

## WHAT WILL BECOME OF ENGLAND?

**From his discovery in 1945** by folk song collector, E. J. Moeran until shortly before his death, Harry Cox (1885-1971) was England's most frequently recorded country singer and the source from whom many modern urban folk revival and folk-rock groups learned their songs.

It began in 1945 at a public house gathering at The Windmill, Harry's local pub at Sutton, near Stalham, Norfolk. Moeran had arranged for a number of country singers to record on disc for a projected BBC radio program. Harry was one of a number of Norfolk singers who gained fame from this occasion. There were, of course, other singers, well known in the pub's locality: Elijah Bell, Charlie Chettleburgh, Walter Gales, Billy Miller, and Jack Riseborough. The resulting broadcast put together by BBC features producer Maurice Brown attracted the interest of Francis Collinson, producer of the weekly Sunday morning radio series *Country Magazine* (and himself a folk song arranger).

Two years later, in 1947, a second recording session was held at the (impossibly named) Eel's Foot pub in Eastbridge, Suffolk. Here, the main singers were father and son Velvet and Jumbo Brightwell from Leiston. The two broadcasts, as well as the regular folk singing sessions at the Eel's Foot attracted the interest of English Folk Dance and Song Society members like myself, as well of Alan Lomax, when he arrived in England in 1950.

It was Alan Lomax's and my participation with Harry Cox in the TV program, *A Ballad Hunter in Britain*, however, in June 1953, (a first for both of us, as well as for a young producer in training at BBC's Alexandra Palace, David Attenborough) that really woke us up to Cox's potential as a performer, not only because of his large repertoire of love songs and sea ballads, but also because he had now started reminiscing about his life, remembering for us all sorts of really fascinating fragments.

Alan and I had just finished editing the English album of *The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music*, on which we had included a number of songs from Harry's first 1945 BBC radio session. Charger Salmon, another Norfolk singer, had recorded fine versions of "The Dogger Bank" and "The Lowlands Low," and we had included another of Charger's songs, "The Rigs of the Time," a song dating from the Napoleonic wars, with a haunting tune and a chorus: "Honesty's all out of fashion, / These are the rigs of the time, time, my boys, / These are the rigs of the time." (You can hear it on Rounder CD 1741). We asked Harry if he knew any other song like Charger's, aimed at political comment — or "protest" song, and that was how we first got Harry started on his unique recollections.

### Harry's Repertoire and Dialect

**Harry Cox's extensive folk-song repertoire** was regarded by collectors as exceptional.

Before World War II, art composers and musicians interested in folk song, like Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth, and E. J. Moeran, were discovering a fast-fading number of country singers who remembered only a couple of songs they sang at the annual Harvest Home suppers. They may have known more but were possibly reluctant to sing someone else's — old so-and-so's song. Also, the time-consuming process of transcribing words and tunes on to paper interrupted the singers' progression from one song to another.

One collector — one only — early in the twentieth century, way ahead of his time, decided to use the Edison Bell Phonograph, employing wax cylinders. This was Percy Grainger. Not only did he want to get all the idiosyncrasies of the music, the use of non-tempered scales, the subtle changes of rhythm, the holding or shortening of beat notes, the drops and raises, but, in addition, he wanted to capture all the nuances of the local dialect. Grainger made his recordings around the market town of Brigg in Lincolnshire, the next county north of Norfolk, and, as he would have been in Norfolk, he was fascinated by the way the singers extended their regional speech patterns within the musical framework.

By 1950, when we post-war collectors came on the scene with our tape recorders, there were obviously fewer surviving traditional singers. But, by keeping our tape machines running, we were able to probe more deeply. Not having to stop, line by line, or word by word, allowed the recollection process to flow in its natural course. The singers, particularly those who had difficulty in reading and writing, had better developed memories than most; in fact, if they were illiterate, like the travelling Gypsies and Tinkers, or like Harry's father, they were more likely to remember everything they heard. Like his father, Harry could go back home after a night of singing, and go over the songs he had heard, again and again, until he had them learned as part of his tactile memory.

East Anglia, Norfolk and Suffolk in particular, have produced a number of singers with an extensive repertoire, particularly near to the fishing ports. Percy Grainger's outstanding discovery in Lincolnshire was Joseph Taylor of Saxby-all-Saints. Harry's father's repertoire must have been extensive but, according to Harry, consisted mainly of sea songs, including those about whale fishing. More recently, since Harry was recorded, other singers have also been found who have retained a fairly extensive repertoire. Notable among these is another Norfolk singer, Sam Lerner of Winterton, who can be heard on some of the other CDs in this series.

Norfolk, like other rural counties in England, still retains a rich local dialect. Indeed, at one time you could tell by the way people spoke, which village, or even which part of a village, they came from. When Harry is talking — even to listeners from London or New York — his Norfolk dialect is broad; and most people will be helped by the transcriptions to understand him. But when he sings, except in the ballads and local songs like the "Barton Broad Babbling Ballad" (track 26) he is more easily understood. Perhaps when performers perceived certain songs as coming from other parts of the country, they felt

they should be sung in “proper,” or standard English.

Also, as Harry recounts, many of his songs did originate from printed ballad sheets sold at markets and fairs, probably another reason for the marked difference between Harry’s ordinary speech and the English of his songs.

—Peter Kennedy, London, July 1999

## 1. WHAT WILL BECOME OF ENGLAND?

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

*What will become of Eng-e-land,  
If things go on this way.  
There’s many a thousand working men  
Is starving day by day.*

*He cannot find employment,  
For bread his children cry,  
And hundreds of these child-e-ren  
They now lay in their graves.*

*Some have money plenty,  
But still they crave for more.  
They will not lend a hand  
To help the starving poor.*

*They’ll pass you like a dog,  
And on you cast a frown.  
That is the way old Eng-e-land  
The working men cut down.*

## 2. HIS LIFE (INTERVIEW)

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

**Harry Cox:** *Well, I was bred and born at Barton Turf. That’s where I served all my young days. Then we moved about to different parts — ’til I grew up — big enough to do a little. And I began my line of life — followed my father’s footsteps. (Laughs) And after I got so I could do anything at all, particular, I went into stock feeding. I took delight in feeding the cattle. I fed — oh, thirty years and more. Sometimes I had done seven months at a stretch. Sundays and all— no rest — never had a holiday. Nowhere to go. All they used to do then of a night — when I got home — they used to get behind the old fire. Music on, and we had a song or two to pass the time. We had to cheer ourselves up. That was all the frolic we had.*

## 3. A-GOING TO WIDDLIECOMBE FAIR

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

When we first visited Harry in his cottage, there was no electric light, as was still the case in most of the isolated villages in East Anglia. When Harry was young, his family had not had enough money to afford oil lamps through the winter. When the men got back from the fields, to save light, they would sit in the glimmer of what little fire they might have had. Most of Harry's memories are of little or no light, littler or no fire, and little or no bread. Fortunately, in later life, the mind tends to push those unpleasant times to the back of the brain somewhere, and Harry is remembering the good times when his father reached under the bed and got out "the music" — the button accordion — or the occasions when he borrowed a fiddle. Mostly, they sat in the dark. They sang the long ballads, taking it in turns.

But first though, they would sing songs that the children could join in — songs with funny names of people, songs with choruses that were hard to get your tongue around, or songs that got longer in every verse. A favourite was the one about tradesmen going to the fair, with its "tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor" kind of chorus. The name of the fair was not important — they used to change the location to keep the little ones awake.

We ourselves heard the McPeake family in Belfast singing about "Monaghan Fair." When Old McPeake sang "Who did he meet but an old baker there," he made it sound like "an old bugger there." In fact, most versions of this song are about all the different beggars who turn up at the fair. Place names mentioned in other versions are widely distributed or don't exist at all. Chambers's *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (1826) has the Border town of Coldingham, near Eyemouth in Berwickshire. In England we heard of places we couldn't trace, like "Maligan Fair" (from a Bristol informant). In Ireland we came across both actual and fictitious places, such as Donnybrook and Crebilly.

Harry's "Widliecombe" sounds like Widecombe in Devonshire, the location of "Tom Pearce, Tom Pearce, Lend Me Your Grey mare," the best known of all English cumulative songs, but that's a story for another evening round the fire. As Harry exclaims, "You need a whole lot of beggars [?] to keep that song going — once you've started it off!"

*As I was a-going to Widliecombe Fair,  
Jolly old baker I met there.  
This old baker his name it was Balls.  
His old woman was Old Mother Bags O'Balls.  
Then there was Balls,  
Old Mother Bags O' Balls,  
Johnny and Jumping Joan,  
Jolly companions every one.*

**(Etc., as above, with Cobbler, Wax, Old Mother Bags O'Wax; Fiddler, Dix, Old Mother Fiddlesticks.)**

**Spoken:** *You need a whole lot of beggars to keep that song going, once you've started it!*

**Other verses remembered but not recorded:** Tinker, Pots, Old Mother Slipper Pots; Tailor, Pins, Old Mother Pricklepins; Miller, Legs, Old Mother Shake-a-Legs; Weaver, Cox, Old Mother Shuttlecocks.

