

Comic Songs, Music Hall Songs & Parodies - Sung by traditional singers from Suffolk

Most traditional singers have a mixture of songs, but there are few who don't have a comic song in their repertoire, particularly as these are often the songs which gain the best audience response. Here you will find a saucy account of a village policeman's observations, a disastrous attempt at theft from a church and the hazards encountered during a day's work; in fact, all life is here! They are not side-splitting pieces, but are guaranteed to raise a smile. Alongside them are parodies of popular songs, which have often captured the imagination of traditional singers.

All the recordings on this CD were originally released on two cassettes (VT101 & VT106). Items from the original recordings not found here are *'Enoch Brown'* and *'The Wireless Song'* which can be found on VTC1CD *'Stepping it Out'*. *'The Farmer's Boy'*, *'Every Morning'*, *'Sweet Violets'*, *'Down in the fields where the buttercups all grow'* and *'When there isn't a girl about'* can be found on other Veteran CD compilations.



INTRODUCTION

Without a doubt East Anglia has been one of the most fruitful hunting grounds for folk-song collectors. At the beginning of the last century Ralph Vaughan Williams worked extensively in Essex and made sorties to Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. He found a wide variety of songs as did E.J. Moeran in Norfolk and Suffolk some twenty years later. One of their aims in noting down the songs and in particular the tunes, was to enable them to use the airs as part of their own orchestral compositions.

In Suffolk, most of the research took place in East Suffolk, particularly centred on two village pubs: Eastbridge Eel's Foot and Blaxhall Ship. BBC radio broadcasts were made from the Eel's Foot in 1939 and 1947 (these recordings are now available on VT140CD) and a framed copy of a 1940 'Picture Post magazine' showing the singers standing around a large table in half light can still be seen in the pub today. Alan Lomax and Peter Kennedy recorded in Blaxhall Ship and a fascinating film, 'The Barley Mow' was made there in 1955, which gives a real insight into a traditional bar-room singing session.

More recently two academic studies were also based on the same pub. Ginette Dunn's was published by Croom Helm in 1980 ('The Fellowship of Song' - Popular Singing Traditions in East Suffolk) while Carol Pegg's 'An Ethnomusicological Approach to Traditional Music in East Suffolk' is included in a collection of extended articles called, 'Singer, Song and Scholar', published by Sheffield Academic Press in 1986. But the most extensive and influential survey of the musical traditions of East Suffolk in recent times was undertaken by Keith Summers, and it was probably the publication of his research in 1978 ('Sing, Say or Pay' Traditional Music Nos. 8 & 9, now available on the 'Musical Traditions' website) which, more than anything else put me on the collecting trail.

When I moved to Suffolk in 1978 we actually settled quite a long way from the famed East Suffolk and I began to wonder whether the centre of the county could have, or have had in the past, a similar musical tradition. My six-year search around the lanes and villages of Mid-Suffolk proved more fruitful than I could have hoped for, and the results of my research were published in 1985 as 'Many a Good Horseman' (Musical Traditions & Veteran). Not only did I find lots of melodeon, accordion and mouthorgan players, I also met some excellent singers, some with rarely-recorded songs. My interest was fired: I wanted to collect as many songs as I could and decided to extend my brief to the whole of the county.

The title of this CD was purposely chosen, as although these are all 'Songs Sung in Suffolk' it cannot be said that they are exclusively Suffolk songs. What can be said however is, whatever they sing, all these singers are true traditional Suffolk singers, and I would like to thank all of them for sharing their songs with me so freely. My only regret is the total lack of female singers: because I never met any, not because I have excluded them. The possible reason for this is that my research was based around pub singers. Women certainly were song carriers but they tended to sing at home, which makes finding them somewhat more difficult.

All the singers included here sing /sang a wide variety of songs, and that is important: early collectors often had a very narrow vision. They knew what they wanted, and what they wanted was what they called folk-songs. I have heard tell of collectors who would stop noting down a song or even switch off their recorders if they were presented with a comic song. What is ironic about this attitude is that many songs that were declared folk-songs had been written by 19th century ballad sellers, had come from the music hall or even from a 20th century 78rpm record.

