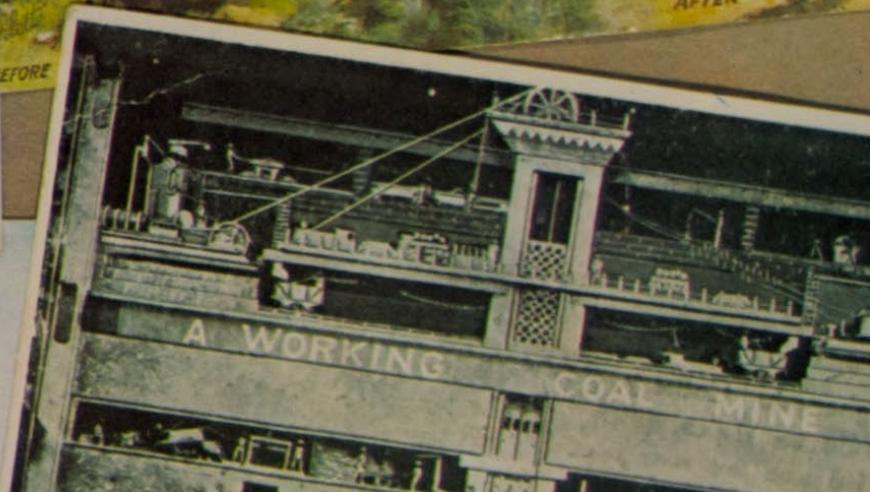


POST HOME CARDS

STAMP





## Bob Davenport Postcards Home

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- 1 Byker Hill/Blackleg Miners
- 2 Durham Gaol Selection: The Gypsy Poacher/Durham Gaol/The First Time I Saw Durham City/  
Ball of Yarn/Breaking Sticks
- 3 Wait Till the Work Comes Round
- 4 The Wintertime Is Coming In/The Old Changing Way
- 5 When a Man Looks Pale/There's Nae Much Luck About the House
- 6 We Plough and Sow/Get Up, Stand Up
- 7 Once I Had a True Love/Lowlands/My Bonnie Lad
- 8 Great Little Army March - Widnes Star Novelty Band
- 9 Unemployed Men Stand on the Corner/McCaffery/I Don't Want to Join the Army
- 10 The House Is Crammed/Good Morning, Good Morning/Our Soldiers Went to War/  
If I Was Fierce/If You Want to Find the Colonel/They Didn't Believe Me
- 11 Have You Forgotten Yet/When This Bloody War Is Over

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Sleeve design by Tony Engle

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In 1956 a pal of mine, a platelayer from Gateshead, said that things were getting tight in the heavy industries along the Tyne. One time you could leave a job on Friday and choose where you wanted to start on the Monday. In 1956, he found, you had to get a job and think about holding on to it.

In 1966 I was involved in the making of a documentary for the Co-op by a group from Hornsey College of Art. I suggested they went up to County Durham and filmed around Stanley, Blaydon and Swalwell where, like many Durham mining areas, they had a long allegiance with the Co-op because of the help they had given the miners in the '26 strike. The camera team were amazed to find they had filmed scenes that were more like the Thirties depression than the Swinging Sixties.

About a couple of years earlier, I was given a lift back to London by a Labour MP after a folk concert for the Trades Council in his constituency. When I mentioned the coming depression, or recession as it was re-named to remove the strong emotional overtones of the former, I was told most forcefully that I should drop the cloth cap socialism of the past and come into the Swinging Sixties.

Despite Harold Wilson and most Labour MPs having swung with every swinger and handing out Orders of the British Empire to the new intelligentsia, we are about to enjoy a depression that will make the Thirties look like a Sunday School outing.

We are getting the same old speeches about shoulders to the wheel, tighten our belts and so on. It must be easy for Civil Servants and Private Secretaries who write these speeches; they only have to look up the files from previous depressions and repeat what is written there.

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The only way out of a depression is a jolly good show or, as most people call it, a war. Already there are eliminating bouts going on around the world and it should not be too long before we have the heavyweight championship of the world. It may finally destroy Civilisation, which some people may totally agree with, but whatever happens it will get rid of the slump and, as we all know, a boom follows a war, so the future is not as black as some powers would have us believe.

