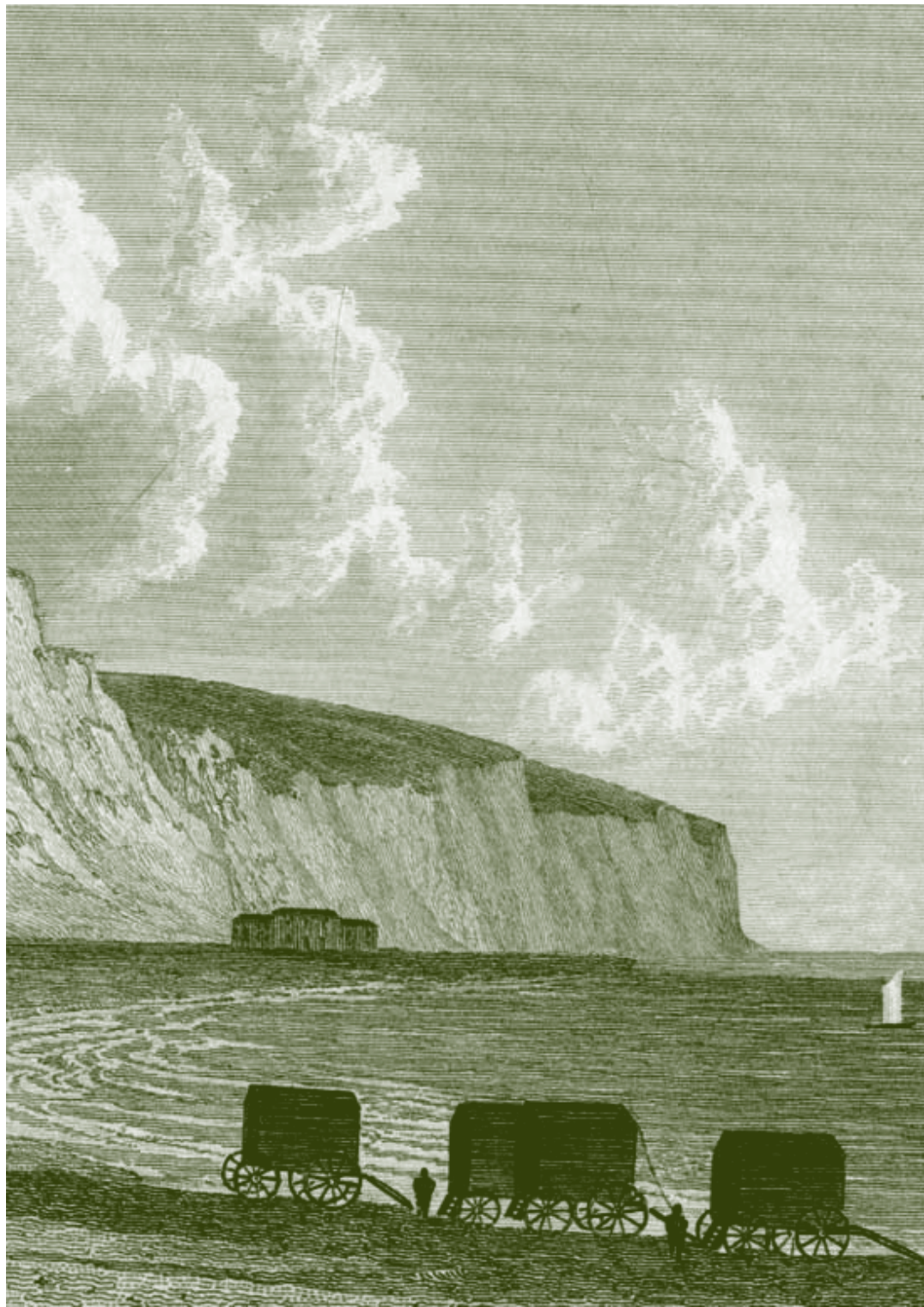


singing
histories

Kent





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Introduction

Music for Change is a leading arts and educational organisation committed to promoting awareness, understanding and respect for cultural diversity. An essential part of our work, especially with children and young people, is the development of an understanding about other people. We therefore hope that this book will be used in two ways.

We hope to bring back to life songs that are intrinsic to the history and traditions of the local people of Kent, and to provide the resources that could be used as the basis for a regional cultural celebration. We are also hoping that the songs will be used by those moving to the area, both from within the UK and further afield, to find out a little more about the heritage of the community they are now part of. Schools, youth groups and libraries will all find the resource informative and easy to use and Music for Change is thrilled to have been part of this project.