#### **4. WORKING IN A GANG (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

After a week's work in the fields, it was a long walk for the field workers to get to the nearest public house, so they all would put what money they could afford into a "club" in order to get delivery of a barrel from the nearest brewery. Here, Harry is talking about the years before 1914 when limited licensing hours were introduced into English public houses.

*Well then, when you got through that muddle, the next big job you'd come into — there'd be the hoeing to do. You'd have another two or three months of hoeing — the roots. Carry on at that — happy enough. Get into a gang — have a club — a gallon or two of beer. That's how we used to go on — happy as the birds in the wood.*

#### **5. THE SPOTTED COW**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy

As far as we know, this is the first English love song to be popularized by Steel Eye Span, now considered the first English folk-rock group. Harry was very derogatory about such groups whom he included with "all that squit you hear on the radio." Although he did appreciate anybody who could sing in a pub, or at a wedding, or other occasion, he believed instruments detracted from the story of a song, even though he himself played accordion and fiddle. In his father's day, the songs had been sung by ballad singers at fairs. Harry's father had paid someone to read them over to him, and it was reported locally that his father, who was unable to read or write, could learn a ballad or love song after only one hearing.

*One morning in the month of May,  
As from my cot I strayed,  
Just as the dawning of the morn,  
I met with a charming maid.*

*"My pretty maid, now whither you stray,  
So early, tell me now?"  
The maid replied, "Kind sir," she cried,  
"I have lost my spotted cow."*

*“So no longer weep, no longer mourn,  
Your cow is not lost, my dear,  
I saw her down in yonder grove.  
Come, love, and I’ll show you where.”*

*“O, I must confess you very kind,  
Very kind,” said she.  
“It’s there you’re sure the cow to find,  
Come, sweetheart, walk with me.”*

**[Omitted:** *Then in the grove we spent the day,  
And thought it passed too soon.  
At night we homeward made our way,  
When brightly shone the moon.*

*Next day we went to view the plough,  
Across the flowery vale.  
We clasped and kissed each other there,  
And love was all the tale.]*

*So if I should cross the flowery glen,  
Or go and view the plough,  
She’d come and call me,  
“Gentle swain, I have lost my spotted cow.”*

## **6. BARTON WALTZ (MELODEON)**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

When Harry speaks of “a frolic around the fireside,” in addition to singing, he is referring to a tune on what was known locally as “a music,” or button-accordion, a diatonic push-pull squeezebox, also known as a melodeon. These were manufactured in England up to the 1850s, and from then until World War I, were imported from the area of Saxony in Germany. The first one I played was purchased at the Co-operative Wholesale Society for five shillings (nowadays they cost 2,000 times that amount). Harry’s was one of those imported in the 1930s — black with shiny metal buttons, one row of melody buttons on the right and two buttons for the four chords on the left. On the top of the right-hand reed block were three black knobs that you pulled up to open the three sets of reeds. You pushed them down to keep out the damp when you were on the road, particularly around Barton Broad (lake) or to keep out the salt water when on shipboard .

As mentioned before, Harry never used his squeezebox to accompany songs, but only for individuals to get up in turns and do a step dance, or for couples to waltz. In some towns and villages there were halls and ballrooms where quadrilles and country dances were held, but in the isolated Norfolk farmsteads there was no place large enough. In Harry’s father’s time, the squares and contras had already given way to the more popular round dances for couples — polkas, schottisches, barn dances, and two steps, and, in three

quarter time: the polka-mazurkas, Varsoviana, and the ever-popular old-fashioned Viennese waltz. For these the melodeon can only provide an approximation of the popular songs that had once been the rage of the London music halls.

**Harry Cox:** *Here's one they used to play when they was coming round to Barton when I was a little boy. (Plays.)*

## 7. THE HARVEST (INTERVIEW)

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

**Harry Cox:** *Harvest time. There's hay to mow. We used to have to mow the hay and all — that time of day. Harvest time — used to mow all the barley. There was no tying up, no binding up, like you do now. Used to tie all the corn and the wheat by hand. It used to be all done by hand. Used to tie all day long. There was nothing come and picked it up, like they do now. Didn't think nothing of it. You'd take delight in it. I liked tying up corn, that I did. I could tie that as quick as a lot of people. I was never afraid of nobody on that job. It was not a bad job at all, I could do that as quick as lightning. Done acres and acres.*

## 8. THE BARLEY STRAW

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Here's a song, like "The Farmer's Servant Man," or "Rap-a-tap tap" (track 10), of the bawdier kind that Harry enjoyed singing to shock the pretty young ladies. In 1895, the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould had asked his literary collaborator, Fleetwood Sheppard, to re-write the text for publication in their *Songs of the West*, but in 1975 we included it, as sung by Harry, in *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*. It was the tenth song that Harry recorded for the BBC at the 1947 session at The Windmill, and he sang it immediately after Charger Salmon's "The Rigs of the Time."

Other versions were collected in 1910 by Ralph Vaughan Williams at Southwold, Suffolk, and more recently in the 1970s by Peggy Seeger and Ewan McColl from Nelson Ridley, an English gypsy. We also recorded it from the great Scottish balladsinger, Jeannie Robertson, as "Davy Faa." As far as we know, to date no version from Ireland has appeared.

*So 'tis of a jolly old farmer,  
Lived in the West Counterie,  
He had the finest daughter  
That ever my eyes did see.*

*'Tis of a rich young squire,  
Was living there close by,  
And he vowed he wouldn't be easy*

*Until he had a try.*

*So he dressed his-self as a tinker  
And travelled on his way,  
Until he came to the farmer's house,  
Was standing there close by.*

*"O, have you got any kettles,  
Any pots or pans to mend?  
Or have you got any lodgings,  
By being a single man?"*

*"O no," replied this pretty fair maid,  
Not thinking any harm,  
"O, you can stay with us all night,  
If you sleep in our old barn."*

*So after tea was over,  
She went to make his bed.  
The tinker following after,  
Which stole her maidenhead.*

*The tinker being nimble,  
Jumped up and barred the door,  
And she slept all night in the tinker's arms  
Amongst the barley straw.*

*"Now since I've slept with you all night,  
Don't think me none the worse."  
He put his hand in his pocket  
And pulled out a heavy purse.*

*"Here's fifty pound I will give you  
To pay the nurse's fee,  
And if ever I come this way again,  
Fair maid, I'll marry thee."*

*"So now you cannot marry me,  
Pray tell to me your name.  
Likewise your occupation  
And where and whence you came."*

*He whispered softly in her ear,  
"O, call me Davie Shaw,*



*And if ever I come this way again,  
Remember the barley straw."*

*Now six months being over,  
And nine months being come.  
This pretty little fair maid  
Was the mother of a son.*

*The old man cried, "O daughter dear,  
Who has done you this harm?"  
"I'm afraid it was the old tinker,  
That slept in our old barn."*

### **9. THE FARMER'S SERVANT (RAP TAP TAP)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

Once again, this one was too much for Reverend Baring-Gould in the 1890s. He noted the first verse but in his notebook wrote "This one so gross I did not take it down." In rewritten form, it was published as "The Flail Man." Two ardent song collectors, Henry Hammond and George Gardiner, noted versions in Dorset and Hampshire, and at our Suffolk pub sessions at Blaxhall Ship it was Percy Webb's Saturday night song. In 1975 we included Harry's version in our *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*.

**Harry Cox (spoken):** *This here is more of a farmer's song:*

*So come all you farmer's men,  
That are both stout and bold.  
If you do as I have done,  
You never will catch any cold.*

*For when my master goes abroad,  
For to view the fields so gay,  
I go up to the door with my rap tap tap,  
O let it be night or day.*

*So as soon as my master's back was turned,  
I went toddling out of the barn.  
I went up to the door with my rap tap tap  
I'm sure I thought no harm.*

*"O, no harm at all," my mistress said,  
And she asked me to go in.  
I told her I was very cold,  
So she gave to me some gin.*

*I took and I drank it down,  
But not a word did I say.  
I thought I could come at the rap tap tap,  
So upstairs we went straightway.*

*And there we laid in sport and play  
For half an hour or more.  
My missus she was so fond of the sport,  
I thought she'd never give o'er.*

*“O you've won my heart forever; Jack,  
Your own master's no man for me.  
He can't come with his rap tap tap,  
Not half so well as thee.”*

*So master goes to market,  
As masters always do.  
Left me to mind the business,  
As servants ought to do.*

*And when my master do come home,  
O, he asked me what I had done.  
I told him I'd minded his business,  
Just as well as if he was at home.*

*He gave to me some beer to drink,  
But not a word did I say.  
He did not know I'd been at the rap tap tap,  
So off home I went straightway.*

**(Laughter)**

**Harry Cox (spoken):** *There you are...have you heard that before?*

**Alan Lomax:** *Gosh, no!*

## **10. THE PRETTY PLOUGHBOY (FIDDLE AIR)**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

“The Pretty Ploughboy,” one of Harry Cox’s best-known songs, appeared on his earliest recordings. This was the first time we heard him playing the tune for its own sake. The song has been widely collected in England, Scotland, and Newfoundland. Because of her love for a young ploughboy, the cruel parents of our heroine have him press-ganged “and sent to the wars to be slain.” She dresses as a sailor, pays handfuls of gold to the captain

of his boat, and saves him from the wars.

