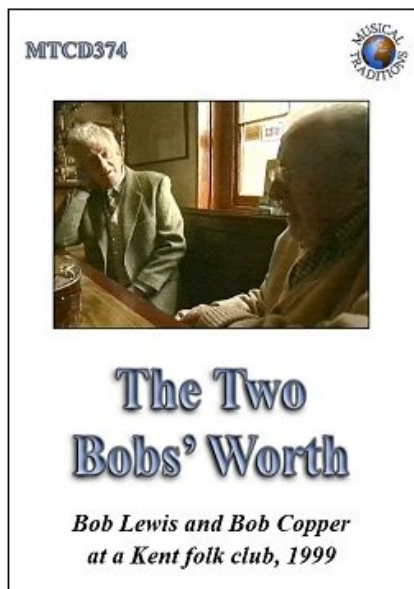


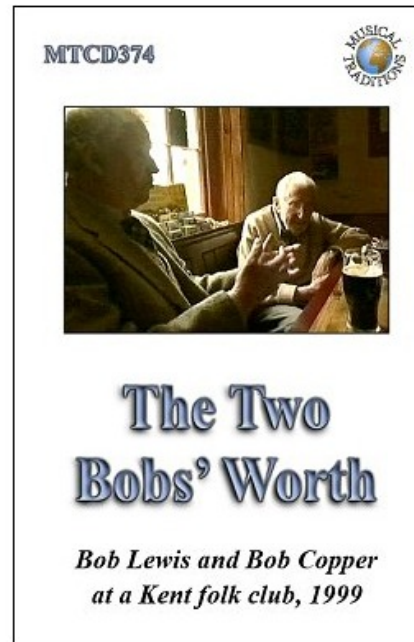
The Two Bobs' Worth

Bob Lewis & Bob Copper at a Kent folk club, 1999

MTCD374



CD case cover



CD booklet cover

1	<i>The Young and Single Sailor</i>	Bob Lewis	6:10
2	<i>The Honest Labourer</i>	BobCopper	3:50
3	<i>Good Morrow Mistress Bright</i>	Bob Lewis	2:51
4	<i>You Seamen Bold</i>	BobCopper	5:10
5	<i>We Shepherds</i>	Bob Lewis	2:38
6	<i>The Streams of Lovely Nancy</i>	BobCopper	4:13
7	<i>Pretty Ploughboy</i>	Bob Lewis	4:07
8	<i>George Collins</i>	BobCopper	7:01
9	<i>A Sweet Country Life</i>	Bob Lewis	4:58
10	<i>The Banks of Sweet Primaroses</i>	BobCopper	3:43
11	<i>The Cobbler</i>	Bob Lewis	3:25
12	<i>The Bold Princess Royal</i>	BobCopper	4:58
13	<i>My Boy Jimmy</i>	Bob Lewis	3:23
14	<i>Dogs and Ferrets</i>	BobCopper	2:24
15	<i>Three Crows / Blackbirds</i>	Bob Lewis & BobCopper	3:39
16	<i>The Threshing Song</i>	Bob Lewis & BobCopper	2:05
17	<i>Spencer the Rover</i>	Bob Lewis & BobCopper	4:04
18	<i>Thousands or More</i>	Bob Lewis & BobCopper	3:27
19	<i>Oh Good Ale</i>	Bob Lewis & BobCopper	3:38
20	<i>John Barleycorn</i>	Bob Lewis	3:55
		Total:	79:46

The Two Bobs' Worth

The *Two Bobs* partnership to perform together was never a regular performing combination. Jon Dudley says "This was probably the idea of a folk club organiser who thought it might be a good idea to get two of the last remaining singers of the Belton, Phillips, Tester, Townshend, *et al*/ generation together for a gig ... a bit like the Sussex Singers nights of yore. There was never a thought of the two Bobs going out and doing this sort of thing on a regular basis, it was just a bit of fun."

Both Bob Lewis and the Nellie's Folk Club organiser, Geoff Doel, confirm that the idea and the name came from Geoff. Bob Lewis says that the two gigs in Tonbridge were the only time they performed under that name. He adds that there were many other occasions where he and Bob Copper sang together but they were the times when a number of the old singers had been gathered together for folk and community concerts. There was one memorable event aboard the old training ship *TS Foudroyant* in Portsmouth Harbour. Bob Lewis mentioned the joint booking to Bob Copper's folk enthusiast neighbour, George Wagstaff. He was very keen on the idea and offered to drive them and to get the pair booked elsewhere - but nothing came of it.

Bob Copper

This is an unusual recording for two reasons - firstly, Bob seldom sang outside the family group and rarely featured himself on the concertina quite so strongly. Bob Lewis with whom he shared this particular bill was (and is) an old friend and we jointly attended many singarounds, concerts, folk clubs and harvest suppers down the years. In other words, Bob Lewis was a trusted ally with whom to venture beyond the regular bounds of performance. As with all things, there is a back story ...

Prior to WW2 Bob Copper had led an interesting life which was in no way dominated by his family heritage of traditional songs, yet very much underpinned by them. To discover his 'awakening' of the value of the family tradition, it fell, as is so often the case, upon the observations of an outsider. Whilst serving firstly as a police constable in Worthing and subsequently as both detective and Coroner's Officer during the second world war, Bob came into contact with some fascinating people in the course of his duties. One such was Barclay Wills. Wills was a tobacconist and newsagent with a small shop and Bob met him whilst investigating a series of break-ins in the area. This shopkeeper turned out to be an amateur naturalist, local historian and author; he was not only deeply interested in the flora and fauna of the Sussex Downland, but also the part played

in the relationship between that particular habitat and the shepherds whose ancient domain it was. Bob himself was born of a long line of Sussex shepherding stock and indeed his Uncle John was still employed in that occupation back home in Rottingdean. Wills had befriended many shepherds and collected their gear and their artefacts; his home was crammed with a collection of fossils, sketches of wildlife (he was no mean artist), sheep bells, crooks and all the impedimenta of that ancient occupation. It was lacking in one thing, however, the shepherds songs, and these Bob knew and shared with his friend, who found them deeply alluring. His encouragement of the tradition into which Bob had been born turned what had previously been an acceptance of 'that's just what we do' into a Damascene moment when he realised that here was something unique, and that he was witness to a vanishing way of life. Moreover with Wills' encouragement Bob started to write and collect his father's reminiscences and memories of farming methods and traditions that had remained largely unchanged for a thousand years. Thus a spark was lit.

Post WW2 and with the coming of peace came Bob's discharge from the police force and his entry into his in-laws licensed establishment in nearby Peacehaven, which he and his wife Joan eventually took over completely. Incidentally, at around the same time, his cousin Ron Copper with whom he so memorably sang up until the 1970s, also took the licence of *The Queen Victoria* in the home village of Rottingdean. Through a series of happenstances and via a letter to the BBC after Bob's father Jim had written to the organisation after hearing a version of one of the family songs on the *Country Magazine* radio programme, the rapid appearance of Francis Collinson, its musical director and eminent Scottish folk song collector, ensured that *The Copper Family* repertoire found an audience far beyond Rottingdean.

This early exposure led to the BBC commissioning a forty five minute radio drama documentary *The Life of James Copper* which spread the songs even further. Recognising Bob Copper's easy and intelligent manner, he was recruited as a freelancer into the BBC collecting scheme (of folk song and dialect) alongside others such as Seamus Ennis and Peter Kennedy, with Hampshire and Sussex being his particular bailiwick. In this enterprise Bob was entirely successful, as a countryman himself he was the ideal person to tease long remembered songs from the memories of older men and women throughout the area, commit them to the newly issued 'midget' tape recorder and fetch his treasures back to Broadcasting House, to be broadcast and eventually despatched to the vaults of the permanent archive. The years between 1955 and 1957 proved

particularly productive when Bob took a pub in Cheriton, Hampshire and made some of his best recordings. An eventual return to Peacehaven had seen the passing of both Bob's and Ron's fathers, and thus the final link with the old farming way of life was gone forever.

Now, with two young children to support, Bob and Joan threw themselves into building up the business which was needing their full attention. There was little time for pursuing song performance save the occasional visit to and from enthusiasts, yet correspondence with the likes of Alan Lomax, Frank and Anne Warner in the USA and Peter Kennedy was maintained. The seminal *Bob and Ron Copper* album, facilitated by the EFDSS was released in 1963 and was to prove hugely influential to folk audiences on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Copper Family songs and others, sparked by a revival of interest in folk music generally, were now being studied and reinterpreted by a raft of younger musicians and performers, and unaccompanied harmony singing was heard in folk clubs throughout the British Isles and beyond. Ever inquisitive and experimental, Bob, through his love of Blues music, had purchased a guitar in the early 1950s, but was soundly warned against its possible use in the accompaniment of family songs by a comment which went along the lines of "what the hell are you doing with that, there's only one lot of people can make the bloody racket you lot do - so don't spoil it with a guitar". From then on, the guitar was merely used for the amusement of the kids with renditions of *The Owl and the Pussycat* and other bed time favourites.

The seed was sown however, and Bob got to thinking that if he ever sung solo (rather than with Ron, which was then the norm), people might think it rather tedious to hear purely unaccompanied material, so what would be a suitably traditional instrument? He may have heard Alf Edwards playing, or more likely remembered an old villager singing with a squeezebox, whatever, an instrument was purchased - a rather lovely old Wheatstone English concertina was unearthed in a Brighton music shop and a deal struck. Complete with its velvet lined mahogany inner case, it was a thing of great beauty, and to Bob's eye, remarkably complex. Armed with a 'Teach yourself the English Concertina' book, he soon found that he had bitten off more than he could chew.

Once again the pressure of work dictated that the concertina was put to one side. By the late 1960s and with a series of managers being installed, Bob and Joan finally had more time to pursue their love of the countryside, gardening, poetry and a half

normal family life aided by the purchase of a small cottage in the north of Peacehaven. Writing, encouraged all those years before by the likes of Barclay Wills and the poet Nancy Price, had always had to take a back seat in Bob's busy life, but now it could be given free rein. For years he had dreamt of linking the many songs, notes, and reminiscences of his father Jim and creating a kind of memoir for his two children, Jill and John, in order that they should have a proper understanding of not only the family background and history, but also of the character of their much loved grandfather.

