

singing
histories

Norfolk



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Foreword

During more daring flights of fancy I pinch my eyes shut, purse my moistened lips and pour my Norfolk heart into local compositions yet to be completed. Prepare for fragments of *Don't Eat Yellow Snow, Not a Dry Seat in the House and Cromer Crab Boats Go Sideways*.

Right, now you can relax. They're coming to take me away to a place of greater safety while the genuine articles demand voices to be raised in praise of a precious strand of our heritage.

This collection of mainly traditional songs, lovingly lined up by living folk legend, Alan Helsdon, and colleagues in tune with his passionate scholarship, gives our history on land and sea a timely curtain-call.

Fishing and agriculture have changed so much since most of these songs were penned. Hardship and humour held hands as trawlers pitched, scythes swished and frosts nipped. A good laugh together took some of the sting out of monotonous and arduous chores.

I feel privileged to have shared the same county stage – albeit a few years later – as performing giants like Sam Lerner, Harry Cox and Walter Pardon.

My role as leader of the Press Gang entertainers for a quarter of a century from 1984 to 2008 brought ample opportunity to salute their lasting legacy.

Many a show opened with good friend Ian Prettyman sharing *Butter and Cheese and All*. And every programme in village hall, theatre or other community meeting place ended with Ian, rest of the cast and audience embracing *The Farmer's Boy*.

Other songs featured in this vibrant selection also received airings on our extensive rounds. Let's relish them afresh as they prepare to inspire a new generation with their ageless values.

Story-telling with joining-in bits... a perfect antidote to the horrors of a push-button age.

Keith Skipper Cromer, 2009



Windy Old Weather

Verse

D Em A7

As we were a - fish - ing off Hais - bo - ro Light, a - shoot - ing and

Chorus

D Em A7 D

haul - ing and trawl - ing all night. In this win - dy old weather,
storm - y old weather, when the wind blows we'll all pull to - geth - er.

2. We sighted a herring, the king
of the sea,
says he, Old skipper, you cannot
catch me!

3. Along come a mackerel with
stripes on his back,
saying, Time, now skipper, to shift
your main tack.

4. Up jumped the flatfish, they call
him a skate;
if you'll be the Skipper then I'll be
the Mate

5. Then up come the hake, he was
black as a rook,
says he, I'm no sailor, I'll ship as the
Cook!

6. Next came the shark with his two
rows of teeth,
Cook, you mind the cabbage and I'll
mind the beef!

7. Along come a conga, as long as
a mile,
Wind's blowing easterly, he said
with a smile.

8. Next came the eel with his
slippery tail;
he slid up the mast and he cast off
each sail.

9. I think what these fishes are
saying is right,
we'll haul in our nets and we'll head
for the Light.

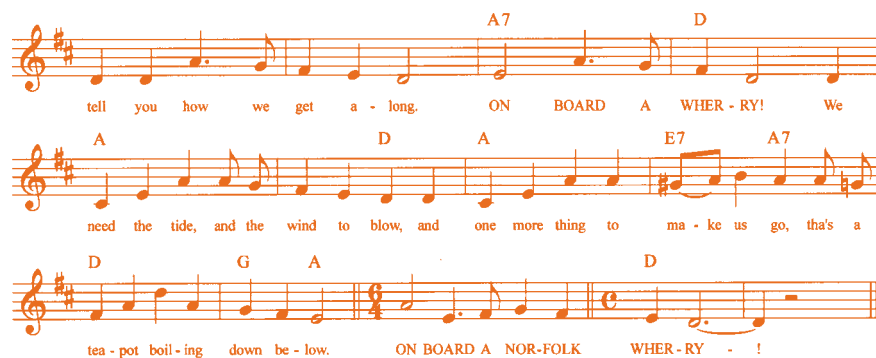


There are no harbours for over 50 miles between Great Yarmouth and Blakeney so all the fishing was, and on a much smaller scale still is, done from beach-launched boats – a heavy and dangerous way of making a living. Lighthouses at Cromer and Happisburgh helped enormously, though the first light mentioned here may be the Haisboro Lightship.

Sam Lerner (see *Butter and Cheese and All*) sings his own version of this, with different tune and words and some recollections of a tough life at sea and on land, on *Now is the Time for Fishing* (Topic TSCD 511).

This version comes from Stan Hugill's *Shanties of the Seven Seas* where it takes its rightful place among other work songs of the sea. Hauling long, wet, and hopefully full nets in a rough sea on a dark night took some doing and a song may well have helped co-ordinate the pulling as well as relieving the drudgery. Good nonsense songs always bring a smile. Try making up some verses of your own.

On Board a Wherry



Wherries simply didn't go to sea. They were brilliant at their job of carrying cargoes around the rivers and broads of Norfolk and north Suffolk when water transport was quicker than muddy or non-existent tracks, but they didn't go to sea. They had no freeboard (height of hull above the water), a huge rudder moved only by hand and one enormous sail on a mast without stays. Any waves at all and they were done for.

