sleepers songbook Songs collected from traditional singer

Carrie Milliner, and the Bobbin Family.

Dedicated with thanks to Carrie Milliner and the Bobbin Family.



Arranged by Chloë & Jason Roweth Includes lyrics, melodies and guitar chords

THIRD EDITION

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16 Songs collected from Carrie Milliner and the Bobbin Family

Arranged by Chloë & Jason Roweth

"Dad's place was a meeting place for the songs....they'd all come to Dad's and sing...that's how I've got hold of so many of their songs..."

"Mum would have our tea cooked, and after the washing up was done Dad would get us around the fire and make us sing one song each, then we were allowed out to play."

"...when I sing their songs, I feel they're close...they're there with me as I sing 'em...I try to sing 'em like Grandfather would, I try to take all their voices off as much as I can when I sing their songs...we just naturally followed the way our parents and grandparents sang. If you don't put feeling into a song, what's the point of singing it? You've got to sing it from the heart."

"I used to follow Dad around like a little puppy and every time he sang it'd go straight into my brain. I'd go away and sing it through 'til I knew I had it right."

"...he'd be singing or humming a tune while he worked, we'd snig the sleepers and we'd have the times of our lives, never thought about being tired..."

"...when I sing their songs I feel they're close...they're there with me as I sing 'em...I try to sing 'em like Grandfather would, I try to take all their voices off as much as I can when I sing their songs...we just naturally followed the way our parents and grandparents sang. If you don't put feeling into a song, what's the point of singing it? You've got to sing it from the heart."

Quotes are from the National Library recordings of Carrie Milliner, and from her memoirs.



Carrie Milliner

Introduction

By Chloë & Jason Roweth

We had just finished a performance at the National Folk Festival in 1997 when we first met with the incredible enthusiasm of Rob Willis and heard words we've thankfully heard many times since, "I've got



something I think you might be interested in.". A short time later, a tape recording of Carrie Milliner (nee Bobbin) arrived by post. Rob had drawn our attention specifically to a song by the name of "Bonnie Moon", and what a beauty it was. We were so caught up in listening to and learning this song, that for a week or so we didn't even listen to the rest of the tape. When we finally did, we found a number of remarkable songs, many of which we'd never heard before. The ones we had heard were brought to new life by Carrie's feeling and delivery, singing in the traditional, unaccompanied style. We enthused to Rob over what we had heard and shortly after received 5 more tapes!

Carrie Milliner (nee Bobbin, born 1926) grew up in the bush of "The Nullica", eight miles from Eden, on the far south coast of NSW. The large extended family lived hard working lives as sleeper cutters. In fertile isolation, this family of singers aurally maintained a fantastic collection of songs. Some of the songs have a traceable history in the family for generations.

Carrie and her siblings learnt the majority of these songs as young kids. They sang as they were hard at work snigging sleepers, by the camp-fire, and I the dance halls. Carrie in particular found a passion for remembering the songs.

Over one hundred songs, poems and fragments have been collected from Carrie Milliner and the Bobbin family. The remarkable variety of the songs, Carrie's singing style, and her accompanying stories provide a fascinating glimpse of the Australian aural tradition at work. Many thanks to Rob Willis, John Meredith and Kevin Bradley for their efforts in making these recordings, and for passing the tapes on to us. Thanks also to the National Library of Australia.

This song book is based on our arrangements of sixteen songs collected from Carrie Milliner and the Bobbin Family as recorded on the CD "Sleepers" – Us Not Them and Friends.

The Songs

This song book is based on our arrangements.

We have occasionally made educated guesses at unclear words, and have sparingly chosen to complete songs using lyrics from other collected and sheet music sources. While we stick close to Carrie Milliner's versions, we have straightened some rhythms, and shifted tunes slightly to accommodate the transition away from unaccompanied singing.

We have learnt a great deal as singers and musicians listening to Carrie, but in arranging, performing and recording these songs we have not attempted to recreate any particular style of performance. Rather, we have tried to stay true to the spirit of the songs, and to trust our instincts; treating the songs as part of a living tradition.