I never met a singer who sang exclusively folk songs, yet I have heard several who only had a couple of comic songs. Those singers who have lots of songs have a balanced repertoire as their aim is to please every audience.

Over the centuries various collectors have been convinced they were making the final song-collecting sweep and that traditional singing was dying out. Lucy Broadwood said in the preface to her 'English County Songs' (1892) "In all parts of the country, the difficulty of getting the old-fashioned songs out of the people is steadily on the increase, and those who would undertake the task of collecting them - and a most engaging pursuit it is - should lose no time in setting to work". In recent years the context for singing, and outside influences on the singers' repertoires have created much change. We are also now unlikely to find more than one singer in an area, but although the spontaneous Saturday evening get-together in the village pub with all the entertainment provided by members of that community has disappeared, the telephone still enables singers scattered across the county to meet together in a pub, and there are still pubs where the landlord knows how to unplug the juke box! Traditional singing still goes on in Suffolk, totally independent of the folk song revival, and I hope that those of us who have an interest in the 'proper stuff' have encouraged its continuation. Maybe in some small way this CD will help to ensure that these songs will continue to be sung.



TED CHAPLIN b.1914



Ted was born in Eye but then made his home in various parts of the county. After living in Cranley Green he spent thirty years in the Henley and Barsham area, where he worked as a horseman and then as a farm manager. His next move was to Bacton, where he operated a coal business for twenty years, followed by a couple of years in Mendlesham and four in Wingfield. He finally settled in Mellis, although he didn't stop working as he spent a lot of his time at Tony Harvey's stables. From there he drove parties of visitors around the lanes in a horse-drawn carriage to sample a couple of hostelrys and then back to Tannington for a meal.

Ted sang a lot in his younger days, as he told me, " Well we used to get down to old Redlingfield Crown; what else was there to do? There was an old boy there used to come and play the accordeon: Wallie Harpie. He weren't an expert at it but he'd play a tune or two, but one night his boss came in and we said, 'Come on Wallie, strike up!' but he wouldn't play in front of him so that's when we started singing a song or two. The first song I ever sung in there was 'Nellie Dean', and I haven't sung it since. Then I moved over to Henley and got in with a chap there, worked at Cobbold's brewery, and I used to go about with him, down in Ipswich and about. Then village pubs we'd go sing a song in, like Coddendam Duke, Coddendam Crown and I suppose Henley Cross Keys was the main pub where we were known. There used to be an old boy, Herbert Page used to get in there with a fiddle and he'd sit in a corner, and rasp away. Well he couldn't play and I'd encourage him and everyone there would curse me. 'Play up Herbert: that's beautiful!' I'd say. Now I was in Swilland Half Moon and two chaps came in and sang several funny songs and the next night I went into Coddendam Duke and I sang those songs!"

Ted's singing career then lapsed for thirty years, and I was fortunate enough to meet him just as he was starting again. That was in Brundish Crown: somebody said, 'Old Ted'll give you a song!' Up he got and gave us. 'The fellow that played the trombone' and he never looked back.

CYRIL BARBER b.1922



Cyril comes from a large family and his three brothers Sonny, Rip and Royal all played, danced and sang. The eldest brother, Sonny, was first to have an accordeon. As Cyril said, "When he was out of the way we'd all steal a tune on his music." Many of Cyril's songs he grew up with, as both his mother and father sang.

The family home was Wingfield and it was around that area he first started to sing, play and stepdance. He told me, "Yes there was a lot of singing in the pubs around Wingfield. There was one old man who lived to be a hundred and he used to sing about 'shot and shell flying across the battle field' from the 1914 war. The folk used to sit there and tears came into their eyes."

He would often keep company with the Whiting family, "Old Charlie Whiting, he could dance and sing a song!" and favourite pubs in those days would have been the Hoxne Swan and the Ivy House at Stradbroke.

Cyril worked mainly on the land and he moved around quite a lot to find farm work, including a period in Cambridgeshire. In the sixties he moved to Felsham and worked for the council before retirement. In these later years he had almost stopped playing and singing: "Nobody wanted to hear those old songs any more" he told me. I'm pleased to say that many people are still interested in the old music and Cyril is always pleased to oblige with a tune, a step or a song.