**Lyrics (not sung here):**

*O, when she'd got her ploughboy all safely in her arms,  
She vowed they would be parted never more.  
She set those bells to ring and so sweetly she did sing,  
Just because she'd saved the lad that she adored.*

*O happy is the day when all true lovers meet,  
When the sorrows and cares are all o'er.  
But cursed be the wars that send many a lad to sea,  
And their true loves never see them any more.*

**11. HIS GRANDFATHER AND FATHER (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax

Harry's grandfather made quite a name for himself as a local entertainer. As a boy, he had been a good singer and a keen step-dancer. His parents found a benefactor who arranged for him to take dancing lessons in Yarmouth, but, throughout his life, in spite of his ability as a performer, he still kept up his farm work.

Harry's father, on the other hand, had a larger number of children and decided to look for a more remunerative occupation. He found it on the herring boats out of Yarmouth. This meant being away from home for long periods, but, as Harry told us, if the weather allowed, he always tried to get home for Christmas. In the end, he had to give up the boats and return to farm work.

**Harry Cox:** *He was a singer and a dancer. He went to proper dancing school when he was young. He could dance, my old grandfather could. He was a real tap-dancer. They trained them, that time of day. He went in for all that. He was a singer of all these old songs. There's a lot that come down from him. And he was a dancer an' all.*

**Alan Lomax:** *Was he much of a hand to work on a farm?*

**Harry Cox:** *A farm worker, same as I am. Yes, he still done that. My father — he sort of took up a different life. He got sick of farm work when he was — he took off to sea when he was a young man. And he done a good many year there. (Pause) And on the water — on the wherry, we call 'em. He had done a lot on there. And then, of course, he got older. I didn't know nothing about him, not when he done that. He give up that as he got older and come onto the land, which, that's where he began — on the land — he finished on it.*

**12. JACK TAR ON SHORE**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

This was one of Harry's father's favorite songs, and one of the first to become popular at The Skiffle Cellar in London's Soho. When the folk revival craze broke out in England in the mid-1950s, strummed guitars suddenly became all the rage. Because of its robust rhythm, this song took its place with skiffled versions of such Lead Belly songs as "Down by the Riverside," and "Rock Island Line" and Scots bothy ballads such as "Turra Market" or "The Barnyards of Delgaty."

Ralph Vaughan Williams collected a version of this from Suffolk, adjoining Harry's East Anglia, and versions have also surfaced in Norfolk. It seems to have been popular among Maine lumberjacks, as well.

*So come all you ladies gay,  
Who delights in sailor's joy.  
Come listen while I sing to you a song.  
When Jack Tar he comes on shore  
With his gold and silver in store,  
There's no one can get rid of it so soon.*

*The first thing Jack require  
Is a fiddler to his hand,  
And likewise the best liquor of every kind,  
And a pretty girl likewise,  
With two dark and rolling eyes,  
And Jack Tar is suited to his mind.*

*Now the landlady she comes in,  
Dressed all in her Sunday best,  
And she look like some bright and evening star.  
She was ready to wait on him,  
When she find he's plenty of tin,  
Chalk him down to the one behind the bar.*

*Now Jack all in his rage,  
He threw bottles at her head,  
And likewise all the glasses he let fly.  
And the poor girl in her fright  
Called the watchman of the night,  
Saying, "Take this young sailor away."*

*Now Jack did understand  
That a ship lay wanting hands,  
And to her he then went straight down.  
With a sweet and a pleasant gale  
He unfurled his lofty sails,*

*Bid adieu to the lasses of the town.*

*Now we laid her on a tack,  
Like a cutter or a smack,  
As she rolled from the lee to the weather.  
And we kep' her full and by,  
Close to wind as she would lay,  
We were bound for Blackwall in stormy weather.*

### **13. TWO HORNPIPES: YARMOUTH AND MEG MERILEES (FIDDLE)**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Harry had no fiddle of his own but played upon one we lent him. We had made a point of taking a country-style violin with us on our travels, and at first we were quite surprised to discover that in addition to playing the squeezebox, Harry could fiddle and had once played on both his father's and grandfather's fiddles. This was, in fact, the same fiddle that we later lent to Johnny Doherty in County Donegal on which Johnny recorded a large number of little-known step dances and hornpipes.

Tunes used for step dancing were called *hornpipes*, so named, presumably, from precursors of the tin whistle — vertical flutes, perhaps, or possibly an oboe-like reed instrument with a horn on the end. Archaeologists have found three-holed animal bone whistle pipes that date from the Roman period, which may have been popular on board ship. The recent discovery of three-hole pipes of three different lengths on the wreck of the Tudor battleship, *Mary Rose*, suggests that these were the prototypical hornpipes used by English sailors going into battle.

Harry plays two hornpipes: the first, which he called “The Yarmouth,” is the most popular of all English step-dance tunes, and is elsewhere more widely known as “The Manchester.” We understand that in Boston it was popularised by a famous musician called “Ricketts,” by which name it is known in the United States. His second tune is a popular country dance, “Meg Merilees,” which we also came across in the Border Country between England and Scotland.

### **14. ON BOARD OF THE KANGAROO (SONG FRAGMENT)**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Harry not only remembered songs not only from his father, but from his mother as well. This one was more of a music hall or vaudeville type song composed in the mid-1850s. Harry remembered the chorus but couldn't recollect all the verses.

**Harry Cox (spoken):** *The old lady used to sing:*

*I never knew she would prove false,*

*Or ever prove untrue,  
As she sailed away from Cardigan Bay  
On board of The Kangaroo.*

**Harry Cox:** *I don't know any more.*

**Peter Kennedy:** *Your mother used to sing that?*

**Harry Cox:** *Yes.*

**Peter Kennedy:** *Hmm.*

Here are the words to the whole song, as we recorded it from Bristol chanteyman Stanley Slade, who called it his “Chinese Blues”:

*It's first I was a waterman, I lived at home at ease,  
But now I am a mariner; I plough the angry seas.  
I thought I'd like seafaring life, so I bid my love adieu.  
And I sailed away from Milford Bay on board of The Kangaroo.*

*My love she was no foolish girl, her age it was three score.  
My love she was no spinster, she'd been married twice before.  
You could not say it was her wealth that stole my heart away;  
She worked at a Chinese laund-e-rie for eighteen pence a day.*

*When I left home she sobbed and sighed, so bitterly she did cry,  
So when I reached each foreign port, some presents I did buy.  
I'd tortoisés from Teneriffe, ties from Timbuctoo,  
A China rat, a Bengal cat, and a Bombay cockatoo.*

*Paid off, I sought her dwelling in the suburb of the town,  
Where an ancient dame upon a line was hanging out her gown.  
“Where is my love?” “She's married, sir, about six months ago,  
To a smart young man, who drives the van of Chaplin, Son and Co.”*

*Farewell to dreams of married life, the soapsuds and the blues,  
Farewell to all the laundry girls, and the washing powders, too.  
I'll seek some foreign distant clime, no longer can I stay,  
And on some Chinese Hottentot, I'll throw my life away.*

## **15. YOUNG AND GROWING (SONG FRAGMENT)**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

This song fragment from Harry's mother is more strictly a traditional folk song, one that is well known and much sung in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Fletcher quoted the song in his play “Two Noble Kinsmen” (1634), and, as “Lady Mary Ann,” it appeared in print in Joseph Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* (Edinburgh, 1792). We recorded it at Curry Rivel in Somerset from Sidney Richards, whose father had sung ten verses to Cecil Sharp in 1904. We also included an Irish version in *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* (pages 473–74).

