



The Travelling Songster An Anthology from Gypsy Singers

Jasper Smith, Levy Smith, Minty Smith, Phoebe Smith

- 1 **The Small Birds Whistle**
- 2 **The Sheepfold**
- 3 **One Penny**
- 4 **The Basket of Eggs**
- 5 **The Pony March/Whistling Rufus/Tuning**
- 6 **Green Bushes**
- 7 **Raking the Hay**
- 8 **The Moon Shines Bright**
- 9 **Father Had a Knife**
- 10 **The Jew's Garden**
- 11 **Step Dance Tunes/
Tuning**
- 12 **Sweet William**
- 13 **Johnny Abourne**
- 14 **Died for Love**
- 15 **The Irish Girl**
- 16 **Captain Thunderbold**
- 17 **Jigs & Polkas including: Cock of the North/
Flowers of Edinburgh/The Girl I left Behind Me/Tuning**

Jasper
Phoebe
Levy
Minty
Jasper
Phoebe
Phoebe
Jasper
Jasper
Minty
Jasper
Minty
Phoebe
Phoebe
Jasper
Levy
Phoebe

Jasper & Levy



First published by Topic 1977
Recorded by Mike Yates 1975-76
Produced by Mike Yates and Tony Engle
Sleeve Notes by Cecily Taylor
Booklet Notes by Mike Yates
Photographs by Mike Yates
Sleeve design by Tony Engle
Front sleeve photograph by Fred Shaw,
hand-coloured by Julia Bennett Studios, London

'WE STILL LOVE TO SING'

George Borrow, author of 'Lavengro' and 'Romany Rye', believed that only two names of trades had been adopted by English gypsies as proper names, Cooper and Smith: *Vardomescro* and *Petulengro*. The latter, again according to Borrow, may be literally translated as either *horseshoe-man* or *tinker/tinsmith* and refers to one of the two ancient crafts for which gypsies have become well-known, be it in Spain, North Africa, Britain or the Balkans (the other, incidentally, being the role of musician). The gypsy's road has been long and hard, but 'a gypsy', claims Jasper Smith, 'can get up and sing on a dry crust of bread' and this is undoubtedly true.

When one considers that only a third of the Travellers in this country have somewhere to stop that is within the law, and that the rest, like Jasper, Levy and Minty Smith, are enduring constant harassment and appalling conditions, it is amazing that their *joie de vivre* hasn't been stifled for ever. But as Jasper points out: 'I always look on the side of the hill where the sun is shining'. Then he laughs, 'If you *Gorgios* had to put up with what we do - well, you'd probably be on them nerve pills for ever!'

The Smiths have certainly had plenty of practice in survival techniques. At the time the family of seven was left motherless, Minty was twelve, Levy seven and Jasper five. 'It was like a *loadstone* on Father', remembers Minty, who took over the mothering from then on. The children had to help as best they could, making pegs, skewers, wooden chrysanthemums, as they followed the traditional family routes - going off through Surrey and Kent for seasonal work on the fruit and hop farms, and always returning to the Epsom/Leatherhead area for the winter. Down at the pub someone would say: 'There's a boy outside who can sing', and Jasper would come to the doorway, too young to go in, and sing for halfpennies.

Every summer, of course, the family never missed a Derby, the time when vast numbers of Travellers always congregate on the Downs for their annual get-together. It is a source of pride to the Smiths that Father was named after the race - he was born on the Downs one Derby Day, and there has been a 'Derby' in each generation ever since - the latest being a great-grandson who is now four years old.

From a young age the family would augment their meagre income by entertaining the racegoers. Sometimes the children dressed up in old pyjama trousers from the totting, and blacked their faces like the nigger minstrels who were there. Levy sang or tuned, and played his tambourine, and Jasper taught himself the mouth organ: 'Well, I kep blowing and blowing till it come to me - then I was away!'

Minty danced and sang when she was a little girl, but as she grew older she did more dukkering (fortune telling) like Granny Charlotte before her. Now she is very shy about performing, and doesn't consider herself a singer at all.

At the age of sixteen she ran off with Frank and 'jumped the broomstick'. Her husband was a knife-grinder like Father's brother, but he also recaned chairs and taught the others mat repairing - how to plait coconut string into a border and sew it on to the mat edges with a big hooked needle. Minty and Frank had a family of thirteen and now she is the proud grandmother of fifty-four grandchildren, which the Gypsies think must be an all-time record. She and some of her family have been living at the side of the dual-carriage at Sevenoaks for about fourteen years now. They are still waiting for caravan pitches having been in and around the area over the last 25 years. Two years ago a passing lorry went out of control killing her daughter's husband and injuring one of the Gypsy boys.

Levy has travelled round Kent and Surrey for most of his life. He only gave up his horsedrawn wagon because he thought he would stand more chance of getting on to a site, but he has still not managed to find one. He kept a couple of horses to pull his cart for totting, scrap collecting and transporting his grinding barrow. A friendly farmer at Westerham let him keep the horses in his wood, so Levy lived on the adjoining grassy lay-by for many years, until the local Council summonsed him for 'obstructing the highway', and dumped rubbish on his vegetable patch to encourage him to move on. In the end Jasper came and towed him to Epsom where he continues his knife-grinding trade and other jobs that come along.

