

Martin Carthy

MARTIN CARTHY

High Germany
The Trees They Do Grow High
Sovay
Ye Mariners All
The Queen Of Hearts
Broomfield Hill
Spring Hill Mine Disaster
Scarborough Fair
Lovely Joan
The Barley And The Rye
The Wind That Shakes The Barley
The Two Magicians
The Handsome Cabin Boy
And A Begging I Will Go



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There are now two distinct songs bearing the title **High Germany**. The one sung here was on a broadside by Such and also in "A Collection of Choice Garlands" printed in the 1780's. The wars referred to are probably those at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Some lines are taken from the other version which is also called "The Two Lovers".

The **Queen of Hearts** appeared on broadsides and was collected by Baring Gould from a man working on the Burrow Tor reservoir at Sheepstor near Plymouth. The tune has a definite 17th century flavour and has been dated by some to the reign of Charles II.

The **Barley and the Rye** was collected in 1927 by Moeran from the enormous repertoire of the then young Harry Cox. Short and to the point.

Probably the most terrifying of industrial accidents is the mine disaster. In 1958 in **Springhill**, Nova Scotia, there was an accident in one of the deep pits. After being trapped underground for eight days, five of them without water, a handful of the miners were finally rescued. This ballad was written shortly afterwards by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger.

Stories of girls dressing up as men are common enough in English folk-song. **The Handsome Cabin Boy** is the story of one who runs away to sea and the results of her long sea voyage. Published in a broadside.

Folklorists and students of plant mythology are well aware that certain herbs were held to have magical significance — that they were used by sorcerers in their spells and conversely as counter-spells by those that wished to outwit them. The herbs mentioned in the refrain of **Scarborough Fair** (parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme) are all known to have been closely associated with death and also as charms against the evil eye. The characters in the **Elfin Knight** (of which **Scarborough Fair** is a version) are a demon and a maid. The demon sets impossible tasks and on the maid's replies depends whether she will fall into his clutches or not. Child believed that elf to be an interloper from another ballad (**Lady Isobel and the Elf Knight**) and that he should rightly be mortal, but as Ann Gilchrist points out "why the use of the herb refrain except as an indication of something more than mortal combat?" Sir Walter Scott in his notes to "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" recalled hearing a ballad of "a fiend... paying his addresses to a maid but being disconcerted by the holy herbs she wore in her bosom" and Lucy Broadwood goes as far as to suggest that the refrain might be the survival of an incantation against such a suitor.

The use of broom in the old ballad **Broomfield Hill** to lull an over-enthusiastic suitor to sleep, is another example of the use of herbs. Broom collected on Twelfth Night was believed on the continent to be extremely potent against witches and spirits. The subject of the ballad is a wager between a knight and a maid, the stake being £500 against her virginity, but by use of the broom she outwits him and escapes. The song is widespread in England and Scotland and in some versions the knight eventually succeeds.

The heroine of **Lovely Joan** may not have had quite the same resources at her

disposal but succeeds no less in thwarting the young man's designs by swift action rather than chicanery. Found in southern England, East Anglia and elsewhere.

Sovay Sovay was a great favourite among country singers and was printed by Such, among others, under its alternative title of **The Female Highwayman**. Her name varies from place to place — Sovay, Silvo, Shilo, Sally, etc. — but the story remains the same being a rather involved and slightly chancy way of establishing her lover's good faith. The tune sung here was collected by Hammond in Dorset and slightly altered rhythmically by Bert Lloyd giving it a somewhat Balkan lift. The text is collated from various versions.

The Trees They Do Grow High first appeared in print in 1792 under the title "Lady Mary Ann" and the young man is named as Young Charlie Cochran. In 1824 another version was printed as the "Young Laird of Craigs Town" with a note attached saying he had been married when very young, and had died shortly afterwards in 1634. There is no real evidence to suggest that the many English versions collected date back to this incident; indeed the ballad may well be older as child marriages of convenience were by no means uncommon in Mediaeval times.

