

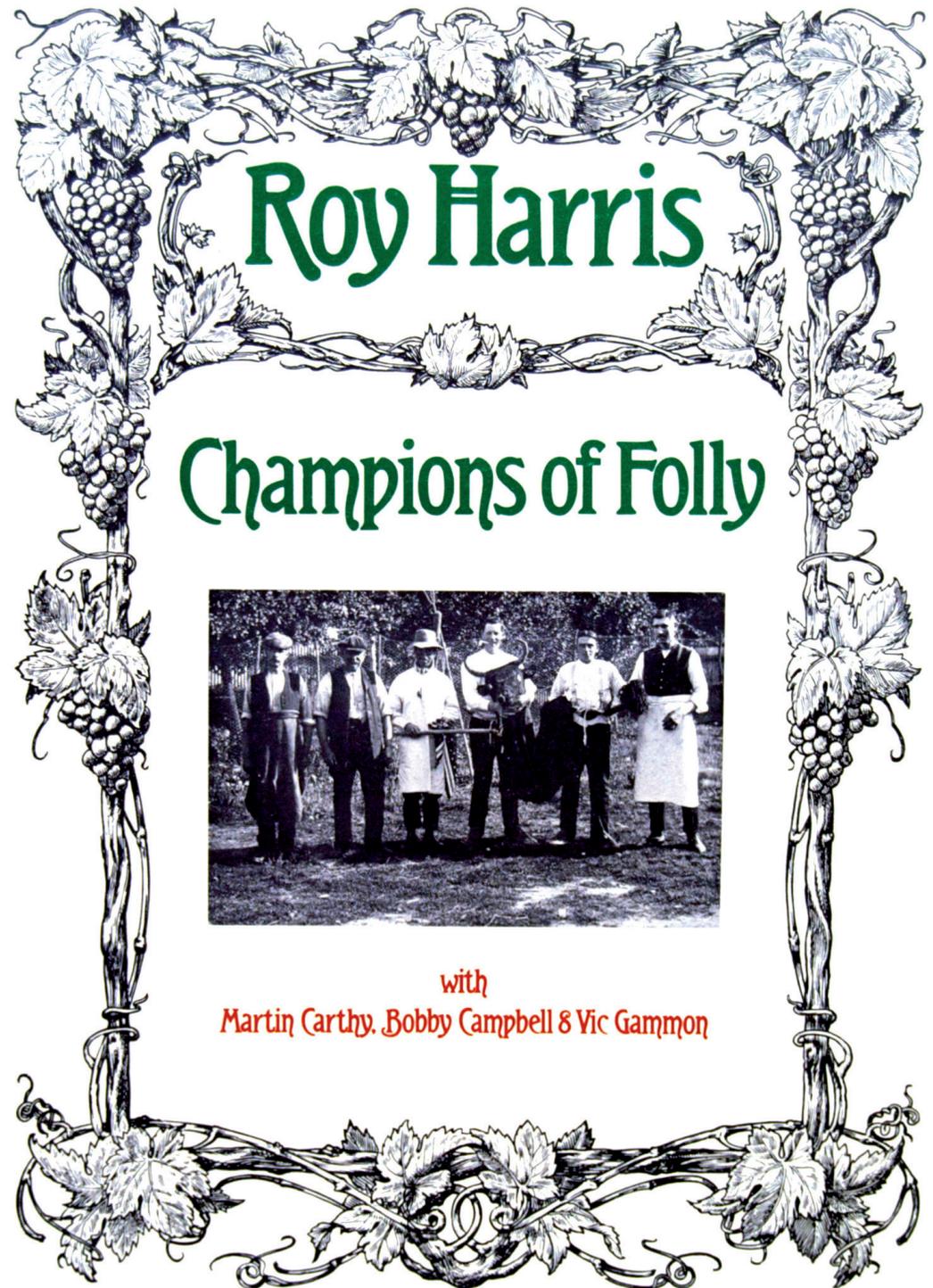
Champions of Folly

Roy Harris

accompanied by Martin Carthy (guitar, dulcimer),
Bobby Campbell (fiddle, mandola),
Vic Gammon (melodeon, concertina)

- 1 **The Saucy Bold Robber** with fiddle and guitar
- 2 **Bold Lovell** with fiddle and guitar
- 3 **Steepleford Town**
- 4 **Captain Ward** with fiddle
- 5 **The Methody Parson**
- 6 **Caroline and her Young Sailor Bold**
- 7 **The Beggar's Song** with fiddle, melodeon and guitar
- 8 **When I Was a Little Boy** with mandola and guitar
- 9 **The Dragoon's Ride** with dulcimer
- 10 **Cropper Lads** with fiddle, melodeon and guitar
- 11 **The 'Royal Charter'**
- 12 **The Topman and the Afterguard** with concertina
- 13 **The Jovial Hunter**
- 14 **Hard Times of Old England** with fiddle, melodeon and guitar

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Recorded at Livingstone Studios, Barnet, November 1974.
Produced by Tony Engle.
Notes by A.L. Lloyd.
Sleeve design by Tony Russell.