CHARLIE HANCY b.1899



During a discussion about old singers in an Oulton Broad pub I was told that I should pay a visit to Charlie Hancy in Broad Street, Bungay as he would sing me some songs, and he certainly did. In fact within minutes of me entering his home he was singing to me with that wonderful rich voice and immaculate pacing. Apart from singing me some interesting and unusual songs he also told me much about his life:

"I never did live anywhere else than Bungay. I was born in Bungay in the next street from here in 1899. Well the town's changed, like when I was going to school there was only about two bicycles, old penny farthings. Then motorbikes came along. I knew the first motor car in Bungay, old Doctor Ransome had it.

"My people were in the hay trade, they did nothing else only in that trade. Well we supplied Norwich, Lowestoft, Yarmouth or Southwold. Where ever we needed to go to. I've been to the barracks in Norwich and all the brewers in Norwich. I used to drive a horse then, I'd drive three. We'd sometimes leave at one o'clock in the morning. I used to sing like hell in the morning. I was

done seven times for being asleep in charge of the horses. Bloody policemen would wait up for you, they'd wait in one of these old cart sheds.

"I've been to just about every fair in England after horses. That's where you used to hear old songs from the old gypsy boys. Then there would be ploughing matches and afterwards they'd get up and sing a song and someone else would get up and sing one. That is how it used to be. There used to be one regular at St James' White Horse; all around the villages, Rumburgh - they had drawing matches. There'd be prizes of money or a spade or a fork and the old farmer would get his bloody field ploughed up for nothing!

"In the pub opposite here they used to tap dance on the tables. I remember one old boy would take a watch out of his pocket and dance over it and never break it. They used to call him old 'Lively' Hood. Then there was those old boys the Parravani, the Italian ice-cream people. Their father first came about here in the thirties. He'd play accordion and go from one pub to another. Then Walter Nobbs, he was real good on the accordeon. He had an old squeeze box first, then a piano accordion."

TOM SMITH b.1918



Tom Valentine Smith (yes, born on 14th February!) has lived all his life in Thorpe Morieux, apart from a brief spell (about six years) away. "We had to move back!" he said. His working life was split between twenty-five years on the land and twenty-six working for Suffolk County Council.

Without a doubt, it was Tom's father, Bert Smith, who encouraged him as a singer, and it is mainly from him that Tom's repertoire is gleaned: "He could sing from morning to night."

Thorpe Morieux Bull was the place where the 'old boys' would gather for a Saturday night sing. Along with Bert Smith, there would be Tom's brother George, Herbert Game, Briar Crick and Truby Reynolds from Brettenham. "They've all gone now, but in those days you would turn out at ten o'clock, so at half past eight the dart board used to come down off the wall. Then singing for the last two hours!"

Tom has never really been a pub singer himself, preferring to concentrate on the piano accordion, for which he is still in great demand in many of the pubs in his area. The songs he sang to me, had been written out when his father was alive, and I must say I'm glad they were..

GORDON WOODS b.1911



I remember well how I first heard about Gordon. I was on the telephone to the famed Worlingworth melodeon player, Font Whatling, and we were talking about the old singers and musicians that used to be around the area. Then Font said, "You do know old Gordon Woods down in Framsdén, don't you? You know, the one who sings all the old songs." In fact I didn't, but I followed up the lead and soon found myself in the company of a fine singer with an interesting repertoire. Gordon was born in Stonham but lived in Framsdén for most of his life.

This is what Gordon told me: "Yes, my father was a singer. He used to sing when he was younger, and I can remember him singing, but I hadn't left school then. I didn't learn any songs from him: he used to sing such complicated ones. There was one about the baby's names (see VTC3CD - track 9) He'd sing some real old songs, the sort we wouldn't remember today. Well he's been dead over thirty years now. His name was Alfred George Woods and he used to sing in Framsdén Greyhound before I was old enough to drink.

"I used to go out with Alf Peachey a lot. We'd go around several pubs, like Ashfield Swan. We couldn't go far 'cause we only had bicycles. There was a singer there called Freddy Fairweather who sang many funny songs and another in that village called George Emeny. Ashfield Swan was full of life.

"I used to sing here in the Greyhound (now renamed the Doberman!) regularly, we used to get quite a lot from Ipswich come. I would sing in there, and so would old Sam Friend. He used to sing some good ones, some of the proper old horseman's songs. Font used to come and play there for many years, and he'd bring Billy List with him."