**[Omitted:** *As I strolled out one evening down by the college wall,  
I saw four and twenty college boys all playing with bat and ball.*

*It's there I spied my own love John, the fairest of them all,  
He's my bonny boy, he's young, but he's growing.]*

*So come all you pretty fair maids, and listen unto me,  
And never build your nest in the top of any tree.  
The green leaves they will wither, the roots they will decay,  
And my bonny lad was young — and was growin'.*

*Now at the age of sixteen, he was a married man,  
And at the age of seventeen, she brought him forth a son.  
At the age of eighteen, on his grave the grass grew green,  
And that put an end to his growin'.*

## **16. HIS MOTHER (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

**Harry Cox:** *My mother, she used to have to work — to find us things to wear and that sort of thing. She done a lot — else we shouldn't be where we are now.*

**Alan Lomax:** *You mean, you mean 'cause your father didn't always send money, huh?*

**Harry Cox:** *My mother really worked as much as he did. On the farm — she used to be a-going — all the year long — when she could. If it hadn't been for her, we shouldn't have had anything. Never got nothing, that time of day — when we were little.*

*My mother had thirteen in all of us family. And four died. And that left nine and they all lived.*

**Alan Lomax:** *Were they all girls?*

**Harry Cox:** **Harry Cox:** *All grow up.*

**Alan Lomax:** *Girls and boys mixed?*

**Harry Cox:** *Yes, three boys lived, and the rest were girls. That's three. I've got five sisters living now, as far as I know.*

**Alan Lomax:** *And, uh, Harry, did you — where were you in the bunch? Were you older?*

**Harry Cox:** *Was I? — I was young — the last one — and there was three more younger behind me.*

## **17. HIS UPBRINGING (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax

**Alan Lomax:** *How did your mother raise you? Did she raise you by punishing you or persuading you, Harry? Did you get lickings?*

**Harry Cox:** *No, I — we were — never were — not used bad — never was hit. No, none of them.*

**Alan Lomax:** *Never were hit at all?*

**Harry Cox:** *No I — never had any trouble with us at all. Never did know when I was get hurt. Never was knocked about or anything.*

**Alan Lomax:** *Of course, you and your little brothers probably had a good many scraps.*

**Harry Cox:** *O well, we used to fall out among ourselves — you know, how we used to do. We used to get wrong, like that. But we never were knocked about with parents. We were looked after, fairly.*

**Alan Lomax:** *I mean, did she rock you and all, when you were babies?*

**Harry Cox:** *No. That I don't remember. I don't — I think we were — you know, kind of rough that way. They didn't have the fancy that they have today — not with children.*

## 18. THE FOGGY DEW

Recorded by Alan Lomax and Peter Kennedy

There have been many theories as to why the girl was frightened of the foggy dew. Current thinking is that it the song was probably originally sung in Irish Gaelic and when it came into English through translation, the title was left untranslated and was therefore never completely understood in England. James Reeves suggested that "fogge" was Middle English for coarse rank grass, and others have thought that the word "dew" may come from the Irish *dhu*, "dark." However, the title of a number of American versions is "Buggerboo" providing the concept of some sort of bogey-man. We think, however, that sexual implications may perhaps be more relevant and likely.

In *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* we point out that Harry sings a version of the same tune that Robert Burns used for another song, his "Banks and Braes of Bonny Doon." In 1891 Frank Kidson heard a Yorkshire miner using the same tune. Cecil Sharp also found this tune to be common with his Somerset singers' versions of "The Foggy Dew." We believe Burns may have appropriated it from a Border version of "The Foggy Dew."

*Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* also includes an interesting version of this song from Norfolk singer, Phil Hamond, that he learned from a treefeller who he thinks heard it in Canada or the States. Here the foggy dew seems to imply being out in the cold: "I got that tired of living alone, I says to her one day, / 'I've a nice little crib in my old shack, where you might safely stay. / You'll be all right in the summer time, and in the winter, too. / You'll lay right warm and take no harm, away from the foggy dew.'"

*As I was an old bachelor, I followed a roving trade  
And all the harm that ever I done, I courted a servant maid.  
I courted her one summer season and part of the winter, too,  
And many a time I rolled my love all over the foggy dew,  
And many a time I rolled my love all over the foggy dew.*

*One night as I laid in my bed, a-taking my balm of sleep,  
This pretty fair maid came to me, and how bitterly she did weep.  
She wept, she mourned, she tore her hair, crying, "Alas, what shall I do?  
This night I resolved to sleep with you, for fear of the foggy dew,  
This night I resolved to sleep with you, for fear of the foggy dew."*



*Now, all the first part of the night, how we did sport and play,  
And all the later part of the night, she in my arms did lay.  
And when broad daylight did appear, she cried, "I am undone!"  
"O hold your tongue, you silly young girl, for the foggy dew is gone,  
O hold your tongue, you silly young girl, for the foggy dew is gone."*

*"Supposing that you should have one child, it would make you laugh and smile,  
Supposing that you should have another, it would make you think awhile,  
Supposing that you should have another, and another one or two,  
It would make you leave off these foolish young tricks and think of the foggy dew,  
It would make you leave off these foolish young tricks and think of the foggy dew."*

*I loved that girl with all my heart, loved her as I loved my life,  
And in the other part of the year, I made her my lawful wife.  
I never told her of her faults, yet never intend to do.  
Yet many a time, as she winks and smiles, I think of the foggy dew,  
Yet many a time, as she winks and smiles, I think of the foggy dew.*

## **19. HUNGER AND PAY (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy

*Used to eat turnips sometimes, Had to get what you could. I have been hungry. Well, he never got only ten shillings a week — that's a labourer's money. That's all we got. You got just what you could get. And I'm like my uncle. "I've seen more dinner times than I had dinners!" That's what he used to tell us. So I — so I got half-a-crown a week — what I got when I first began. I was a long long while afore I got very much more. I was only about seventeen years old before I got — I got about nine and sixpence. I could do more then. I done as much then as I ever done since, in a week. That's when — how I got muddled and messed about. And then I got a little better off, I suppose, as I got older — not much. You paid seven shillings for your board, and then you had the rest. Lot of them used to wear second — old second slops, we called them — jompers. That they did — and old tanned ones.*

## **20. THREE TOASTS**

Recorded by Alan Lomax and Peter Kennedy

Toasts, or healths, as they were often called, were sung or spoken, as drinking glasses were lifted at rural occasions such as harvest home, sheep-shearing suppers, and public house sing-arounds. The subject of toasts could range from a health to the host and hostess, or to the landlord and landlady, to the farm-boy, or to the farm-animals. When not sung they were usually chanted, and, just as with songs, one toast led to another.

**Harry Cox:** *I can give you another toast. You like to hear a toast, don't you?*

**Alan Lomax:** *Oh, yes!*

**Harry Cox (laughs and then recites):**

*Here's luck to the man who wear a raggedy coat  
And haven't got a patch to mend it,  
But damn and bugger the man who got plenty of money,  
And yet ha'n't to know how to spend it. (Laughter)*

*And then here's another one (recites):*

*Here's luck to the bee that stung Adam's ass  
And set the world a-joggin'!*

**Peter Kennedy:** *Set the world a-jogging?*

**Harry Cox:** *Yes, started it all in motion. You see, once that got stung, everything.  
(Laughs)*

**Alan Lomax:** *That's the best I ever heard!*

**Peter Kennedy:** *There's one that you were telling us before, that goes "The world is as round as a wheel."*

**Harry Cox:** *"The sting of death we all must feel!"*

**Alan Lomax:** *Give it, Harry, give it good and proper, so we can get it on the machine.*

**Harry Cox:** *Eh?*

**Peter Kennedy:** *The whole toast, how does it go, Harry?*

**Harry Cox:** *Eh?*

**Peter Kennedy:** *That one.*

**Harry Cox (recites):**

*Although the world's as round as a wheel,  
The sting of death we all must feel.  
Here's health to the living and peace to the dead,  
Let's hope no one in London 'll never want for bread!  
(How will that do?)*

**Peter Kennedy:** *It's London now, is it?*

**Harry Cox:** *London, now. You can put it where you like.*

## **NELSON'S MONUMENT**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Two famous art music composers thought the tune of this song worth noting. Percy Grainger had it in 1906 from George Wray of Brigg in Lincolnshire, and Ralph Vaughan Williams collected a version, without noting the words, from Daniel Wigg of Preston Candover in Hampshire in 1909. Harry Cox himself also felt that the tune and the words

“hung well together.”

*Old England long expected  
Every news to our fleet.  
It was commanded by Lord Nelson  
The French for to meet.*

*The news it came over,  
Through the country was spread,  
That the French were defeated,  
But Lord Nelson was dead.*

*Not only Lord Nelson,  
But thousands were slain,  
A-fighting the French  
On the watery main.*

*To protect their own country  
Of honour and wealth.  
But the French they would not yield,  
Until they yield unto death.*

*The merchants of Yarmouth,  
When they heard so,  
Said, “Come, brother sailor,  
To Church let us go,”*

*“And there we will build  
A most beautiful pile  
In remembrance of Nelson,  
The ruler of the Nile.”*

*“Your plans,” said Britannia,  
“Were excellent and good.  
A monument for Lord Nelson  
And a sword for Collingwood.”*

*“Let it be of good marble,  
And ’petuate his name,  
Letters in bright gold wrote,  
‘He died for Eng-e-land’s fame.’”*

*Our soldiers and sailors,  
As I have been told,*

*Keep themselves in readiness,  
Their rights for to hold.*

*Their rights to maintain,  
Their cause to export.  
If any'd invasion  
To save British port.*

*Our soldiers and sailors  
Many brave deeds have done,  
While fighting in foreign,  
Many battles have won.*

*If the Nile could but speak,  
Or did Trafalgar declare,  
All the world with Lord Nelson  
They would not compare.*

### **HIS FATHER (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

Asked how he knew so many songs, Harry would tell you that he was an underage drinker and was allowed to go to the pub along with his father, who was the main entertainer. Stuck up behind his father's special seat, hidden away in the recess of a single window opening, he eventually learned not only all the verses of his father's songs but also those of the other singers, as well as who would sing what on particular occasions.

