

The collected songs of Peter Fox



When I found I enjoyed singing other people's songs in pubs it lead to writing some of my own. To start with this was just a matter of commenting amusingly on the current affairs and people associated with local pubs, but then I became aware of the power of the medium and importance of tradition. Even in the few years I've been documenting local events much has become history with these songs as possibly the only 'folk' snapshot of the communities. If nothing else I hope others will record the things they think worth recording to keep the true folk tradition alive. Tradition begins today.

I'm not very musical which means the words and rhythm come first followed by what I think is a suitable tune - which seems to work fine, although some tunes are stolen from older works - adapted for my lesser singing abilities. I have some audio files on my web site vulpeculox.net to give an idea of the tune but I can't give you any dots.

I enjoy singing these and get satisfaction from thinking that some of these words will be part of a continuous tradition long after I'm dead and buried. If I can do this then surely others can do better.

I've arranged the notes at the beginning followed by an alphabetical listing of words.

Note : There are a few songs that are part of my Modern Maldon Morality Play and Pub Opera which don't appear here.

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Witham, Essex
April 2008

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Getting started - The Dolphin

My delight on a Monday night

My first ever song and the first of four Dolphin songs. There's a pub on the A120 at Stisted in Essex. In the late 90's and early 00's this was a delightful Riddleys pub selling top quality beer straight from the barrel. I'd be in there every Monday night prompt at 10pm leaving some time after midnight. Many times I'd cycle from Witham wearing some silly hat or other including a red beret with a golden shark's fin and a plastic frog on a spring that bobbed as I went along. There was a regular band of eight to ten of us chaps aged forty to fifty from completely different backgrounds. This is my first real song that celebrates the Monday Club as it was in about 2000. A truly great tradition of mateyness, good ale, owning up to embarrassing mishaps and discussing worries. Sadly that era is no more which is why it's nice to have this snapshot of how we played in those easily forgotten days. Some of the bits may be obscure - these are private notorieties. The important thing is that if I could write this about my pub then you should be able to do something similar to put yours on the record that we call tradition. Three more Dolphin songs came along later.

She stole my buckets away

My 2nd Dolphin song. For weeks I'd go in each Monday evening and Janice would apologise for forgetting to return my buckets again. I realised two things: Firstly I could 'get my own back' in an amusing way, and one that would get embarrassingly recorded in history; and secondly that it was possible to use the context of folk songs to 'warn men about the wiles of women'. This is an early song just knocked up for a quick joke. By the way, I did walk into a pub full of people eating one Friday night and shout out "Buy your lucky frogspawn", but the bit about ebay was made up.

Chuckle on a Monday

The 3rd Dolphin song which developed from trying to do something with the tune for Charlie Mopps that I'd taken a fancy to. I have to admit I ad-lib after each verse, for which you'll have to listen to the audio. Once I'd got the basic idea the words came quite easily. All the occupations described relate correctly to the people involved.

The Dolphin is a saucy ship

4th song related to the Dolphin. Once again I've used the regulars of the Monday Club as the dramatis personae. The objective, which in the event failed, was to get everybody to sing their own verse, with actions, and to match the verse to the character. Of course all this nautical stuff is complete fantasy - the nearest salt water is over ten miles away.

More pubs - The Walnut

Broads Green Rodeo

Very much in the same vein as "The Dolphin is a saucy ship" this is an imaginary escapade where all the regulars can be gently lampooned. The Walnut Tree is another pub that was suffocated by the Greene King blanket when Ridley's sold out. From a happier age, not so long ago, Mark and Louise were the publicans, Fred and Nemo were Louise's horses.

Shall we gather at the Walnut

I'm keen to sing the praises of excellent pubs so the spirituals or hymns are obvious places to start. The 'original' is called "Shall we gather at the river" - if you can find the tune for that you'll have a good starting place for putting this to music. I like the 'extra' last verse which gives a nice punch-line effect.

The 'front bar' mentioned is a wonderful cross between a lobby, jug and bottle and bar with two pews on either side for four leaving just enough room to get to the bar. This is a really wonderful social institution.

Walnut and Wingnut

A 'bard' needs to keep up with current events. The fun of this ditty is that the audience don't know what you're going on about to begin with and you can watch them 'fall-in'. This was written one afternoon to be performed at the pub simply because I had the idea and though it would be good to add something different to the usual conversation.

Heading south - Maldon and Purleigh

Blue Bore

A play on words, being an imaginary story set in the Blue Boar hotel in Maldon. Nigel Farmer is the brewer of fine beer in the stable block out the back and isn't normally rude and abusive but what do I care when I have a witty theme that needs fleshing out. By the way "Pucks" refers to the best known of his beers : Pucks Folly. It's great fun adapting traditional songs; and for me especially this one, as "To be a pharmacist" by the Kipper Family was probably *the song* that started me singing.

Fancy meeting you here

When you walk into a remote pub and yo see two people who are happily married - but not to each other what do you say?

The Round bush

This song, a parody of House of the Rising Sun came about as a challenge over the break in regular Thursday evening practice nights. The original challenge was to hack "By the river of Babylon" into "By the river of Basildon" or something similar but it couldn't be done. On the other hand this almost wrote itself. I particularly like the references to the original words in the last two verses.

On Thursdays my friends Tony, Ian and Chris would simply practise their guitar and banjo playing in the bottom bar of the Round Bush at Purleigh. I'd mostly sit and listen but also chuck-in comments and the occasional song. This was a great informal opportunity to try things out and get direct feedback from friends. - Nobody ever came to listen although there were some memorable guests that turned simple practice into one of those impromptu evenings where everyone is engaged and bursting to have their

go and share memories.

What shall we call the baby

It was a shock to realise that nobody had ever written a song about this before. As a happy event for a pair of regulars was predicted so it was only right and proper to rustle up something amusing to suit.

I realised later that the middle verse could and should be tailored to similar expected events. Enjoy hacking your very own.