At around this time Peter Bellamy and members of The Young Tradition were seeing both Bob and Ron Copper at either or both of their pubs, Peter, being friendly with John Copper was a particularly regular visitor and Bob showed Peter the manuscript of what was eventually to become *A Song for Every Season*. The young Bellamy was highly impressed with what he saw and with contacts at Faber and Faber, opined that it ought to be published. Faber's declined, possibly because already, in the person of George Ewart Evans, they had a successful country author on their books. Bob was then fired up enough to start getting to grips with editing what he'd written - "writing is RE-writing" being one of his ready aphorisms, and he was determined to find another publisher.

Through a series of coincidences and the link between the Comtesse Pierre D'Harcourt who lived in Rottingdean, the book found a publisher in William Heinemann. *A Song for Every Season* rapidly became a best seller and won The Robert Pitman Literary prize for the best new author of the year - at over fifty years of age, Bob Copper was the oldest 'new author' to win it! To coincide with this, Bill Leader produced a definitive collection of the family repertoire in the form of a four album, boxed set of LPs also named *A Song for Every Season*. At this time any combination of Coppers were in demand and Bob and John toured extensively in the early '70s, Jill with three very young sons was somewhat restricted, and Ron, as ever, very much tied to his pub.

Naturally Heinemann wanted a follow-up and Bob had an idea ready and waiting - an account of his experiences as a freelance collector of folk song and dialect in the early to mid '50s. Like the first book, it was the perfect vehicle to include the words and music to a number of traditional songs. This formula had proved very successful with his readers and reached both the rural life audience as well as the 'folk' enthusiasts. Again, this book was a success, if not quite as dramatically so as was *A Song for Every Season*; it was called *Songs and Southern Breezes*. Fate stepped in at this point - Bob's wife

Joan was succumbing gradually but persistently to an illness which would eventually claim her life at the young age of sixty three and his ability to tour, attend book promotions and public appearances declined. By the time his final book for Heinemann was published, *Early to Rise*, his ability to promote the book was virtually impossible. Nonetheless it sold moderately well and like the other two contained songs from the family repertoire not reproduced elsewhere.

Getting away from home was now virtually impossible, and although anything but reclusive, Bob was, as he later described it, "confined to barracks". Deprived of the social intercourse upon which he thrived, it was an absolute necessity however that he cared for Joan. Never idle, he then constructed an inner world in which he wrote extensively, mainly poetry, gardened wholeheartedly, providing the whole family with fruit and vegetables, kept chickens, painted in acrylics and pastels, developed a love and knowledge of classical music, whilst further immersing himself in the Blues genre he had loved since the mid 1930s.

He also felt it an obligation to apply himself to the old Wheatstone once again. The poor thing had languished quietly in its case for too long and now was the moment to give it voice. It was obvious that time had wrought some internal damage so the first thing to do was to have it overhauled. The old tutor book was found, dusted off and thus started a long and tortuous journey. It became obvious that he wasn't getting too far or too fast without some knowledge of musical notation; the mission to teach himself to read music began ...

Within a year or so he was coaxing tunes from the instrument, although the manner of practising was somewhat unorthodox. Joan's life demanded peace and quiet and this was largely achievable, save for Bob's learning to play an instrument like the concertina. An approach was conceived therefore to dampen the sound enough to satisfy Joan, but still issuing enough volume to give the player a clue as to his degree of success or failure. The following stratagem was brought into play - the Wheatstone was placed inside an old heavy pair of gardening trousers whilst the player's arms were introduced to it via the legs, with any surplus being wound around to provide additional muffling. Of course for a beginner it didn't help not being able to see the buttons! Thus Bob progressed with the instrument, challenging himself with writing arrangements both for the family songs and some of those he had collected; later he accompanied himself singing several songs of his beloved Hilaire Belloc very successfully.

In 1983 Bob's wife Joan passed away and in many ways, after a period of mourning and loss, he was in a sense re-born. Although he would never get over his wife's passing he threw himself into a more social life which naturally included his music. For many years Bob Lewis and John Copper had run informal singaround sessions at a number of remote East and West Sussex pubs, and it was natural that Bob eased himself back into singing via these and the monthly Coppersongs Folk Nights at *The Central Club* in Peacehaven. Gaining in confidence, Bob augmented the family harmony singing with solos accompanied by the concertina. He also expanded the repertoire by including some of his favourite songs collected back in the 1950s - these, together with his anecdotes surrounding their discovery and capture, never ceased to amuse and enlighten audiences wherever he was invited.

A number of solo engagements were accepted, usually driven by his friend and neighbour George Wagstaff, or in the case of this one, by the fine Sussex singer Bob Lewis. There was a re-awakening too of an early interest in the work of writer and poet Hilaire Belloc which bore fruit in the publication of a book, *Across Sussex with Belloc*. Part guidebook, part memoir, the reader could follow the author's footsteps every inch of the way, yet also read of singing performances by Gordon Hall, Vic Gammon and many others which he cleverly worked into the narrative. As with the other books, there were songs and musical notation printed at the back, except that this time they were the work of his hero Belloc, although some of the music was his own. Bob even dramatised his favourite piece of Belloc's, *The Four Men*, which perfectly eulogised his passion for the county of Sussex. It was widely performed and broadcast on radio and once again the concertina was very much in evidence.

Ever a fit man, Bob decided, a year after Joan's death that he would like to take a 'holiday' - now this was a word that wasn't really in his lexicon, but being Bob, neither was it a definition that most people would understand. His plan was a second re-enactment of Belloc's 1902 book, *The Four Men* describing a walk across Sussex from East to West (some 110 miles) which he had done himself in 1949. This time he proposed that the Four Men should comprise 'Himself' (Bob), The Sailor (son John), The Poet (me, his son-in-law) and Grizzlebeard (an old friend and contemporary of Bob's, Peter Mansfield). This proved to be the foundation of nine subsequent annual walks, all within East and West Sussex - a remarkable achievement for a not-so-young man.

In 1990 Bob was seventy five years of age and really at his peak. He often said that all those years of

caring for his wife had slowed him down, and coincidentally conserved a lot of the physical and mental energy that would be required in the years to come. It's difficult to believe that the first of the highly successful tours of the USA which the family made, starting in 1994, saw Bob approaching eighty! The travelling and commitments would have laid low a lesser man and indeed, the rest of the family trailed along in his wake. Always the last to go to bed and the first to rise, his stamina was nothing short of miraculous.

This too was a period of renewing old friendships as well as making new ones. In the USA, he re-met Alan Lomax and Frank and Anne Warner's sons, Jeff and Gerret, Jean Ritchie and Pete Seeger (with whom he made a memorable BBC broadcast) and forged new and lasting relationships with the likes of Jeff Davis, Andy Cohen, Jerry Epstein and many more. At home his small bungalow was an ever open door to folk music enthusiasts who travelled from as far as Japan and New Zealand to share a cup of tea or a glass of beer at his welcoming table.

He re-connected too with the environmentalist and self sufficiency guru John Seymour, with whom he'd worked at the BBC in the early 1950s. John was living in Southern Ireland then and Bob visited him for a week - an event he wrote up hilariously for the family called *The Irish Papers* - they became young again in each others company. During the time spent at Seymour's home beside the River Barrow they had as much fun as two naughty schoolboys. Here, Bob was delighted to discover that Seymour was not only well respected in the community but also numbered local musicians amongst his many friends. On one particular evening prior to a music session in his home, their conversation turned to the early days when both had worked for the BBC - "did you ever know Bob Roberts?" (East Anglian barge skipper and traditional musician), "Yes" replied Seymour, "he was a great friend and I crewed for him on *The Cambria* occasionally", and with that he turned around and produced a battered looking musical instrument from behind the sofa. "This was Bob's melodeon". He then proceeded to sing several of Roberts' songs. As Bob later recalled "that was the last place I would have looked as a song collector - just shows that you should leave no stone unturned."

Renowned theatre director Patrick Garland sought out Bob and the family for various concerts he staged around Chichester with some of his theatrical friends, and once again old BBC connections and anecdotes were exchanged amidst gales of laughter whenever the two very different men met. Despite their radically different backgrounds, they of course both worshipped their beloved county of Sussex.

Throughout the 1990s Bob's confidence in his playing of the concertina grew with practice, and he nearly always took it with him to concerts with the rest of the family where he might sing one or two solos. At this time we bought him a melodeon with which he was not quite so comfortable and yet, dogged as always, he learned enough to sing a couple of Bob Roberts' songs and to accompany the Rottingdean Mummers Play. In modern parlance, he was a polymath, inasmuch as he had, from first principles taught himself to read, write and play music, to paint, to write creatively and to apply himself extensively to local history and lore. Withall he was a humble man, totally committed to his origins and his family, yet always finding time for others who would seek his advice or wisdom. The receipt of his MBE just days before his death was of huge importance to him. As well as his son, daughter and myself, he metaphorically took the whole panoply of ancestors with him to Buckingham Palace, for he thanked them daily for their diligence, love and enthusiasm which brought the legacy of songs down to the present generation.

This recording is interesting in that it roughly divides Bob Copper's contribution between concertina-accompanied and unaccompanied songs. In the family, it is Bob's singing with unadorned voice that we remember best, but his dogged determination with the concertina gave him huge satisfaction and frustration in almost equal measure.

His choice of songs here is absolutely typical and gives a clue to what the music meant to him - *The Honest Labourer*, reminded him of cousin Ron and his father Jim who both sang it, likewise *You Seaman Bold* which he usually introduced as being "a song about a narrowly averted case of cannibalism". *The Streams of Lovely Nancy* would have taken him back to the fondly remembered village of Cheriton and singers like the kindly 'Turp' Brown whose song this was. Likewise *George Collins* and the track he describes on this recording as "probably the best song I recorded ..." *Bold Princess Royal*. *Dogs and Ferrets* is the perfect encapsulation of time spent with his father Jim when the two of them would range the rabbit warrens on the Downs above Rottingdean, supplementing the family diet. The 'Two Bobs' unusually sing *Spencer the Rover* and *Thousands or More*, two real family favourites which took hold in many singers repertoires during the folk revival. Finally, *Good Ale* was almost always the song with which Bob closed many concerts, usually with a pint of Harveys Best Bitter in his hand.

Jon Dudley - June 2017

Bob Lewis

Bob Lewis and I have known each other well since the 1960s. In this piece I (Vic Smith) have tried to use as many of his own words as possible. I have interviewed him quite a number of times over the years and kept all the transcripts. Everything that are my words are in italics. Everything that is Bob's own words are not. I have tried to piece together his thoughts from four different recordings in a way that shows a continuity of ideas.