The Saucy Bold Robber

A King's Lynn (Norfolk) fisherman named Anderson sang this rare and lively song to Vaughan Williams some seventy years ago. It's probably an early 19th-century piece (Lawyer Morgan and Lady Dawkins have crept in from another robber ballad, *The Rambling Boy*, which seems to have begun its life c.1750). Roy Harris learnt it from AL Lloyd's *Folk Song in England*, but says 'It may have changed a bit in the years I've been singing it.'

Bold Lovell

The theme of this song reminds us of the capture of Macheath in the Beggar's Opera. Was it suggested by it? Or is the ballad old enough to have put the idea into the head of John Gay who wrote the play in 1728? Sometimes the hero is named Peter or Patrick Fleming, not Lovell. Sir Walter Scott was interested in the song, but he had only a few scraps of it. In 1821 he wrote to his son Cornet Scott at Portobello Barracks, Dublin: 'I wish you would pick me up the Irish lilt of a tune to Patrick Fleming.' From the bits that Sir Walter quotes, it's clear he had our song in mind. A close cousin is the celebrated Irish highwayman ballad *Whiskey in the Jar*. Roy Harris learnt it some ten years ago from Mike Herring of Peterborough, who had it from AL Lloyd who got it from print (*The New Green Mountain Songster*), and adapted it a bit.

Steepleford Town

Roy Harris found this in Barrett's *English Folk Songs*, and was attracted to it because of its locale. Steepleford (now Stapleford) and Sandiacre - Roy's home - are neighbours on the Notts-Derby border. The family of Squire Warren were well enough known to have a pub named after them, the Warren Arms in Stapleford. However, the song - like many other hunting pieces - is not tied firmly to any single locality. Alfred Williams, in *Folk Songs of the Upper Thames* (1923), reports a Buckinghamshire version of it, heard from an 'aged road-mender, whose father sang it over a hundred years ago'. It's one of the few fox-hunt songs that show a bit of sympathy for the fox.

Captain Ward

John Ward of Kent was one of the most daring of pirates who took refuge in the ports of the barbary coast in the opening years of the 17th century. It was European renegades such as Ward and his 'Dutch' partner Danseker (?Danziger) who taught the Moors the pirate trade and helped to establish the port of Sallee (nowadays spelled Sale) near Rabat as a centre for sea robbers prowling up to the Straits of Gibraltar. Ballads about Ward were already circulating in 1603, and a play based on his misdeeds, called *A Christian Turned Turk*, was presented in 1612. However, the present song didn't appear until the latter part of the 17th century, more than fifty years after Ward's death. It is possibly a legendary account of the expedition of Captain William Rainborow who was sent to Sallee to rescue some hundreds of Englishmen from slavery ('the solitary success of Charles I's naval administration'). The name of the ship *Rainbow* is possibly a confusion with the name of the bold Captain Rainborow. The tune is one that Ewan MacColl learnt from his father. Roy Harris heard Ewan sing the ballad, liked the tune, 'looked up some words, and here we are'

The Methody Parson

This 18th-century broadside song has been often sung but seldom printed in modern times. Roy learnt it from Tom Randall of Retford, Notts, who now leads the Blue Hill Button Band, which plays at dances and ceilidhs in the Bristol area.

Caroline and her Young Sailor Bold

Another ballad on the favourite class-conscious theme of the 18th century - in which the rich girl falls in love with the poor sailor and, despite her parents, rigs herself out like a sailor, follows her love, and eventually marries him. It was a favourite broadside song in the 1840s and later, particularly in the neighbourhood of Durham and Newcastle, and it has turned up in sundry places from Hampshire to Aberdeen. Roy Harris heard it 'on an Archive tape sung by Brian Gales'. The tune is related to that used for the coal-mining ballad of *The Gresford Disaster*.

The Beggar's Song

Cecil Sharp got this song from 86-year old Robert Parish at Exford, Somerset, in 1907. Mr Parish could only remember a couple of verses and the refrain. The rest of the words are from a Devon version found by Rev S Baring Gould. Particular interest attaches to the refrain, which is much older than the song. Indeed, the refrain probably wasn't new when it first appeared in print as a drinking song in a pre-Shakespeare comedy, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1575). The rest of the words of *The Beggar's Song* belong to the beginning of the 18th century. Roy Harris can't remember where he got it, but it's printed in Sharp's *English Folk Songs*.