However, when Lucas Brothers, Builders, of Lowestoft got the contract to build Gosport Barracks, near Portsmouth, in 1857 they wanted to take boats and men they knew for the work of fetching local materials, and so the Norfolk and Suffolk wherrymen they hired sailed into unknown waters.

Martin Wigg was only four when he went in his father's wherry, and it was his interview in the *Eastern Daily Press* of 03.01.1927 – when he was nearly eighty – that provided many of the details of the song-cycle *Blue Water Wherries* written in 1986, from which this song is taken.

There are several wherries still sailing, the best known – Albion – being maintained by the Norfolk Wherry Trust.

Excellent books on the subject are: *Black Sailed Traders* by Roy Clark and *Wherries and Waterways* by Robert Malster, and there is a Song Cycle, in which the above is used as the Narrator's song, called *Blue Water Wherries*.

2. I've always lived on board a boat;
I've brought me children up afloat.
And when that's coming on to blow
we send the children down below,
but the tea-pot's always on the go.

3. Just keep your eye on the wind
and sky;
there's always some-one passing by.
We don't get time to say a lot,
just 'Where are you bound?' and
'What've you got?'
and then tha's time for another pot.

4. To shoot a bridge is quite a trick;
the sail and mast they come down
quick.
Tha's easy if you've got the tide,
then through the bridge you
quickly glide
and have a brew on the other side.

5. From Lowestoft to Harwich Bay,
that's not too far to go in a day;
and with a breeze and a nice
calm sea
we'll get to Harwich easily
as long as I get me mugs of tea.

6. Oh we could sail all day and night
without a lock or a bridge in sight.
There's lots of time to patch and
sew,
but all the time he wants to know
'What's the state of the pot below?'

7. We're going now to cross the sea,
to Gosport in good company.
We'll work along the channel shore
and we'll drink mugs of tea galore,
then back to Norfolk sail once more.



Waiting for the Day

Verse

D G D A

The worst old brig that e-ver did weigh sailed out of Har-wich on a win-dy day.

Chorus

D G D A D

And we're wai-ting for the day, wai-ting for the day, wai-ting for the day that we get our pay.

1. The worst old brig that ever
did weigh
sailed out of Harwich on a windy
day.

And we're waiting for the day,
waiting for the day,
waiting for the day that we get
our pay.

2. She was built in Roman times;
held together with bits of twine.

3. Nothing in the galley, nothing
in the hold,
but the skipper's turned in with a
bag of gold.

4. Off Orford Ness she sprang a leak;
hear her poor old timbers creak.

5. We pumped our way round
Low'stoft Ness
when the wind backed round
to the west-sou'-west.

6. Through the Cockle to Cromer
cliff,
steering like a waggon with a wheel
adrift.

7. Up the Humber, up to the town;
Pump all night or you will drown.

8. The coal was shot by a Keadby
crew;
her bottom was rotten and it went
right through.



Thames barges carried everything to and from London, and called anywhere on the east coast they could get into. They frequently sailed into some tiny creek, sat on the bottom when the tide went out and from there proceeded to (un)load bricks, sand, hay, manure, wood, sugar beet, coal, pianos – anything.

Bob Roberts was Skipper of the *Cambria*, the last of them operating on sail alone up to 1972 and he sings this and other songs from the east coast on *Sea Songs and Shanties*.

With a crew of three, occasionally two, there was a lot of hard work to be done and this could have been used as a work song, though with its comic verses and endless possibilities for extension it is just as likely to have taken its part in an evening's entertainment at some quayside pub in Great Yarmouth or the *Butt and Oyster* at Pin Mill on the Orwell where Bob lived for a while.

Norfolk Harvest Song

Verse

Now La - mas day's o - ver boys we will be - gin, we will cut down the
 corn - and gath - er it in. We will reap, we will mow, we will
 sweat to the brow; we will cut down the corn that so sweet - ly does grow.

Chorus

We Nor - folk lads are bold and rough, we love the sound of
 ear - ly horn - ; and our ro - sy cheeks and sin - ews
 tough we owe to Sir - John Bar - ley - corn.



2. We have an old man that is tilling
 the land;
 his back it is bent and he scarcely
 can stand;
 he will get up in the morning and do
 all he can,
 and pray god to reward the old
 harvest man.

3. A man that is lazy and will not
 come in,
 he will hinder his master and
 likewise the men.

We will pay him his wages and bid
 him be gone,
 for what shall we do, lads, with such
 lazy one?

4. Now harvest is ended we will
 make a great noise
 and our master will say, You are
 welcome, brave boys.
 We will broach the old ale-tub
 and box it along
 and then we will sing the old
 Harvest Song.

Farming in Norfolk goes back a long way. '... the earliest clearances of the primeval wildwood began... in the early ninth millenium BC' (Tom Williamson, *The Origins of Norfolk*) and that's about 11,000 years ago! This song isn't quite that old, being included in William Andrews' *Bygone Norfolk* of 1898, and repeated in *Ballads, Songs and Rhymes of East Anglia* by A S Harvey in 1936. As they didn't include a tune, that's the most modern part.