The two brothers enjoy singing the old folk songs and Victorian ballads, and Jasper's renderings of George Formby numbers are always assured of an enthusiastic reception at the local. The Gypsies' inherent love of music is carried into the next generation with Young Levy, in his twenties, singing, yodelling or tap dancing, while Jasper's son Derby accompanies him on his guitar or banjo. If this is not available Jasper will oblige, as of old, on his mouth organ. Derby favours Country and Western songs and idolises Jimmie Rodgers. Modern pop also forms part of his repertoire, so it is uncertain how much of the family's traditional material will survive into the future.

Jasper, like most Travellers, can turn his hand to many things in addition to tree-felling and macadaming, though if he had a settled work space he would like to make the old-style Gypsy wagons. Until comparatively recently, he and his family used to follow the old familiar routes when they went off for farm work in the spring, coming back as usual to the Epsom area for the winter, but in 1971, while they were away hopping, the local Council closed down their site and removed all the amenities which had been built on land where Gypsies had lived for over 50 years. When the Travellers returned and found they were shut out they stayed nearby on a children's playground, and decided not to move away for

farm jobs until they were assured of a site. They are still there after five years. Their long wait may yet prove something to the Council, if only that even five court cases over one piece of land do not necessarily solve anything while people have nowhere to go that is within the law.

Although Phoebe Smith now lives a settled life - her bungalow being to the north of Woodbridge in Suffolk - she has also been involved in evictions and harassment, and once in desperation, in company with her husband Joe, she even picketed Parliament with her caravan. Her justified fame as a singer led to a solo record album, *Once I Had a True Love* (Topic 12T193), and selected songs have also appeared on other albums. Today she seldom ventures far from home to sing. Rather the world comes to her, in the shape of the many young singers and folk music enthusiasts who make the regular pilgrimage to her door.

The *Gorgios* may carry on their legal wrangles, spend their rates taking trespassers to Court, foot the Legal Aid bill for the other side, but the Gypsies shrug as they have always done, and get on with the business of living; despite everything, as Jasper explains: 'We still love to sing!'

Inner booklet

The four singers heard on this record belong to one of the oldest Romani families to be found in the British Isles - the Petulengro, a name that literally means 'horseshoe man or maker'. Unlike Jasper, Levy and Minty - whose harsh, nasal singing style has been tempered by prolonged exposure to damp camp-sites and excesses of wood smoke - one can trace in Phoebe Smith's magnificent singing the remnants of a once splendid past, best preserved today in the *cante hondo* of the Andalusian gypsies, although even this is not specifically gypsy in origin. Unlike her distant cousins, Phoebe has lived in a settled home for many years and her vision of the

past is significantly different from that of many other travellers - a factor that may partly explain her different approach to singing. Nevertheless, in their distinct ways these singers are part of a culture that extends back for many generations. In an earlier record, *Songs of the Open Road* (Topic 12T253), I tried to show something of the travellers' own songs, sung in Anglo-Romani and cant. This present record deals rather with songs and tunes that are not specifically gypsy in origin but which have passed into the travellers' repertoire. Examples are also given of the mouth-music that was, and indeed still is, used for step-dancing. Jasper Smith, in common with other travellers, calls this music 'tuning', explaining that he is often called upon to 'give a tune' at impromptu get-togethers. Without the generosity of these singers, given so freely in time and patience, this record would not have been possible. My warmest thanks to them. Also to Cecily Taylor - Jasper Smith's co-biographer - whose friendship and good humour has been much appreciated; and to Roy Palmer, for supplying me with the broadside text of Levy's song, *One Penny*.

Mike Yates

The Small Birds Whistle - Jasper Smith (vocal)

The Small Birds Whistle is a fragment of the rare ballad *The Famous Flower of Serving Men*, or, the *Lady turn'd Servingman* which was first licenced to Jno. Andrews - a London printer - on July 14th 1656.

Andrews' ballad has the following introduction:

Her Lord being slain, her Father dead,
Her bower robb'd, her Servants fled;
She drest her self in Mans attire:
She trimm'd her Locks, she cut her Hair,
And therewithal she chang'd her Name,
From Fair ELISE to Sweet WILLIAM.

To a delicate new Tune, Or, Flora Farewell. Summer-time. Or, Loves Tide.

Jasper's tune and third verse belong to the Irish *Croppy Boy* family of tunes and, as Frank Purslow has noted elsewhere, this version of the ballad would appear to have come to England from Ireland. I find that fragments similar to Jasper's turn up not infrequently among gypsies and the version collected by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger from Caroline Hughes (printed in Vol. 4 of Bronson *Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads*) is clearly related to the version sung here by Jasper.

- 1 Now when I was a young girl all in my prime
 I ran away with a man that I loved for some time
 And after a while sure he left me in distress
 Left me there with a baby upon my breast

- 2 Then my father he built me a shady bower
 He covered it over with shamrock flowers
 They were the prettiest flowers, oh, that ever you did see
 What my tended old father built up for me

3 So it's early, oh early, oh in the spring
The small birds whistled and they gently sing
They changed their voices, oh, from tree to tree
And the song that they sung was 'Old Ireland's free'

4 Then my father he owed me a dreadful spite
He sent nine robbers all in one night
To take my baby and to do me harm
That's what my tended old father built up for me

Bib: Bronson vol. 2, pp. 530-4; vol. 4, pp. 484-5. Child 106.
Euing pp. 169-70. FMJ vol. I, pp. 147-8. (The latter version is
also in PCL pp. 34-5.)