A version of **A Begging I Will Go** was introduced into Richard Brome's "Jovial Crew" in 1641 (says Chappell) not being in the printed copy of the play, and another version was incorporated by Playford in his 5th book of "Choice Ayres" in 1684 but it is commoner in Scotland than in England. Begging really was a trade in Scotland when the King distributed alms to an order of paupers known as "Bedesmen" who in return were supposed to pray for King and State. They were licensed and the King had one bedesman for every year of his life, a new one being added each year rather like the system of Maundy money still practised in England. In Scotland a general respect for the beggars hung on long after the actual practice had died out. This is an English version from the singing of Ewan MacColl.

Ye Mariners All is an example of an old tune fitted to more modern words. Hammond, who collected it first, thought that the singer sang "mourners" but after consulting a printed source in 1857, decided on "mariners" — a dialect form of mariner. Barrett noted that it had been printed in 1857 but suggested that the song might be older.

In his notes to the ballad of **Two Magicians**, Child describes it as a "base-born cousin of a pretty ballad known all over southern Europe, in especially graceful forms in France". He goes on to say that there is little doubt that they were derived from stories either of a youth apprenticed to a sorcerer learning the black arts by surreptitious reading, being pursued, assuming various forms and finally killing his master. There is a story in the **Arabian Nights Entertainment** of a battle of transformation and others from all over the world telling of supernatural battles of giants, so in fact this "base-born cousin" may be closer to the source. This tune was fitted to the (Anglicised) words by A.L.Lloyd.

Perhaps a classic, of songs of revolution, **The Wind that Shakes the Barley** was written by Robert Dwyer Joyce.

Martin Carthy

This record was first released in 1965, when it was accompanied by this note by Ian Campbell.

There is now no fair sized town in Britain without at least one folk song club, and few large halls which have not presented their share of successful folksong concerts. Go to any folk song club, and in the course of an evening you are likely to hear a variety of traditional and contemporary songs sung by a hard core of experienced residents, "floor singers", and probably at least one visiting professional folk-singer, who, because he is not strictly a traditional singer but a revivalist, probably prefers to call himself a folksong singer. A nice distinction.

Perhaps one of the most popular singers in this category is Martin Carthy. Despite his youth, he is practically a foundation member of the present folksong revival. Like so many of his contemporaries, his interest initially stemmed from skiffle, and it is nearly eight years since he first started performing in public.

After three years with the Thameside Four, with a growing repertoire of British traditional songs, he decided to meet the increasing demands around the London clubs for his appearance as a solo artist. Although he has worked occasionally within a group since then, on one occasion with Rory McEwen and Lisa Turner and fleetingly with the 3 City 4, it is as a solo artist that he had made his biggest impact.

His work has been influenced by many singers and instrumentalists, which is as it should be, and there are few of the younger singer-guitarists who in their turn can deny his influence on their playing. His interest in the art of accompaniment is known and respected throughout the world of folk music, and as a result, many leading singers like to call upon his services in this capacity. In the songs he sings the words are given prime importance, his phrasing controlled in the only sensible way, by the meaning of the words and never by the rhythm of the guitar. Although in his time he has taken his songs from all over the English speaking world, his tendency is now more and more towards the English tradition, a tendency from which both he and the tradition can benefit.

Ian Campbell

Martin Carthy

1 High Germany	2.31
2 The Trees They Do Grow High	3.31
(trad. arr. M Carthy pub. Sparta Florida Music Gp)	
3 Sovay	2.09
4 Ye Mariners All	1.47
5 The Queen of Hearts	2.21
(trad. arr. M Carthy pub. Sparta Florida Music Gp)	
6 Broomfield Hill	
(trad. arr M Carthy pub. Sparta Florida Music Gp)	
7 Springhill Mine Disaster	4.21
(MacColl/Seeger pub. Harmony Music Ltd)	
8 Scarborough Fair	3.25
(trad. arr. M Carthy pub. Pattern Music Ltd)	
9 Lovely Joan	1.49
10 The Barley and the Rye	1.39
11 The Wind that Shakes the Barley	4.26
(trad. arr. M Carthy pub. Sparta Florida Music Gp)	
12 The Two Magicians	3.23
13 The Handsome Cabin Boy	3.24
14 And a Begging I Will Go	2.54
(trad. arr. M Carthy/D Swarbrick pub. Sparta Florida Music Gp)	