Doin' the Purleigh crawl

This was written for a Cockney night at the Round Bush with sheets printed for community singing. It is of course a tour round village pubs. Just in case you missed it, this is based on the Lambeth Walk.

Sad duty

Praise to the late Captain Ibbotson of the Roundbush volunteers

Ray was probably the most hospitable landlord I've ever known. He'd often cook us all something at half eleven in the evening and very tasty it was too - all free. I've cycled home from his pub in the summer and heard Purleigh church strike two across the silent moonlit fields. Life doesn't get any better.

When he died suddenly in August 2006 it was my duty to write a suitable song. Fortunately the muse was with me and I think I did the subject justice in the short time available. I wanted some theme that would connect the present day with tradition, and something that made people feel proud to be part of a community, and something that would put Ray, the most unassuming man you ever met, in his rightful place as a leader and builder of friendships.

I'm proud of this song because it will be a memorial that joins 'the tradition' long after other notices have been forgotten. Also it shows how 'folk memory' and real local history can be woven together which may get people to think a little more about where the world they live in came from and how they fit into it.

Elegy for Mike Watson of Maldon

An odd-ball song that Tony would occasionally do at the Roundbush practice nights was the Three Ravens, also known as the Twa Corbies. This is a very old tune and even older words. This 'early English' tune captured me, especially when performed so simply just with a guitar. (Note to others : ditch those pipes and whistles - this is mellow music for contemplation not brash fife and tabour stuff.)

Mike Watson was the driving force behind the Morris revival in Maldon and was well liked around the town. What better base for a modern elegy, once again it is a songwriter's duty to do these things, that an early English one to emphasise the never ending tradition. It was also my privilege to be able to sing this at Mike's wake in the courtyard of the Blue Boar which in itself is ancient and yet still serves as the home of Morris in Maldon.

When I'm out with the Morris people ask me how old is it. This couplet starts the ball rolling.

Since ancient tribesmen walked the plains

Man has danced to call the rains

Maldon in song

The High street of Maldon

This is a straight parody, if parody is the right word, of the Streets of Laredo; dedicated to all dancers who brave the winter weather. What I like about this is the bitterness of the humour. It's also easy to sing in any company when the weather is inclement.

End of the season song

This was another shocking discovery that an important event doesn't have a suitable song. Originally intended something to mark the end of the Morris season it grew as I thought about the more general case - I hope you get a sense of people working in fields or packing sheds. I tried to get an element of work-song into it which is possible if you have a leader sings the first bit of each chorus line with the ensemble finishing off.

The Morris Men's picnic

Actually it's the ladies clog side, Alive and Kicking, that have a summer picnic but why let facts get in the way of a good song! No prizes for guessing the original.

I'm a mean old daddy from Maldon

There is a well known jazz song called "I'm a ding dong daddy from Dumas" which I felt ought to be Maldonised. It's a great tune (although it needed simplifying) and this was an opportunity to get the jazzers into local mischief, having their own micro-tradition and putting Maldon on the map as the English New Orleans. It's good for the local yacht club but I have to keep reminding them it isn't based on anyone in particular!

Praise to the ploughboy

On Plough Monday we go Molly dancing through the streets of Maldon. When researching the tradition it occurred to me that there ought to be a song to suit. This was written in 45 minutes and I think it's spot on. Firstly it is a secular hymn: You can imagine a harmonium playing in a tin chapel on the flat fields of Lincolnshire. Secondly it mixes then and now - as life on the land is still lonely. Thirdly it reminds us that food doesn't grow in Sainsburys and that the land is how we make it.

May song

The Maldon Morris celebrate May day by dancing on the prom at 5:15 in the morning to welcome the sun. Sadly I think that even the Morris who ought to be a bit more tuned-in to tradition look on it as a private Morris thing rather than a May frolic. There is so much potential for making May dat a proper celebration of so many things. There needs to be a boy-girl boy-girl dance to go with this song.

Overhauls and developments

Fourteen pounds

Sometimes a clever thought strikes when listening to an existing song and as soon as it turns into a full idea a song has to be attempted. Because everyone knows the tune you can get an audience to join in with the chorus. As with my other pillagings of songs I've tried to incorporate words, phrases and structures of the original to give people who know the original a bit of a chuckle. This is probably a good illustration of the power of 'the tradition' to adapt and move on.

Worried man blues

I like the tune and the presentations I've heard of the originals except that the words never made sense in a story. Here the challenge was to try a bit of reconstructive song archeology as if to say : "I found some bones and this is an impression of how I think it could have looked like originally." I've a feeling that this song has very old roots buried in 200 years of American soil, which for them is when Jesus and Dinosaurs walked the earth and more care should be taken of it.

The second, modern version, was just a quick development where I tried to keep the odd nod in the direction of the original. I hope that since it is such a simple song structure and the subject has so many possibilities that there will be many modern versions of this song floating around soon. - Get scribbling.

Originals

These songs stand on their own merits. They're all drawn out of thin air.

The philanthropists

There is a book called 'The ragged trousered philanthropists' which was a polemic much admired between the wars. One old boy I knew said it was the best book he'd ever read. The premise is that the working man never gets better off as all his labours and wages go back into the system controlled by the ones with the money already. Hence the rich are supported by the workers.

For some reason it hadn't occurred to me that you could write polemical songs until we were singing "Round goes the wheel of fortune" at Mike Watson's funeral. Aha! What I call a fierce song - It also sounds old even if it isn't just like "Round goes the wheel of fortune".

I used to be wise

Dum de dum... Bum de bumble... Aha! Inspiration struck as I was randomly bumbling round the M25. The phrase "I used to be wise - But then I got married - And then I was wiser again" just *had* to be the basis of a song. Another of those weird cases where the structure and words come out of thin air. (Of course in this case it was easier being a confirmed bachelor not having anybody thinking I was referring to them.) There's one thing that always bothers me about this song and it's the 'time - prime' rhyme in the last verse. Still at least it makes sense.