The Sheepfold - Phoebe Smith (vocal)

Mary Ann Haynes, a gypsy now living in Brighton, has a similar version of this song. Mary's version contains the following final verse to complete the story:

Oh the doctor was called for to heal up his wounds,
Likewise pretty Betsy to sit by his side,
Likewise pretty Betsy to sit by his side,
'Instead of being my milkmaid', he says, 'You will be my bride.'

Although *The Sheepfold* is not all that uncommon today it has seldom appeared in print or on record, and is possibly no older than the version that appeared on a broadside issued in the 1850s by Henry Parker Such of London.

As I were a-singing a sweet pretty song
I met pretty Betsy come tripping along
'Do you want any milk, sir,' pretty Betsy she cried
and 'Yes,' said the squire, 'If you'll just step inside'

The ring from her finger he broke that in two
He gave one half to Betsy on this open field
He gave one half to Betsy so I had been told
And away they went walking down by the sheepfold

'Now pretty Betsy, let me have my will
and don't you deny me on these open fields,
If you deny me on these open fields
With my bright shiny sword I will soon make you heel'

With hugging and struggling pretty Betsy got free
And with her own weapon she soon let him see
And with her own weapon she pierced him right through
And she left him lay bleeding down by the sheepfold

So home to her father with a tear in her eye
I have wounded the squire dear father she cried
I have wounded the squire dear father she cried
And left him lay bleeding down by the sheepfold

The carriage was sent for and the carriage did come
And likewise the doctor to heal up his wounds
For to heal up his wounds as he laid on the ground
And it's all that he asked for was his charming milk maid

Bib: JFSS vol. 21, p. 35; vol. 35, p. 269. Pinto & Rodway p. 351.
Kennedy p. 696. Leach p. 82. Disc: Topic 12T235 Blackberry
Fold (George Spicer)

One Penny - Levy Smith (vocal)

Levy's short song *One Penny*, sung here to a fine tune, is a fragment of the longer *Adventures of a Penny*, which first appeared in the late 18th century. In this version, Levy has somehow managed to lose the song's narrative element - where an impoverished blade outwits his richer associates - and he is left with a song which he believes concerns a gypsy who gains a kiss rather than the chicken that he had originally set out to steal.

- 1 For I've got an old pony
For that's got the wind
For along every storm
She'll pull herself in
- Chorus:
With me right fol the day
Right fol the day
All in my pocket is one penny
- 2 For I come to a hen-house
And that was close by
'Longside the roadside
I set myself down
- 3 But I asked the landlady
How much I had to pay
She said, 'Nothing but a kiss dear
And do run away'

The full nature of the song can be established from the following text printed in London at the end of the 18th century:

The Adventures of a PENNY

Published at No 15, Long Lane; and No 2 Cleaver's Soap-Yard top of Drury Lane St Giles.

LONG time I've travell'd the North country,
Seeking for good company,
Good company I always could find,
But none was pleasing to my mind.
Sing wack fal de ral, &c.
I had one penny.

I saddl'd my horse and away I did ride,
Till I came to an alehouse near the road side
I call'd for a pot of good ale that was brown
Along of it I sat myself down.

I saw three gentlemen playing at dice
I took them to be some noble knights,
They were at play, and I looking on,
They took me to be some nobleman.

They asked me if I would play?
I asked them what bets they'd lay;
One said a guinea, and I five pounds,
The bet was laid, but the money not down.

I took up the dice and flung them amain,
It was my fortune for to win,
If they had won and I had lost
I must have flung down my empty purse.
Sing wack, & c.
For in my pocket I had no money.

Was ever mortal man more glad,
Than I with myself with the money I had
I am a hearty good fellow, that you shall find,
I will make you all drunk with drinking of wine,

I tarried all night, part of the next day,
I thought it was time to be joggin away,
I ask'd my young landlady what was to pay,
Nothing but a kiss love, and then go your way.

Bib: Baring Gould no. 26. FMJ vol. 2, pp. 290-1. Hill no. 1.
Joyce p. 32. Kennedy pp. 612, 629. Kidson & Moffat p. 10. PM
p. 68. Sharp vol. 2, pp. 243-6.

The Basket of Eggs - Minty Smith (vocal)

Gavin Greig, the assiduous Scottish song collector, called this song *The Foundling Baby*, although singers throughout England and Scotland have preferred to use the broadside title *The Basket of Eggs*. In the late 1950s Ken Stubbs collected a version from Frank Smith, Minty's late husband, which, understandably, was very similar in form. Like *One Penny*, the song dates from the latter half of the 18th century.