We would like to offer our sincere thanks to Bob Kenward, Sue Hudson, Stuart Pendrill and Sue Watson, for sharing their collections of songs, and to Sing London for providing us with the opportunity to put this booklet together.

Julie Larner and Katy Diamond-Jalloh
Music for Change

Foreword

Kent has always been the Garden of England and the gateway to Europe. Any traveller passing through can still see the grazing, orchards and fertile farming land which supplied London with meat, fruit and vegetables. Before the Industrial Revolution, Kent was the richest county in England.

Yet it has always been a county of contrasts. Ship-builders, yeoman farmers, iron-founders, agricultural labourers, wealthy merchants from the City, papermakers, weavers, sawyers, lawyers, millers, miners, tradesmen and craftsmen settled and worked in Kent alongside paupers and noblemen.

Travellers of all descriptions – pilgrims, gypsy fruit-pickers, tourists, East-End hoppers, commuters, seaside day-trippers – came and went with the seasons. The Royal Navy's sailors, bargees, Channel ferrymen, fishermen, pleasure-boat crews and merchant seamen shared the tideways off the Kent coast. All these people brought with them their own songs and stories.

Some of the folk songs in this booklet are very old, sung from generation to generation without being written down. They were remembered because they had a good tune and because the words meant something to the people who sang them.

Some songs told the story of how people lived and worked. Often songs began with an actual event, a great battle, a local quarrel or a notable occasion like the opening of a railway. When many people could not read, they were a way of passing on news, or good advice.

Just like today, though, when life was hard, people wanted excitement. So ballads of murder and fantasy spread. They had heroes and villains. Singers added fresh thrills to their performance, or left out verses which might

offend the local lords. Over the centuries the story might twist and turn, but the song went on.

The writing of new songs is all part of the tradition. Someone might tell a balladeer their life story, or a good joke, or a tale of lost love. Maybe someone was whistling or humming a tune while they worked. Someone, somewhere, first put the words and tune together. Over and over again they would try to think of better words and maybe change the tune so that it sounded right to them. Then, when they were happy with their song, they sang it to someone else.

If the listener liked it, he or she tried to remember it too. So, from person to person and town to town, the song was passed on. If it wasn't liked, no-one sang it any more and it was forgotten. If it was well liked, it might be carried all over the country by people moving around for work. Someone, somewhere, might try to write it down so that more people could sing it. The new songs in this book are just beginning their journey.

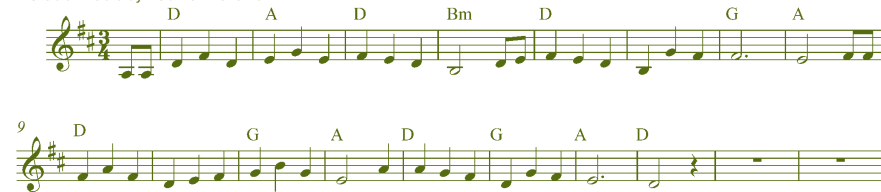
And you

People sing for many reasons – to make themselves feel better, to make a joyful noise, to pass on their experiences to other people or just to have a good time. The best songs are stories too – they pass on the singer's heritage and tradition to all who listen and all who sing along.

We hope that this booklet will help you to do this too. 'Folk song is the gathering of many voices'...

Man of Kent

Words & Music by Bob Kenward 1977



The farmer will tell of the field
and the tree
For the good soil of Kent's known
all over
And the traveller returning
is gladdened to see
The welcoming sea-cliffs of Dover

*For the hop's on the bine out
Faversham way
And the apple's in fruit around
Marden
Here's health to the Darent, likewise
the Medway
And the Downs that surround
England's garden*

The Canterb'ry pilgrims once
walked on their way
And beneath forest shade
were they rested
Now the plough and the harvester
work for the day
Where the wind blows the grass
around Yelsted

Now Maidstone's a market that's
held in esteem
Where the cattle and crops
are worth selling
And Faversham's breweries produce
shepherd's dream
Bringing many a tale to the telling

It's the Medway distinguishes
we Men of Kent
From the Kentish Men west
of the river
But we'll meet at St Lawrence,
the Nevill or Mote
To celebrate willow and weather
Though there's hundreds of houses
surrounding the green
The beauty of Kent is not waning
There's still Romney Marsh and old
Tenterden town
The oasts and the downland
remaining

Can you picture all the places in this song? There have been many changes in the County since Man of Kent was written. Nowadays the traveller is just as likely to pop up from the Channel Tunnel, while wheatfields stretch across the Downs and Kent play most of their cricket at Canterbury. There are towns which didn't exist, like King's Hill, and there are hardly any working hop gardens. The breweries are included, because they were the reason for all the oasts, which are so still much a part of our countryside.

