

singing histories

Plymouth



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Foreword

Admit it. How many of you have heard someone dismiss folk music as being all big beards and open-toed sandals? Perhaps you've even seen someone stifle a yawn when the verses seemed to just keep coming? Or seen how easily people simply banish folk music to a musical bunker in some dusty parallel universe considered somehow irrelevant to life today? Well, little do they know.

It was the great Louis Armstrong who said, 'All music is folk music. I ain't heard no horse sing a song'. The truth is, the breadth, passion, generosity and sheer diversity of folk music is seldom given the credit it deserves. But it is here. In fact, if Louis Armstrong were alive in Plymouth today I'm willing to bet a pair of outdated open-toed sandals that he'd be the first to help us blow our own trumpet about the kind of folk music that's actually alive and being shared in and around this extraordinary city – and the best of it is captured in this booklet.

Who would have imagined that our top ten could include a romantic song about a pasty that could bring a tear to your eye? Or a curiously funny tale of what happened to a lighthouse keeper when he slept with a mermaid? Don't ask. It involves a porpoise. Indeed, what makes this booklet so engaging is its extraordinary variety. On one page there's a rousing historical sea shanty extolling the virtues of drinking 'Nelson's blood', while on another you can revel in a more contemporary political comment on European fishing regulations affecting the fishing industry in 'Tie Em Up' – a protest song 'gifted' by its author Geoff Lakeman, the father of the newly crowned darling of Devon folk music, Seth Lakeman.

Whatever the page, on land or sea, we set out to connect the ideas of singing, local identity and local history. All the songs are set in or are closely related to Plymouth and have been especially chosen because they are accessible and culturally relevant to everyone, particularly young people.

So much of what really sets the folk tradition apart is the way it evolves and share its music even through 'collectors', with a passion and integrity rarely seen in other musical quarters. Well, this booklet was compiled with the love of local encyclopaedic folk enthusiasts so is hopefully a gift to that tradition. So set aside your preconceptions grab your 'grog' and hoist the sails – and be prepared for a journey of discovery that takes you to some of the most unexpected places...

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Roll The Old Chariot Along

Trad - Arr Roger Smith and Paul Wilson

Original verses

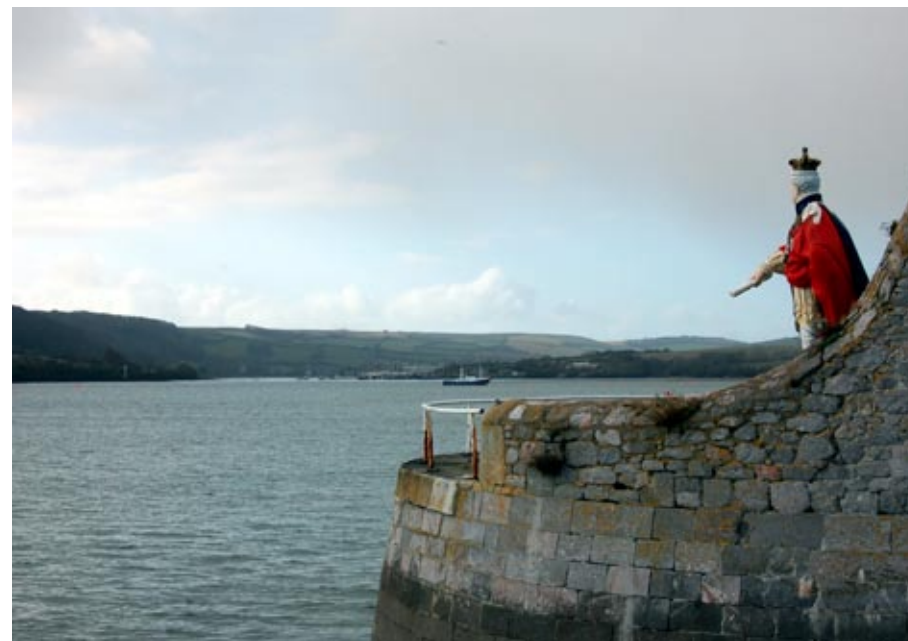
Oh we come from Plymouth Town
 you can see the lights on shore x3
 And we'll all go rolling home
 A drop of Nelson's blood
 wouldn't do us any harm x3
 And we'll all go rolling home
 A good square meal
 wouldn't do us any harm x3
 And we'll all go rolling home
 Oh, a nice watch below
 wouldn't do us any harm x3
 And we'll all go rolling home
 A night on shore
 wouldn't do us any harm x3
 And we'll all go rolling home

Chorus

Roll the old chariot along
 Roll the old chariot along
 Roll the old chariot along
 And we'll all hang on behind

New verses for school age singers or make up your own!