When I Was a Little Boy

The present version comes from Shetland, where it was collected by Patrick Shuldham-Shaw from a good singer, John Stickle, who sings it on Topic's *The Folk Songs of Britain Vol 10 Songs of Animals and Other Marvels*. It was once common all over England, and broken-off fragments of it still survive as children's street songs, mostly indecorous, such as: 'A big old giant come along as tall as any steeple. He took out his dilly-whacker and he pissed on all the people.' The song has survived better in the USA than in Britain, and has turned up as a New England nursery rhyme (collected by the poet James Russell Lowell), and as a Mississippi backwoods ditty under the title *To London I Did Go*.

The Dragoon's Ride

There are so many ballads about a dragoon's high-handed treatment of a maid, usually named Peggy, that one wonders what was special about dragoons. The commonest title is *The Trooper and the Maid*, but as *The Jolly Trooper* it was already in print at the start of the 18th century. It's known from Devon to Aberdeen in various slightly differing but clearly related shapes. A favourite Scottish set is *The Bonny Lass o'Fyvie*. The Rev S Baring Gould had two versions from Dartmoor, 'too coarse for reproduction,' he said. This is one of the West Country sets, which Roy Harris got from Cyril Tawney.

Cropper Lads

The opening years of the 19th century were riotous times. Blood was shed at soup-kitchens and bread queues, shops were plundered, the unemployed fought with the troopers sent to restore order. In the Nottingham hosiery area, where the introduction of the mechanical stocking frame cut prices to a point where the hand knitters couldn't make a living, there were machine-wrecking riots that quickly spread into Yorkshire and elsewhere. Such riots, planned in secret 'in the

name of General Lud', flared up over and again between the years 1810 and 1816. *The Cropper Lads* song was an anthem of Yorkshire Luddites. 'Great Enoch' was the name given to a large hammer produced by the firm of Enoch & James Taylor. The words of the song were printed in F Peel's *Risings of the Luddites* (Heckmondwike, 1895). The tune is lost; but a Yorkshire poaching song, *Hares in the Old Plantation*, is in the same metre, and has one or two similar phrases, and so in the last few years it has served to carry the words of *Cropper Lads*. Perhaps the real tune will turn up one day.

The 'Royal Charter'

The 'Royal Charter' was wrecked off Anglesey on October 26, 1859, on her way to Liverpool from Australia. 455 lives were lost (for once, the song underestimates); and among others, Dickens (in *The Uncommercial Traveller*) wrote an account of the disaster. EJ Moeran recorded the song from a fisherman, James Sutton, of Winterton, Norfolk, an old shipmate of the fine Winterton singer Sam Larner. Roy Harris had it from Cyril Tawney.

The Topman and the Afterguard

The old dialogue song of *Mare and Foal* - in which the mare begins to read from the bible her curses on thieving millers, bakers, tailors, butchers and such, with the foal responding to each curse with a pious 'Amen' - has given rise to innumerable parodies, usually involving soldiers or sailors and their cheating quartermasters. This version was adapted by A.L. Lloyd from an early 19th-century sailor song, and used in a commemorative radio play about Nelson. A number of influential folk club singers were involved in the production, and so the song went into rather general circulation, besides being printed in the magazine *Sing*, which is where Roy Harris found it.

The Jovial Hunter

In the Middle Ages a wild and shaggy folk tale of a monster-killing champion was turned into a courtly versified romance about a French knight, Sir Eglamour. Subsequently this aristocratic piece was once again democratized and became a folk ballad whose sundry versions were called *Sir Lionell*, *Isaac-a-Bell*, *The Jovial Hunter of Bromsgrove*, and - in America - *Bangum and the Boar*. In the mid-19th century, Robert Bell reported it as being particularly popular in Worcestershire and Warwickshire, and the version on which Roy Harris's set is based was collected near Pershore, Worcestershire, about 1845. Francis James Child reprinted it in his great ballad compilation, and Roy saw it there, liked it, and learnt it. Having no tune for it - and indeed, the original Worcestershire informant had only recited the words - Roy made a melody for himself.

Hard Times of Old England

The first half of the 19th century produced a mountain of songs complaining at the lot of the poor - *Shocking Hard Times*, *The Tradesman's Complaint*, *Pity Poor Labourers* were typical titles of the times. *Hard Times of Old England* was a lasting favourite. Roy Harris got it 'from the Copper family, of course. It's a bit less pastoral and Merrie England than most of their stuff.'

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