1. The Wanderers

A poem written by James Hebblethwaite in Tasmania in the late 1800's. Carrie remembers her brother Fred reciting this one as a child. We couldn't resist writing a tune!

2. Where Is My Wandering Boy

Composed by American Robert Lowry and published in 1877 as a hymn. This version, polished and simplified, has two beautiful, rearranged-arranged verses left from the original. Carrie summed this one up with a succinct "I like that!"

3. When the Sheep are In the Fold

A lovely old song also collected from Carrie's sister, Nance Burton. Composed by Fred Helf and lyricist C. M. Dennison (New York), it had become simpler and sweeter by the time Carrie learnt it from her mum.

4. The Rambling Bachelors

Traditional English ballad collected from many of the 'extended family, including cousin Max Walker and Aunt Lil. Carrie associates the song with her cousin Alby Bobbin, who learnt this very big ballad from his father Leaton at the age of seven! This song has everything; romance, jealousy, murder, suicide - and cross-dressing.

5. I Never Will Marry

Well known English/Irish traditional song adopted readily in America and, it seems, Australia as well. Carrie comments that later recorded versions of songs often frustrated her attempts to remember the old tune.

6. I Don't Work for a Living

Comic music-hall song, written by James Mullen and Edward Leroy Freeman. Our version has a verse and chorus from Carrie, a verse collected from Ebb Wren of Forbes, and another chorus collected from Don Kinder. Every time we sing this song, we meet someone whose father also sang it!

7. The Wild Colonial Boy

Only when siblings Carrie, Tom and Nance were all together for a recording session with Rob Willis could they remember their dad's great tune for The Wild Colonial Boy. The three spoken lines also came from Dad.

8. The Drunkards Child

A traditional English song, published as a Broadsheet 1833-1841 in London. Carrie learnt this one from her uncle Leaton and cousin Alby.

9. The Wild Rover / Home Sweet Home

Another one of Dad's songs, this version of 'The Wild Rover' was also collected from bush fiddler and singer Joe Cashmere of Hilston. The waltz tune, 'Home Sweet Home", comes from Melbourne old time dance band 'The Jerry Atrix' (collected by Alan Musgrove).

10. Bonnie Moon

This beautiful traditional ballad, also known as 'The Banks of Clyde", is extremely precious to Carrie and her family, and was passed down from Carrie's greatgrandfather Bobbin.

11. Goodbye Sally

Author unknown. Carrie learnt this one from her uncle, Jack. After two attempts at singing this song, the adventurous melody led Carrie to say "that one seems to go all over the place and you can't seem to do anything about it!"

12. Just as the Sun Went Down

Composed by Lyn Udall, and published in 1898, after the American Civil War. Carrie's version has been polished/edited over time, and naturally retains the strong, universal sentiments. This song is one of a few from the Bobbin collection that is also used as a dance tune by old-time musicians.

13. Little Rosewood Casket

Written in 1870 by L. R Goullaud and C. A. White as 'A Package of Old Love Letters' (Ozark Folksongs). Many songs from America found their way to the Bobbin family; traditional material, early country, popular styles and more.

14. Black Velvet Band

Quite a few well known traditional Australian songs were sung by Carrie, often with interesting variations – this version of the Black Velvet Band has a particularly lovely tune. Similar lyrics have been collected by Alex Hood from Toby Willis, W.A., and published in John Meredith's Folk Songs of Australia (Vol.1).

15. Little Darling

Author unknown. Carrie remembers her dad singing this one around the fire. Just one example of the early country songs that were being sung at "The Nullica".

16. Barbary Allen

A traditional ballad, sung by Granny Bobbin and well known among the family. This very old story with its underlying mysteries has been collected throughout the English-speaking world.