**Harry Cox:** *I was his boy. When I was about that-there height, you might say, I used to go along of him. We had a boat on Barton Broad. I used to go along o' him on Barton Broad after fish — little old customer. I used to have a net. And you drop your net in, you know, and have a haul. You'd— you used to get in the fish like that — on Barton Broad. I have been on there scores of times along o' him. I used to go everywhere 'long of him. I used to go along of him — he used to play a fiddle up at nights up at The White Horse. I used to go along of him and sit on the window board, back of him — a little old boy, I was. He used to play there every Saturday night. He used to get a shilling for his time. They used to give him a shilling, and if he could gather another one, you see, he could gather another one, and that would kind of add a little more to it — to go round.*

**Alan Lomax:** *He got a shilling and all he could drink, I expect.*

**Harry Cox:** *Oh, yes, and he had a pint or two of beer. He used to love a pint or two of beer. He used to go there and draw the custom. Of course, if there was a music going there [a melodeon playing], that time of day, the people would stop there — in these pubs.*

### **23. BARTON BROAD BABBING BALLAD**

Recorded by Alan Lomax

The hinterland of the port of Yarmouth, where Harry lived, consists of a number of fresh-water lakes known as *broads*. Now the haunt of boating tourists, they were once full of fishes, and in Harry's youth, were overgrown with tall rushes or reeds, which were used for the herring baskets. Harry took great pride in cutting reeds, which he considered an important part of his farm work. The fishing sometimes involved what he called "a bit of legitimate poaching." A farmer might rent an area of land that included a broad with its reeds and fishes, and he could not easily prevent the farm laborers, who cut and maintained his reeds, from taking their share of the fishes. Eels, however, were considered public property and there was a great deal of local speculation as to the best method of catching them.

This is a good example of an entirely local song, made about a local person over a local incident. Here was a landowner who tried to exert an unjust authority over the local eel-catchers. Perhaps the song itself played a part in finally getting him convicted and fined and having to go to Norwich to sell his animals to pay the fine.

Babbing means catching eels, which is done "without hooks using a long pole with worms strung on with lengths of wire".

*It's of an old man in Barton did dwell,  
His nick-name was Snuffers,  
He's known very well.  
He hired a broad 'til he's fit to go mad,  
Don't like the poor fellows to go on to bab.*

**Refrain:**

*Right fal-the-ral-loo, fal-the-ral-lay,  
Fal-the-ral-loo, right looral-all-day.*

*About eight o'clock on the broad we did go,  
Our babs and our boats, you very well know.  
Old Snuffers came on and he looked rather white,  
Said he, "My young fellows, I know you to-night." (Refrain)*

*He came with his a music, began for to play.  
He thought about frightening those eels all away,  
So he stamped all his eels, his pike, and his breams,  
We might know his owner as they swam in the stream. (Refrain)*

*Old Snuffers came onto the broad one night,  
We heard him long before he was in sight.  
He swore we had damaged his bows and nets,  
And he'd have us to gaol if he ran into debt. (Refrain)*

**Spoken:** *Now, there's another verse, isn't there. Now, I don't know if I'll try this one.*

*He had two men locked up for the night  
He thought he would put all the others to fright.  
The trial came on — he lost the day,  
And all the expenses he had for to pay. (Refrain)*

*Then off to Norwich Old Snuffers did go,  
To sell his old cow, you very well know,  
To sell his old cow, his duck, and his hen,  
And four of his capon, he will if he can. (Refrain)*

## **24. BABBING FOR EELS (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

**Alan Lomax:** *Tell the story of that, Harry.*

**Harry Cox:** *Well, that was all through the babbing. He hired a broad. He didn't like people to go on. They would go. They can't keep 'em off.*

**Alan Lomax:** *What was babbing?*

**Harry Cox:** *Babbing? Taking eels out of the water on a pole without hooks — worms — treated on wool*

**Alan Lomax:** *Mashing worms on wool?*

**Harry Cox:** *You string 'em on. You have a wire (demonstrating). You pick this here and run it right through 'em. Treat 'em all on a long string. And then you'd turn 'em round your fingers like that — make a bunch — tie a string on it. And then you'd drop 'em into the water and hang onto the teeth. You'd lift 'em over the boat and they'd lay before you drop 'em in. And you'd go again. Up they'd come. They'd drop off as soon as you lift 'em up — there's no hooks.*

## **25. INTERVIEW AND MELODEON PIECES**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

*Well, we had a decent home. We were all welcome there. We'd crawl in there. We were all happy, you know. And when we got a little older and I got a music [a button accordion]. And my brother and sisters grew up, we used to have many a 'evening singing and musics, you know. When they grew up a little, so he learned us different things. Then we used to have a go in. (He plays a Yarmouth hornpipe.) That's one they used to do, as a rule. As regards names of them, I never did know. Never did know the name of the tune at all. (He plays a Highland schottische.) And all sorts of little odd pieces — (Another hornpipe). This here's a Schottische. (Plain schottische) That's a tune they used to always use about here. That's a schottische, that was. There was a bloke — him and his wife used to do it. And they could do it — in the kitchen, you know. They done it well. They used to do it well. I used to like to see it.*

## 26. SINGING IN PUBLIC HOUSES (INTERVIEW)

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

*First pub I started to sing in was The Union Tavern at Smallborough. I was about eleven. I went on with father. They kidded me up to it. Well, they made a gathering. I sung two or three of my piece songs. I went round with the hat. I got a few pence — a copper or two. Didn't get a lot, you know. I got some, anyhow. So then I uh, I gradually worked into it. I mean, I grew older. And I used to go to these here pubs. They never would let me earn a rest: "Give us a song!" That's how I started. And they used to go to these pubs, and that's all they studied.*

*Well, now these young blokes come in here — they shove the wireless on that's singing all this-here squit. They like to hear that. Lot of all sorts of songs, you hear on — sometimes at nights.*

*Well, there weren't no wireless. None of it. You had to go — you used to go to a pub — and made your own music — and sung these old songs and everybody join in it.*

## 27. CHARMING AND DELIGHTFUL (SONG FRAGMENT)

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Harry wanted to be sure that we had recorded this one. He himself regarded it as a "must" for occasions when you want to get everybody to join in the chorus. He would repeat "The larks they sang melodious" three times, before finishing with "at the dawning of he day." Harry himself heard it as an *opener* — or, first song of the session — from Billy Miller of Catfield at E.J. Moeran's BBC recording session at The Windmill. Billy Miller called it "Happy and Delightful," and most pub singers nowadays call it "Pleasant and Delightful," as sung by Velvet Brightwell at The Eels Foot, two years later.

*It was charming and delightful on a bright summer's morn,  
When the fields and the meadows were all covered with corn,  
And the blackbirds and thrushes sang in every green tree,  
And the larks they sang melodious at the dawn of the day.*

**Spoken:** *You've heard that, haint you?*

**Verses not sung:** *A sailor and his true love were a-walking one day,  
Said the sailor to his true love, "I am going far away.  
I'm going to the East Indies, where the loud cannons roar.  
So it's farewell, dearest Nancy, you're the girl I do adore."*

*Three heavy sighs she gave me, saying, "Jimmy, my dear,  
How can you go and leave me in sorrow and despair?  
O are you going to leave me in sorrow to complain,  
Till you from the East Indies do return home again?"*

*Then the ring from her finger she instantly drew,  
Saying, "Take this, dearest Jimmy, and my heart will go, too."  
And as she embraced him, tears from her eyes did flow,  
"May the heavens go along with you, wherever you may go."*

*"So it's farewell, dearest Nancy I no longer can stay,  
For the topmast is hoisted and the anchor is weighed.  
The good ship lies waiting for the next flowing tide,  
And if ever I return again, I will make you my bride."*

*As Jimmy was a-sailing at his own heart's content,  
His ship sprang a leak and to the bottom she went.  
He left dearest Nancy in sorrow to complain  
For the loss of her Jimmy, who died on the Main.*

## **28. THE OLD SONGS (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

**Harry Cox:** *I heard 'em singing the songs and all such things like that, right from little,  
Though of course I wasn't old enough to pick them up.*

**Alan Lomax:** *You love those old songs?*

**Harry Cox:** *I did! I like to hear 'em. I took delight in hearing — I'd go anywhere to  
hear anything of that. If there's anybody singing old songs or whatever, I'd sit there a  
week. My ears were opened.*

## **29. ON YON LOFTY MOUNTAIN (SONG FRAGMENT)**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Harry was able to remember almost as many fragments of songs as complete ballads, and was always interested to try and find the rest of the words of what he called his "bits and pieces." He particularly liked this one verse — with its appealing image of rich diamonds glittering across the sea to guide lowly sailors to their destination. So far, we have been unable to trace the song from which it might have been a verse and would be glad to have any suggestions as to its possible origin.