- 1 Oh there was two (?) and brisk young sailors
Oh with their pockets lined with gold
Oh walking and quickly talking
To a fair young lady they did meet
'Oh lady, lady, can I carry your basket
Can I carry your basket as far as the half-way house?
'Oh yes kind sir if you over walk me
Will you please leave it at the half-way house'
- 2 Oh walking and talking and gently talking
'Til they got to the half-way house
'Oh landlord, landlord, have you any bacon?
Oh in my basket I've eggs to fry'
- 3 The landlord takes it and quickly used it
Thinking he had eggs to fry
'Oh sailor, sailor, you are mistaken
In the room of eggs it's an orphan child'
- 4 One of those sailors (was) forced to weeping
For the other one said, 'Oh it's not worthwhile'
Oh (a) lady stood over called Nancy Whisky
'Was the fair young lady that danced with me?'
'Oh yes kind sir, didn't I please your fancy?
So now the fiddle you've got to pay'
- 5 They took this child to some big large buildings
And they had it baptised '
There was church bell ringings and bridesmaids singing
And one of those sailors did make a bride

Bib: FMJ vol. 2, p. 284. Grey article c. JFSS vol. I, p. 46; vol. 2, pp. 102-3. PCL pp. 27-8. Sharp vol. 2. 111-2. Stubbs p. 32. Disc. Topic 12T258 Sussex Harvest (Bob Blake).

The Pony March/Whistling Rufus - Jasper Smith (mouthorgan/tuning).

The Pony March came to Jasper by way of his father who would whistle the tune whilst driving his vardo (wagon). Although Jasper believes it to be his father's composition it would seem to be part of an early band march of the type issued on early 78s. *Whistling Rufus* is, of course, well-known and Jasper's spirited performance certainly reflects his virtuosity on the mouthorgan.

Tiddlewink old man get a woman if you can
If you can't get a woman get an old tin can
If it wasn't for your name and it wasn't for your shame
I'd let you have a go in a minute young man

Twenty years ago schoolchildren in south Oxfordshire sang the following set of words to a similar tune:

Tiddlewink old man suck a lolly if you can
If you can't suck a lolly suck an old tin can.

Green Bushes - Phoebe Smith (vocal)

The song *Green Bushes* was popular in 1845 when J.B. Buckstone based a play on the same theme - keeping the same title incidentally. It was printed on numerous 19th century broadsides, which possibly helps to explain why so many versions were noted by song collectors at the beginning of this century. Phoebe Smith's version begins with a 'rogue' verse - from the song *The Pride of Kildare* - which, characteristically, does not sound out of place.

- 1 Now sometimes I am jobal and sometimes I am sad
Since my love has been courting another young man
And as she walked by my side oh my heart filled with woe
Make a bloomer on you Susan, you're the pride of this land
- 2 'I will buy you fine beavers I'll buy you fine gowns
I'll buy you fine pettycoats flounced down to the ground
If you will prove royal and be constantly true
And forsake your own truelove and get married to me'
- 3 'I want none of your beavers nor fine silk or gowns
I want none of your fine pettycoats flounced down to the ground
For I will prove royal I'll be constantly true
I'll forsake my own truelove I'll get married to you'
- 4 'Now you let me be going from under green trees
For it's yonder my truelove is a-coming can't you see
And down by the green bushes where he means to meet me'
- 5 Now when he got there he found she were gone
He felt like some schoolboy spent his time at play
'Now false hearted young girl will not 'lude me any more
There's adieu to green bushes for ever and more'

Bib: Copper 2 pp. 240-1. Hamer pp. 42-3. Kennedy pp. 356, 378 (there are extensive references given in this book). Laws P2. Sharp vol. 1, pp. 593-6. Disc: Leader LEA40S0 Unto Brigg Fair (Joseph Leaning). Topic 12TS252 The Broomfield Wager (Cyril Poacher). Xtra XTRS1 141 The Larks They Sang Melodious (Geoff Ling).

Raking the Hay - Phoebe smith (vocal)

Several English folksongs deal with the theme of rural seduction - or attempted seduction. Songs such as *The Barley Raking*, *Lovely Joan*, *The Aylesbury Girl* and *Raking the Hay* enjoyed a widespread popularity in the late 1700s and early 1800s and many no doubt stem from a sophisticated bawdry of the type that Henry Playford included in his drollery collection *Wit and Mirth or Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1698-1714). The songs reappeared over and over again on broadsides and, in the mouths of countless folksingers, have become gems like the one that Phoebe sings here.

- 1 As I walked out on a bright summers day
Across those fields and meadows gay
And who should I meet, was a lady may
And she were raking her master's hay
- 2 'Ada dear, what have brought you here
A-raking of your hay so clear?
Throw down your rake and put on your cloak
And you (gain?) with the sailor to yonders town'
- 3 'No kind sir, that will never do
My master he's now watching you
He'll stop my wages give me no pay
If I leave off a-raking among the hay'
- 4 Words were kind and kisses sweet
So soon that young girl changed her mind
She throwed down her rake and put on her cloak
And she went with that sailor to yonders town
- 5 Nine long months being gone and passed
That pretty fair maid fell sick at last
She cursed the hour likewise the day
When she left off a-raking her master's hay

Some 19th-century broadside printers titled the song *Joy After Sorrow* and, rather than leave the girl as Phoebe does, they ended their versions with the following two verses:

When 40 long weeks come and gone
This lovely damsel brought forth a son
She blessed the hour all in the day
When she went with the soldier and left the hay

When this soldier the news did know
Great favour to this girl did show
They soon married were and she blessed the day
That she went with the soldier and left the hay

Bib: JFSS vol. 3, p. 107. Sharp vol. 1, pp. 447-8. PWS p. 51.
Disc: Topic 12T244 A Garland for Sam (Sam Larner).