So what has all this got to do with the traditional music that I sing? It means that as I come from a working class area in the North-East of England, that has known hard times, my background is going to be reflected in my performance. It need not be bitter or nostalgic, just a straightforward statement. This can be contained in what someone may call a music-hall song, because it is humorous, or what others call a folk song, because it is serious.

Whatever the songs I sing, whether I got them from Gus Elen, Phoebe Smith, Stephen Sedley, Andy O'Boyle, Tommy Armstrong, the New Lost City Ramblers, Percy Webb, May Bradley, Richard Thompson or Bob Marley, I feel they fit into the total performance over the evening and **Get Up, Stand Up** will be sung as strongly as the **Gypsy Poacher**.

One further thing about my performance, which often disappoints North-East students studying at colleges away from home and listening drunk out of their minds on two pints of Newcastle Brown Ale, I tend to avoid the Stage Geordie image that has grown up of late. The North-East, for this depression, has become a Tourist Kingdom. We are encouraged to get dressed up in native costume and gan tappy lappy after the rich Europeans and American tourists, speak quaint dialect words with grammar school accents and, on Newcastle Brown Ale, give the image of happy peasants rejoicing with sword dance and song the return of

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the dole queue. It will need a much stronger beer than what Newcastle Brown Ale is now brewing to avoid the reality of the TV adverts that invite you to enlist as the only way out of the depression around you.

In 1902, Thomas Hardy wrote the following poem, called "The Man He Killed":

'Had he and I but met  
By some ancient inn,  
We should have sat us down to wet  
Right many a nipperkin.

'But ranged as infantry  
And staring face to face,  
I shot at him as he at me,  
And killed him in his place.

'I shot him dead because -  
Because he was my foe,  
Just so: my foe of course he was;  
That's clear enough; although.

'He thought he'd list, perhaps,  
Off-hand like - just as I -  
Was out of work - had sold his traps -  
No other reason why.

'Yes; quaint and curious war is  
You shoot a fellow down  
You'd treat if met where any bar is,  
Or help to half-a-crown.'

*Thomas Hardy, 1902*

As the political speeches don't change in times of crisis, so the content of songs and poems don't.

The same reaction to bad conditions around them gave rise to the poems of William Blake, Siegfried Sassoon and Thomas Hardy; to some of our traditional songs as well as the songs of Richard Thompson, Tommy Armstrong and Bob Marley. Conditions in the Thirties - I should have said 1930s here for there was a depression in the 1830s - caused the break-up of the Widnes Band - they didn't have the money to buy new mouth organs.

Obviously, it would be better that the injustices that have produced such powerful poetry and song against such injustice over the centuries had never existed. But they did exist and still do and as the prime minister tells us to tighten our belts so we must sing **Stand Up For Your Rights** yet again.

And in answer to every prime minister's warning that there are leftist forces at work seeking to overthrow the freedom we enjoy in this country, all I can say is that if I was at Whitley Bay, I would send a postcard to Freedom and say on it - Wish you were here.

Finally, forgive me lapsing into my North-East dialect and having the CIA on my back for being a professional Geordie, but, as we would say up there, keep a haad.

**Bob Davenport**  
**January 1977**

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### The Gypsy Poacher

On one clear and starry evening I from my home did stray  
Down to some lonesome meadows where the hares they sport and play  
The times were bad, there was little work and so my dog and me  
Set out to catch a hare or two to feed my family

Now me and me dog we hadn't been going so very far down the lane  
When we were stopped dead in our tracks by a man crying out in pain  
I rushed up to the plantation, through the hedge I forced a gap  
Then came across this gypsy lad, his leg caught in a trap

I got the lad back to the house, me wife looked at the wound  
At first she thought he must be dead for he never made a sound  
But she quickly got up and she got her shawl when he began to moan  
She says, "I'm going to need your mother's help, look after him while I'm gone"