Some of the Canterbury pilgrims may have walked along the North Downs Way, but many would have come over Rochester Bridge and through Sittingbourne. See if you can find Yelsted on the map! It's more or less between the two routes...

There's so much the variety in Kent. You can start on the mysterious Thames marshes, go over the back of the chalk hills, into the Weald and out again, over the ridges, through pretty towns like Cranbrook, drop down onto the Romney levels and end up on the wonderfully strange shingle of Dungeness – all in an afternoon (and now you can see pictures of it all on the internet). And there are many unusual place-names...

Kent is still a lovely county, and I still think I'm lucky to live here.

The Old Farmer and His Wife

Sung by 69 year old Edward (Ted) Richardson at Rainham, Kent in 1976.



There was an old man on a farm
and this he said to me, sir:
He said he could do more work
in a day than his wife could do
in three, sir.

If that be so the old wife said
to this you will agree, sir:
That I will drive the plough today
and you will milk the cow, sir.

But you must watch the speckled
hen for fear she lay away, sir
And you must watch the spool
of yon* that I spun yesterday, sir.

The old wife took the stick in hand
and went to drive the plough, sir.
The old man took the pail in hand
and went to milk the cow, sir.

But Tiny fussed and kicked about
and Tiny cocked her nose, sir
And Tiny gave the man a kick –
the blood ran from the blow, sir.

My pretty little Tiny dear, my pretty
cow stand still!
If you will milk another day be sore
against my will, sir.

He went within to feed the pigs
which were within the sty, sir:
He knocked his head against the
door which made the blood to fly, sir.

He went to watch the speckled hen
for fear she lay away, sir
But clean forgot the spool of yon his
wife spun yesterday, sir.

And time he looked at pig and cow
he said, 'I do agree, sir,
If my wife never works again she'll
not be blamed by me, sir!'

When two people live together, it seems the busier they get the more often they argue about who does more work – and whose work is more important. This old song shows that it's nothing new. In 1970 a law was passed called the Equal Pay Act to make sure that men and women each receive the same rate of pay for equal work. But, as this song shows, the idea of what is equal work can still vary from one person to another!

Married with three daughters, Ted was very much the 'man of the house' and always thought of himself as in charge, despite being outnumbered by the women. Yet there was always the feeling that his wife, Marjorie, was quietly ruling the house in her own unassuming way. After Ted had finished singing his song, Marje said she had a verse to add to the end, which Ted had conveniently 'forgotten':

*And when the sun was going down and set the trees
a-glowing
His wife and horses hove in sight – they'd finished all
the ploughing!*

This song shows us how far a folk song could travel even without modern radio or CDs – just by one person singing it to another. It is well known in many parts of the USA as 'Father Grumble'.

Hardy Flint

Words & Music by Bob Kenward 1982



Hear the pickers cuss and groan:

Flint, flint, the hardy flint

Always growing, never sown

Flint's all in the clay

Up, down, all around

Flint, flint, the hardy flint

Pick 'em up and pile 'em round

Flint's all in the clay

Firestone or the knapped-edge axe:

Makes weary hands and aching

backs:

Countless as the Coty Stones:

Sharp and black or dull as bones:

If owl hoots in the frosty night:

If corn and poppies blow so bright:

Clear the furrow for the plough:

We'll not hear such ringing now:

Flint white early in the morn:

Pick 'em up, you're never done:

Have you ever wondered what farmworkers did in the winter, after the crops were gathered in and the grain had been thrashed and stored? Up on the Downs, flintpicking was a cold and unpleasant winter job which the farmer gave his younger hands to keep them employed. After every fall of rain flints appeared from the clay soil as if they were a harvest. They were a nuisance to horses, ploughs and wheels. So someone had to pick them up.

Barns and farmhouses were built of the larger stones, often cracked or 'knapped' in half to reveal the shiny black inner face. Farm walls were made from the medium-sized stones in their natural creamy-white, roundy-knobbled form. Even small flints were useful, as they could be crushed for roadstone or shovelled into potholes to repair the damage heavy carts had caused in the rough tracks about the farm.

The Coty stones in the song are those near Aylesford, known as Little Kit's Coty (I grew up saying Cot-y, some people say Coat-y). They are supposed to be impossible to count – although that depends upon whether you include the gravel. The legend says that an accurate guess will awaken Old Nick...