Bob grew up in Heyshott in West Sussex and went to the village school there.

We lived very simply because we were actually quite poor. It's not that many years ago, but just to think, we had just got mains water by that time, so we didn't have to go and get water out of a well. But everything else ... well ... we had a cesspit job, so we did have a flush toilet, but a lot of our neighbours at that time only had the privy down the garden. We didn't have any electric; this is in the 1950s. We relied on oil lamps and that for lighting ... no radio, we mostly made our own entertainment. The idea that we spent the winter evenings sitting around singing isn't true, but singing was natural to me.

Well, what I wanted to say was that the great thing was that people still sang. One of the great losses in life is that, as a nation, most people don't sing now. The idea that a singer was someone exclusive was not there. Everybody sang. We sang up the woods, we sang anywhere. Some sung well, some didn't, but singing was as normal as breathing.

Bob remembers bits of songs learned from both his father and his mother but in his mind these songs, clearly traditional songs, were different from what they were identifying as folk songs at school.

The idea that there was such things as folk songs never really occurred to me. We just didn't think of the words 'folk songs' - something that was cast in tablets of stone - just wasn't there. My only association with that idea at all was when we were at school; we had a headmaster that was keen on all that Cecil Sharp stuff and music lessons used to consist of singing those Cecil Sharp folk songs. The idea was that folk songs was something that you did at school.

My father and grandmother lived down there. I never knew her. She died before I was born. But they lived down in Cornwall. Not very successfully, I tried to re-establish things, try to find out where the old roots were down there. I found a bit out. Because, you know, they were connected with the church. I've never told you,

but my old dad was a parson or curate or whatever you'd like to call him, in the Church of England. But then he had a change of heart over it. He chucked it all up. I don't know what it was all about. Again, he knew a lot of the old stuff - not that I saw a lot of my father, believe you me. But he sang bits and pieces to me when I was a kiddie. I remember snippets of things like that.

Also at that time I was working as an agricultural engineer, and basically what we did, we repaired tractors and machinery, but the thrust of our business was export. So quite a lot of the week I used to be away at farm sales and things like that, up and down the country, right up into Yorkshire and right down into Cornwall; buying up machinery and tractors, which we would cart back home - repair and the next thing was we would be going to the docks in the East End of London or Shoreham, Southampton, Liverpool, up to Hull and shipping this stuff out and it used to go all over the world.

Because I was always at the likes of farm sales and because I'd started to get interested in these old songs and the singing bit, I started taking a bit more interest in it. And when I was out and about like this I'd meet up with all sorts of people afterwards and we'd have a sing-song somewhere. They were the right sort of people, you see. And really that was the time that I started going down to the West Country so much. As a result of going down there for work, I met up with people like Bob Cann¹ and Charlie Bate², all sorts of people. And, of course, we had a common interest - a good sing song - let's get in the back of an old pub somewhere, a few pints and have a bit of a sing.

It was really when I moved out of the Midhurst area, when I first married and that, and I moved down to Elsted that I started to think about it. Of course, I was working as an agricultural engineer at that time of day. I got myself a cottage out at Elsted. There used to be people that came into the pub there. George Money and his mates from Petersfield way and we would have a sing-song in the pub. That was quite natural to me because there had been sing-songs in *The Unicorn* at Heyshott. Not a singaround type thing like you get now, formalised singaround at a folk festival or whatever. A spontaneous thing where someone would sing a song and others would join in or whatever. Someone might say, "Give us that old song, George" or whatever. Somebody would strike up - in the right mood. It was never pre-determined. Someone felt like a sing, so you had a sing. This was very much the sort of thing that I was used to.

Seeing her son taking an interest in the old songs seemed to re-kindle his mother's interest in them and she was anxious to help out.

It really coincided with that time and I thought, "Well, I really ought to start singing and that." And my mother realised that I had got interested. And then she said, "Well, why don't you sing this, and why don't you sing that?" And then there was all this stuff come out that my mother knew that I had no more idea than the man in the moon that she knew. And then because I was taking an interest in it, and I would spend several hours in a week with my old mum, saying, "Right, we'll have a go at this" and so on. Well, she used to get really cross with me. I wasn't singing them properly. So I am indebted initially to mother being a repository of quite a lot of songs. Some she had learned as a little girl at home and at school. Some were the songs that everybody sings, *One Man went to Mow* and *The Tailor and the Crow* and all the usual sort of things.

Old Alfie Ainger ... he was a publican. He was the oldest licensee in West Sussex. He's held the license of the *Royal Oak* in Hook's Way from about 1901 as a young man, and the recorded tape that I have of him there - he was over 88 years of age at the time and he was still in the pub then. He'd been there a hell of a long time. Apart from that tape, I haven't got any recordings, but the pub was a magnet for people who sang; people who would come out there and sing. The only person that I know who recorded in that pub was a woman on the folk scene called Joy Hyman. But there were a good lot of people around who would sing a song spontaneously.

One time we went to Hook's Way. In fact I've got a tape somewhere, I'll look it out for you some time, of old Alfie Ainger, not singing, but talking about his life³. I used to go over to Hook's Way periodically and some people came from what then was a folk song club in Chichester. This would be around 1960. You had a lot of very enthusiastic people, playing guitars and things like that and singing. It was people like Julie Felix and Ewan MacColl and the singers were doing stuff like that. But the audience used to be quite intense. I used to think, you know, "This is Funny; all these people sitting around here listening" and someone would say, "Well, this is somebody's version of such a song and somebody else's version" and so on. And some chap sitting there in a duffle coat would say, "Ooh! You sung that song wrong. That's not right, and that's so and so, and that's supposed to be this." George Belton would sing at the folk club where I wouldn't. He didn't give a whatsit about anybody; he would just sing. I was a bit more wary about it all. It was only latterly that George

persuaded me to sing and eventually I got around to running the club. The people that had done it had given up and somebody was needed to keep it going. But I was still a bit diffident about it; I knew that whilst I had a basic repertoire of songs, I was thinking, "Well, I don't know any folk songs." I was trying to work out in my mind what they meant by this.

They turned up to this thing and they said to me, "Oh, you ought to come down to Chichester, we got this folk club thing going on down there. You'll have a good time of it down there." So eventually I went down there. They used to meet up on a Friday night. They were in *The Hole In The Wall*, I think, then they went to *The Victoria* and then they went back to *The Hole in the Wall*. They shunted about a bit. That was where I first met George Belton. He was out at Madehurst. I got on well with George and Milly straight away. I used to go up and see them at Madehurst and he said "Oh! Come up to our old Songswapper thing"⁴. But I wouldn't sing, other than joining in choruses. I wouldn't sing in a folk club because it was actually a funny sort of atmosphere to me. It didn't feel like singing down the pub.

Bob will frequently speak of how much he feels that he learned from George Belton both about songs and attitudes to life. He also speaks of Cyril Phillips in this way.

I used to go and sing at harvest suppers, farm suppers and the like, with old Cyril Phillips. I used to get asked to quite a lot of harvest suppers, especially around the Midhurst area; quite a number. I used to think, well, rather than doing it on my own, let's get a gang of us together and so I can remember saying to George Belton, "There's a harvest supper at so-and-so, do you fancy coming along?" So we'd do that and it almost became a reciprocal sort of thing because George or Cyril would get asked to do things and they'd include me. That was the time when Cyril was living at Cuckfield. We had some funny old run-ins with Cyril, I don't mind telling you. I could tell you a story or two about that.

Well, Cyril, as you know, he was a bit highly-strung. He obviously had emotional problems or whatever you like to call it. Cyril used to put an old straw hat on and a smock. I can remember going to Highbrook and at that time I was staying up with old Bob Fry⁵. There was a chap called Geoff Cohen⁶, who asked us to a harvest supper at Highbrook, near Ardingly. I'd got a smock and Cyril had got a smock and we were sat in this table up in Highbrook Village Hall. I thought, "You cunning old sod!"

We were eating supper and it was a good old spread with about 23 different varieties of home-made wine on offer. I think Cyril had a go at all of them. He sat there and he'd got these old cords on, tied up around the knees with 'yorks', and he'd got these old hobnail boots on with bright red socks, but one of these hobnail boots the toe was like that, the soles and the uppers had parted company. He was sitting up there with his legs crossed and this red toe poking out and wriggling about. I knew exactly what he was doing, but he'd got this place mesmerised looking at these toes poking out of his boot. He was a past master at some of those things.

He turned up at the singaround one night over at the White Horse at Sutton and I thought "What's he bloody up to now?" He'd got this old corn sack with him and he made a fuss of throwing it down by the fireside place. Anyway we thought, "We'll wait for it", and anyway in the course of the evening, he gets this sack and he unties it and he starts foraging around inside it, you see, and when he's got all the attention, he extracted from it a pair of long Johns, Well, if I tell you this pair would have fitted The Long Man of Wilmington⁷ and then, of course, the spiel came, "A chap left these on my doorstep with a note saying that he thought they might do me a turn!" Dear oh dear!

I started to be associated in Sussex with a lot of singers who were, by and large, a lot older than me. Bob Blake, George Belton, George Spicer, Bob & Ron Copper, Cyril Phillips; even old Scan⁸, people like that. But they were, if you like, the known singers, the recorded singers. But there was a whole raft of people that I knew who, to the best of my knowledge, had never been recorded. Whilst people came around to collect songs, obviously, it was a bit like a fisherman throwing his rod out in the hope that was going to catch something. You might go through somewhere and not find any singers. It's a rather different kettle of fish when you are actually living in a locality where you have an in-depth knowledge, and you can say, "Oh, there's old so and so, he lives there and he sings there and so on" and I can say definitely that back in the 1950s, in the Heyshott, Midhurst, Rother valley area around where I lived, a radius of about ten miles, I must have known about forty people who were other George Beltons, if you like.