Sheep and crows

This is a fierce anti-religious song that originated one day as I was cycling through Suffolk. Firstly it occurred to me that you'd often see crows where there were sheep in the fields. Later on my ride I came to a beautiful rural picture of meadows with a village behind and a church commanding from above. That was the moment two thoughts fused.

When I first started singing this I expected lots of disapproval from the audience, but the reverse is true - It's the only song I've ever been asked to sing again immediately! Something else that's pleasing is being able to tap into folk memories of rural-idyl then overlay that with symbols that aren't so nice and, via the audience clapping in the chorus get them to be part of the 'driving out'.

Hole in the mud

At the time of writing these notes this song hasn't been performed as I'm hunting round for the right tune. It's so easy to fall into Irish laments. Where a boat lays in the port of Maldon it soon makes itself a hole in the mud for itself. I keep telling the Maldonians that they're hospitable, which they are really. From time to time we get boats that arrive from out of the blue, stay for the winter then vanish again - leaving a hole in the mud and a hole in our hearts. If you haven't fallen-in by the end refer to Tennyson's "Crossing the bar".

The Blue Bore or Calamity at the brewery.

Words : Peter Fox

Tune : To be a farmer's boy. (ish)

The sun had set behind the church across from the Blue Boar
When a sad old boy came from the back and entered in the door.
Can you tell me where ever there be somewhere to slake my thirst
I'd like to drink fine Farmer's ales until I nearly burst.

- *Until I nearly burst*

The landlord said to warm him up he ought to have the porter
But true to form the lecher said he'd rather have the daughter.
I'll lay my poor head in her lap as my wounds she nursed
And then I'd drink fine Farmers ales until I nearly burst

- *Until I nearly burst.*

He started telling bawdy jokes that weren't too well received
And when he went to have a pee there was more than one relieved.
The landlord said to pack it in - he really was the worst
Or no more chance to drink fine Pucks until he nearly burst

- *Until he nearly burst.*

The landlord said he have to stick to bitter from now on.
And made it clear they all would be happier when he'd gone.
At this juncture Nigel swore an oath then roundly cursed
There's no more brewing from now on because the pipes have burst

- *Because the pipes have burst.*

THE BROADS GREEN RODEO

Fred and Nemo don't go far, they have nowhere to go.
They're stuck inside the paddock trotting to and fro.
'Till one day they got fed up and started off the show:
It's a day we all remember:- The Broads Green Rodeo.

Geoffrey saw the naughty pair break out of the stockade.
He held out both his arms to form a wide blockade.
He assumed that they were tame and both were easily led.
He don't remember much more :- Now he's *two* plates in his head.

Lou was very shocked to see both her horses free.
She called on her customers in the Walnut Tree.
"Which of you will help me in my hour of need?"
One by one we went outside - to help with the stampede.

Strutty thought he'd try a tune to keep the horses sweet.
He strapped on his accordion and went out in the street.
The song it proved a failure by the second verse.
Fred and Nemo hated it:- it only made things worse.

The darts team they were very keen to get on with their match.
So they went on the green to try and make a catch.
A few of them had bumpy rides and went off the double top.
A horse gave one a bullseye but still refused to stop.

Mark came in the public bar and stopped to have a think.
He sussed-out the solution was to give free drink.
"A prize my lads to anyone who'll overcome their fear."
So one by one we went outside - to try and win that beer.

Fox jumped on his bicycle and peddled after Fred.
He caught him up and then he threw his arms around Fred's head.
It looked as though he'd cracked the problem in two shakes.
Instead he got to find out that horses have no brakes.

Wilf's a cute old timer who had a bright idea.
He'd go up to each horse and whisper in its ear.
"To show it who's the boss you stare and take a certain stance"
We watched him try his theory:- Now Wilf's in the ambulance.

Martin guessed the horses wouldn't yield without a fight.
He went off to his workshop and dressed up as a knight.
The sun shone on his armour without a spot of rust.
But he tripped up on his sword:- Now his collar bone is bust.

Grahame Ethridge has been known for his ideas daft and silly.
"What Fred and Nemo need is a friendly local filly.
We'll get the panto horse out and dress it in a skirt."
I dare not say what happened next: - But by the screams it hurt.

The scouts got in a huddle to think what they could do.
Arkala got them tying knots to make a strong lasso.
By luck the first try captured Fred, they got him in one throw.
But took off fast down Larks lane - with 15 scouts in tow.

Nemo saw the fun Fred had and joined him down the lane.
The pair of them ran off and were never seen again.
We were too tired and not too sad to see the blighters go.
A day we'll all remember at The Broads Green Rodeo.

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Praise to the late Captain Ibbotson of the Roundbush volunteers

Peter Fox 12 August 2006

Many stories have been told of heroes fierce and bold
Their names live on in history of wars and Spanish gold
Swashbuckling chaps with flashing blades who think they're Erol Flynn
Ray Ibbotson was not like that - he only ran an inn.

Out on the Dengie marshes there are thirty pubs or more
Of these houses there is only one with its own corps
It's rather strange that regulars are not known as such
But the quiet and gentle volunteers based at the old Round bush

This landmark pub has been around for a long long time
Hard work and careful stewardship have kept it in its prime
There's cracking food and company and also right good beers
So that's the reason to enlist in the Round Bush Volunteers

From time to time the volunteers are called up on parade
An evening's entertainment for a charity to aid
All our change and larger stuff Ray has somehow lifted
So next week a thousand pounds to a worthy cause is gifted

The volunteers recall with pride how Captain Ibbotson
Would be the perfect host to us with his apron on.
He'd stoke the fires of fellowship and camaraderie
As he would feed at his expense the whole company.

Sad was the day Ray passed away at awful tender years
We all of us were deeply shocked and many moved to tears
Let's celebrate as we know how his memory with beers
So here's a toast to Ibbotson of the Round Bush Volunteers.

