



# FROM THE NORTH

## Gary & Vera Aspey

*Songs*



### 1 From the North

Gary and Vera *vocal*

### 2 The Parting

Vera *vocal and concertina*

### 3 Coal Picking

Gary *vocal*

### 4 The Three Foot Seam

Gary and Vera *vocal*,  
Vera and Bernard Wrigley, *concertinas*

### 5 Mill Girl's Lullaby

Vera *vocal and guitar*, Wilf Darlington *mandolin*

### 6 King Cotton

Gary and Vera *vocal and concertina*

### 7 Auntie Ketyll

Vera *vocal and guitar*

### 8 Cum t' thi Tay

Vera *vocal and guitar*

### 9 The Cradle Song

Gary and Vera *vocal and guitar*

### 10 The Roving Navvy

Gary and Vera *vocal and concertina*  
Bernard Wrigley and Wilf Darlington, *chorus*

### 11 The Ship Canal Song

Gary and Vera *vocal*

### 12 Hailey-Go

Gary and Vera *vocal and guitar*

### 13 Tuppence on the Rope

Gary and Vera *vocal and concertina*,  
Bernard Wrigley *bass concertina*

### 14 A Bit of a Sing

Gary and Vera, Bernard Wrigley, Will Darlington

*Accompaniments:*

**Vera**

*English concertina and guitar*

**Bernard Wrigley**

*English concertina and bass concertina*

**Wilf Darlington**

*mandolin*

First published by Topic 1975

Recorded by Tony Engle in Bolton, October 1974

Produced by Tony Engle

Notes by Vera Aspey

Sleeve design by Tony Russell

Sleeve photography by Harry Ogden

Gary and Vera are a young married couple from Atherton, near Manchester. They have not been singing together for long, but their skill and sure presentation might well be envied by many longer established professional performers. Lancashire songs are their particular speciality and in that area they are busy researchers. If they find a rare and singable set of words with out a tune, then in the true spirit of the folk revival they make a melody for it, and a convincing one at that. Recently they have been seeking songs from the Lake District, an area rather neglected by the great song collectors of the past. Gary and Vera have a lively following in their beloved North, but already their reputation is spreading far out of their native territory.

*Bernard Wrigley*

### FROM THE NORTH

A hare-hunting song, taken from a collection of Lancashire Hunting Songs by Cicely Fox Smith, 1909. The tune was added by ourselves, as with the following track ....

### THE PARTING

Taken from the same collection, but a hunting song with a difference. As a pup, a hound is taken into an ordinary home environment, but raised and trained specifically by that household, so that when the time comes for it to join the pack, it will be prepared to carry out the necessary requirements as a member of one team. So the time for parting comes, but though it's an unhappy occasion for the family, their one wish is for the dog to 'mek a good hound'.

### COAL PICKING

Gary's childhood memories of the need to go coal picking with his father in order to keep the home fire burning gave us the incentive to write this song, but we related it to the General Strike period of 1926, when literally hundreds of people went on the coal rucks (tips or slag heaps) to pick coal.

### THE THREE FOOT SEAM

The song is said to have been written at the time when the Lancashire Miners' Federation was just being formed, 1893-6, though other reports have dated it as far back as 1866. Our thanks to John Smethurst and Chris Cheetham, our source for this song.

### MILL GIRL'S LULLABY

Paul Graney from Manchester wrote the words of this lullaby to which we added the tune. The 'latchkey kids' is a term which we like to use to describe the children whose mothers had to rise very early to go and work in the factory during the 1920s and '30s, starting at 6 am and finishing at 5.30pm, returning home just in time to prepare a bedtime meal. Here, a mother is giving her child instructions for the following day, knowing that she will see her, but for a brief period each evening. She tells her not to be upset, because it won't be long until 'I'll play with thee on Sunday'.

*Note: brid - literally, a bird, but often, as here, used to describe a young child.*

### KING COTTON

Striking words tell of the cruelty and hardships which the early cotton factories brought to Lancashire, where young children laboured and many workers suffered, amongst other things, what is now termed an industrial disease. 'This is the valley where cotton is king' - but at what expense? Written by Mike Harding.