1. The Wanderers

(Words: James Hebblethwaite – Tasmania, 1899/Tune: C. & J. Roweth - 2000)



While I rode in the early dawn while stars were fading white, I saw upon a grassy slope a campfire burning bright, With tent behind and blaze before three loggers in a row, Sang all together joyously pull up the stakes and go, Pull up the stakes and go.

As I rode on by Eaglehawk the wide blue deep of air, The wind among the glittering leaves, the flowers so sweet and fair, The thunder of the rude salt waves, the creeks soft overflow, All joined in chorus to the words pull up the stakes and go, Pull up the stakes and go.

Nearby the tent on forest's skirt, by odour of the earth, By sight and scent of morning smoke, by evening campfire mirth, By deep sea calls and foaming greens, by new stars gleam and glow, By summer trails in antique lands, pull up the stakes and go, Pull up the stakes and go.

The world is wide and we are young and sounding marches beat, And passion pipes the sweetest call in lanes and fields and streets, To rouse the chorus brothers all when something has to show, When death comes round and strikes our tent pull up the stakes and go, Pull up the stakes and go.

2. Where is My Wandering Boy

(Robert Lowry)



Where is my wandering boy tonight, the boy of my tender years, The boy that was once so dear to me, and none was so sweet as he?

Chorus:

Oh where is my boy tonight? Oh where is my boy tonight? My heart o'erflows, for I love him, he knows. Oh where is my boy tonight?

Go for my wandering boy tonight, go search for him where you will, And bring him to me in all his plight, tell him I love him still.

3. When the Sheep are in the Fold, Jennie Dear

(Words: C. M. Dennison, Music: F. Helf)



It was twilight in the dear old southern valley, The sun was slowly sinking in the west. Down a winding track towards home, a shepherd's going, His sheep are in the fold and safe at rest.

By the old gate in the lane-way stands a lassie, And like the sun her sweet smile seems to disappear. As he says, "Farewell one day I'll be returning, When the sheep are in the fold, Jennie dear."

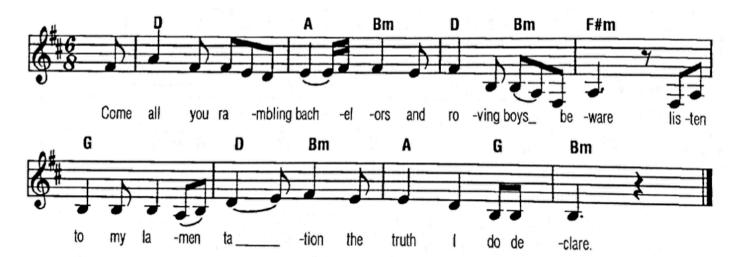
Chorus:

When the sheep are in the fold, Jennie dear, And the harvest moon is shining soft and clear, Let loves star burn bright and true, I will ever think of you, When the sheep are in the fold, Jennie dear.

But once more I roam a-down this same old valley, My heart is sad because you are not here. In the old church-yard tonight I'll find you sleeping. Like the sheep, you're in the fold, Jennie dear.

4. The Rambling Bachelors

(Traditional)



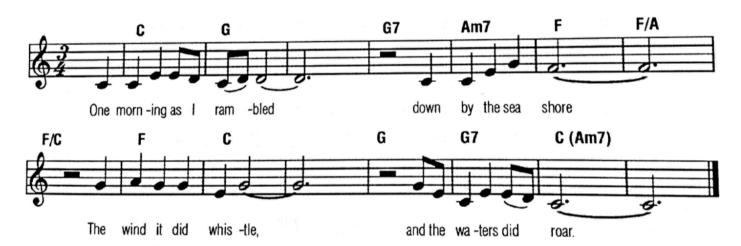
Come all you rambling bachelors and roving boys beware,
Listen to my lamentation, the truth I do declare.
It's concerning two young lovers, who were both bound down with love;
To taste the joys of wedlock, 'til fortune proved unkind.
There was James Conroy a farmer's son, I'll write his tragedy,
He courted lovely Betsy, the pride of Abigail.
But he was tempted to jealousy, and bound down in an oath,
That they'd live and love together, 'til death should part them both.