Chuckle on a Monday

Tune : Charlie Mopps

Chorus

We're always in the Dolphin all throughout the year
We're in the pub all the evening drinking George's beer
We're regular as clockwork - Meeting Monday nights
We are the Monday club - Putting the world to rights.

Nick does lots of discos with Garage, Soul and Rock
But at the old folks rest home he got an awful shock
Their favourite tunes were seventy-eights which made the poor boy groan
His arm it nearly dropped off winding the gramophone

Nige the carver sat one day upon a wooden chair
His shouts were heard a mile away when he hurt his derriere
A splinter in his private parts reduced us all to tears
But when he asked us to take it out there were no volunteers

A little old lady said to Fox to look beneath the stair
Just as his mum had prophesied he found a vacuum there
But when he couldn't start the thing his spirits sank much lower
He was pulling the cable like you start a motor mower!

At Laurie's works the glue pot burst and spread across the floor
The horrible sticky mess oozed right out the door
Some passers-by got stuck fast and called out the Old Bill
Laurie unglued most of them but Plod is stuck there still.

As Hedge was chopping wood he saw a squirrel in a tree
"How-now little rodent - Who is cleverer - you or me?"
The squirrel aimed a nut at him which hit him on the nose
But Hedge just laughed and said "I've still got two of those".

Doin' the Purleigh crawl

Chorus

*Any time you're Purleigh way,
Any evening, any day,
You'll find us all
Doin' the Purleigh crawl.*

Hope you came out with a thirst
The Queens Head is where we'll go first
It's not open at all!
Not doin' the Purleigh crawl.

Down the road to the Vineyard
Finding the way there's not hard
Newhall wines are very toothsome
Try some, buy some

Chorus

Up the hill we know so well
Pass the church into the Bell
You'll find us all
Doin' the Purleigh crawl.

Now off we go to the Round Bush
It's all downhill so don't push
Now's our chance to drink more ale
It's on sale, by the pail.

Chorus

When you fall into a hedge
It's too late to sign the pledge
You'll find us all
Doin' the Purleigh crawl.

Going home is not so easy
All that beer makes you queasy
Find a ditch or hedge and be quick
Head's thick, be sick

Chorus



The Dolphin is a saucy ship
We are the merry crew
We'll tie up for the evening
And have a drink or two

Our harbour is a happy den
Tonight we'll not get far
With all the drink we've got aboard
We're grounded at the bar

We're in our roaring forties
And rolling half-seas over.
We haven't had enough to drink
- There's some of us still sober

Laurie

I am the noble captain
Rugged brave and handsome
I run the very smartest ship
From bowsprit to the transom

Reeve

I am the first lieutenant
Ruthless mean and hard
If the crew get mutinous
I'll string them from the yard



Cruickshank

I am the navigator
My eyesight's never failing
The trouble is I'm seasick
At all the points of sailing

Simon

I am the cookhouse chief
My job's to feed the crew
I've been sailing 30 years
But only serve them stew

Hedge

I am the bosun bold
Who knows 'is knots and 'itches
My hammock has a million fleas
With dozens in my britches.

Nigel

I am the ship's carpenter
My job's to stop her leaking
The crew can never get to sleep
'cos the timber's always creaking

Nick

I am the young midshipman
Still but just a youth
The crew have taught me many
things
All rude and very uncouth

Bob

I sit up in the Crows Nest
Watching o'er the drink
My messmates send me up here
Because they say I stink

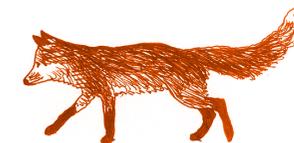
Fox

My job's to play the shanties
To liven up our boat
The crew all say I'm rubbish
And cannot sing a note.

There's some that call us drunkards
Afloat in an old tub
It isn't nice to say those things
About our favourite pub

None of us can stand the drink
- The briny's not for us
In fact we all get seasick
On the top deck of a bus

The salty shore is miles away
We've never been to sea
That's why the Dolphin's tied up
Alongside Stisted quay.



Elegy for Mike Watson of Maldon

Version 1.4 21 May 2005 Peter Fox

Our steps are silenced on this day
For one of us has passed away
 with a down
Now the caller 's called "All up"
No more fine ale with Mike we'll sup
 with a down derry derry down

Since ancient tribesmen walked the plains
Man has danced to call the rains
When spirits of art and nature meet
All folk swirl and stamp the beat

Now the Cotswold sing and dance
The Border Dark Horse has a prance
Rapper swordsmen do their thing
As clogs upon the quayside ring

We dance like sailors learn to ride
The rhythm of the waves and tide
The chasing shapes of nature's power
We capture for a fleeting hour

Our captain, wright and navigator
Foreman, bagman, sage and mentor
He's gone and left us on this shore
Our debt extends for evermore.

So peal the bells out like Mike would
To tell the town that he was good
The river's seagulls scream and cry
For all of us must surely die
 with a down derry derry derry derry down

Notes

- * The origin of the four syllable line and tune is the Three Ravens/Twa Corbies.
- * Mike Watson 19xx-2005 was instrumental in the development of Morris in Maldon. Also a keen sailor and bell-ringer.
- * Maldon is a small but ancient town on the East Anglian coast in the county of Essex, England. The Battle of Maldon, 991, is described in Beowulf.
- * The Caller shouts instructions to the dancers. The last being "All up".
- * Mike helped construct the micro-brewery that supplies the beer we enjoy after practice.
- * There are four styles of Morris in Maldon: Cotswold (Maldon Greenjackets), Border and Rapper (Both Dark Horse) and North West Clog (Alive and Kicking).
- * The quay is a favourite venue for dancing.
- * Much of the Dark Horse costume and repertoire was devised by Mike
- * There's something wild and secret about the way the Dark Horse practice with whoops and ritual dance in a little wooden hut right under the noses of local residents.