### AUNTIE KETYLL

Dame Alice Ketyll, called Auntie Ketyll, was the legendary witch of Clapham, Yorkshire. The events in the song are said to have occurred in 1467-8, at the time of the Wars of the Roses. Though a Yorkist, John de Clapham, and his family before him, fought for the Lancastrian cause. The Claphams had spent all their wealth and blood for it and when, in the spring of 1468, John de Clapham was summoned by his friend the Earl of Warwick to bring troops to him at York, for an impending battle, he turned to his foster mother, Dame Alice Ketyll, for help. As related in the song, she sold her soul to the Devil in order to provide whatever John de

Clapham required, so the legend has it. Our thanks to Mr and Mrs Clapham of Bentham, and the Reverend P.J. Winstone, then Vicar of Clapham Church, who provided the information for us to write this song.

### CUM T' THI TAY

A courtship reaches a point when the girl feels that it is high time for the lad to come home to meet her mother and father, and of course to state his intentions towards her. His unwillingness shows through but it appears he doesn't really have much to say in the matter. Words - Horace Slater. Tune - Gary and Vera Aspey.

### THE CRADLE SONG

Edwin Waugh, one of Lancashire's great dialect poets, wrote this song, which was set to music in 1899 by C.E. Rowley.

### THE ROVING NAVVY

Written by Ian Woods of Frodsham after reading *The Railway Navvies* and comparing it with several accounts of canal building. The similarity in the life style of both canal and railway navvies was obvious, as most canal navvies had changed to the railways as the Industrial Revolution and communications advanced. Ian's conversation with two men in their 90s, who recalled the days when they helped to dig out the Manchester Ship Canal, confirmed the facts.

### THE SHIP CANAL SONG or THE MARY

This was published on a handbill in 1840 by Wilmot Henry Jones of Market Street, Manchester. Written by 'Poor Jack' and sung to the tune of *The Derby Ram*. A hundred years before the building of the Ship Canal, the River Irwell was a busy waterway with packet boats drawn by teams of horses and supplemented by a square-rigged sail. The fast packets were mainly for passengers, and started at any hour of the day or night, timed to catch the ebb of the tide at Runcorn, where passengers for Liverpool were transferred to a larger boat to go with the tide down the Mersey. The Mary was the first seagoing vessel to make the journey to Manchester, on October 20, 1840. Ian Woods added the chorus

calling for support for the building of the Ship Canal, which was opened by Queen Victoria in 1894.

### HAILEY-GO

Vera's mother used to sing this to her as a child, having learned it in turn from her father. It is a version of The Irish Immigrant, of which several sets can be found in Stan Hugill's *Shanties of the Seven Seas*.

### TUPPENCE ON THE ROPE

During the depression of the 1930s thousands of unemployed men were obliged to take to the roads. At this time, attached to every parish workhouse was a casual ward or 'spike' which gave shelter for one night, after which the tramp would have to move on to the next town. In return for a meal of cocoa and bread and scrape (margarine) he was expected to work for a few hours. Because of this he often found there was too little time to reach the next spike, and so, unless he slept under a hedge or in a barn, he could try to beg a few coppers to go into a dosshouse and obtain a bed for about sixpence. If he failed to raise this sum, then he could sleep on the rope for tuppence, or in some places, a penny. The rope was stretched across the width of the room, and a man could hang with his arms over it for support. It was customary to untie the rope in the morning, and the whole row of men would collapse to the ground. Written by Paul Graney (words) and Gary and Vera Aspey (tune).

### A BIT OF A SING

Another song from the pen of Edwin Waugh, set to music by C.E. Rowley, which depicts what must have been the equivalent of our singaround folk club of today, where friends and acquaintances gather together to have a 'bit of a sing'. Here the combination of psalms, glees and comical songs add up to what must have been a 'gradely neet'. Notes: weet your whistles - to take liquid refreshment; layrocks - skylarks; tootle - sing; I'm fain that I'm wick - I'm glad to be alive; brid - unlike the meaning in *Mill Girl's Lullaby*, here it actually means a bird.

Digital remaster ©2014 Topic Records Ltd.  
©2014 Topic Records Records Ltd.  
The copyright in this sound recording and digital artwork is owned by Topic Records Ltd.  
All rights reserved.



TOPIC TSDL255  
www.topicrecords.co.uk