*On yon lofty mountain a castle do stand.  
It's built up with ivy and diamonds so grand.  
It's built up with ivy and diamonds so bright,  
It's a pilot for the sailors on a dark stormy night.*

## **30. LEARNING FROM HIS FATHER (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

**Alan Lomax:** *Sounds like a mighty nice boyhood you had, Harry?*

**Harry Cox:** *Oh, I had a good time, yes. I never took no harm, I tell you. I used to be  
about 'long of my father. He put me into all these here jobs. I used to go with him when  
he was a-mowing. "Come on," he used to say, "try yourself." Well, I mean, I wasn't very*



*old. I used to have a go — fairly, and then I got — still kept it going, trying as I got older, and then I did get kind of fairly tidy. 'Cause I could go and do that. I could go and mow a piece anything as good as the next, come to that. "Nothing to be afraid of," he drilled into me. And I — everything he told me, I tried to follow — in every way. I always done so all my life: if anybody have told me anything for my benefit, as I was thinking, I studied that. I didn't kick against it. I was always out to try and learn. You tell anybody anything, and they won't listen to you. Look, they go a mile round it to do this here. Well, you can go and do it in a half the time. That's how some people are. You've got a job — you show them the proper way — they go and do something quite the opposite. I mean, you can go and do it, time they're looking at it! Well, I'd studied all them sort of things — the best way out of anything. I always followed that.*

### **31. HIS MOTHER (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

**Harry Cox:** *Now my mother, she belonged to the Church. And she used to follow that all her young time. And then she had her hands full, she hadn't much of a chance to go anywhere — seeing after us lot — when we used to go home at meals. I know now, she didn't have time to sit down — waiting on us lot — pouring tea out — cutting the bread. O dear, I never see such a job like it, time was done. Well, she never had time to sit down, hardly.*

**Alan Lomax:** *Was she — was she a sweet woman, a kindly, sweet woman, and happy?*

**Harry Cox:** *Oh, yes, she was happy. She used to — she could sing one time, fairly. Yes, she's never made herself uneasy about anything. She used to take it all in a good way. She got through, anyhow. She lived till she was ninety-four. She'd had a hard life.*

### **32. THE TURKISH LADY**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

*Young virgins all I pray draw near,  
A pretty story you shall hear:  
'Tis of a Turkish lady brave  
Who fell in love with an English slave.*

This might be a short version of the exceptionally long ballad “Lord Bateman” (Child No. 53). In fact, in his discussion of “Lord Bateman,” Professor Child refers to this very song. We believe it may have originated from a broadside printer, because of the widespread distribution of the ballad. It seems to be have been particularly popular in Nova Scotia, as well as in Scotland and England, and we also heard it from Mary Swain, one of the islanders of Tristan de Cunha who were evacuated to England in 1962.

*There was a ship from London came,  
As she was sailing on the main.  
They were taken by a Tur-key,  
And they were made there slaves to be,*

*And they were made there slaves to be.*

*They bound us down in irons strong,  
They whipped, they lashed us all day long.  
No tongue can tell, that I am sure,  
What we poor slaves had to endure,  
What we poor slaves had to endure.*

*“I pray what countryman are you?”  
“I am an Englishman, ’tis true.”  
“And if that you had been a Turk,  
I would ease you of your slavery work.”*

**Spoken:** *You see, she [the Turkish daughter-woman] got him away. She asked him what he would, you see. And she wanted him to turn a Turk. And he said (recites): “Before I would, I’d die at stake, / Before I would, my own God’s sake.” Then they took off — they got away. (Recites) “To whips and chains they bid adieu.” And the finish line is: “And this will tell what love can do.”*

### **33. POACHING (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

**Harry Cox:** *My father — he’d had a rough life, that far. I mean, he had done a little roughing about. He was a poaching man, too — he used to like that game. He used to like to go after the old hares — gunning. He used to go and lay his old hares in Barton Church porch, when he used to go that way. He’d shot many a hare in Barton Churchyard. And then he used to — if he got more than he could carry — I think he used to tell me, course I didn’t know — he used to lay them in there till he come back. He’d got three or four old hares. He’d take them in the porch. Nobody durst go in after him and look. I believe there wasn’t one out of twenty durst go in the churchyard of a night — dead of night. They’re afraid. He went and laid them in there. They would be all right till he come back. He have shot plenty in the yard, he reckoned. I don’t think he was afraid of anything. I never knew nothing to frighten him. He’d go anywhere — wouldn’t nothing frightened him.*

**Alan Lomax:** *Wasn’t it considerably risky, that poaching, Harry? I mean, couldn’t he get sent to prison, if he got caught?*

**Harry Cox:** *Uh, well, course they had these gate nets, and dogs and guns. Well, that was all the go. There was plenty there like him. I mean, that was a real do then — an old hare was worth half a crown, and that’s what they were studying on! (Laughs)*

### **34. HENRY THE POACHER**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Songs about poaching — taking game or fish illegally, or, at least, without getting caught

— are still popular in England. In Harry's grandfather's day, local people still believed that they could be transported to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) for poaching, and this was in fact the law in the early nineteenth century. An Act passed in 1828 stated that if three men were found in a wood, with one of them armed, they were liable to be transported for 14 years; and in 1829 there were two important trials of poachers in Warwickshire. These incidents resulted in almost identical ballads from most of the well-known printers, including Birt, Catnach, Fortey, Such and Pitts of London, Clift of Cirencester, Jackson and Pratt of Birmingham, and Williams of Portsea. The main variations occur in the names of the places: some have Henry brought up in Warwickshire and imprisoned in Lancaster; and in some the servant girl Rosanna comes from Wolverhampton; others omit the name of the squire in whose park they were caught. Roy Palmer goes into some detail about the ballad and suggests that it was probably a follow-up to the very successful number, "Van Dieman's Land," popularized in Moncrieff's musical drama performed at the Surrey Theatre in 1830.

*So come all you wild and wicked youths, wheresomever you may be;  
I pray now pay attention and listen unto me.  
The fate of our poor transports, as you shall understand,  
The hardships they do undergo upon Van Dieman's Land*

*My parents reared me tenderly, good learning give to me,  
Till I by bad companions beguiled my home from me.  
I was brought up at Worcestershire, near to the town did dwell.  
My name is Henry Herbert, and many knows me well.*

*Me and three more went out one night to Squire Daniel's Park;  
To get some game was our intent, as the night came proving dark.  
And to our sad misfortune, they took us there by speed,  
And sent us off to Warwick Gaol, which made our hearts to bleed.*

*'Twas at the March Assizes, at the bar we did appear;  
Like Job we stood with patience to hear our sentence there.  
And being some old offenders, it made our case go hard.  
Our sentence were for fourteen year, and we were sent on board.*

*The ship that bore us from the land, the Speedwell was her name,  
And full four months and upwards, we ploughed the raging main.  
No land, nor harbour could we see, and believe it is no lie,  
For around us one black water, and above us one blue sky.*

*I oft-times looked behind me towards my native shore  
And the cottage of contentment that I shall see no more,  
Likewise my ag-ed father, who tore his hoary hair,  
Also my tender mother, whose arms did once me bear.*

*'Twas on the fourth of July, the day we made the land,  
At four o'clock we went on shore, all chain-ed hand-in-hand.  
And to see our fellow sufferers, as I feel I can't tell how,  
Some chained unto a harrow and some unto a plough.*

*So we were marched into the town, without no more delay,  
And there a gentleman took me, bookkeeper for to be.  
I took my occupation, my master likes me well,  
My joys are out of measure, I am sure no one can tell.*

*He kept a female servant — Rosanna was her name;  
For fourteen year a convict, from Worcestershire she came.  
And we oft-times tell our love tales, when we were far at home,  
And now we are rattling of our chains, in foreign lands to roam.*

### **35. WINDY OLD WEATHER**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

This song appeared on some broadsides as “The Fishes’ Lamentation” and seems to have survived as a sailor’s chantey or fisherman’s song. Whall (1910), Colcord (1938) and Hugill (1961) include it in their chantey books. We also recorded it from Bob Roberts on board his Thames barge *The Cambria*. It also appears in the Newfoundland and Nova Scotia collections of Ken Peacock and Helen Creighton.

[Omitted: *As we were a-fishin' off Happisburgh Light  
Shootin' an' haulin' an' trawlin' all night*] [Haisboro]

*Up jumped the herring, the queen of the sea,  
She sang out, “Old skipper, o, you can't catch me —  
In this windy old weather, stormy old weather,  
When the wind blow, well all pull together!”*

*Up jumped the mackerel with spots on his back,  
He sang, “Old skipper, you're on your own track —  
In this windy old weather, stormy old weather,  
When the wind blow, well all pull together!”*

*Up jumped the sprat, the smallest of all,  
He sang out, “Old skipper, come haul your trawl haul.” (Chorus)*

*Up jumped the crab with his great long claws,  
He sang out, “Old skipper — you'll run her ashore.” (Chorus)*

*Up jumped the rooker, his back hard and tough,  
He sang out, "Old steward, you will burn the duff." (Chorus)*

*Up jumped the mackerel, with spots on his back,  
He sang out, "Old skipper, come square your main tack." (Chorus)*

**Harry Cox:** *That's all I know of that.*

**Alan Lomax:** *Oh, God! That's one of the nicest songs I've heard in England, Peter!.*

**Further verses (not sung):**

*Up jumped the whale, the largest of all,  
He heaved on the windlass pawl after pawl.*

*Up jumped the shark, with his two rows of teeth,  
Cook, mind the cabbage, and I'll mind the beef.*

### **36. HIS FATHER AT SEA (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

*Weather blowing about there. They were blowing about — perhaps a week — to get anywhere with sails. Sometimes blowing away a fortnight — blowing right away there [to] Holland. And then they had to get back to Yarmouth. He went as a boy — no, he wasn't a boy. When he was a young man, he went. And they never come into Yarmouth harbour. Not till the Christmas time, when he first went. There was no running away — he had to stop there. He used to take the fish out to ferry them into harbour. She lay outside. And off they'd go again. He never came home. That's how it was then — and that was the life. I've heard him say, he'd been standing — when he used to be a-steering an' all — and ears full of salt — water all open on the — just nowhere to get — you know, he had to take it. Bob down — poof! Ton o' water over the top of him — smothered head to foot! That was the life then.*

### **37. SWEET WILLIAM**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

This is the most popular of all the many songs about the loss of a "blue jacket" sailor at sea, and is still widely sung in England, Scotland, and Ireland as well as in Canada and the States. In Britain, it attracted the attention of art composers Broadwood, Gardiner, Grainger, Kidson, Merrick, Moeran, and Vaughan Williams, who all made folk-song settings of their collected versions.