End of the season song

Peter Fox 26th August 2006 ©

Chorus:

*Our season it is finished. The work is at an end
We stood the test together, and strangers now are friends.
We have had the sun. We have had the rain.
We have fallen down and then got up again.
We help our mates in a muddle
We work together to ease our struggle
And now as it ends - We leave good friends.*

When we started long ago our major thought was hope
We were keen but we were green and wondered how we'd cope
Though we tried hard it often seemed the task would get us beat
But side by side, with our mates, we kept away defeat.

Chorus

Our prowess rapidly increased until we reached our prime
We could deal with real hard stuff in world record time
Each one knew his part and which place to be
So together we all worked like oiled machinery.

Chorus

At starting we would joke and laugh but then grew later sour and gruff.
As the season neared its end we all had had enough.
Our leader kept our spirits up to drive out discontent
With hansom deeds and gracious words of encouragement

Chorus

So tonight we drink our health like sardines in a tin
We're closely packed and well oiled with beer and London gin
We did it! Yes we did it boys! As we're parting shed a tear
Away with you tomorrow boys - We'll start again next year

Chorus

Chorus coda:

So comrades raise your glasses the work has all been done
The toast is to good fellowship and good health to everyone

We've had the fun. We've had the pain.

Fancy meeting you here

Peter Fox

Nov 2005

Chorus

Fancy meeting you here
I think that's awfully queer
Wherever I go - you go too
I'd hoped to see the last of you
So fancy meeting you here.

The old lag in his prison cell has just got a new mate.
Hello! he said, Haven't I seen you on a previous date?
I've been in here fifteen years and only got three more
But you face is known to me - what are you in here for?
I used to be a high court judge dressed in wig and gown
But all those nights with little boys then finally brought me down
I think I might have been the chap who made you start a sentence
I expect I'll soon be knowing the meaning of word repentance.

The countryside is nice in spring and so to a pub I went
Down little lanes with singing birds and glorious blossom scent
As I stepped in through the door I saw two friends of mine
Canoodling in the alcove with a glass of wine
Where's the harm in that? I couldn't see the bother
They were happily married but not to each other
What's a fling between good friends? They knew I wouldn't say
Even though my lips are sealed I think I spoilt their day.

I went to see my girlfriend on the Isle of Wight
As I jumped on to the ferry I gave my boss a fright
Strange to see him on the boat as he tried to hide
I'd worked out his predicament before we got to Ryde
You've just claimed for a week at the New York Ritz
But seeing you here has blown your scheme of fraud to little bits
Now I do my bosses job and fly to conferences
But I learnt from him and never try to fiddle my expenses.

(You loose) 14 pounds (and what do you get)

Some people say a burger 's made outta mud
A big mac's made outta muscle and blood
Muscle and blood and skin and bone
A plastic bun and an awful pong

You loose 14 pounds and what do you get
Another stone lighter but you're not slim yet
Saint Peter don't you call me 'cos I can't go
My body won't go through that heavenly door

I was born one mornin' with no silver spoon
In front of the telly in the living room
Delivered by the pizza boy in 15 min.
That's the only time I've ever been thin

Chorus

I was fed on Jaffa cakes, chocolate and crisps
Jumbo portions of chicken and chips
Deep fried Mars bar with sugar on top
My skin 's so tight it'll soon go pop

Chorus

I'm the size and shape of a barrage balloon
Someone tried to spear me with a whaler's harpoon
They call me the blob of forty four stones
I can't help it if I've got big bones

Chorus

The council came along to strengthen the floor
They brought chairs of steel and a double width door
Don't think they're spending specially on me
'Cos all my school friends have obesity.

Chorus

If I block out the sun better step aside
A lotta men didn't, a lotta men died
I don't move fast but if you're in my way
They'll have to roll you up to take you away

Hole in the mud

The jolly bits are completely different from the sad bits this is a hermaphrodite song
A vulture in parrot's clothing

[Jolly]

The sailors are our jolly mates who come into our port
We hear their tales of foreign lands and see strange things they've brought
They might not know our language much, who cares we muddle through
Our patience is rewarded by friendships short but true

It's nice to be a guide to help the wandering folk we meet
We may not see them ever again - so what? It's just our treat
The sea is cruelly rough and they may never dock again
So let us have a round of beer and another merry refrain

Their real home across the sea is pulling them away
Soon some gentle ebb tide will sneak them out one day
But natural human instinct says wait longer at the quay
Who'd swap a little haven of land for a lot of mean green sea

[Jolly ... halting ... stop]

I went down to the quay just like on any other day
And there I saw... nothing... a void... they'd gone on the night tide

[Sad]

There's a hole in the mud where a boat used to rest
It's all that remains of the folks we loved best
They've gone down the river and out to the sea
There's a hole in our hearts where our friends used to be.

There's laughter and chuckles for the new family
On the edge of our land-life it's a strange mystery
We teach them our ways how to do the things right
And their friendship it warms us as we gaze up at the night

Our trading of insults is only for fun
New things they can show us as we show'd them
They soon learn our customs and make their own way
And their kinship it keeps us strong right through the day

We might lose touch for a while and then
They're dying to tell us of their trips once again
Bright times on the shore and tough times on the sea
We all make our voyage in our own company.

(continued)

There's a hole in the mud where a boat used to rest
It's all that remains of the folks we loved best
They've gone down the river and out to the sea
There's a hole in our hearts where our friends used to be.

The horizon's compelling it tempts us away
Though we're happy at home we might go there one day
The loved ones that I knew who went off to the sea
Will they ever be coming back here to me?

Our life in this haven is stable and sure
But all bets are off when we leave from this shore
Excitement and mystery go hand in hand
With the sadness of those that we've left behind

The cold waves and dark sea will soon be our death
So leave warm hearted memories for those that are left
As they swap stories about us on the day we have gone
Let's hope that our memory is worth passing on.

There's a hole in the mud where a boat used to rest
It's all that remains of the folks we loved best
They've gone down the river and out to the sea
There's a hole in our hearts where our friends used to be.