It's obvious that Gordon heard many singers over the years, and it is from them that he gathered his repertoire of songs: a real collector! So when Gordon was asked where a particular song came from, he'd just answer, "I don't know, I just picked them up around the pubs." And long may that tradition continue!

GEOFF LING b.1916



The Ling family of Blaxhall must be one of the best known singing families in the county, and Geoff has certainly kept that tradition alive. His mother Susan and father Oscar were singers and his older brother, George became known as 'a rare old singer'. George moved from Blaxhall to Croydon, but as Geoff relates, "If George came back to the Ship, say on holiday, there were certain songs that the rest of the family wouldn't sing because they were his, although we would sing them the rest of the year."

This is how it has been for years with song ownership. How often have I heard someone say, "You don't sing that one if 'so-and-so' is here: that's his." What is interesting now, is that Geoff is able to sing many of the family songs and much of the local repertoire because he is now the main carrier.

Geoff worked mainly on farms, and he told Keith Summers that he started singing in pubs when he was eighteen. "I'd go around with Dad to steel quoits games at pubs like Marlesford Bell, Aldeburgh Mill Inn and Eastbridge Eel's Foot. But the most singing was at the Ship in Blaxhall, and that's how we'd pick up those old songs, by hearing them so often."

MANNY ALDOUS b.1906



Manny is one of the few singers I have recorded who almost discovered himself. At least, a phone call from his daughter-in-law, who had heard of my folk-song collecting activities, put me on his trail and a meeting was arranged at her house in Needham Market.

Maurice Sidney Aldous was born at Lower Farm, Offton and after leaving school at 12 he had many jobs including working on farms, on the roads and in the local tannery, iron foundry and sugar beet factory, finally working in the kitchens at RAF Wattisham.

Like many singers who had sung all their lives, Manny was a song collector himself. He told me, "When I was right young, when I used to go to Offton Limeburners, 'Hay' Plummer was there, he sang, The Sages from Somersham, they also had lots of songs and they played accordions there. You used to get a lot of old boys and they used to sing one against the other. That's where I got a lot of my old songs."

Another pub he visited frequently was Whatfield Horseshoes. "I used to sing in the Horseshoes. There was a man named Thorpe there then. Before the war that was. As soon as I got in the pub the old landlord would say "We'll have a song tonight. There's a pint as soon as you sing a song! The old staggers they used to really love those old songs. In fact in that time, them that couldn't sing in the old pub, they'd pass around a hat and they'd have to put something in. I never had to put anything in!"

Manny told me that he had a list of song headings in a little red book which he used as a reminder. He had unfortunately mislaid it and I only had the chance to meet him three times before he died. I am pleased I was able to record some of Manny's songs so they will not be lost.

TONY HARVEY b.1937



The Harvey family have lived and farmed in Tannington since the turn of the century on what became one of the largest farms in the county. Tony has been keen on singing all his life and he used to love to hear his grandfather sing to him. In many ways he has been a song collector himself, but always in the belief that songs are for singing. I have often heard him say of a song he's never heard before, "Now there's a good song", and I'd know he would want the singer to write the words out for him. If it had not been for Tony's enthusiasm I am sure many of the songs sung locally would have been lost. Several of his local pubs have been good for singing, like Brundish Crown, Dennington Bell and Laxfield Low House, but the nights I will never forget were those he organised at Framlingham Hare and Hounds in the days when the late Jimmy Finbow was landlord. Well into his nineties, Jimmy would sit in his old chair by the fire surveying a gathering of some of the finest local singers crammed into his tiny bar.

Apart from singing, Tony's other great love is for his horses: he has been the master of the local hunt, Easton Harriers, and for many years has collected horse-drawn carriages, carts and gypsy caravans, undertaking several charity drives in them to Appleby horse fair and to the Derby at Epsom. He now runs a business providing horse-drawn outings from Tannington Hall. Several local pubs are visited and if you're lucky you might get a song or two from the driver!