Then Betsy wrote a letter, and sent it to her love,
She desired him to meet her, one evening in the grove.
But little did she ever think, the thoughts run through his breast,
She appeared in men's apparel, so gaily she was dressed.
Then when he saw her coming, he cried out most severe,
"Here comes my brother Johnny, to meet my true love here.
"Now quickly I'll deceive him, his butcher I will be,
He never shall enjoy her, nor live to trouble me.

From the ground he rose a pistol well-loaded in his hand,
He fired at his brother, as you may understand.
It was at his love he fired the shot, which caused her downfall,
And in her tender bosom, he lodged a fatal ball.
She cried out, "Cruel Jimmy," as she lay upon the ground,
"Now come and see your Betsy die, it was you that gave the wound.
"Then when he saw her dying, he raved and tore his hair,
Another bullet for himself, he quickly did prepare.
He shot himself, saying, "Betsy, I die for love of thee"
Let all young men take warning of cursed jealousy.

5. I Never Will Marry

(Traditional)



One morning as I rambled down by the sea-shore, The wind it did whistle and the waters did roar.

I heard a fair damsel make a pitiful sound, She sounded so lonesome, on the waters around.

Chorus:

I never will marry, I'll be no man's wife, I expect to live single all the days of my life. The shells in the ocean will be my death bed, The fish in deep water swim over my head.

She cast her fair body on the waters so deep, She closed her blue eyes in the water to sleep.

My love's gone and left me, the one I adore, He's gone and I'll never see him anymore.

6. I Don't Work for a Living

(J. Mullen & E. Leroy Freeman)

Chorus:

I don't work for a living I get along alright without, I don't toil all day, I suppose it's because I'm not built that way,

Some people work for love and say it's all sunshine and gain, But if I can't get sunshine without any work I think I'll stay out in the rain!

They say we're all born for a purpose, they say we're all born with a gift

Some people like to be famous, I suppose it's by hard work and thrift.

There's lots of us fighting and striving, for seat down in the old A.C.T.

But if I've got a seat in my trousers, and a missus to work for me....

Now give me a nail and a hammer, and a picture to hang on the wall

And give me a strong step ladder, you know that I might fall,

And give me a couple of waiters, and a barrel of good old Bass Ale

And I bet you I'll hang up that picture - if somebody drives the nail.

Last Chorus:

I don't work for a living I get along alright without I live peacefully, labour disputes never worry me. I love my family and the missus, oh how I adore. I decided to make them all happy, that's why I never go home anymore!



7. Wild Colonial Boy

(Traditional)



There was a Wild Colonial Boy, Jack Doolan was his name,

Of poor but honest parents, he was born in Castlemaine. He was his father's idol, his mother's pride and joy, And dearly did his parents love the Wild Colonial Boy.

"So come away my hearties, we'll roam the mountainside, Together we will plunder, together we will die. We'll scour along the valleys and gallop o'er the plains, And scorn to live in slavery, bound down in iron chains."

At scarcely sixteen years of age he left his father's home, And to Australia's sunny shores a bushranger did roam. They put him in the iron chains, in the government employ,

But never iron on earth could hold the Wild Colonial Boy.

In sixty-one this daring youth commenced his wild career. With a heart that knew no danger, no foeman did he fear. He stuck up the mail coach and robbed Judge McErroy, Who trembled and gave up his gold to the Wild Colonial Boy.

He bade the judge good morning and told him to beware, That he'd never rob a needy man who acted on the square But a judge who' d rob a mother of her son and only joy, He must be a worse outlaw than the Wild Colonial Boy.

One day as Jack was riding the mountainside alone, A listening to the little birds; their happy, laughing song, Three mounted troopers came along, Kelly, Davis and Fitzroy,

With a warrant for the capture of the Wild Colonial Boy.