A new suit of clothes
 wouldn't do us any harm x3
 And we'll all go rolling home
 Fish and chips
 wouldn't do us any harm x3
 And we'll all go rolling home
 Fishing in the river
 wouldn't do us any harm x3
 And we'll all go rolling home

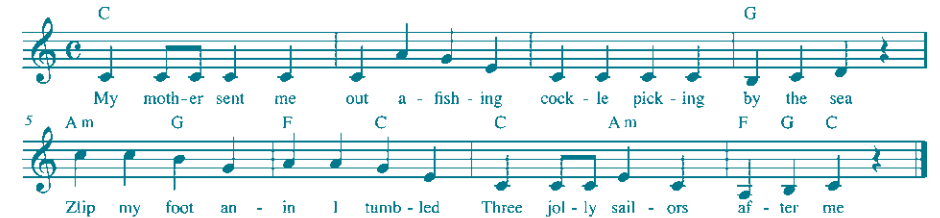


This is a perfect example of a traditional early 19th century work song or sea shanty with rousing chorus. Most shanties were lively, with different speeds for the different jobs onboard, and lifted the spirits of the hard-working crew. It would have been sung by the crew to keep rhythm during heavy group tasks on deck such as hoisting sails or weighing anchor. New verses would be added to existing song and adjusted to last for the duration of the chore. This version was obviously created by a crew out of Plymouth who felt hard done by and unhappy with the hard existence they experienced with bad weather and lack of food during their sea voyage.



Sailor's Lass

From the Baring Gould Collection/Wren Music
Taken down by W. Whitworth from the singing of Mr. Bunsell, Devonport 1870
Thanks to Marilyn Tucker, Martin and Shan Graebe



My mother sent me out a fishing
Cockle picking by the sea
Slip my foot and in I tumbled
Three jolly sailors after me

Sailors they have gold and silver
Soldiers they have naught but brass
I don't care what my mother tells me
I will be a sailor's lass

My mother said if I married a sailor
It would break her tender heart
I don't care what to mother matters
I will take the sailor's part

He will buy me sheets and blankets
He will buy me diamond rings
He will buy me a pair of circles
When the wedding hoops he brings

This is one of many traditional Cornish songs and music collected by the eccentric Rev Sabine Baring-Gould in late 19th century. A prolific author, he was also a scholar, antiquarian, folklorist and hymn writer (he wrote *Onward Christian Soldiers* and *Now the Day is Over*). Baring Gould would visit singers in their homes or at their work and write down the words of their songs while a musician assistant would learn the tune. A true Victorian, Baring-Gould tried to place the songs in their social and cultural context. In this tune, despite her mother's warnings of possible hardship, the young girl prefers to be a 'Sailor's Lass' and looks forward to married life adorned with gold, silver and diamond rings.

The Oggie Man

Words and Music Cyril Tawney

Well the rain's soft ly fal ling and the Og gie Man's no more I
can't hear him cal ling like I used to be fore I came through the gate way and I
heard the ser geant say "The big boys are com ing see their stands a cross the way Yes the
rain's soft ly fal ling and the Og gie Man's no more

1. Well the rain's softly falling and the
Oggie Man's no more

I can't hear him calling like I used to
before

I came through the gateway and
I heard the ser geant say

'The big boys are coming see their see
their stands across the way'

Refrain

Yes the rain's softly falling and the
Oggie Man's no more

2. It was here that she told me when
she bade me goodbye

'There's no one will miss you one half as
much as I

My love will endure dear like a beacon
in a squall

Eternal as that Oggie Man beneath the
dockyard wall'

Refrain

Well the rain's softly falling and the
Oggie Man's no more

Repeat verse 1 if desired



An 'Oggie Man' was a stall holder who sold Cornish pasties and other snacks in late 19th century. Traditionally the pasty was a whole meal – with savory filling at one end and sweet at the other, wrapped in a pastry parcel.