George Ewart Evans wrote in *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay*: 'Under the old community the harvest was the climax of the rural year, not merely an incident in the more mechanical and depersonalised round on the farm as it has become today. The whole village was involved and there was a carefully laid down ritual which had long roots far back in medieval times.'

Even school attendance gave way to harvest. In *Knapton Remembered*, Philip Almey remembers 'work on the farm, and plenty of it while he was still at school' in 1946-7, and Kathleen Suckling (née Johnson), born in 1936, recalls the men scything round the edge of the field to let the horse-drawn binder start and then waiting with dogs and sticks for the rats and rabbits as the uncut area in the middle of the field got smaller.



The Thatcher

Verse

My name 'tis Dan - iel Reed - ham, from Nor - folk I - do hail; I
am by trade a that - cher, some say I do it well. I
work the roofs and hou - ses from Yar - mouth through to Lynn, and
when my la - bour's fin - ished all are warm and sa - fe with - in.
All are warm and sa - fe with - in.

2. When I was but a young lad
of no more than thirteen years
I was then bound Apprentice,
my heart was full of fears.
My Master was a hard man;
he taught me all he knew
of thraves, combs, of withynecks,
of shingling-hammer too.

3. I learned about the beetle
to beat the end of reeds;
of how to hone the sheep-shears
as sharp as you would need.
I made the sturdy holder
of hazel, sometimes ash;
I made myself a carrier
for holding reeds well lashed.

4. 'Twas soon that I was put to work
a-helping with my trade;
my days were spent a-matching reeds
until the thraves were made.
The sound of shingling-hammer
on withynecks was heard
until the roofs were strong and safe
and storms could be endured.

5. My youthful years passed
quickly by soon I was on my own;
master of my own thatch
to a craftsman I had grown.
To work with God's and Nature's
gifts; to bend them to a task;
to spend your life beneath the sky
is more than most would ask.

Written by Mike King for a TV programme that was never broadcast, this gives a detailed account of a craftsman's training and his love for his job.

In Harrod's 1876 *Directory of Norfolk* the village of East Ruston (pop 750) boasted a church, a chapel and a school. Occupations included tailors, wheelwrights, carpenters, boot & shoemakers, grocers, a coal merchant, a wherry owner, blacksmiths, publicans, drapers, a machinist, a bailiff and millers. There are also 25 farmers listed. Small wonder people didn't go far from home – they didn't have to.

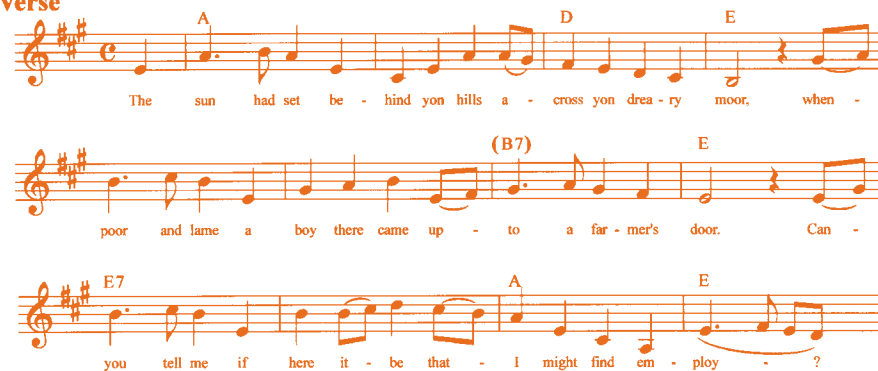
Today there's a school and a pub but the church is un-used and the mill is derelict. However there's an egg producer, a photographer, an importer, and a garden.

Also, home-brewing was much more common than today so the two pubs, the *Butcher's Arms* (still there) and the *Chequers* were not the only sources of beer. Another reason not to stir too far.

Mind you, if your thatched roof needed replacing in 1876 you had to go 3 miles to Happisburgh (William Suffling) or 4 miles to Sutton (John Annison) to find a thatcher. Once they'd done the job though you could be sure it would last. Norfolk reed was the best there was and would be good for 60 years or so.

Farmer's Boy

Verse



Chorus



2. For my father is dead and
 my mother is left
 with fi ve children great and small,
 and what is worse for my mother
 yet;
 I'm the oldest of them all.
 Though small I'll work as hard
 as a horse
 if you will me employ:
 to plough and sow, to reap and mow, to
 be a farmer's boy, to be a farmer's boy.

3. And if that you won't me employ
 one favour I've to ask,
 that's to shelter me till break of day
 from this cold winter's blast.
 At break of day I'll trudge away:
 elsewhere to seek employ;
 to plough and sow, to reap and mow,
 to be a farmer's boy, to be a farmer's
 boy.