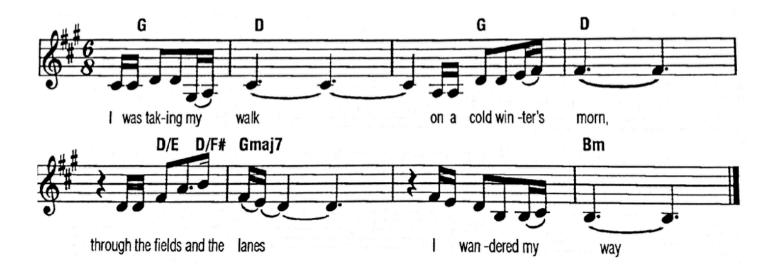
[Spoken..] "Surrender now Jack Doolan for you see there's three to one.

Surrender now Jack Doolan, you daring highway-man" Jack drew a pistol from his belt and shook the little toy, "I'll fight but not surrender!" cried the Wild Colonial Boy.

He fired at trooper Kelly and brought him to the ground And in return from Davis he received a mortal wound. All shattered through the jaw he lay, still firing at Fitzroy, And that's the way they captured him, the Wild Colonial Boy.

8. The Drunkard's Child

(Traditional)



I was taking my walk, on a cold winters morn, Through the fields and the lanes, I wandered my way, 'Til I came to a hollow, all rustic and wild, I heard a voice crying, "I'm a poor drunkard's child."

"My clothes they're all ragged, tattered and torn, I'm despised and dejected, forsaken and forlorn, And on me they frown, and seem so unkind, There's no sympathy for a poor drunkard's child."

"My mother she died, in the workhouse hard by, And she left me an orphan, to weep and to sigh. Broken hearted she died, looked up to heaven and smiled, Saying 'Jesus protect you, my poor Drunkard's child."

"But now to conclude and to finish my song, I hope what I've depended on, you will not think me wrong; For I'm just and orphan, but I won't turn out wild, I'll show a good example, though a poor drunkard's child."

9. Wild Rover / Home Sweet Home Waltz

(Traditional)

Wild Rover



I've been a wild rover this many long year, Spent all my money on whisky and beer, And now I'm returning with gold in great store, And I never shall play the wild rover no more.

Chorus:

For it's no, no never - never no more, I never, never, never shall play, The wild rover no more.

I dropped into a shanty I used to frequent, And I told the landlady my money was spent, I asked her for credit, she answered me nay, Such a custom as yours I can get every day. Then I drew from my pocket ten sovereigns bright, And the landlady's eyes opened wide with delight, Said she I have whisky and wines of the best, And the words that I told you were only in jest.

I'll go home to my parents, confess what I've done, And I'll ask them to pardon their prodigal son, And if they will do so as they've done before, Then I never shall play the wild rover no more.

Home Sweet Home Waltz

Note: This tune is used as an instrumental in Chloe & Jason Roweth's version of the song.





The Bobbins, from left: Nance, Phoebe, Tom and Carrie.

10. Bonnie Moon (or The Banks of Clyde)

(Traditional)



I wandered many a night in June, along the banks of Clyde, Beneath the bright and bonnie moon, with Mary by my side.

A summer wedding to my eyes, and to my heart of joy; For well she loved to roam with me, her highland minstrel boy.

Her presence stood on every star, two million fields so clear, I thought the flowers sweeter by far, when they were seen with her.

Bridge: Although her heart was true to me, her highland minstrel boy.

I played to ladies fair and gay, in many a southern hall, But there is one far, far away, a world above them all.

And though many a weary year has fled, I think with mournful joy, Upon the day when Mary wed, her highland minstrel boy.

11. Goodbye Sally

(Unknown)



Goodbye Sally, I'm saying goodbye, Don't you worry, I'll be singing a song, I want to see that smile, that wonderful smile, That's gonna cheer me on my way Right through the Siegfried Line.

So goodbye Sally, it won't be for long, Don't you worry I'll be singing a song, And when it's all through Sally, I'll meet you in the valley, So long Sally it won't be long.