CLIFFORD ARBON b.1908



I first heard of Clifford when Tony Harvey rang to tell me of an old boy who had turned up at one of the regular Tuesday night music sessions at the Earl Soham Victoria. He'd sung a couple of comic songs and really impressed and amused everybody there. Tony had found out his name for me and off I went on his trail, to the remote village of Monewden.

Clifford was in fact wellknown in the area, and not just for his singing and starring role in the film 'Akenfield', but because he was the local wheelwright for most of his life: an important job when most of the traffic on Suffolk lanes was horse-drawn. His workshop was still intact, complete with the tools he had used for many years, situated at the bottom of his cottage garden: the cottage he had lived in since he was two. As Clifford said, "I was born just the other side of this garden so I haven't moved far in my life, have I?"

In his early days he was a keen melodeon player and played in many pubs in the area, including Ashfield Swan where he met up with the renowned Alf Peachey. "Cor! he could play. A champion."

He learned several songs around the pubs in those days, and he also learned several for village concerts, which were an important feature of the village year. It was often the comic songs which appealed most at such events.

HUBERT SMITH b.1927

Hubert's main audiences for his singing in latter years were the cows he looked after. He was a stockman for most of his working life, with days which could stretch from four o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night: "I wouldn't do anything else!"

He came from Tannington originally, but lived at Thorpe Morieux for most of his life. In earlier days he worked with Font Whatling, and his sister married the renowned stepdancer Wattie Wright.

Thorpe Bull was usually the venue for a good sing, where Hubert would meet up with Tom Smith (no relation) and play melodeon or sing a song or two. "If I gave them a song they'd often be a bit dirty!" he told me.



HUBERT FREEMAN b.1925



Hubert was born in Ashfield and moved to Monk Soham at nine. Then at twenty three he got married and moved to Beddingfield, where he worked as a farm manager.

He comes from a family of singers: his father and mother both sang, as did his uncle 'Hack' who used to be landlord of Bedfield Dog. Hubert's father Jim sang in many pubs in the area and one of his favourite songs was 'I came home one night' (Seven drunken nights). When I asked Hubert how he started singing he told me, "Well I used to sing at different parties and that, but I never sung in the pubs. The only time I used to sing in the pubs: well I'll tell you what happened. I knew several little songs and when I was about fifteen or sixteen I used to go to Monk Soham Oak on a Saturday night. I used to have half a pint, and I was only a little old short boy, and they'd say, 'Stand old Hubert on the table.' Then Bedfield Dog where my uncle kept, they'd get me to sing."

WALLIE SYER b.1906



Although I met Wallie in Bildeston, he had only lived there for ten years and was actually born just up the road in Hitcham. It was there he started driving a tractor on a local farm, and throughout his working life he turned his hand to many jobs including portering at Stowmarket railway station and at Stow Lodge hospital.

He didn't sing out until later in life, but the couple of songs he'd learned from his father enabled him to join in when there was a bit of singing going on at a wedding or in a local pub.

THE SONGS

On the back and inside cover photographs of the Grundisburgh coach outings which were taken in the 1920s, it is interesting to note that each coach has an accordeon player. I'm sure there were a few songs sung on those days out and I wonder whether these recordings would have been useful to them? I would like to think that they would be unnecessary, as amongst the company there was probably a singer or two who would have known some of these songs anyway. We'll never know, but what is true is that a country singer would sing a song from any source, as long as it fulfilled the important role of having a story to tell. Some songs were obviously passed down through families, friends and the community where the singer lived, but often their origins are more obscure.

Over the last couple of centuries there was actually more travelling than is often thought. Country people did travel to cities to work or to sell their produce and in the days of the Music Halls many a song was written about their eventful visits. Fred Whiting went as far as Australia in search of work, and of course brought songs back with him. Throughout the last century (and before) ballad sheets were produced, and not only were they brought home by those who made the trip to the capital, but also their own country songs appealed to the broadside publishers and so those were spread even further afield. I have heard many tales of ballad sellers visiting Suffolk villages and I wonder how many of the songs sold by them had originated in Suffolk. Other 'new' songs were brought back by bargemen who travelled around the coast, and fishermen who would seek new hunting grounds.