The seagulls are crying their loss all aloud
The banks of cold fog provide a pale shroud
The flap flap of halyards clank out their toll
As the incoming flood fills in the hole

Our stay here won't last, that we all know
Once the ebb tide is flowing we'll just have to go
Now when I too am gone, just think of me
Chasing sun-sparkles on a tropical sea

I used to be wise ...

Peter Fox

7 Oct 05

When I was a lad I spent my time flirting, sporting with all of the field
My old grandpa said me to keep clear of courting and not to temptation to yield
So wasn't I wise to keep free and single to enjoy many hours of pleasure
Avoiding the trap of matrimony to live my own life at my leisure

*I used to be wise
But then I got married
And then I was wiser again*

One day my guard slipped I was captured by Cupid and promptly agreed to be wed
My mother she told me until then I'd been stupid and so the altar we sped
So wasn't I wise to marry my darling and settle ourselves as a pair
In the arms of my sweetheart to cherish our future and start a new life free of care.

Chorus

Well that was the theory but not so in life I soon found myself in a bother
My sister she told me I'd been fooled by my wife in fact she was already a mother
So now I was wise. What could I do but take the young child as my own
Though my missus was false the baby was charming and now to a daughter has grown

Chorus

Sad for to tell the two of us argued about something else every day
My missus told me she'd have the last word whatever it was I would say
So now I was wise and kept very quiet hoping the hope the storm would pass over
But it only got worse so at last I decided there was nothing to do but to leave her

Chorus

Now I'm all on my own without any ties but my heart is not in its prime
So I say to myself have I been wise in the choices I've made in my time?
I think I get wiser each day of my life because every step that I take
Is food for the mind to digest at my leisure whether success or mistake

Chorus

May song

Peter Fox June 28th 2006

Chorus

Men : Queen of the May your flowers do bud
Ladies : Jack in the Green your sap's in full flood
Men : Perhaps I could have this measure with you
Ladies : Together we'll start the year all anew

Winter's cold breath and blanket of snow
Are memories now as the shoots start to grow
Summer is waiting to lift up our hearts
As nature's new year on May day it starts

The annual cycle comes in four parts
Of those the spring is where the year starts
The green of the shoots and flowers all yellow
Is time for the bonding of maid and her fellow

We dance for to welcome the sun on this morn
To wish for good health as the year is reborn
All of our worries are left in the past
The future is rosy and set fair to last

I'm a mean old daddy from Maldon

Peter Fox

June 2007

I'm a mean old daddy from Maldon come and see me do my stuff
I'm a mean old daddy from Maldon I just can't get enough
I've got a sailboat on the river and a momma on the shore
I like to take my pleasure 'till I can't take no more.

I'm a mean old daddy from Maldon come and see me do my stuff
I'm a mean old daddy from Maldon I'm ugly and I'm tough
But my baby she has nice fine lines and a lovely rounded stern
She's snuggles right into my berth as soon as I return

I'm a mean old daddy from Maldon come and see me do my stuff
I'm a mean old daddy from Maldon I like it when it's rough.
I like to have a real good thrash so soon we get quite wet
There's nothing like a lively ride to work up lots of sweat

(Wistful)

I'm a poor old daddy from Maldon I won't be doing that again
I'm a poor old daddy from Maldon here's a lesson for you men
They've taken all my money, I use to have a load
I cannot say which costs the most: A woman or a boat

I'm a sad old daddy from Maldon I remember when I did my stuff
I'm a sad old daddy from Maldon I liked my sporting rough.
I had a sailboat on the river and a momma on the quay
The boat's now at the bottom and my momma's gone left me.

'Tis my delight on a monday night

(A bit like the Lincolnshire poacher)

Introduction

I climbed onto my bicycle when I was 43
I trundled off to Stisted to see what I could see
I fell into a public house - The Dolphin was its name
And I'm pleased to say that since that day I've never been the same

Chorus

O 'tis my delight on a Monday night to drink a rake of beer
(Dum de dum de diddledee etc.)

Dave Cruickshank

Alderman Councillor Cruickshank he has a Christmas tin
He twists our arms each week to put our clonkers in.
It builds up nicely through the year - it makes a pretty stash
So we wine and dine at Christmas time in one almighty bash.

Nigel

A cider drinker has been known to join our merry throng
And even in mid-winter he'll not wear trousers - long
Nige the carver has no fear - In fact he's bold as brass
He hates the heat upon his seat so he's no knickers on his arse

Simon

Simon is a dealer - of the legal sort
He sells florists sundries which earlier he's brought
He gets quite nervy 'bout his health but this you must remember
He has to be fit to do his bit all throughout November!

Dave Reeve

If you want some work done by our builder Dave
You mustn't be impatient - and don't forget to save
I'm sure it will look very nice - When he's got it done
But can you wait until that date in 2021?

Hedge

The Green Man of our legends is living with us now
He works deep in the woodland chopping trunk and bough
In winter time he sells his fuel. In spring he goes on shoots
I expect too see, just like a tree, Hedge start growing roots

Nick

Nick's a noisy shortarse which sometimes is a pain
The reason is not hard to find - as I will now explain
He's got to be gentle in his job - which is selling flowers
So on Monday night he gets quite tight and swears away for hours

Laurie

Braintree's business forum has Laurie in the chair
He keeps them all in order and makes sure it is fair
Self adhesive labels - he makes them by the ton
If you're caught short, without a thought, stick one up your bum

Self

Fox he comes from Witham with a fish upon his head
Or a frog and shark's fin on a beret which is red.
He often likes to make us smile - and sometimes sing a song
But too much beer and then I fear the words all come out wrong

George

George the landlord welcomes us with his cheery face
He serves up pints of lovely beer and keeps us in our place
There are no hand pumps on the bar, it comes straight from the cask
I fancy a bit - Whose round is it? - I thought you'd never ask!

Last verse

Now when we're dead and buried and passed the pearly gates
We'll all meet up together and drink again as mates
There'll be no fear of closing time or turning out the lights
And we'll count the years and we'll count the beers we had on Monday nights.