A Blacksmith Courted Me



For a blacksmith he courted me,
just nine months or better
Until he won my heart, wrote
to me a letter
With his hammer in his hand,
strikes his blows so neat and clever
And if I were with my love, I'd live
for ever

Now he talks about going abroad,
fighting for strangers
And he'd better stay at home,
and keep from all dangers
For you stay at home with me,
my dearest jewel
And you stay at home with me,
and don't prove cruel

My true love's gone across the sea,
gathering fine posies
My true love's gone across the sea,
with his cheeks like roses
I'm afraid that broiling sun will spoil
his beauty
And if I was with my love, I'd do
love's duty

For it's once I had gold in store,
they all seemed to like me
And now I'm low and poor, they all
seem to slight me
For there ain't no belief in a man,
nor your own brother
So it's: girls, whenever you love,
love one another

Ever since there were nations there have been wars between them, and families and friends have had to say goodbye to a loved one who is going away to fight. Traditional folk songs about the parting or return of a soldier or sailor have therefore always been popular. Some tell the story from the point of view of the woman left behind; others show the feelings of the serviceman who wonders if the one he loves could stay faithful while he is away.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, recruiting parties would come to town offering 'the King's shilling' to persuade poor men to join the army. If they did, their wives or sweethearts might never see them again. In this song, the young woman may have already married her blacksmith; at least it seems her prospects for future happiness look bleak.

Like so many women or men married to members of the armed forces today, she waits at home, fearing for his safety in a distant and unknown land. The singer of this song is not only worried about the dangers of battle: 'gathering fine posies' refers to the custom of carrying a bunch of herbs in the pocket to protect against catching diseases.

You may recognise this traditional tune: it became famous when it was chosen for the hymn 'To Be a Pilgrim'.

King Hop

Words & Music by Bob Kenward 1980



January is a bitter plough
Poles but February's show:

*Hop is King, he will rise again
In pints, in jugs, in glasses
In pints, in jugs and glasses*

In March the stringer stalks the sky
April shoots do upwards wind:

May's the green boy clung to twine
June the rising of the man:

He stalks July both leaved and long
August grows a thorny crown:

September scythes his thorny bine
October men they press him down:

In the brewer's pocket by November
Barrel-chested by December:



You can find oast houses all over Kent, but why were they built? Before piped water, ale and beer were safer to drink than a bucket of something drawn from the well or river. Brewing killed many of the germs in the water. Beer could be a weak drink. Hops were used to add flavour.

You could find hop gardens and their long poles and strings everywhere. Each month brought its own task. The stringer on stilts threaded twine webs for the young hop-bines to twine around. In June the hop vines snaked upwards, sometimes a foot and a half each night. September is when the top grew shaggy and lush. A slash with a scythe cut the string and brought down the bine. Once the female flowers were hand picked by hoppers – some of these hoppers were local but many more were from London. Nowadays they are picked mechanically, to the endless clatter of the stripping machine.

In the oast-house, the hop flowers are spread out for drying on a rack-floor over a carefully tended fire. White steam creeps around the cowl. When they are ready, the dried flowers are pressed into sacks known as pockets and taken away to breweries. Handling the vines mazes your skin with tiny cuts, and the hop-juice makes them sting, but who wouldn't pay such a price for a 'holiday' in Kent?

Hops

From the Kentish Gazette, Sept. 4, 1776. A New Song for the year 1776. Addressed to the Farmers of Kent



You farmers of Kent who are jolly
and gay
Come listen awhile and pray mind
what I say
May this season be crown'd with
plentiful crops
And off from an acre a load of good
hops
*Oh good hopping, oh good hopping,
oh good hopping, good hopping, oh*

Oh may they prove fine too and fetch
a great price
That you my brave boys may get
rich in a trice
For as ye are ever both hearty
and free
Success to you all for to fill you
with glee
*Oh good hopping, oh good hopping,
oh good hopping, good hopping, oh*

To crown your repast in the hopping
this year
I wish that the weather may be fine
and clear
For when it is wet it is wretched
and sad
From morning till night in a hop-
ground to pad
*Oh sad hopping, oh sad hopping,
oh sad hopping, sad hopping, oh*

Then to see the poor hoppers alas
what a sight
Tis enough to put modesty into
a fright
For they are so draggled and wet
to the skin
They're much to be pitied –
their clothing's so thin
*Oh poor creatures, oh poor
creatures, oh poor creatures,
poor creatures, oh*