Well, after a while we thought, well we never see one another unless someone's got a do on, like one of your dos over in Lewes⁹. It was either I said it, or George Belton said it. I'm not sure who it was exactly but someone said, "Well, why don't we have a get together once a month? Let's fix up on a

pub and find somewhere where we can meet up and we can have a few beers and have a yarn, and a few sandwiches, something like that, and we can have a sing." Well, that sounded like a good idea and out of that came the *Sussex Singarounds* which have been going for more than thirty years now. So we got everybody out of the woodwork from Bob Blake, Cyril Phillips, Mabs and Gordon Hall, George Spicer, Ron Spicer, Johnny Doughty, Len Pelling. You name it they all came to it. The Coppers, though not Bob at that time of day, because his missis was still alive and wasn't well and Bob wasn't able to come, but John and Jill and Jon Dudley, and one or two other people from Peacehaven. It started that we said well, one month we'll meet up at *The Fox* at Charlton, up my way near Goodwood, another month, we'll go and we'll meet up at the *George & Dragon* at Dragon's Green. That was near Horsham and handy for people like Bob Blake to come to it. And then the third month, we were going to meet at the back room over at the *Central Club* in Peacehaven.

That's what we started off, but then we found that we were always ringing up one another to find out where we were supposed to be next month. We rapidly dropped the idea of Dragon's Green because that landlord had got a lot of people in, and the place was humming with a lot of people coming in expecting an event, and you couldn't hear yourself think, never mind sing. We thought, "Blow this. This isn't any good up here." So we then went, this was Bob Copper's idea. We phoned up old Mike Campbell, out at *The Fountain* at Ashurst and so we started going there on a fixed monthly basis. We started going there and met up with old Len Pelling and he became part of the gang. Then Mike Campbell got in trouble with the brewery, he hadn't paid his beer bills or something. Well, he finished up having to go to Hellingly¹⁰. He had problems and he lost the pub and that was the end for us too.

From there, we went down to John McLennon, who kept *The Norfolk Arms* in Steyning, and we had a very happy association with that pub. He used to want us to sing in the saloon bar, but we said "No, the public will do us fine. We're happy there." But because he had to shut down all his fruit machines and one-arm bandits when we were there, none of the local lads used to come in when we were there. So his trade was suffering and it was me that suggested that we moved on, and I knew the couple that kept *The White Horse* at Sutton. They used to have singing things in their old pub in East Meon in Hampshire. They'd been badgering me to come and have sing songs there for some while and so we went there and stayed for a long time until Barry, the landlord, died. Sheila tried to keep the pub on her own but it got too much for her. Of

course Vic Gammon and Will Duke were coming along by then and they suggested that we go to *The Jolly Sportsman* at East Chiltington. That didn't last very long. The people who invited us there were giving the pub up and we went for a little bit to the *Central Club*, the Coppers place, sung in the kitchen out the back. Then Vic and Will suggested *The Ram* at Firle and that's where we've been for many years now, at least a dozen years.¹¹

So I suppose the idea of the singarounds in the first place was for all of us to get together, so we could sing if we felt like it, or sit and yarn or whatever. Always at the back of my mind, and certainly this idea evolved, that I couldn't think of a better way of singers to learn songs straight off the traditional singers of Sussex, learning them then and there. From the horse's mouth, rather than saying, "Well, I learned it from George Belton, but I learned it from a gramophone record." To actually learn from a person and to know the person is a different thing to learning it through the media, recordings or things like that. It's not the same thing, is it? It was always an idea to encourage people with an interest in traditional song, hopefully to help to preserve, well "preserve" is perhaps not the best word to use; to sustain a living oral tradition. And a lot of younger performers started to come along.

The way the singing is seen in the media upsets me. It's not broad enough. It's all become swept up into one big package or enterprise, so that you hear the same things said over and over again. "Well, if we've got to have traditional singing, we've got to have them." You know? I've been fortunate. I've been asked to do evenings alongside Bob Copper at Tonbridge and elsewhere and I really felt privileged to do that. It's great, just us and the songs, without and spiel or razzmatazz. And I was recorded at an evening up in London and a chap, I don't know who it was. He asked me if he could record me and later on I found that it had been put in the National Sound archive. He was doing stuff for the British Library. So I was quite pleased about the thought of that¹².

The final section that I have included comes from an interview on 22/11/2000 which was specifically dedicated to Bob's interesting and insightful comments on the state of vernacular singing in the years after the Second World War

The period that we are really talking about now is the time after the Second World War. There was a new impetus in collecting in those years, coinciding with the times that the radio broadcasts were taking place, *As I Roved Out* and so on. Bob Copper was going around recording and so on.

To my mind it is a very significant period. Because a number of things happened to make the whole ethos of singing change. What really happened was that village life was never really quite the same. I'm sure that they said the same after the First World War as after the Second World War. You had a start of a break-up of the community. There was a decline in agriculture, in terms of the number of people employed on the land. A lot of the village schools closed down around that time, children were being hived off out of the village schools and bussed into the local towns for their education. Additionally, this was the sort of the tail-end of the Empire in those years after the war. You had a lot of ex-colonials coming back from Malaya, etc, from the former colonies. Ex-rubber planters and so on. They came back and were looking to set themselves up in some kind of livelihood. Rather like a lot of ex-servicemen, who were coming out of the forces at the end of a gratuity. So these sorts of people, they had some money and their target was the village pub.

All of a sudden, you had an influx into the rural communities, with something of their Colonel Blimpish attitudes. The ex-colonials regarded anything rather than their own class as low form of life. They took over the village pubs and then wanted to impose their ideas on them. The pub became their sort of personal club. They actually started to discourage some local people from using the pubs. It used to be that the whole of the pub was a sort of public bar or taproom. Then all of a sudden you had this gin and tonic brigade, all the ex-pats congregating in them. This really was a great upset to village life. Whereas local people had come to the pub as a focus to the community, you know - the church, the school, the pub. They were getting a bit of the cold shoulder. I can think of a lot of examples. Going with some mates of mine to *The Bat'n'Ball* in Hambledon. We were sitting in a bar, started having a sing-song and this dragon of a female came up, all tweed and barbed-wire knickers and everything like that - "No singing in here!" (very posh voice) There was a lot of this. A lot of the local singers no longer had a platform to sing because they were being discouraged. Well, I suppose they thought they had to be careful. I can recall situations where you had sing-songs in pubs where someone would say one word out of place and the next minute there would be a punch-up. So I suppose they thought of the idea of a sing-song with people enjoying themselves equated in a pub with trouble. I think that this pulled the rug out from under the feet of a lot of singers, people who had lived in the village all their lives and had always sung in their locals.

The other side of that was that after the war, there were an awful lot of gash motorcars going around, ones that had been parked up during the war. People who had made money bought a lot of new cars, but a lot of people, like myself, bought their first second-hand car then. I paid £30 for a pre-war thing. A lot of country people had the money to go out and buy themselves a car or a motorbike or motorbike and sidecar. That meant that they became more mobile instead of singing down in their own local. Well, if they couldn't go and sing in their own local, they could get on their bike and go off somewhere else. So the likes of Scan went out of Horsted Keynes; I'm not saying that they were anti him singing and playing there, but he was off up to *The Stone Quarry* in Chelwood Gate. All of a sudden, rural people, singers would travel 20-30 miles to somewhere where they knew they had mates or knew that they would be welcome. So that meant that there was a great deal more interchange of ideas and singers came more into contact with each other.

Another aspect of life, coming on to the fifties; a lot of things really hadn't changed in so far as the like of Pop Maynard, most farm workers and other rural people did a bit of poaching on the side a few rabbits and pheasants and that was by and large turned a blind eye to. That was another change that happened. It coincided with the introduction of myxomatosis. The handy dinner wasn't there. The rabbit population was decimated.

A lot of these would-be gentleman farmers, hobby farmers, came in. Basically, they came down at the weekends and strutted around with a gun underneath their arms. If you had lived in the village of Heyshott, for example, you were a foreigner. If your family had been there two hundred years, you might have been accepted. People that moved in were regarded with very deep suspicion. And we're talking about singers and then someone coming around and wanting to collect songs. No disrespect to you, but many of the early collectors were educated people, school teachers and the like. There was a lot of suspicion about what do these people want? Are they out to make money out of us? I think it must have been quite difficult from the collectors' point of view and difficult from the singers' point of view to establish a bond of trust. I think that as a result, they missed out on an awful lot. Ken Stubbs, well, I mean, God Bless him. The best thing that can be said about him was that he was a bit of an oddball. From that point of view, collectors were going to have a bit of an uphill struggle to get some of the best things that were around.

Predominantly, the singers that were collected from were mostly men, very few women. Well, a lot of

women singers, my mum for example, would never have set their foot inside a pub. The only place that most women would sing would be at home. The barriers would come down with strangers coming around. You didn't get let into someone's home very easily unless you were well accepted and well known. There must have been a whole raft of things that must have been missed.

Vic Smith - June 2017

Notes:

1. Bob Cann - from the south Dartmoor area - exceptional meleodeon player, step-dancer, singer, dance caller, story teller and the founder of the Dartmoor Folk Festival.
2. Charlie Bate 1919-1977 Singer and accordion player. One of the main movers and characters of the Padstow May Day celebrations. Bob Lewis's friendship with Charlie, and his association with Padstow have led his on-going involvement as one of the ceremony's drummers; a subject which it is very difficult to draw him out on.
3. At the time of writing the interview with Alfie Ainger is being prepared for inclusion on the Sussex Traditions database at; <http://sussextraditions.org/>
4. Horsham Songswappers was the first regular 'folk revival' singing gathering in Sussex. In *Sussex Folk* (Country Books ISBN 1-898941-78-5) Clive Bennett writes 'Horsham Songswappers met monthly at the Albion (church) Hall. Founded in 1958 by Tony Wales there were no 'guest' singers as such, but a fairly informal meeting of largely local people interested in folk music, with tea and biscuits served during the interval. The first meeting was on 30 March and over the next few years it included as regulars, among others, George Belton - where incidentally he introduced *The Sussex Toast* which is now so popular with many Sussex singers - Bob Blake, Harry Mousdell and Terry Potter, with occasional visits from Scan Tester and Bill Agate. Tony, aided by members of this club, also conceived and organised one of the first folk festivals not only in Sussex, but also in the country, which was held on Saturday 29 July 1961 at Horsham Boys Club, Hurst Road.
5. Bob Fry - a great enthusiast for and supporter of traditional song in Sussex. At that time, Bob was living in Horsted Keynes just a few yards from where Scan Tester was living with his daughter, Daisy and her husband Archie.
6. Geoff Cohen - folk song enthusiast and at that time proprietor of the 'Mid-Sussex Times'.

7. The Long Man of Wilmington is a chalk hill figure on the steep slopes of Windover Hill near Wilmington, East Sussex

8. Lewis (Scan) Tester - 1887 to 1972 - of Horsted Keynes

9. For most of the many years that my wife Tina and I ran a weekly folk club in various pubs in Lewes, we often had 'Sussex Singers Nights' where we gave the entire evening over to the old singers that Bob mentions ... and quite a number of others as well.