The Morris Men's picnic

Words: Peter Fox Version 1.00 23 May 2005

If you go down to the prom today
You're sure of a big surprise
If you go down to the prom today
You'd better go in disguise

For every dance that ever there was
Is thrashed today for certain, because
Today's the day the Morris Men have their picnic.

Every Morris man who's been good
And most of the rest as well
Will wreck the peace of a summer's day
And most of the night as well.

All through the park where none of them cares
They dance on tables and upset the chairs
Cause that's the way the Morris Men have their picnic.

If you go down to the quay today
You'd better not go alone
It's lovely down on the quay today
But safer to stay at home

For all the dancers that ever there were
Will gather there on the quayside for sure
Today's the day the Morris Men have their picnic.

Picnic time for Morris Men
The Morris Men are having lots of lovely Farmer beer
Some drink cider which then
Makes them feel rather queer

See them gaily dancing out
They love to sing and shout
They never feel any pain
If only they knew how their mummies and daddies
were so ashamed of them
Then they'd never dance again.

Praise to the Ploughboy

Peter Fox

20th January 2006

The ploughboy plods behind his horse
To keep the ploughshare in its course
The sun and rain draw up the grain
What is buried will rise again

To line the land with furrows straight
The plough team work from dawn till late
Figures crawling 'cross wide fields
Make the bed for summer's yields

The steady pressure of man's hand
Leaves his sign upon the land
In time the fields give what we need
For bread and ale on which we feed

2000 seasons go to show
We still need fields for crops to grow
So praise the lonely tractor boy
Who's iron plough we all employ

The Round Bush

Tune : House of the rising sun (trad.) Words(PF) might need some tweaking (or just generally improved) 'cos the music I'm using as a guide isn't consistent across the verses so the stresses and syllables get jumbled and slurred. Version 1 5 Jan '05

There is a pub down Dengie way
They call the Old Round Bush
The beer's straight from the cask in there
As fine as you could wish

I've been down to the Hazeleigh Oak
And tried the Prince of Wales
But neither pub is half a patch
If you're hooked on real ales

The main room is a public bar
With jolly good company
To warm your feet while you sup your beer
Is a thing that just suits me

Now Ray our landlord feeds us well
We get some fine free grub
It's a treat to have these little titbits
In a drinking man's pub

There's well kept beers behind the bar
It comes right out the cask
There are no pumps to foam it up
What more could one ask

Now the only thing a drinker needs
Is a pub that serves real ales
But the thing that makes him satisfied
Is bright fellows and good tales

Oh mother tell your children
That life is not a rush
Enjoy your short life in this world
In Purleigh's Old Round Bush.

Peter Fox 5 Jan 05

Shall we gather at the Walnut Tree

Shall we gather at the Walnut Tree
Where the beer is clear and bright
We could play darts in the public
And stay there drinking half the night

Chorus *Yes! We'll join the congregation
Drink some pints of Ridley's beer
We'll raise our glass in a libation
And stay good drinkers all the year*

When we gather at the Walnut Tree
Where fresh ale comes straight from the tap
We'll play at cards for the money
Though it's only ha'penny nap

Chorus

Shall we gather in the front bar
Where there's only room for four
We'll abuse the later entrants
As they walk in through the door

Chorus

If we go into the boudoir
Where it's nicely painted pink
We could have a slap up dinner
With fancy cocktails for a drink

Last chorus - *Go on go for the harmony!*

Extra While you're gathered at the Walnut tree
 Drinking halves of mild and bitter
 I'll be round at your place, And
 comforting the baby sitter.

Sheep and crows

Version 5 - 17th June 2005 - Peter Fox¹

Chorus:

*Where there are sheep you will find crows
It's not very nice but that's how the world goes
So pick up your rattle and big bag of stones
Else the black-coated gentry will **pick at your bones**.²*

Where wooly white blobs graze on England's green
Sinister shapes in the sky will be seen
Black-hearted pirates reel in the air
Till they land in the flock to take their fair share

Nature's black shepherds are soberly dressed
They strut through the flock picking the best
Scheming and wheeling and crowing so hoarse
If cunning won't work they'll take it by force

Peasants and farmers who farm to survive
All hate the rector who gathers his tithe
But meekly on Sunday they sit in their rows
As hellfire and brimstone from the pulpit he crows

Many black birds gather round at a birth
They're always on hand to help with a death
Imams and preachers and bishops as well
With rabbis, and vicars can all go to hell

Lets go to London, two thousand and five
There's an eight year-old girl who's hardly alive
She was viciously tortured for being a witch
So much for the care of those in the church

The dark suited priest all ready to pray
Waits in his heaven for a weakling to stray
He spots some poor lamb all ready for fleecing
But the flock do nothing. Not even bleating.

¹ Original tune : Not yet written down.

² Emphasis = Claps to scare crows away

She stole my buckets away

(A true story)

The frogs had been a-mating there was frogspawn all about
So I got a net and my buckets and fetched a lot of it out.

*She stole my buckets away
Oh she stole my buckets away.
Oh - What a hard hearted woman
To steal my buckets away*

Janice wanted frogspawn to put into her pond
So I went down to the Dolphin With a bucket in each hand

Chorus

I cried out as I went in "Get yours here today -
Buy your lucky frogspawn Last chance for Mother's day"

Chorus

That's the last time that I saw them Until next Father's day
They were in an Internet auction She'd put them on E-bay.

Chorus

Boys! Let this be a lesson To Samaritans good or bad
If a woman asks for some frogspawn It's certain you'll be had.

Peter Fox 2003

The philanthropists

Peter Fox 2005 ©

The rich must have as many mouths as the starving poor
So hand across your wages to them that need them more
Their fine clothes and their carriages do not come for free
So nobly do we help them out with our philanthropy

The banker can not do real work but it is not his fault
He has to sit inside all day with his money in a vault
His daughter goes to finishing school so we all must pay
Or else he'll be embarrassed when it comes to settlement day

The lawyer cannot saw a beam or build a house of bricks
He sits upon a stool all day scheming legal tricks
His mistress must have rare perfume so it's only right
We fork out for his pleasure all through the night.