In case of this weather let there
be no flaw
Take care to provide them
with plenty of straw
That when the poor creatures retire
to their nest
They may lie in comfort and take
all their rest
*Oh poor hoppers, oh poor hoppers,
oh poor hoppers, poor hoppers, oh*

But above all that's said, pray don't
cheat the King
For if you do that, it is sure a bad
thing
As he'll have his duty by hook
or by crook!
Beware, oh beware, lest you're
in the black book
*Oh sad doings, oh sad doings, oh sad
doings, sad doings, oh*

Though you have more honour
at least so I trust
I'd have you be always quite upright
and just
For honour and honesty carry
the sway
Then from these great maxims ne'er
venture to stray
*Oh rare hopping, oh rare hopping,
oh rare hopping, rare hopping, oh*





If you visit a Kent farm, when fruit or vegetables are being harvested by hand, you might hear the workers speak a language you do not understand. Many farmers could not pick their crops without the help of people who come from afar to stay for a season and work hard for basic wages. But do you know that this is nothing new?

In the 19th century, Kent had 72,000 acres of hop gardens. For each acre, 200 workers were needed for two or three weeks every year to pick the hops, which were used to flavour beer. So every year, at the end of August, crowds of casual workers travelled to Kent from all over southern England and especially from London. They joined others who had already spent the summer on the farm, fruit-picking and harvesting.

For many, it was a chance for a paid holiday – but pay and working conditions were poor. Basic accommodation was provided, often in a barn or a one-room hut on the farm. Hop-pickers slept on the ground, on a sack filled with straw. They were paid for 'piece work' – a penny (now 0.4p) for every bushel basket they filled. They worked long hours to earn as much as possible; but if the weather was wet, they could not pick.

In the song, the farmer is reminded to be honest and just. The 'measurer', who counted how many bushels had been picked, was often so keen to save his master's money that he squeezed down the hops to avoid having to pay for a full basket.

The Old Country Train

Words & Music by Bob Kenward 1997



Paddock Wood to Hawkhurst
by way of Horsmonden
Pulling through the hopyards,
pushing back again
Ramblers for Cranbrook, wagons
for Churn Lane
We'll never see the like
of the Old Country Train

Driver up the car end, sitting
at his ease
Fireman on the engine, doing
as he please
By Wealden woods and orchards,
all the seasons through
We worked the line by pull-and-
push on duty 312:

We'd a Chatham tank from
Tonbridge, 17-0-4
And a two-set off the Brighton line,
seen better years before

Never had a guard, just a crate
Jor two of fruit
And a couple-or-three passengers all
in their market suits:

September brought the hoppers,
we watched them all go past
Coppertops and Converts, working
fit to bust

Hammering through Goudhurst,
charging Badger's Oak
With the roughest of the old stock
they could find up in the Smoke

I've taken out a Crompton from
the yard at Hither Green
Come home off the Dover run,
my working clothes all clean
But give me back the rails and
that old Chatham tank
I'd be back on steam tomorrow,
charging Cranbrook bank



Have you ever wondered why there are Station Roads with no railway nearby? Kent's small branch lines, now closed, are fondly remembered by those who travelled on them. The Hawkhurst line wandered up into the hills, past hop gardens and farms, using pull-and-push trains for passengers.

Pull-and-push meant that the driver didn't have to shunt his engine to the front for every journey. On the way back he drove the train back from the last coach, working the brakes and using a bell to tell the fireman when to put on steam. The fireman had to shovel coal, check the water level, open the regulator and keep the engine moving all on his own.

Enginemens often had affectionate nicknames for their locomotives, such as 'Coppertop' (the D class which first ran with a shiny brass dome). Old locomotives like these were used for hop-picking specials made up of carriages which spent most of their time rusting away in sidings. When diesels came in, 'Cromptons' or Class 33s were familiar sights all over Kent.

This song was written after talking to two railwaymen. Although they both worked on diesels and electrics, it was their hot, dangerous, heavy, dirty, oily, dusty days on steam engines that Brian Jeffrey and Mick Wright (of Tonbridge shed) looked back on with pride.

Street Cries (Aldington)

Knife-Grinder's Cry



Birdstarver's Cry



Broomsellers Cry



Knife-Grinder's Cry

Carving knives, table knives,
scissors or razors
Any umbrellas to mend?

Bird-Starver's Cry

Away you old devils, away
 Away you old devils, away
 You eat too much
 You drink too much
 You carry too much away, away

Broom-seller's Cry

Will you buy a broom?
Will you buy a broom?
Will you buy a broom today?