The Moon Shines Bright - Jasper Smith (vocal)

During the period 1907-09 Ralph Vaughan Williams collected a number of traditional carols in Herefordshire, along the Welsh/ English borders. Many of them were sung by gypsy singers - including Eliza Smith, mother of May Bradley, who provided several fine carols to the collector Fred Hamer in the 1960s - and the gypsies were no doubt steeped in a well-established local carol-singing tradition. Broadside printers such as Bloomer, Pratt and Russell of Birmingham and Rann and Walters of Dudley specialised in ornate carol sheets - it was Walters, incidentally, who produced *A Good Christmas Box* (1847), an influential chapbook that contained 58 carols including *The Moon Shines Bright* - whilst in London John Pitts and Jemmy Catnach issued large carol sheets during the month preceding Christmas. Even today many Midland gypsies can recall several of these splendid songs but, to my disappointment, I find that very few carols are now sung in South-East England. Jasper remembers using *The Moon Shines Bright* as a begging song, to be sung from door to door at Christmas time some 40 years ago, and, interestingly, records exist to show that it was also used in this manner as early as 1750.

-
- 1 Oh the moon shined bright and the stars gave a light
And a little before the day
Our Lord, our Lord, how he suffered on a cross
And he begged us the way how to pray
 - 2 Oh wait, oh wait, good people wait
Wait and you shall hear
Oh we're here today and the morrow we're away
And our body lays under the turf
 - 3 God bless the rulers of this house
Likewise the gentlemen too
All the happy families
Set round the table too
A little of your pudding sir
A glass of your strong ale
Lord we'll send you all a happy New Year
 - 4 Now my carol's done and I must be gone
No longer can I stay here
Our Lord, our Lord, how he suffered on a cross
And he begged us the way how to pray

Bib: Broadwood p. 108. JFSS vol. 1, pp. 176-7; vol. 2, pp. 131-2; vol. 4, pp. 10-1 ; vol. 8, pp. 215-6. Sharp vol. 2, pp. 501-4.

Father Had a Knife - Jasper Smith (vocal)

Versions of *Father Had a Knife* were issued on broadsides by Such and Fortey in London and Pearson in Manchester, and one such text is included in the Henderson book mentioned below. Collectors such as Cecil Sharp, George Gardiner, the Hammond Brothers and Alfred Williams all noted the song but it is only recently that collected sets have been seen in print. In verse 3 line 3 Jasper's Anglo-Romani word *jub* (or *joob*) stems from the Sanskrit word *yuka* (= a flea).

- 1 So it's father had a knife mother had a fork
Sister had the bottle and brother had the cork
We had a cut from the knife a dig from the fork
A drink from the bottle and she's gone and lost the cork
Chorus:
So the longer we go on the merrier we will be
We do belong to a boozing family
- 2 Now it's father had a pig mother had a cow
Sister had the rabbit and brother had the owl
We had some pork from the pig some milk from the cow
Some sport from the rabbit and a whistle from Johnny's owl
- 3 Now it's brother had a lice and sister had a flea
Brother had a bottle and uncle had the tea
We had some scratches from the jub some bites from the flea
Some drink from the cup and he's gone and lost the tea

Bib: Dunston p. 3. Henderson p. 70. Kennedy pp. 607-8.
Disc: Topic 12T 198 The Folksongs of Britain vol. 10 (Harold Covill).

The Jew's Garden - Minty Smith (vocal)

O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln - slayn also
With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,
For it is but a litel while ago -
Preye eek for us, we synful folk unstable.

Chaucer

Although the supposed 12th-century murder of Hugh of Lincoln has been cited by some scholars as the origin of this ballad, it would seem more likely that it is in fact based on even earlier beliefs - mythological rather than historical. The ballad has remained popular with gypsies in Britain - Child included a set collected by Francis Groome, a Victorian gypsologist - an ironic fact when one considers that this is a ballad concerning the persecution of the Jews, here being sung by a member of the gypsy race, some 2 million of whom died alongside the 6 million Jews who perished in Hitler's pestilence. In several American sets the murderer is shown to be a gypsy - a reflection there of the prejudice that is inherent in many societies.

- 1 Oh three little boys went out for to play
A-playing with the ball
Till they playing with the ball
Over in the Jew's garden
- 2 'Come here little boy you can have your ball
You can have your ball again'
As he reached for this ball
And she grabbed him like a sheep
- 3 She takes him upstairs and lays him on her knee
The first thing she picked him was an apple
- green as grass
Then the next thing what she picked him was a cherry
- as red as blood
- 4 'Oh if my mother was to come by this way
Will you tell her I'm asleep'

Minty's brother, Jasper, sings the following words to the same tune:

- 1 There was two little boys coming home from school
Playing with the ball
They tossed it over in the Jew's garden
Oh, over a very high wall
- 2 'Come here little boy you can have your ball
You can have your ball' cried he
And he grabbed him by the waist and he pulled him down
And he stabbed him like a sheep

Bib: Bronson vol. 3, pp. 72-104. Child 155. EDS vol. xxviii, no. 2 (Spring 1966) p. 48. Disc: Leader LEA4055 Folk Ballads of Donegal and Derry (John Ban). Tangent TNGM1 19D The Muckle Songs (Margaret Stewart). Topic 12T161 The Folksongs of Britain vol. 5 (Cecilia Costello).



THE SHANNON SIDE

London:—H. P. SUCH, Machine Printer and
Publisher, 177, Union-street Borough.