According to this tune, written in 1966, the particular oggie booth was beside the Albert Gate of the Royal Dockyard at Devonport and dockers could always count on the oggie man for a quick meal. However heavy bomb damage during WWII (1940s) destroyed many surrounding buildings and this song now serves as a poignant reminder of the passing of a thriving dockyard and region – and the absence of many friends and lovers.

Tie Em Up

Words and Music - Geoff Lakeman

Man and boy fish a - hoy Spend me life in days at sea now they
 want-na make a land - lub-ber out of me tie me up be - side the quay
 Tie em up tie em up don't let em sail Tie em up tie
 em up bet - ter sel - ling up than ty - ing up

1. Man and boy fish ahoy
 Spend me life in days at sea
 Now they want to make a landlubber
 out of me
 Tie me up beside the quay

Chorus

Tie em up tie em up, tie em up don't let
 em sail
 Tie em up tie em up, better selling up
 than tying up

2. A man in a suit he came down here
 Took a stroll along the pier
 Looked at his list and he told me square
 You can go fishin' just once a year

Chorus

3. Brixham, Plymouth Padstow crews
 Mevagissey, poor old Looe
 Newlyn boys they're all sunk too
 Thrown overboard like an old fish stew

Chorus

4. Quotas, rotas laws and rules
 Ministry men from public schools
 Telling us all to down our tools
 They don't give a damn that we're all
 washed up

Chorus

5. We've risked our lives, left our wives
 Missed our children growing up
 Now we left our boats and come ashore
 Signed on the dole to fish no more

Chorus



A genuine protest song from the early 1990s, this folk song decries the fishing subsidies brought in during the Thatcher government. Loans and subsidy payments were meant to be an incentive for fishermen. Terms of the new contracts dictated when the fishermen went out to fish and when to stay in port.

Unfortunately these new quotas and conditions badly affected most fishermen. This was an unpopular change to a centuries old way of life which bankrupted an entire industry. The chorus expresses the sentiment of many Plymouth fishermen that it was better to be 'selling up' rather than 'tying up' their boats.

Mack'rel Up The Wall

Words and Music Paul Wilson

The word is out the fish are in a mil - lion sil - ver
 tales and fins the cry goes up to run on down there's mack 'rel up the wall

1. The word is out the fish are in
 A million silver tails and fins
 The cry goes up to run on down
 There's mack'rel up the wall

2. Now it's fishing fever time,
 People run with rod and line
 It's out of May and into June
 There's mack'rel up the wall

3. First one then two and then a score
 Two hundred people maybe more
 With bait and nets and floats and all
 There's mack'rel up the wall

4. Boys with silver paper bait
 Are catching lots and going great
 With sticks and string and old bent
 pins
 There's mack'rel up the wall

5. Blokes who have the latest gear
 Sometimes the fish just won't come
 near
 And then they'll cadge from someone
 else
 There's mack'rel up the wall

6. Down with newspapers they come
 They're filled with fish for everyone
 Enough for all and some to spare
 There's mack'rel up the wall

7. If nets get tangled swear and curse
 Cut your line, it could be worse
 Carry on the fishing spree
 There's mack'rel up the wall

8. Week on week they share it out
 No-one goes away without
 You don't need money here you know
 There's mack'rel up the wall

9. Out of June comes hot July
 Fishing fever quickly dies
 Until next year it starts again with
 Mack'rel up the wall
 Mack'rel up the wall
 Mack'rel up the wall
 SHOUTED
 Mack'rel up the wall!



Written during a Plymouth song-making project in 1994, this folksong captures the thrill of the annual mackerel run, an event that occurred regularly up until the recent past. It is part of local oral history that each summer large mackerel shoals arrived in the nearby coves. Someone would shout, "Mackerel up the wall". Once the alarm was raised, all the townspeople would rush out of their houses and down to the water's edge where whole families would fish for their supper. The supply was so plentiful, you were able to fish with just 'sticks, string and old bent pins'. The chorus deliberately tries to echo the town crier-like shout of 'Mackerel' and the resultant excitement of the time.