So songs were brought into the county by those who travelled further afield, but of course I have also met several old boys who have told me that the furthest they have ever travelled was to Ipswich for the livestock market or to Felixstowe or Yarmouth on an outing: maybe on one of those coaches from Grundisburgh! But songs were also brought into the area by 'foreigners': road and railway gangs, often with large numbers of Irishmen; itinerant traders and seasonal farm workers, in particular the gypsy families who certainly increased the mobility of lots of songs. With the introduction of the gramophone, new influences were exerted on the rural repertoire and there are several examples here of songs coming directly from 78 rpm records.

This collection is a gathering of songs from many sources, and with the help of many friends I have been able to identify where most have come from. These should not be looked upon as museum pieces. They are to be sung and I hope they will continue to be sung for many more years to come.

It won't take very very long Clifford Arbon (Monewden) *'It won't last very very long'* was composed and arranged by Frank W. Carter and R.P. Weston and sung by Harry Champion when it was published by Francis, Day & Hunter in 1902. Clifford told me he learnt it many years ago from his uncle, Tom Parrant.

I've got a good idea where it's gone to Charlie Hancy (Bungay) *This is one of the songs that we don't have a good idea of where it comes from, but it has all the hallmarks of a Music Hall song.*

Curiosity Tom Smith (Thorpe Morieux) *Like a lot of songs picked up by country singers, this one probably originated from a 78 record. 'Little Tich', who was recorded on Pathe c.1913, is the most likely source: an unusual record as it was a centre-start which need special equipment to play it. This is one of the many songs Tom learned from his father.*

Beery Bob Manny Aldous (Great Bricett) *'And when his days work was done' is the actual title of this one, and it was written and composed by T. W.Connor and sung by George Brooks (c 1904). This was one of Manny's favourite comic songs and it is interesting to note that he had more verses than are included on the 78 recording of the song. Manny would also add the final two lines, which are from another song called 'More work for the undertaker' (pub. Francis, Day & Hunter and sung by Charles Bignell), with the comment: "I like to put that on the end".*

The fella with the trombone Ted Chaplin (Wingfield) *Most comic songs seem to be credited to the Music Hall and here we have one which actually mentions a visit to a hall in its first line. 'Um-ta-ra-ra' was published by B.Feldman & Co. in 1896, when it was sung by its composer Walter Kino. Although the chorus has remained fairly intact, it seems that the verses were not remembered and others have been invented. This is maybe understandable as the chorus is in 6/8 time whilst the verses, in the original, are in 2/4 time and are eight lines long. This was a popular song in Suffolk and Keith Summers recorded a version similar to Ted's from Jimmy Knights of Hasketon (Sing, Say and Play - Topic 12TS375), which was published in Roy Palmer's 'Everyman's Book of British Ballads' (1980). In fact it could have been from Jimmy that Ted learned it, as Ted told me that he got the song from a chap who sang it in Swilland Half Moon: "That was in the days when I could hear a song once and then sing it the next night!" Ted always sang this song while walking around the room and impersonating a trombone player. (see the cover photo)*

The big wheel Geoff Ling (Blaxhall) *'The Great Big Wheel' was written by E.W. Rogers and published by Francis, Day and Hunter in 1895 when it was sung by Arthur Lennard. Geoff learned it from Ben Jay, a Blaxhall singer from before the war.*

You've got a long way to go Tom Smith (Thorpe Morieux) *The original of this turn-of-the-century Music Hall song was written and composed by A.J.Mills and F.W.Carter, and sung by Frank Coyne. Tom's version is very similar to the original, but has undergone a few changes while being passed down to him via his father.*

The baby boy Gordon Woods (Framsden) *This has all the hallmarks of a well written Music Hall song but we have not been able to identify its origin. It was certainly well known in Gordon's locality and Hubert Freeman also sings it. I suspect they might have both learned it from the renowned melodeon-player Alf Peachey from Ashfield.*

The baby's names Wallie Syer (Bildeston) *This little ditty comes from two different songs. Verse one is obviously based on the chorus of a song written by C.W.Murphy and Albert Hall which starts, 'The baby's name is Kitchener, Carrington, Methuen, Ke-ke-wich , White', which was sung by Charles Bignell in 1900.*