10. A large mental hospital now closed down

11. From an interview recorded in 2003.

12 The recordings were by Andrew King and the first reference that I had heard of the recordings that make up this album. Andrew has told us during the preparation of this album that these recordings were made before he started working for the British Library. This is also from the 2003 interview.

Previous commercial recordings of Bob Lewis:

The Brave Ploughboy: Songs and stories in a Sussex pub. Various artists (Xtra XTRS 1150 1975). Recorded by Karl Dallas at the Lewes Arms, Lewes

A Sweet Country Life (Veteran Tapes VT 120, 1990). Recorded by Mike Yates

When the May is All in Bloom: Traditional singers from the South East of England. (Veteran VT131CD 1995 Bob Copper, John Copper, Louie Fuller, Gordon Hall, Bob Lewis, Ron Spicer). Recorded by John Howson

Down in the Fields: An Anthology of traditional folk music from Rural England, Various performers (Veteran VTC4CD. 2001)

Where the Wind Blows An Anthology of traditional folk music from Coastal England, Various performers (Veteran VTC5CD. 2001)

The Painful Plough (Foxide RUST 105. 2003) Recorded by Peter Collins

Old Songs & Bothy Ballads (Autumn Harvest AH08. 2009) Bob Lewis, Jo Miller, Chris Miles, Jimmy Hutchison, Jock Duncan, Henry Douglas, Jim Taylor Recorded by Pete Shephard

Drive Sorrows Away (Autumn Harvest AH 09. 2009). Recorded by Pete Shepherd

Song Notes

Roud Numbers quoted are from the databases, *The Folk Song Index* and *The Broadside Index*, continually updated, compiled by Steve Roud. Currently containing almost half a million records between them, they are described by him as "extensive, but not yet exhaustive". Copies are held at: The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, London; Taisce Ceoil Dúchais Éireann, Dublin; and the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh. They can also be purchased direct from Steve at: 38 King Street, Somersham, Cambs PE28 3EJ.

Child numbers, where quoted, refer to entries in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* by Francis James Child, Boston, 1882-98. Laws numbers, where quoted, refer to entries in *American Balladry from British Broadside* by G Malcolm Laws Jr, Philadelphia, 1957.

In the following Song Notes, all Musical Traditions Records' CDs are referred to only by their Catalogue Numbers (i.e. MTCDxxx), as are all Topic Records' CDs (i.e. TSCDxxx) and Veteran CDs (i.e. VTxxxCD). The names of all other CD publishers are given in full.

Recorded by Andrew King at Nellie's Folk Club, The Rose and Crown Hotel, Tonbridge, Kent, on 17th October 1999.

The CD:

1 - **The Young and Single Sailor** (Roud 264, Laws N4)
Bob Lewis

A fair maid walking all in her garden
A brisk young sailor she chanced to spy
He stepped up to her thinking for to view her
And he says "Fair maid, can you fancy I?"
He stepped up to her thinking for to view her
And he says "Fair maid, can you fancy I?"

"You appears to be some young man of honour
Some young man of honour you appears to be.
How can you impose on a poor young woman
Who is not fitting your servant to be?"
Repeat last two lines.

"If you are not fit for to be my servant
I have a sincere regard for thee
I will marry you and make you my lady
And you shall have servants to wait on thee."
Repeat last two lines.

“I have a true love all of my own
And for seven long years he’s been gone to sea.
If it’s seven more years I will wait for him
And if he’s alive he will wait for me.”
Repeat last two lines.

“Now seven long years makes an alteration,
He might be either dead or drowned.
If he’s alive I do love him dearly,
And if he’s dead he’s in glory crowned.”
Repeat last two lines.

He put his hand all in his pocket,
His fingers being both long and small,
Pulled out the ring that they broke between them,
Soon as she seen it down she did fall.
Repeat last two lines.

He picked her up all in his arms
He gave her kisses one, two, by three
Saying “I’m your young and your single sailor
I am now returned for to marry thee.”
Repeat last two lines.

Soon as she see her true love was loyal
In wedlock chains they both were bound,
They live together and adore each other
In London City they do there dwell.
Repeat last two lines.

Also known as *The Broken Token* or *The Young and Single Sailor*, this is probably one of the most popular of all the 'broken token' songs, in which parting lovers break a ring (or some other token) in two, each half being kept by the man and woman. At their reunion, the man produces his half as a proof of his identity, and fidelity.

Robert Chambers, in his *Book of Days*, 1862-1864, describes a betrothal custom using a 'gimmel' or linked ring:

'Made with a double and sometimes with a triple link, which turned upon a pivot, it could shut up into one solid ring ... It was customary to break these rings asunder at the betrothal which was ratified in a solemn manner over the Holy Bible, and sometimes in the presence of a witness, when the man and woman broke away the upper and lower rings from the central one, which the witness retained. When the marriage contract was fulfilled at the altar, the three portions of the ring were again united, and the ring used in the ceremony'.

It boasts 491 Roud entries, the great majority of which come from North America; England has 70, Scotland 61 and Ireland 42. The song was often printed on ballad sheets and there are connections

here with the story of *The Odyssey* and the ballad of *Hind Horn*.

There are 129 sound recordings listed, and those by: Bob Hart (MTCD301-2); Daisy Chapman (MTCD308); Harry Brazil (MTCD345-7); Harry Holman (MTCD309-10); Mary Cash (MTCD325-6); Maggie Murphy (MTCD329-0); Cas Wallin (MTCD323-4); Nova Baker and Elsie Vanover (MTCD341-2); Sarah Anne O'Neill (TSCD660); Fred Jordan (VTD148CD); Viv Legg (VT153CD); Johnny Doughty (TSCD662); Harry Upton (TSCD652); Texas Gladden (Rounder CDs 1500 and 1800) remain available on CD.

2 - **The Honest Labourer** (Roud 19) Bob Copper

‘Twas of an honest labourer
as I’ve heard people say
He goes out in the morning and
he works hard all the day
And he has seven children
and most of them are small
He has nothing but hard labour
to maintain them all.

A gentleman out walking one day to
take the air
He met with this young labouring man
and solemnly declared
“Are you that honest labourer?”
He said “Yes Sir, that’s true.”
“How do you get your living
just the way that you do?”

“Sometimes I do reap and
sometimes I do mow,
At other times to hedging and
to ditching I do go.
There’s nothing comes amiss to me,
from the harrow to the plough,
That is how I get my living,
by the sweat of my brow.
“When I get home at night,
just as tired as I be,
I take my youngest child and
I dance him on my knee,
Then the others they come around me
with their prittle prattling toys,
And that’s the only comfort
a working man enjoys.

“My wife and I are willing and
we both work in one yoke,
We live like two turtle doves and
not one word provoke.
Although the times are very hard,

and we are very poor,
We can scarcely keep the raving wolf
away from our door.”

“Well done, you honest labourer,
you speak well of your wife.
I hope you do live happy
all the days of your life.
Here’s forty acres of good land
that I will give to thee,
To help to maintain your sweet wife
and family.”

This is very much an English song, popular from Westmorland to Sussex - and almost half of Roud's 211 instances are English (there are over 100 broadsides) - with Scotland contributing just 8 entries, and Ireland 9.

Robert Burns contributed a version of this song to The Scots Musical Museum, but it was old even then in 1792, earlier versions being in the Roxburghe and Euing collection of blackletter broadsides. In England it's usually called *The Nobleman and the Thresher*.

There are 33 sound recordings, but only those by: Harry Holman (MTCD309-10); Frank Hinchliffe (MTCD311-2); Sarah Makem (MTCD353-5); Ron Copper (TSCD534); and Eleazar Tillett of N. Carolina (Appleseed APR CD 1035 - the only North American recording!) remain available on CD.

3 - **Good Morrow Mistress Bright** (Roud 8119) Bob Lewis

“Good morrow, Mistress Bright,
through lone woods fleeting,
What larky larky wight
may call you sweeting?
Would he not fondly fear
to leave you lonely here,
Lest dangerous men and deer
You might be meeting?”

“My lonely woodland way,
O gallant stranger,
I traverse night and day
and fear no danger.
I have no jealous spouse,
I've changed no lover's vows,
Heart whole among the boughs,
I'm still a ranger.”

“Those eyes of haunting blue,
that voice's cadence,
The long ago renew
my memory's aidance.
Before I sailed the sea,

were none so dear to me
In childhood's joyous glee,
O flower of maidens.”

“Your words are waking now,
fond recollections
Of many a childish vow
of frank affection;
And since you fondly fear
to leave me lonely here,
From dangerous men and deer
Be my protection.”

A very rare song; Roud includes only this one instance of it appearing in the oral tradition. The words were written, in a mock-medieval style, by the Irish poet Alfred Percival Graves (1846-1931) - a great faker of folk songs - and because published in Charles Villiers Stanford's National Song Book (1905) taught in schools and almost certainly learnt by the Lewis family there. Bob had the words from his mother, who had them written on a scrap of paper. Bob's tune, which is different from that found in the National Song Book, will be recognised as that of a version of *A Blacksmith Courted Me* that Ralph Vaughan Williams collected in Sussex.

4 - **You Seamen Bold** (Roud 807) Bob Copper

You seamen bold that plough the ocean
Know dangers landsmen never knew.
The sun goes down with an equal motion
No tongue can tell what you undergo.
In dread of storm, or heat of battle,
There are no back doors to run away
While thund'ring cannon loudly do rattle,
Mark well what happened the other day.

A merchant ship a long time had sailèd,
Long time being captive out at sea.
The weather provèd so uncertain
Which brought them to extremity.
Nothing on board, poor souls, to cherish
Nor could step one foot on freedom's shore,
Poor fellows they were almost starving,
There was nothing left but skin and bone.

Their cats and dogs how they did eat them
Their hunger being so very severe,
Captain and men in one position,
Captain and men went equal share.
But still at last a stitch came on them,
A stitch came on them right speedilye,
Captain and men stood in a totter
Casting out lots to see who should die.

The lot it fell on one poor sailor

Whose family being so very great.
Those very words did he grieve sorrow
Those very words did he regret,
“I'm willing to die, my brother mess-mates
If you to the top-mast will haste away,
Perhaps you might some sail discover
While I unto our dear Lord do pray.”