It was in the month of April, one morning by the dawn,
When Violets and Cowslips were strewn upon the lawn,
And Flora's mantle bedecks the field with pride,
I met a comely damsel down by the Shannon side.
Good morning, to you sweetheart, I unto her did say,
Why are you up so early, and were you this way?
With cheeks like blooming roses, the damsel she replied,
I go to seek my father's sheep, down by the Shannon side.
I said, my pretty fair maid, I'll bear thee company,
If you have no objection that I should go with thee;
She said, kind sir, excuse me, my parents will me chide,
If I am seen with any man down by the Shannon side.
In transport I beheld her, and gave her a kiss,
She said, kind sir, be civil, what do you mean by this?
The ground was mossy where we stood, her feet from her
did slide.
And we both fell down together upon the Shannon side.
Three times I kissed her ruby lips as she lay on the grass,
On coming to herself again, O then she cried alas!
Now you have had your will of me, make me your lawful
bride. (non side.)
And do not leave me here to mourn, down by the Shannon side.
He said, my pretty fair maid, from mourning now refrain,
And we will talk of marriage when I return again;
But do not let your spirits fall, what ever you betide,
Until I see your face again down by the Shannon side.
We kissed, shook hands, and parted, and from her I did
steer;
I did not pass that way again for more than half a year,
In crossing o'er that flowery path my love by chance I spied,
She was scarcely able to walk down by the Shannon side.
I seemed to take no notice, but steered on my way,
My love she turned her head aside and desired me to stay,
The tears like crystal fountains down her cheeks did glide,
O don't forget the fall you gave down by the Shannon side.
For me it was a woeful fall for I am with child by thee,
And if you'll be satisfied, kind sir, to marry me,
Here's 50 guineas in bright gold, my father will provide,
And 60 acres of good land down by the Shannon side.
I said, my pretty fair maid, I like your offer well,
But I'm engaged already, the truth to you I tell,
Unto another fair maid who is to be my bride,
A wealthy grazier's daughter down by the Shannon side.
Since you will not marry me, pray tell me your name,
That when my babe is born, I may call it the same;
My name is Captain Thunderbolt the same I'll not deny,
I have got men to guard you on yonder mountains high.
We kiss'd, shook hands, and parted and from her I did stray,
Turning her head aside, these words I heard her say,
I hope 'twill be a warning to all young maids beside,
Never trust a young man down by the Shannon side.

Step Dance Tunes - Jasper Smith (mouthorgan), MintySmith (tuning).

Oh Derby, Derby, won't you marry me?
Derby, Derby, won't you say yes?
Derby, Derby, won't you marry me?
Show your legs to the cockney girls.

Sweet William - Phoebe Smith (vocal)

Versions of *Sweet William* have turned up repeatedly from singers throughout the English-speaking world, suggesting that at one time it enjoyed a widespread popularity. On the surface it seems an innocent enough story. However, in some versions William's ghost appears as a warning to his over-faithful sweetheart - rather like the ghost in the ballad of *The Unquiet Grave* (Child 78) - and it would seem that the ballad has become linked with Irish forms of another supernatural tale, *The Grey Cock* (Child 248). Phoebe's version, in common with most English sets, omits this element.

- 1 There was six bonny sailors stood in a row
 And my love William among the crew
 He's tall and handsome, both young and fair
 If I don't have William I'll have none at all
- 2 Now he sails away on the morning tide
 I stood on shore and watched that ship sail by
 To plough the ocean both far and wide
 When the sea is raging and the wind blows high
- 3 'Now come father, come father, build to me a boat
 And on the ocean I'm going to float
 To watch those Queen's ships as they sail by
 Then I will enquire for my Willie boy'
- 4 She did not sail on the ocean far
 Before a Queen's ship she chanced to meet
 'Come Captain, Captain, now tell me true
 The ship my love William's on board with you?'

- 5 'Now what colour clothes did your Willie wear?'
 'The colour blue with his eyes so true
 His ruby lips they're so fresh and fine
 And ten thousand times they have been joined with mine'
- 6 'Oh no fair lady he is not here
 He's dead and drowned I am aware
 The other night when the wind blew high
 That's when I lost sight of your Willie boy'
- 7 'Now are you single and are you free
 Or will you come love and marry me?'
 'I won't be bound but I will go free
 Until apples grow on an orange tree'

Bib: Ashton (*The Sailor Boy* - no page number). Laws K12 (numerous references given). Sharp vol. 2, pp. 320-3. Disc: Topic 12T 194 *The Folksongs of Britain* vol. 6 (Lal Smith). Wattle A52 *Australian Traditional Singers and Musicians In Victoria* (Simon McDonald).

Johnny Abourne - Phoebe Smith (vocal)

Johnny Abourne is thought by most scholars to concern one James Raeburn, a Glasgow bakery worker, who is believed to have been transported to Australia in the first half of the 19th century. (Although rumour has it that the Scottish collector Superintendent John Ord of the Glasgow Police failed to trace Raeburn's supposed crime in police records.) The song appeared on numerous 19th-century English broadsides as *The Hills of Caledonia* but, to my knowledge, this is only the third set to have been collected so far in England, Ralph Vaughan Williams having previously noted it in Norfolk, and George Gardiner a set in Hampshire which has so far remained unpublished. The following verse, noted by John Meredith in Australia, is possibly nearer to the original than Phoebe's 3rd verse:

I slowly rose, put on my clothes, my heart was filled with grief,
My comrades standing round me could grant me no relief.
As I stepped into the morning coach my heart was filled with woe
For to leave my friends, hills and dales of Caledonia.