Harry was of the opinion that men were frequently lost at sea due to thoughtless orders given to the men by their officers.

*"O father, father, build me a boat,  
That I may on the ocean float,*

*And every big ship I do pass by,  
I will inquire for my sailor boy."*

*Now she had sail-ed two days or more,  
Before she spied a large man-o-war,  
Saying, "Captain, captain, pray tell me true,  
Is my Sweet William on board of you?"*

*"What kind of clothes does your William wear?"  
"His blue serge suit and his curly hair,  
His blue serge suit and his buckle shoes,  
They are the clothes my sweet William used."*

*"O no, fair lady, he is not here,  
For he is drown-ded, great is our fear.  
For it was the other night when the wind blew high,  
We lost seven hands and your sailor boy."*

*She then sat down and she wrote a song.  
She wrote it wide and she wrote it long,  
At the end of every line she shed a tear,  
For the loss of her Sweet William dear."*

**Spoken:** *Well, that some people get that pair now that go (sings):*

*She wrang her hands and she tore her hair,  
Like some mad woman in great despair.  
She threw her body into the deep, saying,  
"This is where my Sweet William sleep."*

**Spoken:** *Have you heard that afore? Some people put — I don't like that (recites):*

*Come all you men who dress in blue,  
And all you officers, same thing do,  
Hoist your flags and banners high,  
For the loss of me and my sailor boy.*

**Spoken:** *I don't like to hear that one in there*

### **38. HOW HIS FATHER LEARNED SONGS (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

*When he went to sea, he dropped in with different people about there — and other places beside. He didn't go particular after them. If he heard a song what he liked, he got them*

*to learn him it. He give them a couple of shillings to keep reading that over to 'im, or sing it over to 'im. Then he'd pick it up. And that's how he learnt.*

### **39. THE YARMOUTH FISHERMEN'S SONG**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy

This is a unique song about life on board a Yarmouth drifter. Harry composed a number of songs himself, but this one, composed by one of his father's shipmates, was learned from his father. Harry couldn't remember all the verses, however, and completed the song "to the best of his ability."

*On the fourteenth of November from Yarmouth we set sail,  
The wind being east-north-east, my boys, with a sweet and a pleasant gale,  
Until it did blow hard, and the sea rolled mountains high,  
And at night when we did shoot, my boys, how dismal looked the sky.*

*The morning when we haul-ed, our anchor we let go.  
There's very few of fish, my boys, but sorrows you do know.  
There's very few can tell what poor fishermen undergo,  
All those who're on the salt seas, when the stormy wyndes do blow.*

*We bent our other anchor, and by it we did ride,  
Full four hours and more, boys, strongly tied,  
Until my watch on deck, when they did so loudly call,  
"Here's a ship come down upon us," so, master, they did call.*

*To think she did go clear of us, we all were very glad.  
You must think and recollect, my boys, our case is very hard,  
To think she did go clear of us, how glad were all our lot,  
For she came so very close to us, our cable for to cut.*

*At least it was not all, for our ropes on fire did get.  
We did not lose for the wants of them, we did not lose for wit.  
But into harbour leave her, and on the slips did go.  
And the next day put to sea again, hurroar, hurroar, my boys.*

*So now our voyage is ended, and all things they are done.  
Here's health unto our owner, here's health unto his son,  
Here's health unto the people that stood the voyage through,  
And here's health unto our master, our boy, and all the crew.*

**Alan Lomax:** *Oh, that's smashing, Harry.*

### **40. THE CROCODILE**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

We included this among other diversionary songs in *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* (where we quoted a version from Northern Ireland in which the river Nile inhabitant was known as “the royal crocodile”) as well as a verse from a similar ballad (from seventeenth-century collection, *The Pepysian Garland* of diarist Samuel Pepys) about a “miraculous fish” cast up on the sands in the meads of the Wirral coast in Cheshire: “His lower jaw-bone’s five yards long, / The upper thrice so much. / Twelve yoke of oxen stout and strong, / The weight of it is such.”

Meredith and Anderson include “The Wonderful Crocodile” in their *Folksongs of Australia* (1967); and in Flanders and Brown’s *Vermont Folksongs and Ballads* (1932) it turns up as “The Rummy Crocodile.”

*So come all you landsmen, listen to me,  
To tell you the truth I’m bound.  
What happened to me by going to sea,  
And the wonders I have found.*

*Shipwrecked I was experienced,  
Cast up upon the shore,  
Where I resolved to take a trip,  
The country to explore.*

**Chorus:**

*With a whack fol the looral looral day,  
With a whack fol the looral day,  
Whack fol the looral looral looral,  
Whack fol the looral day.*

**Omitted:**

*[’Twas far I had not scouted out,  
When close alongside the ocean,  
I saw something move which at first I thought  
Was all the world in motion.*

*But steering up close alongside I found  
It were a crocodile.  
From the end of his nose to the tip of his tail  
It reached ten thousand mile.*

*’Twas a crocodile I plainly could see  
’Twas not of a common race.  
For I was obliged to climb a high tree  
Afore I could see his face.*

*And when he lifted up his jaw,  
Though perhaps you may think ’tis a lie,*



*He reached the clouds for miles three score,  
And very near touched the sky.*

*While up aloft the wind was high,  
It blew a gale from the south.  
I lost my hold and away I flew,  
Right into the crocodile's mouth.*

*He quickly snapped his jaws on me,  
He thought he'd gained a victim,  
But I popped down his throat, my boys,  
And that was how I tricked him.*

*I travelled on for a week or two,  
Until I came into his maw,  
And there I found rump-steak not a few,  
And fifty bullocks in store.*

*Of life I banished all my care,  
For of grub I was not stinted,  
I lived in there for a hundred year,  
And very well contented.]*

*The old crocodile was getting old  
At length one day he died.  
He was ten year a-getting' cold,  
He was so long and wide.*

### **Chorus:**

*His skin was ten miles thick, I'll swear,  
Or somewhere there about.  
For I was just a hundred year,  
A-cuttin' old toegate out.*

*O now I've sung my little song,  
You may think it's a bit of a lie.  
From the end of his nose to the tip of his tail,  
It reached ten thousand mile.*

### **41. THE SOLDIER'S AND SAILOR'S PRAYER**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

In *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, we quoted in full verses from "The Mare and the Foal" collected by E. J. Moeran from George Hill, near Stowmarket, in Suffolk. Harry's "The Soldier's and the Sailor's Prayer" seems to be a variant of it. Like "The Rigs of the Time" and "The Hard Times of Old England," it accuses the various tradesmen of overcharging: "We'll pray for the millers, who grind us our corn, / For they are the biggest rogues that ever were born. / Instead of one sackful, they'll take two for toll. /

May the devil take the millers,' 'Amen,' said the foal."

I remember that while his wife was still alive, Harry was sensitive about singing songs such as this in the living room of his house at Catfield. The only recordings we could make of him at Catfield had to be made in his woodshed where he kept his gardening tools. There he felt at home and could launch into this kind of song. Although it may have grown out of a protest lampoon, Harry regarded this one as a good drinking number, inviting a response from his pub listeners who used to bang down their tankards on the table after each prayer.