4. Come try the lad, the mistress
 said,
 let him no further seek.
 Oh father do, the daughter cried,



as the tears ran down her cheek.
 He'd work if he could;
 it's hard to want food
 and wander for employ;
 don't turn him away, but let him stay
 and be a farmer's boy, and be
 a farmer's boy.

5. They tried the lad and found
 that he
 was worth his weight in gold,
 for he could work with all his might
 and do what he was told.
 Right glad, the farmer asked the lad

to stay in his employ
 to plough and sow, to reap and mow;
 to be a farmer's boy.

6. In course of time the lad grew up
 and the good old farmer died;
 he left the lad the farm he had
 and his daughter for his bride.
 The lad that was; the farm now has;
 oft smiles and thinks with joy
 of the lucky day he came that way
 to be a farmer's boy, to be a farmer's
 boy.

From *A Garland of English Folk Songs* by Frank Kidson (1926) and noted at Drifffield, Yorks.

Everybody likes a good story and if the orphan ends up with the farm and the farmer's daughter that's the best tale of all – one that would bring a tear to the eye of even the stoutest Victorian who heard this song in their drawing room.

George Edwards was a child labourer on a Norfolk farm and dedicated his later long life to preaching in Primitive Methodist Chapels on Sundays and to forming the 'Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers' and Small Holders' Union' on the other days. When George entered Parliament in 1920 this song was sung by ecstatic MPs as he took his seat, re-enacting the success of the Farmer's Boy in real life.

This song was sung by Walter Pardon of Knapton who sang regularly at the Orchard Gardens in North Walsham in the 1970s – where I went to hear him. That was, for me, the last link in a chain: 'Three of Walter's mother's brothers were specially fine singers... but it was Uncle Billy Gee, who lodged with Walter and his parents, who gave Walter the bulk of his songs. In the late 1920s and early 1930s when the Depression was at its worst, Uncle Billy and Walter found themselves with time on their hands... so the couple would spend their afternoons in the garden shed sipping cider or beer and singing songs together. Walter was never sure if Billy had picked up his songs at the *Mitre Tavern* in North Walsham, or if they were handed down from Billy's parents who were born in 1827 and 1831.' (From the notes by Michael Yates to *A World without Horses*.)

So some of the songs Walter sang to us enthralled young revival singers in 1975 could have been learnt by his Great Uncle in the same town in 1845 – 130 years earlier. But then Norfolk's like that.



On Board a Ninety-Eight



2. A bold Press Gang surrounded me,
their Warrant they did show,
and swore that I should go
to sea and face the daring foe.
And so they lugged me to the boat,
oh how I cursed my fate;
'twas then I found that I must float
on board of a ninety-eight.

3. When first I put my foot on board,
how I began to stare;
our Admiral he gave the word;
There is no time to spare.
They weighed their anchor, shook
out sail,

and off they bore me straight
to watch the foe in storm and gale
on board of a ninety-eight.

4. Before we reached Americay
they gave me many a drill;
they soon learnt me a nimble way
to handle an iron pill.
In course of time a fight began
when bold Jack Tars laid straight.
What would I give if I could run
from on board a ninety-eight.

5. But as time fled I bolder grew
and hardened was to war.
I'd run aloft with my ship's crew

and valued not a scar.
So well I did my duty do
I soon made Bosun's Mate,
and damne soon got Bosun too
on board of a ninety-eight.

6. So years rolled by; at Trafalgar
bold Nelson fought and fell;
as they capsized that hardy tar
I caught a rap as well.
To Greenwich college I came back
because I saved my pate;
they only knocked one wing off Jack
on board of a ninety-eight.

7. So now my cocoa I can take;
my pouch with baccy stored;
with my blue clothes and three-
cocked hat

I'm as happy as a Lord.
I've done my duty, served my King,
and now I bless my fate;
but damne, I'm too old to sing;
I'm nearly ninety-eight.





A 'Ninety-Eight' was a 98-gun Man o' War – a very big, rather slow, ship which only fulfilled its function by being in the thick of any battle.

Sung, with 4 other songs, by Mr Leatherday, an ex sailor of the North End, King's Lynn to Vaughan Williams on January 9th 1905.

The young Ralph Vaughan Williams visited the fishing community of the North End of King's Lynn in 1905 and it changed his life. He had heard Folk Song before but here, and in the King's Lynn Workhouse, he noted about 78 songs in two 'magnificently productive days'. (Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*). RVW went on to include some of these tunes in *The English Hymnal* published the next year, and in several of his later classical works.

This song featured in the 2005 concerts to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the visit. Nelson was very popular with the Fleet and with the Norfolk members of it in particular. He was born in the County and was brought up and educated there. His love of the sea was demonstrated when he was a boy by his many visits to Burnham Overy Staithe to watch the shipping. He ensured the loyalty of his men and officers by considering their well-being and earned their admiration by his bold offensives. He reckoned one Norfolk sailor to be worth any two others, never lost his Norfolk accent and once said, 'I am myself a Norfolk man, and I glory in being so.'