The squire cannot plough a field or lead a team of horses
He's gambling on the stock exchange or betting on the courses.
His wastrel sons are worse than he - they drink with floozies too
Who're the chaps to pay for that - The likes of me and you.

The tycoon cannot fish the sea - His yacht's not built for that
He often dines with royalty in his penthouse flat
His knighthood must have cost a lot of champagne and caviare
Who're the lads to pay for that - We all are!

The judge he dines on tender lamb but never tends the flock
His leisured life is sometimes spoilt by prisoners in the dock
Judgement looks like justice when it's wigged and gowned
So be grateful when you're taxed at only five bob in the pound.

The rector's job is not so tough - he works for half a day
He gives a talk on Sunday to justify his pay
Your tithes my boys are wisely spent. They go to help the meek
So sing the praises of the lord when you're starving half the week.

*The rich must have as many mouths as the starving poor
So hand across your wages to those that need them more
Their fine clothes and their carriages do not come for free
So nobly do we help them out with our philanthropy*

The High street of Maldon

December 8th 2005 - Victorian evening

Words : Peter Fox Tune : Traditional.

Dedicated to Elaine in particular and all other 'nesh' Greenjackets in general.

As I walked down the High street of Maldon
As I walked out in old Maldon one day,
I spied a poor dancer shiverin' all in white linen,
Wrapped up in white linen and cold as the clay.

"I see by your bells that you too are a dancer,"
These words she did say as I boldly stepped by.
"Come join our cold party and hear my sad story;
I was mugged by the Morris and I know I must die."

"Let sixteen Greenjackets come handle my coffin,
Let sixteen Greenjackets line up and perform,
Take me to the graveyard and lay the sod o'er me,
For I'm a cold dancer who will never get warm.

"All through the summer I used to go dancing,
When it was warmer I'd dance a fine hay.
But the cruel winter wind puts a knife through my body
The flu 's on my chest, I am dying today."

"Get six jolly dancers to carry my coffin,
Get six pretty barmaids to serve them good beer
Send the Squire a memo to learn from my dying
Don't go dancing in December next year."

"So beat the drum slowly and play the fife lowly
And play the dead march as you carry me along,
Take me to the Blue Boar and buy me some cider
I'm a frozen Greenjacket who needs to get warm"

"Go bring me a glass, a glass of hot scrumpy
To warm my chapped lips," oh so faintly she said.
But when I returned, the spirit had left her
And gone to her Maker, the dancer was dead.

We sing our songs lowly and drink our ale slowly
And bitterly weep as our tears hit the ground.
For we all loved our comrade, so generous and handsome,
And now for a change we must buy our own round.

The walnut and the wingnut

(Spring 2005 - Charles & Camilla get married)
Peter Fox

Said the walnut to the wingnut
For too long we have tarried
Isn't it time the two of us got married

Said the wingnut to the walnut
For me there is no other
But first of all I'll have to get permission from my mother

Said the walnut to the wingnut
Don't leave me in the lurch
Is it too much to wed me in a church

Said the wingnut to the walnut
It's all down to history
And what'll the bishop say about our adultery?

Said the walnut to the wingnut
Living in sin we've tried
I can't wait much longer to become your bride

Said the wingnut to the walnut
I truly love you dear
But till the old bat abdicates you can't be queen I fear.

What shall we call the baby?

Note. Rewrite the middle verse for each specific case

For mums and dads to be,
they just cannot agree.
It's a puzzle that drives all parents wild.
They sit up late at night,
trying to get it right
Wondering what they're going to call the child.

What shall we call the baby? What shall we call the brat?
You can't call a baby *Tiddles* like you'd call a cat.

(Alternative) Now from time to time
Wiz breaks out in rhyme
So a poet's name was quite a handy notion.
He thought of Keats and Byron
and Banjo Patterson
But gave up when he came to Andrew Motion

(Alternative) Now Robert had a thought
As he was selling Port
Some wine might have a cracking name
Chateau Neuf de Pap
Was really loads of crap
So in the end he settled for Champaign

What shall we call the baby? What shall we call the swelling?
You can't call a baby *Bide-a-wee* like you'd call a dwelling.

The family may have views
when they hear the news
With Pas and Mas all hoping for a look-in.
To say that one's the best
will upset all the rest
So you'd better take a book and stick a pin in.

What shall we call the baby? What shall we call the sprog?
You can't call a baby *Rover* like you'd call a dog.

... *But you could call it Clarence*
... *Unless it's a girl*
... *Or twins!*

Peter Fox
November 2004 (*A baby boy born 27 Jan 05*)
Adapted summer 2005 for *Charlotte Bishop*

Worried man blues

My straight version adapted from various sources

*It takes a worried man to sing a worried song,
It takes a worried man to sing a worried song.
It takes a worried man to sing a worried song.
I'm worried now but I won't be worried long,*

- The train that I robbed was 21 coaches long/now the sheriff is chasing after me
- I went down to the river to get a boat and flee/but the lawmen were waiting there for me
- 21 links of chain around my leg/And on each link an initial of my name.
- I asked the judge what's gonna be my fine?/21 years on the rocky mountain line.
- The train arrived 21 coaches long/The girl I love is on the platform all forlorn.
- I looked back down the track as far as I could see./A little bitty hand was waving back at me.

My modern version

- The chaps at work are making fun of me/'Cos I don't have a girlfriend on my knee
- I'm underneath the clock waiting for my date/Is she coming or is she simply late
- Now she says the baby looks like me/I don't know lets test for DNA
- The DNA says I murdered 21 men/Which is rubbish - I only murdered 10.
- The judge he said "These lawyers are my friends"/This is where your reign of terror ends
- I sit in my cell when 21 years have gone/and regret the time that I went wrong.