Those very words did he grieve sorrow,
Those very words did he regret,
When a merchant ship there came a-sailing
There came a-sailing to their delight.
May God protect all jolly sailors
That boldye venture on the main,
And keep them free from all such trials
Never to hear the likes again.

The popularity of this song in the revival inclines us to be surprised to find only 39 instances in Roud - though all are from England and, amazingly, only one relates to a broadside (dated as being between 1780 and 1812). Also, apart from single collections from Shropshire and Somerset, all the others are from Sussex, that well-known ‘collectable’ southern county. Members of the Copper Family are frequently named as the singers, and Jim (TSCD673) and Bob are the only singers to have recorded it.

5 - We Shepherds are the Bravest Boys (Roud 284)
Bob Lewis

We shepherds are the bravest boys
That treads old England's ground.
If we goes into an alehouse
We values not one crown.
We'll call for liquors merrily
And pay before we go,
While our sheep lies asleep
O where the stormy winds do blow.

Come all you valiant shepherds
That have got valiant hearts,
That goes out in the morning
And never feels the smart.
We'll never be downhearted,
We'll fear no frost nor snow,
And we'll work in the fields
O where the stormy winds do blow.

As I lookèd out all on the hill
It makes my heart to bleed
To see my sheep hang out their tongues
And they begin to bleat.
So I pluckèd up my courage bold
And up the hill did go
To drive them to the fold
O where the stormy winds do blow.

And now I have a-folded them
And turnèd back again
I'll go into some alehouse
And there be entertained;
A-drinking of strong liquor, boys,
It is our hearts' delight
While our sheep lies asleep
All full safely all this night.

‘A well-known and oft quoted piece’, says Alfred Williams, who found several sets of this good pastoral song in Gloucestershire, where it is particularly well-established (though it has also turned up in Hampshire and Dorset as well). The tune is related, rather distantly, to the widespread melody known in Scotland as Drumdelgie, in Wales as *Dydd Llun y Boreu* and in England as *The Gentleman Soldier*. Another song seemingly known only in southern England and, again, to relatively few people - just 36 Roud entries.

Topic's publication of a Fred Jordan recording (TSCD670) seems to be the only other available on CD.

6 - The Streams of Lovely Nancy (Roud 688)
Bob Copper

The streams of lovely Nancy
are divided in three parts
Where young men and maidens
go to meet their sweethearts
It's drinking of strong liquor
causes my heart to sing
Night in yonder valley
made the rocks for to ring.

On yonder high mountain
there's a rare castle stands,
All builded up with ivory
Down by the black sands,
All builded up with ivory
and the diamonds so bright,
It's a pilot for a sailor
on a dark winter's night.

*On yonder high mountain
where the wild fowl do fly
There is one amongst them
that flies very high.*

*If I had my true love for
a night on that strand,
How soon I would secure her
by the slight of my hand.*

*At the foot of yonder mountain
there runs a river clear.
A boat from the Indies*

*did once anchor there,
With red flags a-flying
and the beating of the drum,
Sweet instruments of music
and the firing of her gun.*

As the sailor and his true-love
was a-walking along,

Said the sailor to his true-love,
"I will sing you a song,
You're a false-hearted lover,
you make me say so.
Fare thee well, lovely Nancy,
for away I must go."

"I will go, love, to some nunnery
and there end my life,
Oh I never will get married
nor yet make a wife.
Constant and true-hearted
for ever I'll remain
But I never will get married
'til my sailor comes again."

We sailèd from London
to Liverpool town,
Where the girls are so plentiful,
some white and some brown,
But of all the lovely lasses
that ever I see,
It's the girl from the Angel
is the only girl for me.
It's the girl from the Angel
is the only girl for me.

What are we to make of this song - particularly when it includes the two verses in italics which Bob doesn't sing? The early members of the Folk Song Society nearly drove themselves mad trying to read all sorts of things into these words (without actually mentioning Freud!) but, really, reached no conclusion. Broadside texts are almost identical to the versions collected from singers like Turp Brown, and the meaning of the song remains unclear. It's also odd that in all the versions I've seen, the first four verses - while making little sense - do at least cohere, while the remainder clearly come from another song or songs, and are quite different in different versions.

With the exception of three Canadian and three Northern Irish singers, this is another song known only in southern England. Roud has 139 entries, though all but 15 are from printed sources. Hampshire's Turp Brown (TSCD652) and Norfolk's Harry Cox (Rounder CD 1839) have the only other CD publications.

7 - The Pretty Ploughboy (Roud 186, Laws M24) Bob Lewis

It's of a pretty ploughboy
stood gazing o'er his team
His horses stood underneath the shade
That wild youth goes whistling,
goes whistling to his plough
And by chance he used to meet
a pretty maid, a pretty maid,
And by chance he used to meet a pretty maid.

"If I should fall in love with you,
it's my pretty maid,
And your parents they came for to know,
The very first thing would be
they'd send me to the sea
They would send me in the wars
to be slain, to be slain,
They would send me in the wars to be slain."

Now when her agèd parents
they came for to know
That ploughboy was a-ploughing on the plain,
The press gang was sent and
they pressed her love away,
And they sent him in the wars
to be slain, to be slain,
And they sent him in the wars to be slain.

It was early next morning
when she earlye rose
With her pockets were linèd with gold
See how she traced the streets
with the tears all in her eyes
In search of her jolly
ploughboy bold, ploughboy bold,
In search of her jolly ploughboy bold.

Now the very first she met was
a brisk young sailor bold.
"Have you seen my pretty ploughboy?"
she cried.
"He's gone onto the deep,
he's a-sailing in the fleet,
He's a-sailing on the tide,
pretty maid, pretty maid,
He's a-sailing on the tide, pretty maid."

Now she rowed until she came
to the ship her love was in,
And straightway to that captain did complain
"I've come for to seek my pretty ploughboy
That is sent in those wars
to be slain, to be slain,
That is sent in the wars to be slain."
Now she took out fifty guineas
and she threwed them on the floor
And gently sure she told them all o'er
And when she's got her ploughboy
safe all in her arms

Then she rowed her pretty ploughboy
safe on shore, safe on shore,
Then she rowed her pretty ploughboy
safe on shore.

Quite a popular song, with 241 Roud entries - mostly from England. No doubt its popularity stems from the large number of late-18th century and early-19th century broadside printings it enjoyed. Despite there being 36 sound recordings, comparatively few seem to have been published. Sharp noted at least 12 English versions, including one, rather surprisingly, from a lady in central London, as well as a single set from a singer in Virginia.

Other versions available on CD: both Harry and Lemmie Brazil (MTCD345-7); Daisy Chapman (MTCD308); Caroline Hughes (MTCD363-4); Walter Pardon (TSCD514); Harry Cox (TSCD512D); George Burton (TSCD673).

8 - **George Collins** (Roud 147, Child 42 / Child 85) Bob Copper

George Collins rode out one morning in May
When may was all in bloom.
And there he espied a fair pretty maid,
She was washing her white marble stone.

She hooped, she hollered, she highered her voice,
She waved her lilywhite hand.
"Come hither to me, George Collins," cried she
"For your life it won't last you long."

He put his benbow down on the bank side,
And over the river sprang he.
He slipped his hands round her middle so small,
And kissèd her red rosy lips.

George Collins rode home to his father's gate.
He rattled at the ring.
"Come down, oh Father, oh Father," he cried
Come down and let me in."

"Come down, oh Mother, oh Mother," he cried
"Come down and shake up my bed.
"Come down, oh Sister, oh Sister," he cried
"Get a napkin to tie round my head."

"If I should chance to die this night,
As I suppose I shall,
You may bury me under that white marble stone
That lies in fair Eleander's hall."

Fair Eleander sat in her hall one day
She's weaving her silk so fine,
When she espied the finest corpse coming

That ever her eyes shone on.

Fair Eleander said unto her head maid:
"Whose corpse is this so fine?"
She made her reply "George Collins' corpse,
An old true lovier of thine."

"Then set him down, my pretty brave boys,
And open his coffin so wide,
That I might kiss George Collins' lips,
For ten thousand times he has kissed mine."

This news was carried to London town,
And writ on London gate,
That six pretty maids died all of one night,
All for George Collins' sake.

According to Professor Child, 'This little ballad, which is said to be still of the regular stock of the stalls, is a sort of counterpart to *Lord Lovel*.' Other scholars have suggested that it is quite an ancient piece, and that the 'fair pretty maid/washing her fine silken shrift' is no other than a supernatural mistress who threatens George (or Giles, as he is often called) with death, should he leave her. If this is the case, and it does seem possible, then the ballad is probably linked with another piece, *Clerk Colville* (Child 42). Roud uses his 147 Number for both ballads.

Despite being a fairly popular song with 223 Roud entries (the vast majority from North America), this one is unusual in having only one broadside publication - though it's appeared in 125 books! Similarly, it has only two other CD publications that seem to be available: the singer Bob mentions, Enos White (TSCD653), and Jacquey Gabriel (MTCD311-2).

9 - **A Sweet Country Life** (Roud 2406) Bob Lewis

A sweet country life is to me both
dear and charming
For to walk abroad on a fine summer's morning
Your houses, your cities, your lofty gay towers
In nothing can compare with
the sweet shady bowers.
Your houses, your cities, your lofty gay towers
In nothing can compare with
the sweet shady bowers.

Nor do I admire your robes and fine dresses,
Your silks and your scarlets and other excesses;
For my own country clothing
is to me more endearing,
Than your sweet pretty mantle,
for 'tis my homespun wearing.

Repeat last two lines.

No fiddle, no flute, no hautboy or spinet,
In ought can compare with
 the lark or the linnet;
A-down as I lay all among the green bushes,
I was charmed by the notes of
 the blackbirds and thrushes.

Repeat last two lines.

As Johnny the ploughboy was a-walking alone,
To fetch home his cattle so early at morn;
There he spied pretty Nancy
 all among the green bushes,
She was singing much more sweetlye
 than the blackbirds and thrushes.

Repeat last two lines..

'Twas down in the meadow,
 beneath a lofty mountain,
There she sat a-milking
 by the side of a fountain;
The flocks they did graze
 in the dew of the morning,
Bright Phoebe did shine, the hills all adorning.
Repeat last two lines.

So now to conclude and to end my ditty,
Come all you country lasses that are
 so neat and pretty;
Oh never do forsake your own
 country employment,
No cities can afford half
 so sweet an enjoyment.
Repeat last two lines.