Norfolk people, though, could have been more tactful with their Hero. When Nelson was presented with the freedom of the Borough of Yarmouth in 1800 after the Battle of the Nile, the Clerk was about to administer the oath when he noticed Nelson's left hand on the Bible. 'Your right hand, my Lord,' he said. 'That,' replied Nelson, 'is at Teneriffe.' (*Yarmouth is an Antient Town*, A A C Hedges, 1959)

Bungay Roger

Verse

verse

F (D) C (A) F (D) C (A) F (D) C (A) F (D)

Well now I come from Bun-gay town and they call me Bun - gay Ro - ger. They

C (A) F (D) C (A) F (D) C (A) F (D)

axed I o'er and o'er a - gain if I would be a so - dger. They

B♭ (G) F (D) B♭ (G) F (D)

axed I o'er and o'er a - gain if I would take the shil - ling. Cor

B♭ (G) F (D) C (A) F (D) G7 (E7) C (A)

blast says I, I'll have a try just to show that I was wil - ling.

Chorus

Chorus

F (D) C (A) F (D) C (A)

With a fal - a - ral - a - day, and a fal - a - ral - a - day;

F (D) C7 (A7) F (D)

fal - a - ral - a - day 'til I get home.

2. They marched us round the
barrack square
a-doing of our duty proud, sir;
the Sergeant-Major, he was there,
and he was a-hollering loud, sir.
Eyes right! Eyes left!
Cor blast you hold yer head up,
and if I don't do what they say
they buggers I in the lock-up.

3. They march I to the Dining Hall
as hungry as a hunter;
the Orderly Officer, he come round,
Now are there any complaints here?
Well up jumps I and with a cry
I says, There bein't enough of it!
For the meat is high and the taters
are dry.
You can tell the cook to stuff it!

4. Now I be doing thirty-odd days
in my little-old cell sir,
and they be trying thirty-odd ways
to make my life like hell, sir.
They make I run with a blooder
great gun
until I'm nearly dropping.
When me time is through I'm away
off home;
there ain't no fear of me stopping.

5. I wish I was back on the farm
a-pushing of the blooder old
plough sir;
I wish I was back on the farm
a-milking of the blooder old cow sir.
I wish I was back on the farm
with bags of beef and mutton;
with a dirty old fork and a rusty
old knife
cor blast I'd be a glutton.

Bungay is in Suffolk, but this is a song that has travelled a lot anyway, and one version, from Cornwall, is called *Muddlin' Barracks*. It has travelled in time too. I learned this song from my mother in about 1965, and she had got it from her brother who had been in the Army in North Africa in WW2. This was, of course, long after the end of the King's Shilling which had been offered as an inducement to enlisting in earlier wars.

I think she 'cleaned it up' a bit before singing it to me. Curiously, I've never heard anyone else sing verse four and often wonder if it's unique to our family. That's how the oral tradition works, even today.

Newton Flotman Train

Verse

I'm off now to O - ver - strand, - , I'm go-ing where the beach is -

grand - . The train goes there ev - ery day of the year; I'm

off now to O - ver - strand - - -

Chorus

I'm ri - ding on that New - ton Flot - man train - . I'm ri - ding on that

New - ton Flot - man train - . You get on board 'n get off at

Flor - don; I'm ri - ding on that New - ton Flot - man train -

2. I'm going to Geldeston
and when the journey's done
I'll go in the Wherry and come out
merry;
I'm going to Geldeston.

3. I'm getting off at Guestwick
Green;
a smaller place you've never seen;
two people, a cat, and that is that;
I'm getting off at Guestwick Green.

4. I'm leaving for Lowestoft town,
I'm taking the railway down.
I'm going to see the East extremity;
I'm leaving for Lowestoft town

5. I'm bumping to Berney Arms Halt,
a station with only one fault;
when you get out there tha's the
middle of nowhere;
I'm bumping to Berney Arms Halt.

6. I'm wending to Wells-next-Sea;
I'm taking the 9.23,
and if it should rain I'll come
back again;
I'm wending to Wells-next-Sea.

7. I'm steaming to City Station,
that is my destination;
nor Thorpe nor Victori-a ends
my story;
I'm steaming to City Station.

There are about 80 disused railway stations in Norfolk so there's plenty of scope for you to make up some more verses yourself. There never was one at Newton Flotman though – you alighted at Flordon and walked 2 miles! Getting out at Berney Arms Halt (between Reedham and Yarmouth) really does put you in the middle of nowhere, with a 5-mile walk along the Yare or Breydon Water as a bonus. There used to be three termini in Norwich, all just outside the old City walls. Thorpe Station was the first, built by the Norwich and Yarmouth Railway in 1844.