As will be seen, Phoebe's text has Abourne transported to Canada - no doubt as a result of an English singer's mishearing of the word Caledonia.

- 1 My name were Johnny Abourne in Glasgow I were born
My home and habitation that I have left and gone
To leave those hills and bonny dales
To Canadee-i-o
- 2 Was on one Friday morning as we layed in our cells
Up stepped our bold-ly turnkey and these very words did say
'Come rise you noble convicts I'll warn you one and all
This is the day that we sail away to Canadee-i-o'
- 3 We early rose slipped on our clothes our hearts were filled with grief
Strong iron chains we boundly stayed near Carr-a-gang-awa
No more I'll meet near Claddy Banks
To Canadee-i-o "
- 4 Good luck unto my mother dear who reared me many of years
And through my sad misfortune she has shed many of bitter tears
And likewise to my father dear he is the best of all
Now the seas shall roar between us all in Canadee-i-o

Bib: JFSS vol. 2, pp. 180-1. MacColl & Seeger p. 80. Ord pp. 357-8.

Disc: Folkways FW8776 The Borders (Tom Scott)

Died for Love - Jasper Smith (vocal)

Some songs and ballads are extremely difficult to identify with any degree of accuracy. Many are closely related with verses floating freely between whatever form the singer chooses to sing. It would seem that Jasper's song comes initially from an 18th century ballad *The Cruel Father*, with additions from an early 19th century song *The Squire's Daughter*. Other songs from this parentage are *The Alehouse* and *There is a Tavern in the Town*. Jasper's version of this well-loved piece appears to be a relatively late form and, so he tells me, one that was popular with servicemen during World War II.

- 1 A man came walking home one night
He found his house without a light
He walked upstairs to go to bed
Then the second thought came in his head
- 2 He walked into his daughter's room
And found her hanging by the beam
He drew a knife and cut her down
And on her breast this is what he found
- 3 'My love is for a sailor boy
Who sails across the deep blue sea
So all you maidens good and true
Never change the old love for the new'
- 4 'Oh Lord wish my child was born
And all my troubles could be gone
So all you maidens good and true
Never change your old love for the new'

Bib: Kennedy pp. 360, 381 (see especially the important note given). Laws P24. Leach pp. 62-3.

Disc: Folkways FA2 374 Close to Home (Roscoe Holcomb).
Rounder 0017 Almeda Riddle.



Sailor Boy.

Sold by T. Evans, 79, Long Lane.

DOWN by a chrystal river side,
Where silver streams did sweetly
glide,
I heard a fair maid making her moan,
How can I live now my Jemmy's gone.

Go fetch to me some little boat,
That on the ocean I may float,
Through the French ships as they sail by,
Enquiring for my sailor boy.

She had not sailed long on the deep,
Before five sail of French ships she did
meet,
Come tell to me, you jovial ships crew,
If my true love sails along with you?

O no, fair lady, he is not here,
For he is drown'd I greatly fear,
For on yonder green island as I past by,
There we lost your young sailor boy.

She wrung her hands and tore her hair,
Just like a woman in despair,
Her boat against the rock she run,
O can I live, my Jemmy is gone!

So come you maids who dress in black,
That for a sailor you do lack,
With a black top-mast and sails wide,
That parted me and my sailor boy.

Down to the silent shady grove,
There will I moan for my true love,
And tell the small birds all my grief,
For they alone afford some small relief.

The Irish Girl - Levy Smith (vocal)

When John Pitts printed this song in the first decade of the 19th century he called it *The New Irish Girl*. It may be that there was an earlier song titled *The Irish Girl* although I suspect that the title really refers to the fact that Pitts - or somebody now unknown - had created a 'new' song using already existing lines and verses. Fifty years later when Henry Parker Such issued the song - using the same title - he added a number of additional verses that were also taken from established songs. Interestingly, though, Levy's short fragment is nearer to the Pitts sheet than to the later sheet that Such issued.

- 1 For I wish I was in old Dublin Town
For a-sitting on the grass
With a bottle of whiskey in my hand
And on my knee a lass
We would call for pints of liquor-y
For we'll pay before we go
How can I go and leave her
For to slight my pretty Polly
- 2 Now my pretty Polly have a pair of shoes
For the tops are painted green
For if I was a nightingale
For I'll sing from mom to night
But it must have been that Spain(ish) girl
For my darling (short?) of will
- 3 I'm a-going home, I'm going home
For I'm going home quite sure
With a bottle of whiskey in my hand
For and on my knee a lass
But I'll roll my lass all on the grass
Let the wind blow high and low

Bib: Copper I pp. 246-7. JFSS vol. 1, pp. 258-9; vol. 8. pp. 263-4.
Sharp vol. 1, pp. 495-500.
Disc: Leader LED2063 A Proper Sort (Walter Pardon).