The Ramble-ay

Traditional - From the Hammond and Gardiner MS.
Collected early 20th century from Joseph Elliott of Todber
Arr Paul Wilson

G Bm C D G Bm

Now it happen'd to be on a cer-tain day when the Ram-ble-ay__ to her__

C D G Bm C A m D D D G

an - chors__ lay Twas__ in the__ night the gale came on and she from her an - chors a - way did run

Now it happened to be on a certain day
When the Rambley to her anchors lay
T'was in the night the gale came on
And she from her anchors away did run

Our fore and main t'gallant yards being
struck
And everything both neat and snug
Our closed reef topsails neat was
spread

We was thinking to weather the old
Ram's Head

The rain came down in huge great drops

Oh the seas wash over our main top
And when we could no better do
We let our cables run right through

Our bosun cries my hearties all
O listen unto me while I pipes my call
Come launch your boats your lives to
save

Or the seas this night will be your
grave

Over board over board our long boats
tossed
And so many got in that the most was
lost

There was some in one place, some in
another
And the watch down they were all
smothered

Sad news sad news to Plymouth Town
That the Rambleay was lost and most
was drowned

All Plymouth town will float with tears
In hearing of these sad affairs

Come all you pretty maidens wherever
you be
That lost your loves in the Rambleay
There was only but one to tell the tale
How our ship behaved all in the gale'



This song is a sad reminder of the often dangerous life of seamen in the 18th century. Journeys were long and arduous. Many ships with their entire crew and cargo were lost at sea. It became a common practice to have charitable appeals for the bereaved families of such disasters.

This particular song was circulated for the benefit of many Plymouth families who had lost loved ones aboard the troopship HMS Ramilles. During a violent storm in 1760, more than 700 lives were lost when the ship went aground off the perilous south Devon coast. Ramillies Cove was named in memory of this naval tragedy.

Tom's Gone To Hilo

Collected from John Short of Watchet by Cecil Sharp
Collated by Marilyn Tucker and Paul Wilson
Arr Paul Wilson



When first the world I did begin,
Tommy's gone and I'll go too
Away down Hilo
Tommy's gone and I'll go too
Tom's gone to Hilo

Tommy's gone to Plymouth town
Away down Hilo
Tommy's gone to Plymouth town
Tom's gone to Hilo

Tommy's gone what shall I do?
Away down Hilo
Tommy's gone what shall I do?
Tom's gone to Hilo

Tommy's gone for evermore
Away down Hilo
Tommy's gone for evermore
Tom's gone to Hilo

The eminent composer and teacher Cecil Sharp wanted to preserve the vocal and instrumental (dance) folk music of the British Isles. This 17th century sea shanty is from his collection and tells a common story of sailors and their lives at the time. It would seem that 'Tom' had boarded ship in Plymouth and sailed around the dangerous Cape Horn, the southernmost tip of South America. As ships could only enter ports that recognized their national flags, the port of Ylo in southern Peru would have been the first welcoming place to stop-over for water and provisions.

There are several interpretations of this particular tune which has survived intact and is still one of the more popular shanties.



Captain Ward

From the Baring Gould collection from the singing of Sam Fone, Dec 1892
Collation and historical notes by Marilyn Tucker and Paul Wilson Wren Music



There came a ship a-sailing, a-sailing
from the West
Loaded with silks and satins and
choice things of the best
Till we fell in with Captain Ward all on
the seas so green
He robbed us of all our store bid us go
tell our King

Our King he had a noble ship a ship of
gallant fame
Launched on the twenty fourth of
March the Rainbow was her name
With full five hundred seamen bold as
ever your eyes did see
With full five hundred seamen bold to
keep her company

Then oh away the Rainbow went a
sailing on the main
In search of this bold robber and Ward
it was his name

'Who's this, who's this' says Captain
Ward 'my name I'll never deny
But if you are in some King's high ship
then you're welcome to pass by'

'Oh yes, I am the Kind's high ship and
I speak it to your grief
Let you and I some battle try before our
sails we reef'

'With all my heart' cries Captain Ward
'I value not one pin
For though you've got brass for blazing
show, still I've good steel within'