It was rebuilt in 1886 and is the only one still there. Victoria (Queen's Road) was next, built by the *Eastern Union Railway* in 1849, and lastly came City Station (Barn Road) which was the terminus of the *Midland and Great Northern or Muddle and Get Nowhere* as it was affectionately known.

Bold Fisherman

Verse

B \flat (G) E \flat (C) Cm (Am) B \flat (G) E \flat (C) B \flat (G) E \flat (C)

One morn-ing in - the - month of June, down by a ri - ver - side, there she be-

Cm (Am) B \flat (G) E \flat (C)

held - a - bold - fish-er-man - come - ro - wing by - the tide.

Refrain

E \flat (C) B \flat (G) E \flat (C)

Come ro - wing by - the tide. There she be - held - a -

Cm (Am) B \flat (G) E \flat (C)

bold - fish-er-man - come - ro - wing by - the tide - .



2. 'Morning to you bold fisherman.
How came you fishing here?'
'I come a-fishing for your sweet sake
upon this river clear.

Refrain
Upon this river clear.
I come a-fishing for your sweet sake
upon this river clear.'

3. He lashed his boat up by the stem
and to the lady went.
He took her by the milk-white hand,
for it was his intent.

Refrain
For it was his intent,
He took her by the milk-white hand,
for it was his intent.

4. Then he pulled off his morning
gown
and gently laid it down.
There she beheld three chains of
gold
hang dangling three times round.

Refrain
Hang dangling three times round.
There she beheld three chains of
gold
hang dangling three times round.

5. Down on her bending knee she
fell;
so loud for mercy called.
'I'm calling you some bold

fisherman;
I see you are some lord.

Refrain
But I see you are some lord.
I'm calling you some bold fisherman;
But I see you are some lord.'

6. 'Get up, get up, get up,' he cried,
'from off your bending knee.
You have not said one single word
hath least offended me.

Refrain
At least offended me.
You have not said one single word
hath least offended me.'

7. 'I will take you to my father's hall
and there make you my bride,
then you will have a bold fisherman
to row you on the tide.

Refrain
To row you on the tide.
Then you will have a bold fisherman
to row you on the tide.'

From the sleeve notes by Paul Marsh and Steve Roud to *The Bonny Labouring Boy* which includes the above:

This song was probably only 150 years old when Harry Cox sang it for Leslie Shepard on October 10th 1965 but by then Harry had been gathering songs himself for 60 years and since his first meeting with E J Moeran in the early 1920s had been singing them for others to note, and later to record, for over 40 years.

Harry learned many songs from his father but actively sought out other singers who had songs that interested him. 'Many a time, when I've heard of a man in another village who had a song I didn't know, I've walked over to see him, and paid him sixpence to teach it to me. I've walked as far as fifteen miles for a song.'

His daughter Myrtle recalled, 'Because my father was not brilliant at writing... he got his sisters to write songs out for him. Rose was the one that would do a lot of the writing... He'd sing 'em over and she's copy 'em down.'

Bob Thomson wrote in 2000, '... written on loose sheets of paper and in two or three school-type exercise books... Overall the collection was quite sizeable – I suppose about 300/400 songs...'

Peter Coleman of Norwich was the last person other than the family to see Harry, visiting him two days before he died (1971). Although Harry was desperately ill he managed to lift himself slightly from the bed and asked Peter to promise not to let the old songs die out. Peter has been singing some of them ever since and later said, 'There were other singers, but Harry strode like a colossus above them all.'



Yarmouth Town

Verse

G C G C

In Yar-mouth Town there lived a man who kept a Ta-vern by the strand; this

G C G C

land-lord had a dau-ghter fair; a plump lit-tle thing with gol-den hair.

Chorus

G C D G

Well, won't you come down, won't you come down, won't you come down to Yarmouth Town?



2. Now to this tavern come
a wherryman
and asked this daughter for
her hand.
Why should I marry you, she said,
I get all I want without being wed.

3. She said, If with me you want
to linger
I'll tie a bit of string all around
my finger;
as you pass by just pull on the string
and I'll come down and I'll let you in.

4. So at closing time the wherryman
he went to the tavern by the strand,
and then he went and he pulled on
the string,
and she come down and she let
him in.

5. Well he'd never seen such a sight
before,
'cause the string around her finger
was all she wore.
So they went upstairs and he tugged
again
and she pulled back the sheets and
she let him in.

6. The sailorman stayed till the cock
did crow,
then down to the harbour he did go
where he told them all about the
maiden fair;
the plump little thing with the
golden hair.

7. Now the story that very soon got
around
and the very next night in Yarmouth
town
there were fifteen wherrymen
pulling on the string
and she come down and she let
them all in.

8. So all you young men who to
Yarmouth do go,
see a plump little thing with her hair
hanging low;
all you gotta do is pull on the string
and she'll come down and she'll let
you in!

Every port had its 'Sailortown' where various needs would be supplied, and there are many songs, often bawdy, sometimes comical, that tell stories of them. Yarmouth, of course, could not compete with London. Liverpool, Hamburg or Yokohama, but there were certain taverns that were used by sailors in preference to those where he would feel, and be, out of place. Substituting a wherryman for a sailorman brings a sense of scale to proceedings.