12. Just as the Sun went Down (or Two Dying Soldiers)



In the mist of the battlefield, Just at the close of day, Wounded and bleeding upon the field, Two dying soldiers lay.

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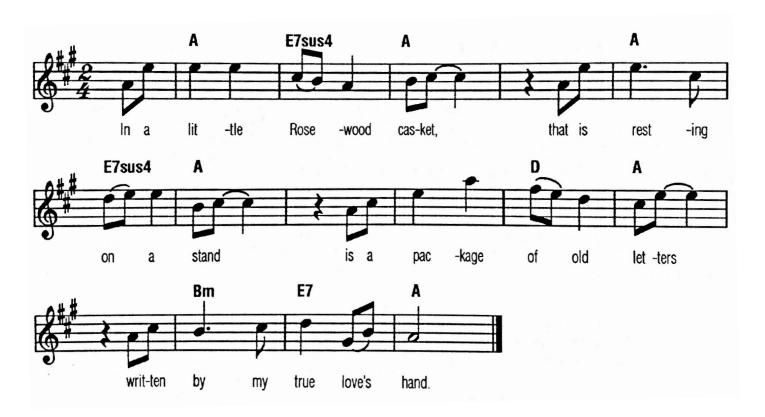
Bid-ding each oth -er their

One thought of mother at home alone, Feeble and old and grey, One of his sweetheart he'd left in town, Happy and young and gay.

One held a ringlet of thin, grey hair, One kissed a lock of brown, Bidding each other their last farewell, Just as the sun went down.

13. Little Rosewood Casket

(L. P. Goullaud & C. A. White)



In a little rosewood casket, that is resting on a stand, Is a package of old letters, written by my true love's hand. Will you go and get them, sister, and read them all tonight, For I've oft times tried but could not, for the tears would blind my sight.

You have got them now, dear sister, come sit down upon my bed, And press gently to your bosom, this poor throbbing, aching head. Tell him that I never blamed him, not an unkind word was spoke, Tell, oh tell him, sister, tell him, that my heart in coldness broke.

When I'm dead and in my coffin, and my shroud's around me bound, And my little bed is ready, in the cold and silent ground, Place his letters and his locket, both together on my heart, But the little ring he gave me, from my finger never part.

You have finished now, dear sister, will you read them all again, While I listen to you read them, I will lose all sense of pain. While I listen to you read them, I will gently fall asleep, Fall asleep to walk with Jesus, oh dear sister, do not weep.

14. Black Velvet Band

(Traditional)



It was in the city of London, in apprenticeship I was bound, And many a 'gaily' old hour I spent in that dear little town. One day as I was walking along my usual beat, I saw a pretty young maiden, a-tripping along the street.

Chorus

And her eyes they shone like diamonds, And I though her the pride of the land, And her hair hung down to her shoulders, Tied up with a black velvet band.

One day as we were walking, a gentleman passed us by, I could see she was bent on some mischief by the look in her rolling blue eye, A watch she took from his pocket, and slyly slipped into my hand, I was taken in by the copper, bad luck to the black velvet band.

Before the Lord Mayor I was taken, "Your piece, Sir, I bid you can see, And if I'm not greatly mistaken, you're bound for over the sea."

Then it's over the dark and blue ocean, far away to that evil land,
Far away from my friends & relations, and the girl with the black velvet band.

15. Little Darling

(Unknown)



Now you call me your little darling, you say that you love only me, This world you say you are leaving, and I'm lonesome, as lonesome can be.

Chorus

Mother says I'm too young to marry, Dad says that our love is unfair, Sister is cross and provoking, and my life is a burden to bear.