There is one for the lady and one

for the baby
Will you buy a broom?
Will you buy a broom?
Will you buy a broom today?

Since the very first villages and towns existed, people have competed with one another to sell their goods. Before there were shops, goods and services of all kinds were promoted and sold outside in the street. Street cries were a way for these sellers (known as 'costermongers' or 'hawkers') to 'hawk' their products and services in the open-air. To stand out from the others, each one developed their own short song or cry. The idea is used to this day in advertising: a bright tune or sound catches the attention of the public and a simple message is repeated often so it is remembered. They are sometimes called 'jingles'. Can you sing any adverts or recall any phrases describing a product?

You can still hear something like these street cries in some streets and outdoor markets. Look out for the fruit and vegetable seller offering something like ‘two punnets a pound your strawberries’ or the newspaper seller calling out the name of their newspaper.

The three street cries above can be sung simultaneously. You could write your own street cry and join in. You may already know this well-known old cry:

Hot cross buns! Hot cross buns!

One a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns!

If you have no daughters, give 'em to your sons

One a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns!

He Rode the Waves

Words & Music by Sue Watson



My Grandad was a fisherman,
he set forth every day
Laurita, Curlew and Beau Jesse,
his boats he'd proudly sail
The life was hard, the days were
long, he'd work 'til late at night
But he was happy doing this, for him
this life was right

*He rode the waves, he sailed
the stormy sea
He rode the waves, he lived his life
so free*

When war arrived, he did his bit,
he joined in with the fight
And with the bomb disposal squad
he defused mines at night
And at Dunkirk he and his friends
took fishing boats to sea

And ferried all the soldiers home
to England's shore at Deal

His black sheep son, he didn't want
to be a fisherman
But still the sea was in his blood,
the lifeboat he did man
For people stuck on Dover cliffs,
to bring them up he'd climb
He joined the air-sea rescue,
put his life upon the line

His brother took the family line,
a fisherman became
And his son too, he followed on,
took up the family game
Now he takes parties out to sea
to fish and take the air
And sometimes when he's on the
sea, he feels his grandad's there

Have you heard of the shingle beach at Deal, or the Goodwin Sands? The Royal Navy would moor warships in the deeper water to ride out storms, and many boatmen could make a living putting to sea and taking provisions to and fro. They knew the waters very well and, in the days before the RNLI, would be needed to save drowning sailors when the weather was bad.

Sue Watson hails from the coastal town of Deal in South-East Kent, traditionally a fishing town, with a shingle beach and fishing boats lined up along the shore. This song tells the true story of three generations of her family throughout the twentieth century and their connections to the sea they live by – ranging from sea fishing and daring exploits during World War II, to manning the local lifeboat and participating in air-sea rescue operations on Dover Cliffs.

It also highlights the changes in the local fishing industry over the years. Although there are still fishing boats on the shore at Deal, there are fewer nowadays, and their use has changed over the years to mainly pleasure craft. This song is inspired mainly by conversations with members of Sue's family and also childhood memories of being taken to see the boats – and even being taken out for a ride in them on the English Channel as a treat on special occasions!

Maybe someone in your family has a story which you could make into a song? Just as there are fishing families who know all there is to know about a particular stretch of water, so other families have memories of working in different ways. Most people are only too glad to talk about how it was when they were younger. They will talk about their skills and the way things have changed and soon you will have plenty to write a song about.

FE5 the Happy Return

Words & Music: Stuart Pendrill



In 1905 out of disaster – the FE5
she sailed in
The Happy Return they named her –
the Good Intent to replace
To fish for the people of Folkestone
as onto the channel she fared
When the FE5 sailed on the waters –
the crew were all pleased to say
That this fine Cornish built fishing
lugger – kept them safe when out
at sea:

*She'll not go – she'll not fall – she will
– out last us all*

*The trusty FE5 was built to survive
– and The Happy Return will sail
again*

In 1916 she got power – no longer
at the will of the winds
And for over 50 years she remained
here – taking her catch from the sea
Then she moved up the coast to the
Wash – and continued there to pay
her way
Those storms in 87 tried to wreck
her – the insurance men said she'd
have to go
Brought back – repaired and refitted
– once more she was soon out to sea:

Her end ordered from Brussels
where – strange decisions are made
They want boats the size of small
islands that – take everything from
the sea
So this fine and proud old fishing
vessel – was told that she would
have to go
But instead of going all to pieces –
the Cornish men saved her soul
They restored that fine old fishing
lugger – to the way – they built
her long ago:

Its been one hundred years since
she first sailed into – harbour at
Folkestone town

That fine and trusted fishing
lugger was – truly made – with
'Good intent'

Many boats have come and gone
their way now – many fine men lost
unto the seas

So the FE5 named the Happy Return
is – well known by St Peter too
In the next hundred years we'll still
see her – sailing proudly out upon
the seas



How do fishing boats get their names?