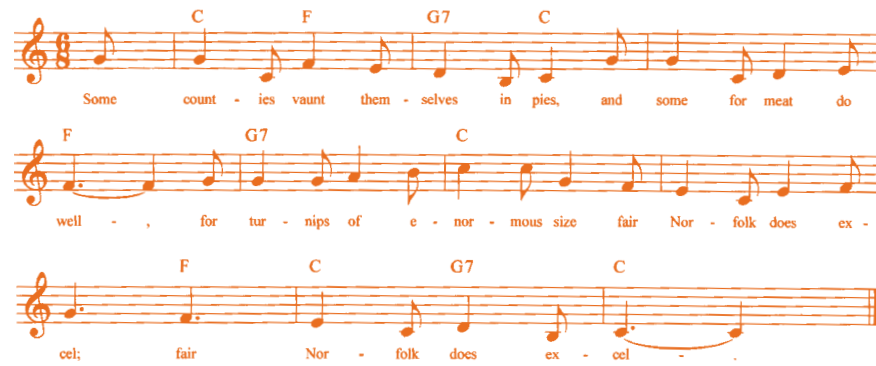
From *Wherries and Wherrymen*, Robert Malster:

To combat some of this the *Norfolk and Suffolk Wherryman's Mission* started on North Quay in 1858 and expanded into the ex *Globe* public house which had been 'notorious for the peculiar infamy and variety of the sins which found a congenial theatre there.' There was later a Wherryman's and Working Men's Institute on North Quay and a Mission boat working up and down the rivers three times a week. Further work was done in Norwich and Aylsham, the latter having a chapel built for wherryman's use.

St Andrew's Church, Great Yarmouth, was consecrated in 1860 and was always known as the 'Wherryman's Church'.



The Norfolk Turnippe



2. This tale an old nurse told to me,
which I relate to you;
and well I know what nurses say
is sacred and is true.

3. At midnight hour a hardy Knight
was walking o'er the ley;
the stars and moon had lost
their light,
and he had lost his way.

4. The wind full loud and sharp
did blow;
the clouds so strong did pour;
and such a night, as stories show,
was never seen before.

5. In vain he fought for half the
night;
no shelter could he spy;
Pity it was so bold a Knight
because of cold should die.

6. Now voices strange assail his ear,
and yet no house was nigh.
Thought he the devil himself is here,
Preserve me God on High!

7. Then summoned he his courage
high
and thus aloud did call,
Giants, demons, come not nigh,
for I defy you all!

8. Then from a hollow turnip near
there came a sudden light;
a friendly voice with accent clear
did thus address the Knight:

9. Sir Knight, no demon lives in here;
no giant keeps this house,
but two poor drovers, goodman Vere
and honest Robin Rouse.

10. We two have taken shelter here
with oxen, ninety-two,
and if you'll enter, never fear,
there's room enough for you!

From the *Town and Country Magazine* of September 1770.
Modern tune. Spelling and occasional words updated
for this book.

'The reputation of Norfolk for turnips dates from the time
of 'Turnip' of Rainham (1674 – 1738) who introduced the
cultivation of turnips on a large scale, and devoted himself
to the improvement of agriculture.' – *Ballads, Songs and
Rhymes of East Anglia*.

The Outing

Verse

I come from Dick-le - bor - ough tha's South Nor - folk way, and to sing you a
 song I've been asked. I hint done no sing - ing for ma - ny a day, and I
 thought that my song days were passed. But I'll tell you the tale of our Out - ing last
 year when we goes up to Lon - don by train; Far - mer Saun - ders he
 pays and he gives us the day, and I hope as he'll do so a - gain.

Chorus

There was Si - mon, there was Sis, there was 'Li - jah, there was Liz, there was Fre - da there was
 Frank and there was Fred. There was Ma - ry, there was Moll, there was Pe - ter, there was Paul, there was
 Nan - cy, there was Nel - ly, there was Ned. There was Har - ry, there was Ham, there was Sid and there was
 Sam, there was Mar - tha, there was Matt and Mo - ther Miles, and the Far - mer said to
 me, now you're in charge, you see, so mind you bring 'em safe home, Gaf - fer Giles.

2. Us drives in a wagon to Thetford town
 and us gets off at six by the train.
 'Is any for breakfast?' a bloke come and says.
 'Ah yes, us be hungry, tha's plain.'
 So us had such a feed and us gets up to go
 when this bloke says, 'Pay up, two pound, one.'
 I say, 'You go on, us has paid for our fare,
 'twas you asked us for breakfast, my son.'

3. Well us gets up to Town and us goes to the Zoo,
 'cause us heard as how there we ought.
 And Sam had an uncle that worked there beside,
 and us thought us 'ould get in for nought.
 But I say to the bloke, 'Just count us and see
 if us all come back out safe and sound,
 for I've heard as some blokes get lost in the Zoo
 and when time to come home, can't be found.'