Paddy stole the rope Tony Harvey (Tannington) *This comic song, which is one Tony learned from Billy List, does not seem to have turned up too often, although it was collected from Harry Knight of Laughton, Lewes, Sussex and in 1953 the BBC recorded Bob Scarce in Suffolk singing it. Interestingly, it was recorded more recently in Ireland by Jimmy McBride from Jimmy Grant of Meenyanly, Donegal. His tune is probably older than Tony's, which is in fact a variant of 'McNamara's Band'.*

I'll be up her way next week Hubert Smith (Thorpe Morieux) *When I asked Hubert where this cheeky song came from, this is what he told me: "I learned 'I'll be up her way' from an old chap who I haven't seen for 30 years now. He was a young man when I learned it off him. That was in Onehouse Shepherd and Dog: that used to be another musical pub; they used to get a crowd there. I think, if I'm right, his father used to be a blacksmith in Wetheringsett, and I think that's where he came from too." The format of this one is certainly reminiscent of the Music Hall but we have not yet managed to identify it: however it was also collected in 1959 in a pub in Chatham, Kent, by Russell Quaye, who subsequently performed it with his skiffle group The City Ramblers.*

Do let me have another one, Georgie Gordon Woods (Framsden) *'Do let me have another one, Georgie' was written by Harry Castling and published by Francis, Day & Hunter in 1899, when it was sung by Tom Leamore.*

K-K-K-Kiss me again Clifford Arbon (Monewden) *An old book of songs provided Clifford with this one, which he learned for a village concert. The original song was published in 1921 and was written and composed by Wym Stanley and Andrew Allen. They were prolific writers of comic songs including the wonderfully titled 'Take back the heart you gave me, and take back your liver as well'. (A butchers love song!)*

The ghost song Charlie Hancy (Bungay) *Charlie learned this one over 60 years ago, when he was a boy, from local singer Bert Eldon. The structure is in Music Hall style and it is likely to date from the 1890s to 1920s. Mousehold refers to the area of Norwich where the prison is situated.*

The virgin of nineteen Gordon Woods (Framsden) *Another song on the familiar theme of the girl with very little left of her by the last verse! The best known version is probably the parody of 'After the ball' and on this CD we have yet another (Geoff Ling's 'Among my souvenirs' - track 28). Gordon's version has a haunting tune which feels much older than the words, and so the joke is not at all obvious at the start of the song. The only other collected version of 'A virgin of nineteen', turns up in 'Australian Folk Songs' (Edwards 1972), collected at Bundaberg, Queensland, by Bob Mitchell and Stan Arthur in 1966 from the singing of Enos Newitt (b.1882).*

Pretty girls in China Wallie Syer (Bildeston) *This song dates back to 1918 and was written by Terry Sullivan with music by Siberman & Grock, who also published it under its original name 'My Devon Girl' when it was performed by Miss Gertie Gitana. Wallie's version is slightly different to the original, which also has another verse.*

Right in the middle of mine Manny Aldous (Great Bricett) *This was written by Fred Murray and published by Charles Sheard & Co. Ltd. in 1902, when it was performed by Arthur Reece.*

The egg song Clifford Arbon (Monewden) *Parodies are always popular with country singers, and here is a classic which uses no less than twelve popular tunes to tell about the adventures of a not very fresh egg. The song was written by Greatrex Newman, arranged by Wolsey Charles, sung by Leslie Henson, and published in 1921. Ian Russell in 'Everyday Culture' (Open University Press 1987), identifies the tunes used as: 'Annie Laurie', 'The Boys of the Old Brigade', 'Poor Old Joe', 'For Months and Months and Months', 'I Mind the Day', 'Mademoiselle from Armentieres', 'In and Out the Windows', 'The Minstrel Boy', 'The Bay of Biscay', 'Excelsior', 'The Tarpaulin Jacket' and 'Rule Britannia'.*

Emma Tompkins Tony Harvey (Tannington) *Tony learned 'Emma Tompkins' from local singer Arthur 'Pidgy' Cornish, who lived in a cottage called 'Widow's Nest' in Brundish. This is another which hasn't yet turned up anywhere else, but it is typical of the 1900-1910 Music Hall era.*

Man all tattered and torn Geoff Ling (Blaxhall) *Geoff's gregarious cousin, Percy Ling, was well-known for singing this one and he can be heard on 'The Ling Family' (Topic 12TS292). The verses are not always sung in the same order and not all the verses are necessarily sung at one time; they are sometimes improvised, depending on the occasion. It is therefore not surprising that this song does not have a printed history.*

