record can sing part, if not all, of it.

- 1 Now my father's the King of the gypsies you know,
My mother she taught me to knit and to sew.
With a pack on my shoulders they all wish me well,
I marched off to London for some fortunes to tell.

2 As I were a-walking down fair London street,
A handsome young squire I chanced for to meet.
He said, 'Are you my little brown cheeks?', and
 liked them so well,
'Now my little gypsy girl can you my fortune tell?'

3 'Oh yes sir, oh yes sir, give me out of your hand,
Your houses, your money, your riches your land;
Your servants will wait on you, within your carriage
 rides,
I'm the little gypsy girl who is to be your bride.'

Jasper Smith's three verses closely follow the broadside text as issued by Jackson of Birmingham. Jackson concluded the song with the following verses:-

4 He led me thro' woods and vallies (sic) deep I'm sure,
Where I had got servants to open the door,
On a rich bed of down he pleased me so well,
And in nine months after his fortune I did tell.

5 Then adieu to the fields and shadowy groves,
No more with my sisters a-camping I'll go,
The bells shall ring merrily and sweet music play,
And we'll crown the glad tidings of that lucky day.

ERIN'S LOVELY HOME

sung by Mary Ann Haynes, Sussex.

Erin's Lovely Home has been noted by many folksong collectors, no doubt on account of its tune. Mary Ann Haynes had the song from her maternal grandmother, of Irish extraction. It appeared on numerous 19th century broadsides and is still met with fairly frequently today.

1 When I was young and in my prime, my age
 was twenty-one,
When I become a servant, unto a gentleman.

Oh, I served him true and honestly, and very well
 he did know,
But cruelly he did banish me from my Erin's lovely
 home.

2 Now the reason why he banished me sure I mean
 to let you know,
I owned I loved his daughter, and she loved me also.
She had a heavy fortune, and riches I had none;
But cruelly he did banish me from Erin's lovely home

3 It was in her father's garden, it was in the month
 of May,
A-viewing all those pretty flowers, all in their
 rightful bloom.
Oh, she said, 'My dearest William, if along with me
 we'll go,
And adieu to all my friends, and my Erin's lovely
 home.'

4 Oh, the very same night she give consent all along
 with me to go,
And a-parting from her dwelling home it grieved
 my overthrow.
Ten thousand pounds she did lay down, saying,
 'This shall be your own;
And we'll never mourn for those we've left in our
 Erin's lovely home.'

5 Oh, when I got to Belfast town, it was in the
 break of day.
My true love she'd got ready the words to me did
 say.
'Oh John (?) my dear, bear up your heart, for you
 I'll never disown,
Until I see your face again in my Erin's lovely home.'

6 Oh just a few hours after, her father did appear,
And he marched me back to Comangell in the

county of Traeler,
She said, 'My dearest William, for you I'll never
disown,
Until I see your face again in my Erin's lovely home.'

THE GAME OF CARDS (ONE, TWO THREE)

Sung by Levi Smith, Surrey

The Game of Cards, or *One, Two and Three* as Levi prefers to call it, was printed on a broadside by George Walker of Durham in 1839, and in the 1870s by Pearson of Manchester. The song was obviously once highly popular, Cecil Sharp alone collected six versions, and it is often met with among gypsies. Unlike some singers, Levi has managed to lose most of the song's sexual symbolism.

- 1 For as I went out walking one bright summers morning
For as I went out walking all on the highway;
For it's who should I meet was a fair pretty creature,
She was walking and chattering all on the highway.
- 2 For we both walked, we both talked a few miles together
'Till we come to some shady green tree;
For it's she sat down first, for I sat myself beside her,
For the game that we play will be one, two and three.
- 3 For she chuckd down the ace and she stole the jack from me,
She said, 'I'll play you the (high?) and the game.'
She said, 'I said, kind sir, I'll be this way tomorrow,
For the game that we play will be one, two and three.'

4 For she saddled up her horse and she begged me good-morning,
For she saddled up my horse and she begged me farewell;
She said, 'I said, kind sir, I'm going to a place they call Windsor,
But (?) that sweet little town, that's where I was born.'