It was early on the next morning that
the red blood began to run
The fight went on till day was done and
set the golden sun

'Fight on fight on', says Captain Ward
'and tell your King from me
That if you fight on for another night
still your master I will be

Go home go home' says Captain Ward
'and tell your Kind from me
That he might be King on the green,
green land, but I am King at sea'

Then it's back returned the rainbow
sailing home again
Put up in Plymouth Sound once more,
but half the crew were slain
'Alack alack, then says our King I once
had Captains three
And if any of them were still alive they'd

have brought proud ward to me
Alack alack, then says our King I once
had Captains three
And if any one of them was still alive
he'd have brought proud Ward to me.'

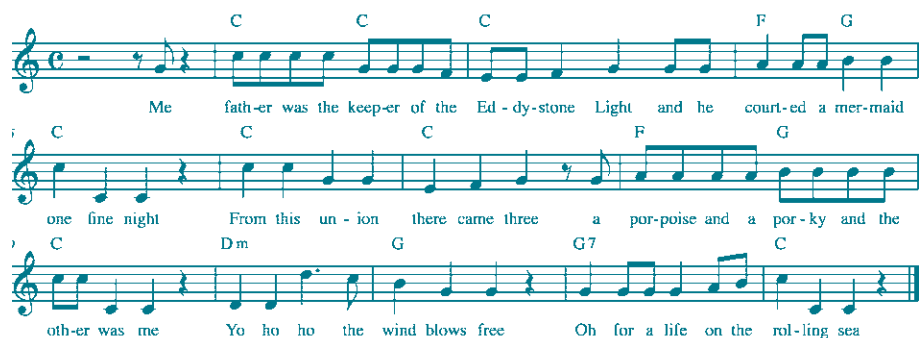
*For the last two longer verses, simply
repeat the second half
of the tune to carry the words of the
extra yrics.*

Another classic ballad from the Baring Gould collection, this
song is an account of the historic Englishman and pirate, Captain
John 'Jack' Ward. In true early 17th century fashion he was a
buccaneer who captured ships, engaged in sea battles, was
shipwrecked and arrested. Captain Ward traveled and traded
around the Mediterranean and used Tunis as his safe haven.

At one time he offered King James I large amounts of
money in return for amnesty for himself and his men. The pardon
was refused so Captain Jack did not return to England. He
converted to Islam and took the name Yusuf Reis. He was able
to live out his days – reportedly 70 years - in style and splendour
in north Africa.

The Eddystone Light

Author Unknown



*Me father was the keeper of the
 Eddystone Light
 And he courted a mermaid one fine
 night
 From this union there came three
 A porpoise and a porky and the other
 was me*

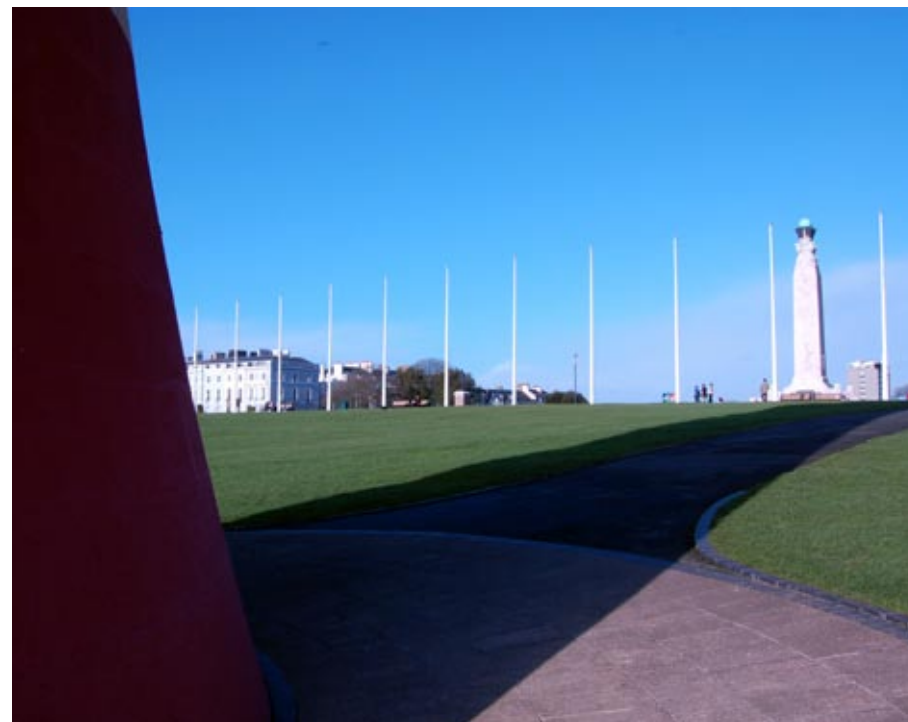
*Chorus
 Yo ho ho, the wind blows free,
 Oh for a life on the rolling sea*