No sooner had she left the house than a knock came at the door  
Well I went out to answer it, the men stood from the law  
They pushed their way into the house, saw the lad lying on the hearthstone  
"Well, here's a bit of luck, me lads, we've caught two for the price of one"

It was at the quarter sessions in Durham we did appear  
Where even the gypsy's plea for me the judge he wouldn't hear  
My wife, she paled, she bit her lip, when she heard the judge declare  
"Of poaching they're both guilty, transport them for seven year"

In shackles we were bound away in a filthy prison ship  
The gypsy lad who'd become my pal died on that dreadful trip  
Oh yes, I'll serve my sentence, but I swear that when I'm free  
I'll revenge that lad and everything bad they've done to me family and me

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### The Wintertime Is Coming In

The Wintertime is coming in and I haven't got a sou  
Me pockets they are empty and I don't know what to do  
In dole queues, at soup kitchens, unemployed men stand in line  
The rich have joined the swallows they've flown south for wintertime

The Wintertime is coming in, hard times are harder yet again  
Poverty tears your soul apart, did you ever feel the pain?  
Man, I know that we're to blame if you believe the masters' lies  
But the people they can see the truth in a starving family's eyes

These cold grey days of Winter, we'll soon forget them in the Spring  
Blue skies are around the corner the crooners brightly sing  
But it's for ever and a day I fear these hard times are here to stay  
And hunger drags the minutes out till one hour seems a day

The poor are getting poorer this coming Wintertime  
The rich are getting richer but they cannot spare a dime  
Just hang around and starve awhile until the next war comes along  
Then we'll pack up all your troubles in a good old marching song

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## We Plough and Sow

We plough and sow, we're so very, very low that we delve in the dirty clay  
Till we bless the plain with the golden grain, the vale with the fragrant  
hay  
Our place we know, we're so very, very low, it's down at the landlord's feet  
Oh, we're not too low the bread the bread to grow, but too low the bread  
to eat

We're low, we're low, as down we go to the hell of a deep sunk mine  
Where we gather the proudest gems that glow when the crown of the  
despot shines  
And the more he asks or the harder the task, a cut in our pay he will try  
Oh, we're far too low in comfort to live, but not too low to die

We're low, we're low, we're so very, very low, yet from our fingers glide  
The silken glow, the robes that flow round the limbs of the sons of pride  
Now what we give and what we get we know, and we know our share  
Oh, we're not too low the cloth to weave, but too low the cloth to wear

We're low, we're low, as to the wars we go, to fight some foreign country  
That yesterday was our greatest friend but today is our enemy  
'God bless our boys', the parsons say, 'Praise them', the papers cry  
But when the war is won, and it's home we come, who cares if we live or  
die

We're low, we're low, until that happy day we're called to a heaven on high  
Where the freedom we never had in our lives will be there on the day we  
die  
Now, if you think it's worse suffering hell on earth for the promise of a  
heaven above  
Never stop those who fight that one day we might see our heaven down  
here below

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## POST CARD

Unemployed men stand on the corner  
and talk about the army  
All-found and regular pay  
So join the peace-time army  
That only gives a display or two  
between the peaceful leisure hours  
At ease in the guardroom  
The battle-drum is only slumbering  
Your peaceful days it's numbering  
A quick tattoo  
And then it's you  
Defending  
The red, white and blue.  
A glorious death is oft imes hidden  
in the war-drums rattle  
At Ypres, Alamein, Belfast,  
Or some other future battle  
Seeking honours on the regimental colours.  
Looking at the colours in the cathedral  
blessed by the bishops in victory gowns.  
Forgotten are the burning towns  
The ruined homes.  
The mangled limbs, the dying groans,  
The orphans' cries, the widows' moans.  
All this your regiment brought  
That day you and your comrades fought  
and fell  
With the telly ad. still gleaming  
In your disbelieving eyes



The Titanic Syncopators appear  
by courtesy of Iceberg Productions

*When a Man Looks Pale* from  
William Blake's poem "Night the  
Seventh" is included by courtesy  
of the Oxford University Press

*Great Little Army March - Widnes Star  
Novelty Band (Zonophone 6158)*  
is included by courtesy of EMI Records  
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