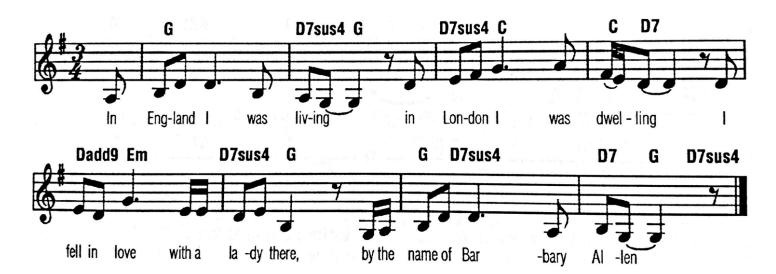
But no matter what they all say dear, though I know that our love is in vain, I'll always be your little darling, though I know that our love causes pain.

I'll remember all that you've told me, I'll be honest and faithful and true, I'll always be your little darling, 'til the Lord calls me home dear to you.

I'll bid you goodbye now my darling, I'm leaving this whole world behind, I'll always be your little darling, I'll be honest and faithful and kind.

16. Barbary Allen

(Traditional)



"In England I was living, In London I was dwelling, I fell in love with a lady there, By the name of Barbary Allen.

I courted her for six long years, In the hope that I might wed her, Until one day I fell so ill, I sent for Barbary Allen."

So slowly, slowly she walked in, And slowly she came nigh him, And all she said when she got there, "I think young man, you're dying."

"A Dying man, I am not yet, One kiss from you might cure me", "A kiss from me will never be, Not if your heart is breaking."

"Do you recall, young man", she said, "Whilst in the garden walking, You picked a rose for the ladies there, But none for Barbary Allen.

Do you recall, young man", she said, "Whilst in the ballroom dancing, You danced with all the pretty girls, But you slighted Barbary Allen"

"Look up, look up at the head of my bed, You'll see a basin standing, It's overflown with the tears I've shed, For the love of Barbary Allen

Look down, look down at the foot of my bed, You'll see a waistcoat hanging, Containing a gold watch and chain, Give them to Barbary Allen"

"O dig my grave, and dig it deep, And dig it long and narrow, For a young man died for me last night, And I'll die for him tomorrow.

At the head of his grave plant a pretty primrose, At the foot of mine a briar." They grew, they grew to the churchyard top, 'Til they could grow no higher.

They twisted and twined in a true lovers knot, For the love of Barbary Allen, They twisted and twined in a true lovers knot, For the love of Barbary Allen.

Parodies

Here are some parodies we left off the CD...you know the tunes!

Show Me the Way to Go Home

Show me the way to go home, said the girl on Bondi beach,
I lost my swimmers about and hour ago and they've gone right out of reach,
All I've got on now, is sand and sea and foam,
So give me a sheet of the Sunday Sun and show me the way to go home.

Mademoiselle

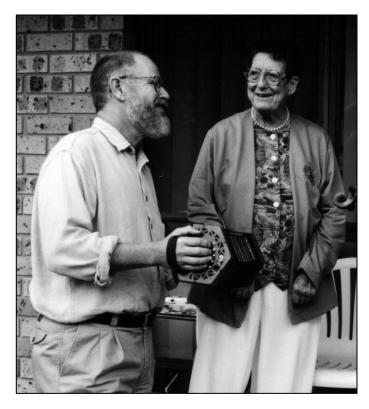
Mademoiselle she bought a cow, parlez vous, Mademoiselle she bought a cow, parlez vous, Mademoiselle she bought a cow, but how to milk it she didn't know how, Inky-pinky parlez vous.

She pulled its tail instead of its tits, parlez vous, She pulled its tail instead of its tits, parlez vous, She pulled its tail instead of its tits, and all she got was a bucket of — Inky-pinky parlez vous!

Daisy

Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do, I'm half crazy all for the love of you, It won't be a stylish marriage, I can't afford a carriage, But you'll look sweet beneath the sheets of a featherbed built for two.

Daisy, Daisy, the coppers are after you,
If they catch you,
do you know what they're going to do?
They'll tie you with ropes and wire,
behind the black Mariah,
So ring your bell and go like hell
on a bicycle built for two.



Rob Willis and Carrie Milliner