WHILE THE YOGGER MUSH LAYS SLEEPING

sung by Jasper Smith, Surrey

While the Gamekeepers Lie Sleeping is a well loved and often sung country song. The harshness and inhumanity of the 18th and 19th century Game Laws did little to stamp out poaching in rural Britain, a fact attested to by such songs as *The Oakham Poacher*, *William Taylor*, *Thornymoor Park* and *While the Gamekeepers Lie Sleeping*. Here Jasper Smith sings a macaronic form of the song using terms which have proved invaluable to travellers who wish to speak among themselves without fear of being understood by outsiders.

- 1 I have a juk, he's a very good juk;
Mandi kurs him for his pleasure.
For to muller some game in the middle of the rorti,
While the yoggers lay sleeping.
- 2 Up jumps an old morg and away he shavs,
Right down through some plantation.
Mandi kurs him up, then poggers his little crown,
Then he puts him in his little putsi.
- 3 Then he said to his old juk, 'We are best to be jelling,
Yes, the yogger-mush will know it.'

-
- 4 Mandi kurs this old man to some sea (port) town,
To see what the morgs were fetching.
'Five joes a brace,' said my bonny, bonny chavvi;
'That's if you can kur mandi plenty.'
 - 5 Mandi walked into the old Half-Way House,
To get a half of gather.
Mandi spent one crown, let the other one down,
While the old yogger laid sleeping.

Yogger = gamekeeper

mush = man

juk (or *jook*) = dog

mandi = I, myself

kurs = take, fetch, bring

muller = kill

rorti (or *rarti*) = night

morg = hare s

shavs = goes, escapes

poggers = breaks, hits

putsi = purse

jelling = going

joe (or *joey*) = groat (also cant term for a small coin)

chavvi = boy

gather = beer

THE DESERTER

sung by Wiggy Smith, Gloucestershire

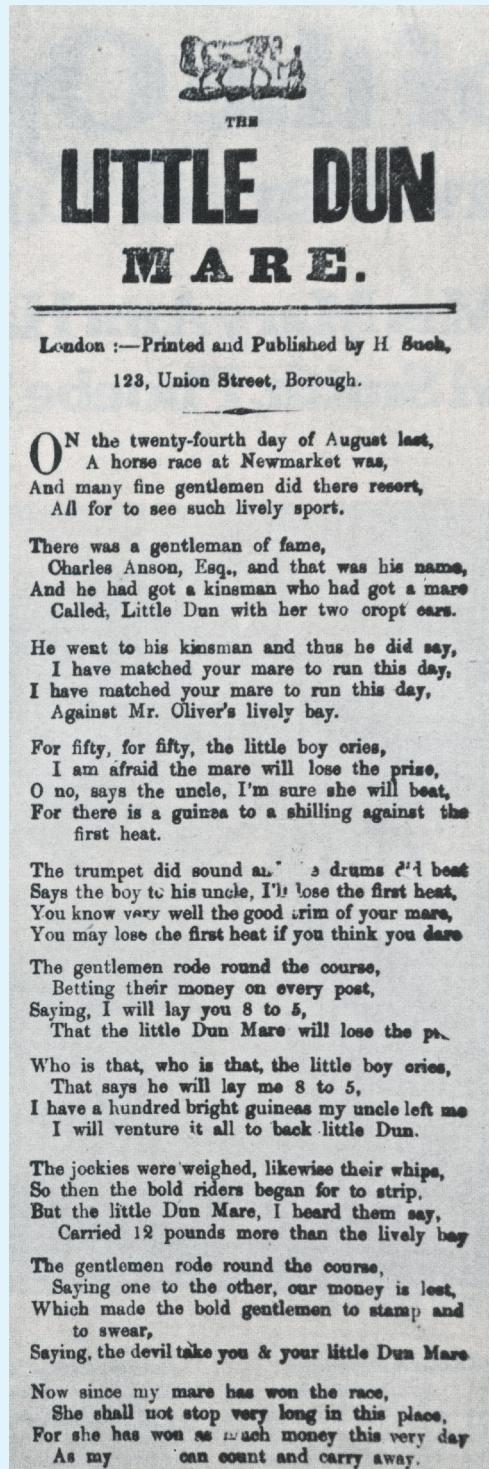
Perhaps this song should be titled *The 'New' Deserter* to distinguish it from an older ballad in which a soldier repeatedly deserts from the army until finally he is pardoned by the King and released. Indeed Henry Parker Such printed it in the 1850s under the title *New Deserter*. Wiggy Smith believes the song relates to a true event which happened during the Great War.