*One night, as I was a-trimming of the
 glim
 Singing a verse of the evening hymn
 A voice on the starboard shouted
 'Ahoy!'
 And there was my mother, a-sitting on
 a buoy*

*Chorus
 'Oh what has become of my children
 three?'
 My mother then she asked of me
 'One was exhibited as a talking fish
 The other was served from a chafing
 dish'*

*Chorus
 Then the phosphorous flashed in her
 seaweed hair
 I looked again and my mother wasn't
 there
 But her voice came echoing back from
 the night
 'To Hell with the keeper of the
 Eddystone Light!'*

Chorus



In 1698, the Eddystone Lighthouse was the first lighthouse to be built on a small grouping of rocks in open sea. Some 14 miles off Plymouth, the tower lit the treacherous rocks to ease navigation. But it was the fourth lighthouse, built by John Smeaton, that really captured the imagination of the entire world. Using Cornish labourers, local granite, great ingenuity and all his engineering skills, Smeaton was able to overcome many problems and successfully open his 24-candle lighthouse on 16 October 1759. In the process, he had come up with the formula for quick drying cement which would revolutionise future building projects.

The Eddystone Lighthouse is Plymouth's most famous landmark and was re-opened at its present site on Plymouth Hoe in 1882. It stands 51 metres high with a range of 24 miles.

Outward Bound

From the Baring Gould collection. Taken down from Will Huggins Lydford
This version collated by Paul Wilson
from the singing of Cyril Tawney, Martin Scragg and others

To the Plym outh Dock we bade fare well, to charming Pol ly and love ly Nell With our
an - chors weighed and the sails un - fur'l'd we're bound a - cross the wat - cr - y world for the
seas we are out ward bound for the seas we are out - ward bound

To the Plymouth dock we bade farewell
To charming Polly and Lovely Nell
With our anchors weighed and the sails unfurled
We're bound across the watery world
For the seas we are outward bound
For the seas we are outward bound

Now the wind it blew from east north east
And our ship she does nine knots at least
At the Spaniards we let fly
While we've grog we'll never say die
For the seas we are outward bound
For the seas we are outward bound

When we return to the Plymouth docks
Those fair pretty maids come round in flocks
One to the other you can hear them say
'Here comes Jack with his 3 years pay
From the seas he is homeward bound
From the seas he is homeward bound'

And when we get to the Dog and Bell,
Where there's good poison for to sell
Out comes old Arch with his sweetest smile
Saying 'drink my lads tis worth your while
From the seas you are homeward bound
From the seas you are homeward bound'

And when our money is gone and spent
And there's none to be borrowed and none to be lent
Out comes old Arch with his sourest frown
'Get up Jack, let John sit down'
For Jack is outward bound, but John is homeward bound
For Jack is outward bound, but John is homeward bound

From the Baring Gould collection, this humorous folk tune recounts the folly of a Jack Tar who returns to Plymouth after three long years at sea. With wages in his pocket, at first he is welcomed and befriended by all. However, when he has spent everything on the luxuries of food, drink, women and sport, his popularity begins to wane. People ask him to step aside and give up his seat as he is now 'outward bound'. He is penniless and will be looking to sign on to another sea voyage.

Plymouth Dock is the old name for Devonport, and gives historical resonance to the song.

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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.

The *Singing Histories* series includes eight regions: Plymouth, Birmingham, Kent, London, Manchester, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Sunderland.

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