*A soldier and a sailor were a-walking one day  
[Said the soldier to the sailor, "I've a mind for to pray."]  
They walked till they came to an old hollow tree,  
Said the soldier to the sailor, "Let this our pulpit be."*

*"Now the first thing we pray for will be some good beer."  
Said the sailor to the soldier, "I wish it was here.  
For where we get one pint, I'm sure you get ten,"  
Said the sailor to the soldier. Cried the soldier, "Amen!"*

*"Now the next thing we pray for will be our gracious queen,  
May she live as happy, and long may she reign,  
And where she get one man, I hope she will have ten.  
May she never wants for bounty." Cried the soldier, "Amen!"*

*"Now the next thing we'll pray for will be a good wife,  
And may we live as happy all the days of our life.  
And if she be a bad one — kick her out and out again,  
May the devil double-treble-tremble her!" Cried the soldier, "Amen!" (Laughs)*

#### **42. LONDON IS AS SHARP AS THE EDGE OF A KNIFE (SONG FRAGMENT)**

Recorded by Alan Lomax

*Some cried old hartichokes, some cried old clothes,  
Some with a snuffbox just fit for your nose.  
If you heard 'em, you'd thought they were calling the cows.  
They made such havoc in London!*

*London is as sharp as the edge of a knife,  
The city is filled with fraction and strife.  
There's none so sweet as a counterie life.  
All you that want wit, go to London. (Laughs)*

**Alan Lomax:** *That's like "Up With the Rigs, and Down With the Jigs!"*

**Harry Cox:** *Yes. Oh, that was a song you see. That all came in — the first start of it, when he went to London. He went off to London. He'd got neither shoe nor no stocking hanging on his legs, and away he went, trudging to London. This all happened when he was there, you see. That's what he found when he got there.*

### **43. UP TO THE RIGS OF LONDON TOWN**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

When Harry came up to London in 1956 to take part in the Ballad Hunter TV program in London, it was only his second visit to the capital, and he was certain that everyone there would try to trick him out of his money or pick his pockets. On that occasion, he met another great country singer, Charlie Wills, a shepherd from Golden Cap in Dorset, who was himself on his second visit to London. At first they eyed each other like rivals in a beauty contest, but when they discovered that they both sang almost identical versions of this song, they became bosom pals. Both got maximum enjoyment from a ballad in which a visitor to London gets the better of the local ladies and ends up advising others to take good care, particularly when in Cheapside.

*As I walked London streets so gay,  
In Cheapside I lost my way.  
And a fair young maid I chanced to meet,  
With kisses, o, she did me treat.*

**Refrain:** *I was up to the rigs, down to the jigs,  
Up to the rigs of London town.*

*She took me to a house of fame,  
She asked me there what was my name.  
And aloud for supper she did call,  
She said, "Old man, you will pay for all." (Refrain)*

*Now supper being over, the table cleared,  
She called me her jewel, then her dear.  
The chambermaids prepared for bed,  
The waiters brought in white and red. (Refrain)*

*Now it was the hour 'twixt one and two,  
She asked me if to bed I'd go.  
And so very soon I gave consent,  
And straightway to my bed I went. (Refrain)*

*Now she thought by me she'd work her will,  
'Times she frisk-ed, I laid still.  
And as soon as she had gone to sleep,  
Out of bed I gently creep. (Refrain)*

*I searched her pockets, and there I found,  
A silver ring and five hundred pounds.  
I thought the gold looked very nice,  
Said I to myself, "This'll buy a brush." (Refrain)*

*Now you sharps and flats, wheresomever you be,  
Mind you take advice by me.  
And treat them well whate'er betide,  
But look out and keep well in Cheapside. (Refrain)  
Spoken: That's "London Town."*

#### **44. HIS MEMORY AND SONG PREFERENCES (INTERVIEW)**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy.

*Up to the present, I ain't forgot anything yet — that I know. I got a good memory, fairly. Oh, I don't forget. I mean, I ain't lost nothing. I don't forget much. Some people forget things, you know. I don't now. I don't forget them. I have been mixed up sometimes. Just for one line and go out — and you go out of doors — that'll all come to you. You can't. And nobody can tell you. If anybody know a song, you tell 'em, "That ain't right." You won't have it. That don't fare right that way, you know.*

*I was along with my father. He used to sing these old songs. I took delight in it. I liked them. I do now. I like an old song. I'd go anywhere, by and by, to go and sing an old song. But I didn't know if they could find one. I wouldn't listen to a song what they make today. I'd never pick up one to learn 'cause there ain't one worth it. Not to my knowledge. They're out of my line. I like the olden times and old fancies and ways, and that's what I'm going to keep in. And they can do what they like. And they ain't got — they can't sing a song. Not one that's sense in it, Not like I can.*

*Did you ever hear? You never did hear the — "Betsy the Servant Maid"? That's a long song. Would you like me to sing that? That's a good song. This is a long song. All right then, you'll hear this, then.*

#### **45. BLACKBERRY FOLD**

Recorded by Peter Kennedy and Alan Lomax.

Harry took pride in this song, which his grandfather had sung, and which had been in his family for more than 200 years. He enjoyed the story the milkmaid, "from the side of a cow," concealing a dagger in her bosom, and ending up marrying the landlord who had tried to take advantage of her. It's the old, old story.

He liked long songs: and this was his favorite among all his favorite long songs. In the absence of radio, TV, and newspapers — sitting round the fire, probably without even

candles or an oil lamp — it provided an educational and entertaining drama that listeners could see in their own imagination. This is a song that has only been noted in England, about a very English way of life. Its important ingredient is the element of class, of which Harry was acutely aware, and which, although people today like to claim it to be disappearing, still seems to cling on in England as the cultural ingredient of an English lifestyle.

On another occasion, Harry remarked about this song:

*I've known things to happen like that in my time. Well — thinks she weren't good enough for 'em. Cleared her out. Life — that's almost like in the Slave Time — that was here with us, too! That'd been in my family over two hundred year ago. My old grandfather sung that. Well, she went to this here squire's place, and they didn't want her there. The old lady see she was getting too thick 'long with her son, you see, and that didn't suit her. She want out on it. If she had a-been well off, she would have said nothing — it was money what they used to do then. That's what they look at. You weren't no good 'long nobody with money. They thought they wouldn't look at such as us. Yes, I know people been sent off to America, rather than — when they'd have been a-getting too thick and altogether, and they thought she hadn't been good enough for them. Working — like getting away and been no work. Glad to get them away from them. Things like that — and if they'd let 'em alone, they'd 'ave been better off.*

*It's of a young squire in Bristol did dwell,  
And ladies of honour; they lov-ed him well.  
But it was in vain, in vain, it was said,  
That he was in love with the bonny milkmaid.*

*The squire and his sisters all sat in the hall;  
And as they sat talking, they heard someone call.  
As they were singing that sweet morning song,  
Pretty Betsy, the milkmaid, came tripping along.*

*“Do you want any milk, sir?” pretty Betsy did say.  
“O yes,” said the squire, “Step in, pretty maid.  
It is your fine body, I much so adore.  
Such a love as I never endured before.”*

*“O no, sir,” said Betsy, “How can you say so?  
In love with the milkmaid, and in such poor clothes?  
For there are fine bodies well built up for you,  
Not wed a poor milkmaid from the side of a cow.”*

*Then a ring from his finger, he then instantly drew,  
And right in the middle, he broke it quite through.*

*One part he gave to her, as I have been told,  
And they both walked together down Blackberry Fold.*

*As they were a-walking, this old squire did say,  
“There is one thing I warn you, my pretty maid,  
If ever I force you, in this open field,  
The first time I force you, I will cause you to yield!”*

*“O, no, sir,” said Betsy, “pray let me go free.  
I will have you not play such games upon me.  
I love my sweet virtue, as I love my dear life.”  
And out of her bosom drew a long dagger knife.*

*Then out of her bosom this dagger she drew,  
And into his body, she pierced it quite through.  
Then home to her master with tears in her eyes,  
“That I wounded the squire — I’m afraid he will die!”*

*A carriage was fetched, and the squire sent home.  
A doctor was sent for to heal up his wounds.  
His wounds being dressed, and in bed he did lay,  
“O Betsy, o Betsy!” ’Twas all he did say.*

*Now Betsy was sent for, and shivering went on.  
“I’m sorry,” said Betsy, “for what I have done.”  
“The wounds that you gave me was all my own fault,  
So don’t let such things still remain in your thought.”*

*Now a parson was sent for, this couple to wed;  
So happy they joined in those sweet marriage bands.  
It’s best to prove virgin, be you ever so poor,  
And make you a lady ten thousand times o’er.*

**Alan Lomax:** *Well, I’ll be damned!*

**Harry Cox: (Laughs)**

**Alan Lomax:** *They don’t get any better than that!*

#### **46. ADIEU TO OLD ENG-E-LAND, HERE’S ADIEU**

Recorded by Alan Lomax.

Once again, a song only sung in England. We only heard it from two other singers, the Dartmoor singer, Harry Westaway, of Belstone, Devon, and the Dorset Gypsy, Carolyne Hughes. A Catnach broadside has the alternative title, “The Transport’s Farewell.” It is about the loss of money and freedom, no more good drink, no more good food, no more

comfort in bed, and no more riding to the races.

*Once I could lay in that bed,  
A bed of the very best down,  
But now I am glad of a bunch of wheatstraw  
To keep my poor bones from the ground.*

**Chorus:**

*So adieu to Old Eng-e-land, here's adieu,  
Here's adieu to five thousands of pounds.  
If the world had been banished before I was born,  
My troubles I should not have known.*

*So once I could drink of that beer,  
The very best beer of the glass,  
But now I am glad of cold water  
To quench my poor lips from the thirst. (Chorus)*

**Other verses not on record:**

*Once I could eat the best bread,  
That was made of the very best wheat.  
Now I'm glad of a mouldy old crust,  
I'm glad to get something to eat.*

*Once I could ride in my coach,  
With horses to draw me along.  
But now I'm bound strong irons,  
In chains so heavy and strong.*