- 1 I was once young and foolish, like many who is here;
I been fond of night rambling and I am fond of my
beer.
Sure if I had my own home and my sweet liberty,
I would do no more soldiering, neither by land nor
by sea.
- 2 Sure, the first time I deserted and I thought myself
free,
I was quickly followed after and brought back by
speed.
I was quickly followed after and brought back by
speed,
And put in the Queen's guardroom, with heavy irons
put on me.
- 3 You take off the heavy irons, and you let him go free,
For he'd make a brave soldier for his King and country
You take off the heavy irons, and you let him go free,
For he'll make a brave soldier for his Queen and
country.
- 4 Repeat v.1, lines 3/4.

Acknowledgements

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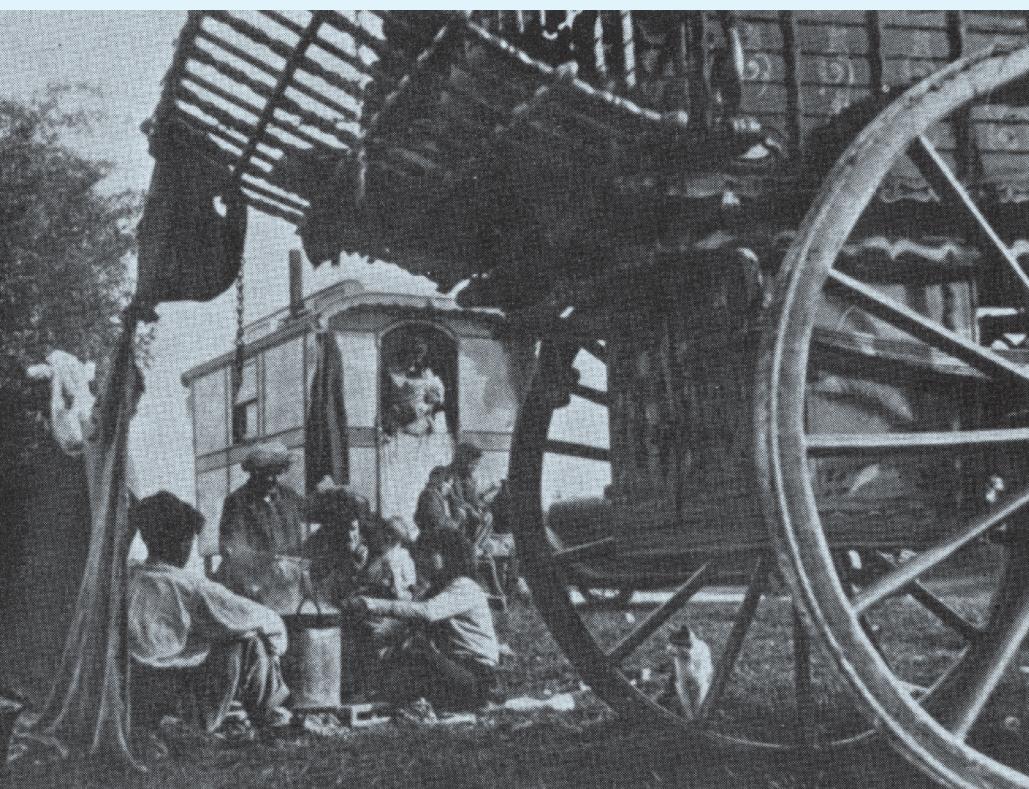
Mike Yates





Songs of the
Open Road

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