What a beautiful tune! Now this is a pretty rare song with just 22 Roud entries, all from England, naming just two singers - Bob Lewis and William Watts, who Sharp collected in Tewkesbury in 1906. It is first found in Log-Book of Timothy Boardman Kept on Board the Privateer Oliver Cromwell in 1778.

10 - **The Banks of Sweet Primaroses** (Roud 586) Bob Copper

As I walked out one midsummer's morning
For to view the fields and to take the air
Down by the banks of sweet primaroses
There I beheld a most lovely fair.

Three long steps I stepped up to her
Not knowing her as she passed me by,
I stepped up to her, thinking for to view her;
She appeared to me like to me like some virtuous bride.

I said, "Fair maid, where are you going?
And what's the occasion for all your grief?"

I will make you as happy as any lady
If you will grant me one small relief."

She said "Stand off, you are deceitful,
You are a deceitful and a false young man,
It is you that's caused my
 poor heart for to wander
And to give me comfort lies all in vain."

I'll go down in some lonesome valley
Where no man on earth shall e'er me find,
Where the pretty little small birds
 do change their voices
And every moment blows blusterous wind.

So all young men that go a-courting
Pray pay attention to what I say.
There is many a dark and a cloudy morning
Turns out to be a sunshiny day.
Turns out to be a sunshiny day.

A very popular song, right up to the present, with 57 of Roud's 254 instances being sound recordings. It's been found in most parts of England, together with isolated sightings in Wales (Phil Tanner), Scotland and Canada. It was widely printed on broadsides and in books, and all the collected sets of the song closely resemble the broadside version published by Barraclough of Nuneaton, and later by Henry Parker Such of London.

Other versions available on CD: Bob Hart (MTCD301-2); Pop Maynard (MTCD401-2); Caroline Hughes (MTCD363-4); Rebecca Penfold (TSCD672D); The Copper Family (TSCD534 and TSCD600); Fred Jordan (EFDSS CD 002); Phil Tanner (TSCD651 and Rounder CD1741); Ray Driscoll (Artesion CD 703); Harry Green (VT135CD).

11 - **The Cobbler** (Roud 22797) Bob Lewis

A cobbler there was and he lived in a stall
Which caused him for parlour,
 for kitchen and hall
No coin in his pocket nor care in his fate
No ambition had he nor duns at his gate.
Derry down down down derry down.

Contented he worked, and he
 thought himself happy,
If at night he could purchase
 a cup of brown nappy;
He'd laugh then and whistle,
 and sing too most sweet,
Saying, "Just to a hair I have
 made both ends meet."
Derry down, down down derry down.

But love, the disturber of high and of low,
Who shoots at the peasant as well as the beau;
He shot that poor cobbler quite into the heart,
I wish he had found some more ignoble part.
Derry down down down derry down.

It was from a cellar this archer did play,
Where a buxom young damsel continually lay,
Her eyes shone so bright
when she rose every day,
That she shot the poor cobbler
quite over the way.
Derry down,down down derry down.

He sang her love songs as he sat at his work,
But she was as hard as a Jew or a Turk;
Whenever he spake, she would
flounce and would flee,
Which put the poor cobbler quite into despair.
Derry down,down down derry down.
So he took up his awl (all), that he
had in the world,
And to make away with himself was resolved,
So he pierced through the body,
instead of the sole ;
And the cobbler he died, and
the bell it did toll.
Derry down down down derry down.

So now in good will I'll advise as a friend
All young men take warning
of this cobbler's end
Keep your hearts out of love or
you'll find by what task
That love brings us all to an end at the last
Derry down down down derry down.
Derry down down down derry down.

This is not one of the usual 'Cobbler' songs (Roud 174 or 837), but a very rare one with just 17 Roud entries, all from printed sources, and no sound recordings before this one. The only named singer is Henry Burstow.

12 - The Bold Princess Royal (Roud 528, Laws K29)
Bob Copper

On the fourteenth of February
we sailed from the land
On the bold Princess Royal,
bound for Newfoundland;
We had forty bright seamen,
our ship's company,
So boldly from the east'ard
to the west'ard bore we.

We had not been a-sailing
scarce days two or three,
When a man from our topmast a sail he did see.
Come bearing down on us to see where she bore
And under her mizzen black colours she wore.

"On now," cried our captain,
"What shall we do now?
Here comes a bold pirate to rob us, I know."
"Oh no!" cried our chief mate,
"that shall not be so.
We will shake out our reef, me boys,
and away from him we'll go."

It was the next morning, at the dawning of day,
That lofty old pirate shot under our lee
"Whence came you?" cried the pirate.
We answered him so,
"We are out of bold London, bound for Calaio"

"Then back your main topsail
and heave your ship to
For I have a letter to bring down to you."
"If I back my main topsail and heave my ship to
It will be for some pilot, not alongside of you."

He chased us to the eastward
all that livelong day
He chased us to westward
and he couldn't make no way
He fired shots after us
but none could prevail
And the bold Princess Royal soon
show him her tail.

"Oh now" cried our captain,
"That pirate has gone.
Go down for your grog, me boys,
go down, everyone.
Go down for your grog, me boys,
and be of good cheer,
For while we have sea-room,
bold lads, never fear."

A very well-known song, at least in England - 122 of Roud's 230 instances are from here, though there are a score or so each from eastern USA and Canada. And almost all the English entries are from counties with a sea coast - the great majority being from Suffolk and Norfolk. It has also remained popular until recent times; Roud shows 67 sound recordings.

Bob Copper collected this song from Ned 'Wintry' Adams of Hastings, in 1954. It was one of his proudest finds and one that he had to work the hardest to get a singer to sing for him.

Colcord dates this song to the beginning of the American War of Independence. The seaports mentioned in the numerous versions vary considerably, and range from Callao and Peru to Rio and Cairo. It has turned up along the eastern American seaboard, but seems to be especially well-known in East-Anglia.

Since the words 'Bold Princess Royal' occur so frequently in the song it's unsurprising that this is almost always the title used - until it crosses the sea, that is. In Ireland and the US many alternative titles have been adopted, many of which centre on the pirate, rather than the Princess.

Also available on CD by: Bob Hart (MTCD301-2); Sam Lerner (MTCD369-0); Harry Cox (TSCD706); Walter Pardon (TSCD514); Velvet Brightwell (VT140CD); Bob Roberts (Saydisc CD-SDL 405); Ned Adams (TSCD673); Jamie Taylor (Greentrax CDTRAX 9001); John Goffin (Neil Lanham NLCD 6) and Cis Ellis (NLCD 3).

13 - **My Boy Jimmy** (Roud 273, Laws K12) Bob Lewis

It was early early all in the spring
When my boy Jimmy went to serve the king
With his main mast tall and his ? high
That's parted me from my sailor boy.

A sailor's life is a merry life,
They rob young girls of their hearts' delight,
Leaving them behind for to weep and mourn;
They never know when they will return.

Here's four and twenty all in a row
And my sweetheart does the brightest show;
He is proper tall, genteel withal,
And if I can't have him I'll have none at all.

"Oh, father build me a little boat,
That on the ocean I might float,
And every King's ship that we pass by,
There we'll enquire for my sailor boy."

She had not sailed long upon the deep,
When some lofty French rig she chanced to meet
"Come sailors all, come tell me true,
Does my boy Jimmy sail among your crew?"

"Oh no, fair lady, he is not here.
For he's been drownèd we greatly fear,
On yon green island as we passed by,
There we lost sight of your sailor boy."

She's wrung her hands and she torn her hair,
Just as some woman in deep despair,

Her little boat 'gainst a rocks did run,
"How can I live now my Jimmy's gone?"

Another song with a beautiful tune and a seemingly wide popularity but, upon inspection, most of the 374 Roud entries are from the USA. Although England's broadly-spread distribution of the song shows the majority of sightings in these islands, Scotland and Ireland also have plenty of examples.

It probably dates from the late 18th century and goes under various titles, including *The Sailor Boy*, *The Sailing Trade*, *The Sailor Boy and His Faithful Mary*, *The Faithful Lovers* and, most commonly of all *Sweet William*. Cecil Sharp noted eleven English versions, usually under the latter title, as well as finding a further dozen sets in the Appalachians. The final verse is also found in the song *Died for Love*.

Other versions available on CD: Mikeen McCarthy (MTCD325); Danny Brazil (MTCD345-7); Harry Cox (Rounder CD1839); Joe Heaney (TSCD518D); Fred Jordan (VTD148CD); Liz Jefferies (TSCD653); Phoebe Smith (TSCD661); Viv Legg (VT153CD); Elizabeth Stewart (Elphinstone Institute EICD002); Dock Boggs (Smithsonian Folkways SF40108)

14 - **Dogs and Ferrets** (While Gamekeepers Lie Sleeping) (Roud 363) Bob Copper

I keep my dogs and my ferrets too
I have them in my keeping
To catch good hares all in the night
While the gamekeeper lies sleeping.

My dogs and I we went out one night
To view their habitation.
Up jumped poor puss, and away she ran
Straightway to a plantation.

She had not gone so very far in
Before someone caught her running
So boldye then she called out ?
I said "Uncle's just a-coming".

I then took out my little penknife
All quickly for to punch her
She turned out to be one of the female kind,
Oh how glad I was I caught her.

So I'll go down to some alehouse by
I'll drink that hare quite mellow.
I'll spend a crown, and a jolly crown too,
And I'll say I'm a right good fellow.

The song *Hares on the Old Plantation* (the title the early authority, Frank Kidson, gave it) probably

comes from the early 1800s, when the newly introduced game laws and enclosure acts were beginning to deeply affect the lower classes.

Knowing the extent to which poaching was practised, even in recent years, it's not surprising to find songs on the subject still popular among country singers. In the case of this song, half the 73 examples in Roud are sound recordings - an unusual proportion, but unsurprising in the light of the above. What might surprise us is that there are no broadside versions listed, since other such songs (*Van Diemen's Land*, for example) were well supported by these publications.

It's also unusual that the song is only found in England, as is the case with almost all poaching songs. Somewhat surprised by this, I tried a search on songs with 'Poacher' in the title and found 389 instances in Roud - only 18 of which could be identified as not being English! Are we the only thieves in these islands - or just the only ones who enjoy singing about it? It could, of course, have something to do with the way in which the English, alone in Europe if not the world, have accorded landowners rights of ownership to the wild animals which happen to be on their domains at any particular time.