In September 1904, a sudden storm caused the shipwreck and destruction of a fishing boat belonging to the Saunders family of Folkestone. Fortunately, the entire crew were rescued. In those days, however, fishing was not only a major source of food but also a major employer; therefore its loss was a blow to the local economy.

The mayor of Folkestone organised an appeal to purchase a replacement vessel from Cornwall and in 1905 the replacement vessel sailed into Folkestone harbour. It was registered as the FE5 (FE denoting Folkestone) and the family named it Happy Return, in recognition of the safe return of the crew from their shipwreck.

The 1987 storms caused severe damage and she was declared a total loss, but she was brought back and repaired. In 1998 she was ordered to be decommissioned, but instead of being destroyed she was returned to Cornwall where she was fully restored by the Mounts Bay Luggar Association where she continues to sail for pleasure.

Remarkably in 2005, on her centenary, the tough old boat made a happy return into Folkestone harbour. She had been in constant use as a fishing boat up to 1998, sixty-four years out of Folkestone and twenty-nine years from Kings Lynn.

Petition of the Pigs in Kent

The Sporting Magazine, Nov. 1809



Ye owners of woodlands, with all
due submission
We humbly beg leave to present
our petition
That you will be pleased to recall
your decree
Which tells us that acorns no longer
are free
In Sussex and Surrey and Middlesex
too
Pigs may ramble at large without
much ado
So why then in Kent should
pretences be found
To drive us like culprits and thieves
to the pound
Since we and our fathers and others
before 'em
Have ranged in your woods with
all proper decorum
No poachers are we for no game
we annoy
No hares we entrap and no
pheasants decoy

Contented are we if an acorn we find
Nor wish for a feast of a daintier kind
Besides we are told and perhaps not
mistaken
That you and your friends love a slice
of good bacon
But if of good bacon you all love
a slice
If pigs are to starve, how can bacon
be nice?
For these and for other wise reasons
of state
We again our petition most humbly
repeat
Ye owners of woodlands, with all
due submission
We humbly beg leave to present
our petition
That you will repeal this severest
of laws
So your woods shall resound to our
grunting applause

Have you ever been asked to add your name to a petition, protesting against a decision made by an official authority? When this song was written, petitions were a common way for citizens to make their views known to the government.

In this song the petition is made on behalf of the pigs of Kent. It asks landowners to continue a custom called 'pannage', which allowed people to let their pigs loose in the woods to feed on fallen acorns for six weeks every autumn. It was a very good way of fattening the pigs ready for slaughter: their salted meat was a very important food for the winter.

At one time in England there were a lot of 'common lands' which could be freely used for the grazing of animals. In the 19th century, new laws called Enclosures Acts meant that many common lands passed into the ownership of private landlords, who could then charge a fee for grazing or 'pannage'. As a result, many poor people found they could no longer afford to keep livestock. With only very low wages to live on, they could face starvation unless they moved into towns to find work in a factory.

The Hoodeners' Rant

Words & Music by Bob Kenward 1994



When winter comes to home
and heart
And deepest frost will ne'er depart
We'll brave December's foul impart
And beat a path to your door:

*Comes the turning of the year
All good men have duty clear
To bring good luck on the winter
drear
And ride the Hooden Horse*

First the Molly-Man comes in
That's turned his coat all outside-in
He can't be seen by the devil or man
So drives Old Nick from the door:

Then the Waggoner's come
to the chase
With whip and halter to settle
the case
To master Hooden without a trace
And lead him back to the door:

The rider he's a brisk young blood
To straddle bold Hooden and ride
to the wood
With never a thought for the sticks
or mud
He tumbles back to the door:

In come Hooden all at his ease
As kind a nag as takes the breeze
But anyone here should him
displease
He'll kick you back to your door:

And when that we have done
the task
And Hooden he is ridden at last
We'll drink good health and we'll
raise a glass
And dance away from your door:

Why are those people performing a play, and why is one dressed as a horse?