Father's work Charlie Hancy (Bungay) *This one is in fact a combination of two Music Hall songs. The first, 'At nine o'clock he got the sack', was probably written by James W. Tate and was sung by Maidie Scott who recorded it in 1912 (Zonophone 855). The second part is 'Wait 'til the work comes round' which was recorded by Gus Elen in 1906.*

The tattooed lady Gordon Woods (Framsden) *In Spaeth's book 'Read 'em and Weep' (1926) he comments: "One of the immediate results of the taste for geographical songs was a series of parodies, of which the best loved (and most printable) is 'The Tattooed Lady', to the tune of 'My home in Tennessee'. This is decidedly English of course, but it seems to have appealed equally to the American sense of humour." The original song was written by William Jerome and Walter Donaldson in 1915, and this parody was sung by soldiers and sailors in both World Wars.*

I finish them off Hubert Freeman (Bedfield) *'I finish them off' was sung by Dan Crawley and published by Francis, Day & Hunter between 1895 and 1905. Hubert tells me that he learned this one from his father and he's heard nobody else sing it since. Neither have !!*

The old sow Cyril Barber (Felsham) *This version almost certainly derives from a 78 rpm Zonophone record made by Albert Richardson in 1928, and it was again recorded by Leslie Sarony (with vocal quartet) in 1934 (Rex 8145). 'The Old Sow' was picked up by many traditional singers around the country, particularly in the rural areas. The BBC also recorded Fred Ginger singing it at the Eel's Foot in Eastbridge in 1937 (see VT140CD). Cyril tells me that he picked this up from a chap who was from London and used to stay in Hoxne; "His name was Barber too!"*

Bobbed-haired family Manny Aldous (Great Bricett) *This funny little song dates from the 1920s when 'Bobbed', 'Shingle' and the 'Marcel Wave' were popular hair styles. The original song was written by Will Hyde who also performed it when it was published by Hermin Darewski & Co. Ltd.*

I was there a-watching them Tom Smith (Thorpe Morieux) *'I was there a-watching them'* was composed and arranged by Frank W. Carter & A.J. Mills and published by Reeder & Walsh in 1904, when it was sung by Harry Ford. It turns up in several country singers' repertoires: south Yorkshire singer Arthur Howard knew it, and his version is now sung by Will Noble; while in Suffolk it was recorded by the BBC in the 1920s from the Harkstead shepherd Albert Bromley. Local singer Terry Davey met Albert before he died, nearly twenty years ago, and he now sings that version. This was again one of Tom's father's.

I took it home to Maria Charlie Hancy (Bungay) *This song dates back to 1905 when it was sung by Frank Seeley and published by B. Feldman. It was composed and arranged by Harry Wincott & Harry Leighton.*

Among my souvenirs Geoff Ling (Blaxhall) *Geoff tells me that he put this parody (of the well known H. Nicholls song) together one evening in 1947 while sitting around the piano in Little Glemham Lion, with the landlady of the pub, Mrs Simpson, providing the accompaniment. Another recording of Geoff singing this song appears on the now-deleted Transatlantic album 'The Larks they Sang Melodious' (XTRA 1141), although there he doesn't complete it with the final verse of the original song as he does here.*

Violets are blue and roses are red Gordon Woods (Framsden) *This is by William Hargreaves (who also wrote 'Burlington Bertie from Bow') and was sung by Charlie Higgins who recorded it in about 1931 (Rex 8012). It is quite interesting to hear that recording, as Higgins had a broad North Country accent, quite unlike how I am used to hearing it from Gordon!*



Framsden Greyhound, where Gordon Woods sang many a song

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Photographs:

Front cover - Ted Chaplin sings 'The fella with the trombone' in Haughley Kings Arms (*John Howson*)

Back cover - Gordon Woods sings 'Violets are blue and roses are red' in Framsdon Greyhound (*John Howson*)

Singers - all *John Howson* except Tony Harvey with Horses (*Malcolm Taylor*)



Inside covers -

A charabanc outing
from Grundisburgh
Half Moon

(*Courtesy of Suffolk
Record Office*)