Although this song has a common theme, it's unusual in that the poaching operation is completely successful.

Other CD recordings: Tom Willett (MTCD361-2); Wiggy Smith (MTCD307); George 'Pop' Maynard (MTCD401-2); Jim Baldry (TSCD676D).

15 - Three Old Crows (Roud 5, Child 26)
Bob Lewis

Spoken:
Three old crows sat on an oak
They were as black as black could be.
All sing

Three old crows sat on an oak
They were as black as black could be.
Sp: All sing

Says one black crow unto his mate
"Where shall we go for food to ate?"
All sing

Says one black crow unto his mate
"Where shall we go for food to ate?"

Sp: All sing

"Oh let's go down to Alfie's barn
And feed ourselves on rotten carn"
All sing

"Oh let's go down to Alfie's barn
And feed ourselves on rotten carn"
Sp: All sing

"And when we've ate and flown away
Then what will poor old Alfie say?"
All sing

"And when we've ate and flown away
Then what will poor old Alfie say?"
Sp: All sing

"Oh damn and blast those bloody crows
Damn and blast those bloody crows. Amen.
All sing

"Oh damn and blast those bloody crows
Oh damn and blast those bloody crows. Amen.
All sing

In one form or another (and there are many others) this has been a very popular song, with 234 Roud entries, although more than half of these are from North America. England and Scotland have around three dozen each, though there are none from Ireland.

Despite some 45 sound recordings, few seem to have made it onto CD: Fred Jordan (VTD148CD); Bob Cross (VTC4CD); Charlie Clissold (VTC4CD).

I Know Where those Blackbirds Be (Roud 23614)
Bob Copper

If I were back home in Hampshire
Where they birds do flock round I
I'd clap my hands and laugh like buggery
And all they birds would fly away

I wonder where that blackbird be
'E be up yon wurzle tree
I sees 'e and 'e sees I
And I be after 'e
If I 'ad a bloody girt stick
Bugger I wouldn't I swipe 'e quick
If I were back home in Hampshire
Where they birds do flock round I

Almost all southern English traditional singers seem to know a version of this - but few have been collected. Roud has just 8 entries with only 5 singers named. The Cantwell Family (MTCD372) have the only published recording.

16 - **The Threshing Song** (Roud 874)
Bob Copper

It's all very well to have a machine
To thrash your wheat and your barley clean,
To thrash it and wim it all fit for sale,
And go off to market all brisk and well,
Singing rumble-dum-dairy flare up Mary
Make her old table shine.

The man who made her he made her so well,
He made every cog and wheel to tell.
And the big wheel runs and the little'un hums,
And the feeder he sits above the drum,
Singing rumble-dum-dairy flare up Mary
Make her old table shine.

At seven o'clock we do begin
And we generally stop about nine or ten
To have some beer and oil her up,
Then away we go 'til one o'clock,
Singing rumble-dum-dairy flare up Mary
Make her old table shine.

There's old Mother Howard the sheaves to put,
And old Father Howard he does make up.
And Mary she sits and feeds all day,
And Johnny he carries the straw away,
Singing rumble-dum-dairy flare up Mary
Make her old table shine.

Then after a bite and a drink all round
The driver he climbs to his box again
And with his long whip he shouts, "All right,"
And he drives 'em round till five at night,
Singing rumble-dum-dairy flare up Mary
And make her old table shine.

Roud has only 20 entries for this song, with only three other singers, all from Hampshire, named other than members of the Copper family. It's another one with no broadside publications, and its earliest known date is 1905 in a Gardiner manuscript.

17 - **Spencer the Rover** (Roud 1115)
Bob Copper and Bob Lewis

These words were composed
by Spencer the Rover,
Who had travelled Great Britain
and most parts of Wales.
He had been so reduced
which caused great confusion,
And that was the reason he went on the roam.

In Yorkshire near Rotherham

he had been on his rambles,
Being weary of travelling he sat down to rest,
By the side of a fountain (mountain)
there runs a clear fountain,
With bread and cold water
he himself did refresh.

It tasted more sweeter than
the gold he had wasted,
More sweeter than honey
and gave more content,
And the thoughts of his babies
lamenting their father
Brought tears to his eyes,
which made him lament.

The night fast approaching
to the woods he resorted,
With woodbine and ivy his bed for to make.
There he dreamt about dying
lamenting and crying,
Go home to your family and rambling forsake.

On the fifth of November,
I've a reason to remember,
When first he arrivèd home
to his family and wife.
They stood so surprisèd when first he arrivèd,
To behold such a stranger
once more in their sight.

His children came around him
with their prittle-prattling stories,
With their prittle-prattling stories
to drive care away.
Now they are united like birds of one feather,
Like bees in one hive contented they'll be.

So now he is a-living in his cottage contented
With woodbine and roses
growing all around the door.
He's as happy as those that's got
thousands of riches,
Contented he'll be, and go a-rambling no more.

A surprisingly well-known song with 132 Roud entries from all over England, though only 16 of these are sound recordings. Almost all are by members of the Copper Family, the exceptions being Jim Porter (MTCD309-0); and Jim Barrett (TSCD673). The earliest date we can find is a Walker (Durham) broadside of 1839.

18 - **Thousands or More** (Roud 1220)
Bob Copper and Bob Lewis

The time passes over more cheerful and gay,
Since we've learnt a new act

to drive sorrows away,
Sorrows away, sorrows away, sorrows away,
Since we've learnt a new act
to drive sorrows away.

Bright Phoebe arises so high in the sky
With her red, rosy cheeks
and her sparkeling eye,
Sparkeling eye, sparkeling eye, sparkeling eye,
With her red, rosy cheeks
and her sparkeling eye.

If you ask for my credit you'll find I have none,
With my bottle and friend
you will find me at home,
Find me at home, find me at home,
find me at home,
With my bottle and friend you will
find me at home.
Although I'm not rich and
although I'm not poor,
I'm as happy as those that's got
thousands or more,
Thousands or more, thousands or more,
thousands or more,
I'm as happy as those that's got
thousands or more.

A song almost exclusive to the Copper Family, although two other singers are noted amongst Roud's 14 entries: George Townshend, and the Burgess Family joined by Harry Knight and George Tompsett, although only that by Oak (MTCD327-8) is available on CD.

19 - Oh Good Ale (Roud 203)
Bob Copper and Bob Lewis

It is of good ale to you I'll sing
And to good ale I'll always cling,
I like my pot filled to the brim
And I'll drink all you care to bring,

Chorus:
O, good ale, thou art my darling,
Thou art my joy, both night and morning.

I love you in the early morn,
I love you in daylight, dark, or dawn,
And if I'm weary, worn or spent,
I'll turn the tap and ease the vent,

Chorus

It is you that helps me with my work
And from a task I'll never shirk
If I can get a good home-brew,
And better than one pot, I like two

Chorus

And if all my friends from Adam's race
Was to meet me here all in this place,
I could part from all without one tear
Before I'd part with my good wine or beer,

Chorus

And if my wife did me despise
How soon I'd give her two black eyes,
But if she loved me like I love thee
What a happy couple we should be,

Chorus

You have giv'n me debts and I've often swore
I never would drink strong ale no more,
But you for all that I forgive
And I'll drink strong ale just as long as I live,

Chorus

With 42 Roud entries, this appears to be a relatively popular song, though only a handful of singers not in the Copper family are noted - and only the Coppers have ever recorded it. It first appears in Frederick Atkinson, *The Banquet of Thalia, or, The Fashionable Songsters Pocket Memorial* (York, 1790).

20 - John Barleycorn (Roud 2141)
Bob Lewis

John Barleycorn is a hero bold
as any in the land,
His fame has stood for ages good
and will for ages stand.
The whole wide world respects him,
no matter friend or foe,
And where they be that makes too free,
he's sure to lay them low.

Chorus:
Hey, John Barleycorn, ho, John Barleycorn,
Old and young thy praise have sung,
John Barleycorn.

To see him in his pride of growth
his robes are rich and green,
His head is speared with a goodlye beard,
fit nigh to serve the Queen.
And when the reaping time comes round
and John is stricken down,
He'll use his blood for England's good
and Englishmen's renown.

Chorus:

The Lord in courtly castle,
the Squire in stately hall,
The great of name of birth and fame
on John for succour call.
He bids the troubled heart rejoice,
gives warmth to Nature's cold
Makes weak men strong, and old ones young, and all men
brave and bold.

Chorus:

Then shout for great John Barleycorn,
nor heed the luscious vine,
I have no mind much charm to find
in potent draught of wine.
Give me my native nut-brown ale,
all other drinks I'll scorn,
For true Sussex cheer is 'Arvey's beer,
our own John Barleycorn.

Chorus:

This is not the usual song of this name (Roud 164) and, with 32 instances, has only about one fifth of the number of entries, mostly from the south-east of England. Nor is it as old as might be imagined; the earliest broadside dates to 1859-1860. It looks as if only George Townshend has a CD recording (MTCD304-5).

Credits:

Firstly, of course, thanks to **Andrew King** - for the recordings, without which ... Also, to **Vic Smith** and **Jon Dudley** for the main booklet text, additions to the song notes, and for all the photos.

Also to:

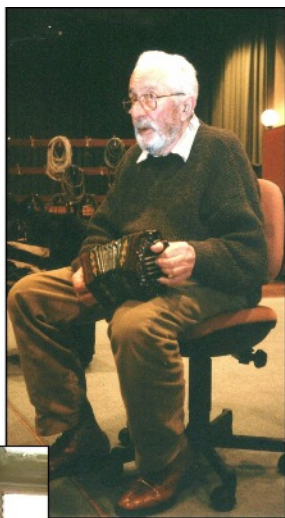
- Danny Stradling - for the song transcriptions and booklet proof reading.
- Steve Roud - for providing *MT* with a copy of his *Folk Song Index*, whence came some of the historical information on the songs.

MT Records' 10% Sales Royalties will go to support the Sussex Traditions organisation.

Booklet: editing, printing, song notes

CDs: editing, production
by Rod Stradling

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Far right: TS Foudroyant in Ports-mouth harbour.

Bottom right: the usual suspects at a Petworth Society event, c.1980.



All other photos:
Bob and Bob.



Front [l-r] Dick Richardson, Jill Copper, Jon Dudley, Lynne Copper, Ron Spicer.
Back [l-r] Vic Gammon, Bob Copper, Bob Lewis, John Copper