Captain Thunderbold - Phoebe Smith (vocal)

Lucy Broadwood used to refer to this song as *The Betrayal* and she believed that it shared a common - possibly Irish - origin with songs such as *The Lily White Hand* and *Blackwater Side*. My own view is that the song at one time recorded a more supernatural encounter - possibly with the Devil himself - and is, I feel, connected in spirit to another Irish tale of the netherworld, *Reynardine*, in which a girl plays out a meeting with a disturbing half-animal, half-human being. For an early version of the song, see *The Westerne Knight* and the *Young Maid of Bristoll, Their Loves and Fortunes related* - a blackletter broadside that was licenced to be printed on June 1st 1629 and is reprinted in the Rollins book mentioned below.

- 1 Was on one May morning so early in the spring
When prim-a-rosy violets come spreading round the green
And one of them so manfully come Jack-in-the-field with pride
As we both walked down together along the Shannon side
- 2 'Where are you going my pretty fair maid
Where are you going this way?'
'I am going to seek my father's ship
Down by the Shannon side'
- 3 'May I come with you my pretty maid, may I come along your way
And if you've any objections I will follow on behind'
The ground being moss and slippery, one foot from her did slide
And they both went down together along the Shannon side
- 4 'Now since you've had your will of me pray tell to me your name
That's when my baby that is bom as that may be the same'
'My name is Captain Thunderbowl and the truth I'll never deny
For I have got men to guard me over yonders mountains high'



The New Irish Girl,

Pitts, Printer, Wholesaler's Toy and Marble Warehouse 6,
Great St. Andrew Street 7 dist.

As I walked out morning down by a river's side,
And grazing all around me an Irish girl I spied,
So red and rosy was her cheeks and cold black was her
hair.
How costly were the robes of gold this Irish girl did wear

Her shoes were of the Spanish black bespangled with dew
She washing her hands tearing her hair crying alas what shall
I do,
I am going home I am going home I am going home says
she
Why would you go a raving for my true love says she

The very last time I saw my love oh he was very bad,
The only reason he shere for was to tie his head
There is many a man that is woefer than him perhaps he
might weint again,
O Love is a killing thing did you ever feel the pain

I wish my love was a red rose that in the garden grows,
And I to be the gardener of her I would take care,
There is not a month throughout the year but her I would
see
With his red would garish her sweet Williams Thyme
and Rue,

I wish I was a butterfly I would fly so my love's breast
I wish I was a linnnet I would sing my love to rest
I wish I was a nightingale I would sing till the morning
clear
I would sit and sing for my true love whom once I loved
so dear

I wish I was in Dublin town a little on the grass;
With a bottle of whiskey in my hand and on my knee a
lass,
We'll call for Liquors merrily and pay before we go,
I'll fold them in my arms let the winds blow high or low

Bib: Law: P18. Ord p. 200. Rollins pp. 305 -8. Sharp vol. 1, pp. 651-5.

Jigs & Polka; including **Cock of the North, Flowers of Edinburgh** and **The Girl I left Behind Me** - Jasper Smith (mouthorgan & tuning), Levy Smith (drum).

Oh step it away you pretty boys
Step it away your time
God bless your body
When your legs keep time

The Travelling
Songster

15

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- John Ashton Real Sailor Songs 1891 (reprinted 1973).
Sabine Baring Gould Songs & Ballads of the West 1889.
Lucy Broadwood & JA. Fuller Maitland English County Songs 1893.
Bertrand Bronson The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads (Princeton) 1959-72.
Francis J. Child The English & Scottish Popular Ballads (various editions).
Bob Copper A Song For Every Season 1971.
Bob Copper Songs and Southern Breezes 1973.
Ralph Dunston Cornish Dialect and Folk Songs 1932.
English Dance and Song in progress.
The Euing Collection of English Broadside Ballads (Glasgow) 1971.
Folk Music Journal 1965 - in progress.
Gavin Greig Folk Songs of the North East 1909-14 (reprinted Hatboro, Pa., 1963).
Fred Hamer Gamers Gay 1967
W. Henderson Victorian Street Ballads 1937.
Rev. Geoffrey Hill Wiltshire Folk Songs and Carols (Bournemouth) 1904.
Journal of the Folk Song Society 1899-1931.
P. Weston Joyce Old Irish Folk Music and Songs (Dublin) 1909.
Peter Kennedy Folksongs of Britain & Ireland 1975.
Frank Kidson & A. Moffat A Garland of English Folk Songs 1926.
G. Malcolm Laws American Balladry from British Broadside (Philadelphia) 1957.
MacEdward Leach Folk Ballads and Songs of the Lower Labrador Coast (Ottawa) 1965.
Ewan MacColl & Peggy Seeger The Singing Island 1960.
John Ord Bothy Songs & Ballads (Paisley) 1930.
Frank Purslow The Constant Lovers 1972.
Frank Purslow The Foggy Dew 1974.
V. de Sola Pinto & A.E. Rodway The Common Muse 1957.
Frank Purslow Marrowbones 1965.
Frank Purslow The Wanton Seed 1968.
Hyder Rollins A Pepsysian Garland (Harvard) 1922 (reprinted 1971).
Maud Karpeles Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs 1975.
Ken Stubbs The Life of a Man 1970.

Digital remaster ©2013 Topic Records Ltd.
©2013 Topic Records Records Ltd.
The copyright in this sound recording and
digital artwork is owned by Topic Records Ltd.
All rights reserved.



TOPIC TSDL304
www.topicrecords.co.uk



Jasper Smith



Levy Smith



Minty Smith



Phoebe Smith



jasper and Levy



Joe Smith