The Hooden Horse play is traditional to East Kent, though it can be seen more widely now every Christmas. Whitstable Hoodener Mark Lawson asked for a song in the 1980s and gave me all the information. The story is quite easy to follow: after the Molly-Man clears the way, the Waggoner and Rider try to tame the black-cloaked Hooden Horse. Of course, being a clever creature, he resists their attempts, clacking his wooden jaw and making them very uncomfortable. Hooden does things at his own pace and if left to do so is as nice as pie. However, he is not afraid to make his annoyance felt if someone tries to take advantage of him. This may have been a message to the audience, as it was the poor farm workers who presented the play to the owners of the big houses in their area. Usually they were given some money or mince pies as thanks, which would have been very welcome in hard times. Some say that acting out the play makes for a good harvest. Would you risk bad luck by turning the Hoodeners away?



Where to find out more

In print

The English Folk Dance and Song Society has a database of lyrics.

Kent County Reference Library has a few books with song lyrics.

Fran & Geoff Doel have written many useful books on Kentish Customs and Folklore.

Bygone Kent magazine has informative articles by George Frampton.

Recordings

Finding recordings by local singers can be difficult, as most are not available in the major shops. Internet searches for Kent Folk, Tundra, Arky's Toast, TanTethra, Andy Turner, Pig's Ear and Steel Carpet will bring up useful links. Adding the word 'folk' after the artist's name will speed your search, as will limiting your search to the UK. Otherwise you'll find out a lot about Kent State USA!

For those wishing to learn more about the stories behind 'The Old Country Train', Branch Line's DVD 'Classic Southern Region Vol. 1' explores the Hawkhurst, Westerham and Allhallows train lines using archive cine film, and on it you can hear Mick Wright and Brian Jeffrey talking about the life of railway men in the steam era.

Live music

Most main towns in Kent have folk and acoustic music venues. To find your nearest, try the free booklets 'Around Kent Folk' and 'Folk In Kent' in the library or search (*your chosen town*) Folk Club. Many, like the long-established Faversham, Dartford, Tonbridge and Deal folk clubs, feature guests from all over the country and hold regular singers' nights where new singers are welcomed. We all remember singing our first song in public!

The largest annual festivals in Kent are Broadstairs in August and Rochester Sweeps in May, but all around the county you can find weekends of music like the Faversham Hop, Deal Maritime, Whitstable Oyster and Tenterden Festivals, as well as the many smaller day events. All have open sessions where you can hear local melodies mingling with a whole world of folk song.

Hoodenars, Mummers and Morris Men abound in season. BBC Radio Kent has a weekly programme hosted by Simon Evans, which also carries news of local events.

Write your own songs

Here are two Kentish Tunes and a Tune of Kent composed by Bob for you to write your own words to. They do have names, but you can make up your own title to suit the lyrics.

Howey's Adventure



The Countless Stones



Malling Jig



Notes on the contributors

Bob Kenward likes to write songs about his home county, Kent. Sometimes they come from the memories of people he has listened to, so that a new generation can sympathise with the ways of the past. Sometimes his songs arise from events as they happen. Most of all, Bob likes to sing with other people – to join with friends in choruses which celebrate the loveliness of the Garden of England.

Sue Hudson is an acknowledged specialist in traditional and old songs of Kent. As part of the popular duo Tundra, with Doug Hudson, she toured the UK, Europe and the USA presenting the songs of Kent in concert, often appearing on TV and radio, as well as recording four albums. She continues to research and write on historical subjects, as well as regularly performing folk music and song.

Stuart Pendrill has been playing and writing music for over thirty years. Well-known at various festivals and folk clubs, from Dorset to Yorkshire, he regularly enjoys playing at the local folk clubs in Deal, Dover and St Mary in the Marsh – all of which have a great atmosphere and offer a great night out. Many of his songs are written about Kent and Kentish events, so playing them locally adds another dimension to them.

Sue Watson hails from the coastal town of Deal and began singing harmonies with her family when young. She is well known at folk clubs and festivals in East Kent and further afield. Sue also has music-hall songs and ballads in her repertoire. Like most singers throughout the ages, if she likes a song she will sing it, wherever it comes from.



Sing your way through local history! From milling songs in Manchester to hop-picking songs from Kent, *Singing Histories* uses traditional song and their stories to bring history to life.

The project has been produced by Sing London – the arts organisation whose mission is to unite the nation in song.

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Produced by Sing London in partnership with Music for Change

Further copies can be downloaded free of charge at www.singlondon.org





At the English Folk Dance and Song Society, we champion the folk arts at the heart of England's rich and diverse cultural landscape.

Our award-winning Resource Bank contains over 100 resources – incorporating hundreds of audio files, videos and supporting documents, all free to download. They offer endless practical ways to use folk song, music, dance, drama and more in all sorts of community settings, as well as in formal education.

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