4. Next, us go to a place called Trafal - agar Square,
 and the beautiful fountains to see.
 And Fred say to me, 'Can us paddle in here?'
 I say, 'And that fare to be free.'
 So us takes off our boots and us takes off our socks
 and us paddles about in the sun, and a crowd gathers round and they cheer
 and they laugh,
 and they seem to think suffin were fun.



You can personalise the comic chorus of 'The Outing' by substituting your own selection of names.

This song was a favourite of Ray Hubbard. We know about the life of Ray from the notes of John Halliday, who interviewed Ray in 2008 before issuing the CD *Horsemen's Harvest*. Ray Hubbard was born at Langmere near Dickleborough, south Norfolk, in 1933. His family was steeped in music; his parents and grandparents all played a variety of instruments (concertina, mouth-organs, accordions) and sang. In addition, his father and grandfather were both horsemen.

Ray started playing at 6 years and had music lessons. He got a local Saturday job when only 8 years old with Mr Saunders at Langmere Hall Farm, working with Suffolk Shire horses. He passed the exam for Diss Grammar School, wanting to become a Vet but the school wanted £400 which was beyond his family. He got a full-time job at 14 on Langmere Farm and was told that when he was 21 he could take over the farm. This he duly did in 1954.

When the farm was sold in 1966, Ray was still there working only with horses, the last man to do so.

Ray played church organ at Rushall and was choirmaster at Dickleborough where an appeal for funds for the bells produced a Concert Party which toured Norfolk for 10 years.

Butter and Cheese and All



2. Now the first time I went
 a-courting,
 I'll tell you the reason why.
 It was to a jolly old cook
 who my wants she did supply.
 She fed me off the best roast beef
 and plenty of mince pies.
 And when that I was hungry,
 my wants she would supply.

3. One night I went to see her,
 she invited me to tea.
 She said, 'The missus amd master's
 out,
 we'll have a jolly spree'.
 I went into the parlour
 my own true love to please,
 and into one pocket she rammed
 some butter

and into the other some cheese.

4. Now after supper was over
 and I could eat no more.
 O Lor, at my surprise
 when a rap came at the door.
 And then for a hiding place, my boys,
 for that I did not know,
 then up the chimley I did go,
 as black as any old crow.

5. Now the fire, it being rather warm,
 it began to scorch my knees.
 Likewise to melt my butter,
 likewise to toast my cheese.
 For every drop dropped in the fire
 a mighty blaze was there.
 The master swore in his old heart
 the devil himself was there.

6. Now up the top the master went
 to drive old Harry out.
 He began to pour cold water down
 which put me to a rout.
 And down the chimley I did come
 and into the streets did crawl.
 I was obliged to ramble as fast as
 I could
 with my butter and cheese and all.

7. Now some they said it was
 Old Nick,
 for him you very well know.
 And some they said 'twas the devil
 himself,
 for I was as black as a crow.
 The dogs did bark, the children
 screamed,
 out flew the old women and all,
 and they began to blubber it out,
 'He's got butter and cheese and all.'

East Anglia is generally considered to be the part of England most rich in folk songs and folk singers. Sam Lerner learned many of his songs from his father and sang in public from the age of 9. Later in life he sang at many fishermen's concerts all the way from Shetland to Cornwall – as well as his local pub, the Fisherman's Return.

"We used to have some good old times when we used to come home from sea. We used to get in the old pub, have a pint or two around, give them a drink, a song and a four-handed reel. Round we'd go and up we'd go and we used to have a rare old, good old time. That's all there was for our enjoyment."

Sam was born in Winterton in 1878 when the population was almost 900 and its chief industry was fishing. He first went to sea aged 8 in a sailing lugger and made his first trip under steam in 1899. By the time he was 55 he had many times visited the Faroe Islands, the Norwegian Deeps and the Channel Grounds as well as much of the Northern Sea and had, according to his doctor, "worn himself out with hard work". He made his first recording in 1957 aged 79 and became well-known in the Folk Song Revival. 65 songs were collected from Sam: traditional ballads, broadsides, sea-songs, music hall pieces etc.

Acknowledgements

Notes about songs by Alan Helsdon of Norwich except where otherwise credited.

Alan Helsdon is Norwich born and bred and has been involved with many folk activities in Norfolk including running the Norwich Folk Club and various Singarounds, Sessions and Ceilidh bands. He has taught in the County's schools since 1978 and has recently published 'Hawk & Harnser' – a collection of Norfolk dance tunes.

All songs are traditional except:

Blue Water Wherries and *Newton Flotman Train* by Alan Helsdon

The Thatcher – by Mike King

Tunes for *Norfolk Harvest Song* and *The Norfolk Turnippe* by Alan Helsdon

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Historical photographs courtesy of the Norfolk Record Office and Norfolk County Council Library & Information Service.

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