

# Singing the Child Ballads

Rosaleen Gregory

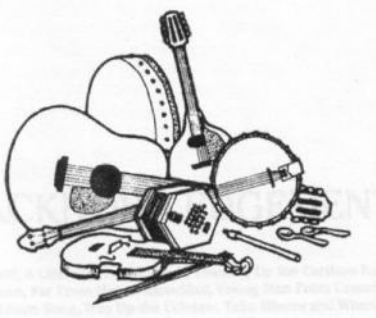
Last issue brought us almost to the end of my numerical journey through my singing versions of ballads included in Francis James Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Books I through V, but, as promised, there are some extra items learned along the way. This issue picks up three variants of ballads already submitted, plus one new one, and the sweeping-up operation will continue for an issue or so more.

## **Child #299: "Trooper and Maid" ("Pretty Peggy-O" aka "Fennario")**

*Guitar accompaniment.*

I was sure "Johnny of Hazelgreen" (#293) was my last offering from Child's Volume V, but a little digging and stretching has unearthed "Trooper and Maid", alias "The Bonny Lass of Fyvie", alias "Pretty Peggy," alias "Fennario". The connection is slim, in that Child's printed version bears no resemblance to what I sing, but he does mention the other titles in his commentary. The song I learned from oral tradition many years ago was called "Pretty Peggy-O." It is effectively the same as the song in the *Joan Baez Songbook* called "Fennario," which Bob Dylan (among others) popularized. In Baez's head-note to that song we are told that Cecil Sharp discovered several versions in the Southern Appalachians, and that it is still popular in Scotland as "The Bonny Lass of Fyvie-O." It was also known earlier in England as "Pretty Peggy of Derby". The ballad has a jaunty tune, easy guitar chords, and a sting in the tail.

You'll be glad to know that my extra variants and other recently learned items won't require such tortuous justification!



## **Child #2: "The Elfin Knight" ("Scarborough Fair")**

*A cappella.*

Now back to the beginning, and I want to share this engaging version of "Scarborough Fair" that I learned last year to illustrate a presentation on the English collectors Frank Kidson and Lucy Broadwood that Dave was giving at Whitby Folk Week in the UK. It was actually collected by Yorkshire folklorist Herbert Bower, who lived in Ripon. This version lacks the well-known refrain "Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme", but has an easy, flowing melody which sounds to me as if it should be a fiddle tune. The verses keep on repeating the two sections of the tune one after the other until the end.

## **Child #4: "Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight" ("False Sir John")**

*A cappella.*

I learned this fine Jean Ritchie Appalachian version of "The Outlandish Knight" some time ago but forgot to include it at the time. It's since become one of my favourites. My source is *Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians as sung by Jean Ritchie*, Oak Publications 1965, foreword by Alan Lomax, which is a treasure trove of traditional songs enlivened further by the inclusion of headnotes to each song by Jean and some amazing old black-and-white photographs taken by George Pickow.

## **Child #10: "The Twa Sisters" ("Bowie, Bowerie")**

*A cappella.*

Back in the Summer 2005 issue of the Magazine I included my favourite version of this ballad, which I took from Dan Milner and Paul Kaplan's *Songs of England, Ireland and Scotland: A Bonnie Bunch of Roses* (New York: Oak Publications, 1983).

I also know this John Jacob Niles-collected song which succinctly squeezes the narrative into eight hard-hitting verses. According to Niles, "Bowie, bowerie" was sung to him by "a soft-spoken, bewhiskered old man named Arlie Tolliver", in Cumberland, Kentucky, on July 12, 1932.

# Fennario



[www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue42\\_4/Fennario.mp3](http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue42_4/Fennario.mp3)

Anon

Voice

As we marched down to Fen-nar - i - o, As we marched down to Fen-  
ar - i - o, Our cap-tain fell in love with a la-dy like a dove, They called her by name, pret ty  
Peg - gy O.

The musical score is written in 4/4 time. The first line of music is for the voice, with lyrics 'As we marched down to Fen-nar - i - o, As we marched down to Fen-'. The second line of music is for the guitar, with lyrics 'ar - i - o, Our cap-tain fell in love with a la-dy like a dove, They called her by name, pret ty'. The third line of music is for the guitar, with lyrics 'Peg - gy O.'.

As we marched down to Fennario,  
As we marched down to Fennario,  
Our captain fell in love  
With a lady like a dove,  
And they called her by name pretty Peggy-O.

What will your mother think, pretty Peggy-O?  
What will your mother think, pretty Peggy-O?  
What will your mother think  
When she hears the guineas clink,  
Sees the soldiers all marching before you, O?

In a carriage you shall ride, pretty Peggy-O,  
In a carriage you shall ride, pretty Peggy-O,  
In a carriage you shall ride,  
With your true love at your side,  
As fair as any maiden in the arey-O.

Come tripping down the stair, pretty Peggy-O,  
Come tripping down the stair, pretty Peggy-O,  
Come tripping down the stair,  
Combing back your yellow hair,  
And bid farewell to sweet William-O.

Sweet William he is dead, pretty Peggy-O,  
Sweet William he is dead, pretty Peggy-O,  
Sweet William he is dead,  
And he died for a maid,  
The fairest maid in the arey-O.

O if ever I return, pretty Peggy-O,  
If ever I return, pretty Peggy-O,  
If ever I return,  
All your cities I will burn.  
Destroying all the ladies in the arey-O

# Scarborough Fair



[www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue42\\_4/Scarborough\\_Fair.mp3](http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue42_4/Scarborough_Fair.mp3)

Anon

Voice

Is any of you going to Scarbro' Fair? Re-mem-ber me to a lad as lives there, Re-mem-ber me to a lad as lives there, For once he was a true lov-er of mine. Tell him to bring me an a-cre of land, be-twixt the wild oc-ean and yond-er sea sand, be-twixt the wild oc-ean and yond-er sea sand, And then he shall be a true lov-er of mine.

Is any of you going to Scarborough Fair?  
Remember me to a lad as lives there,  
Remember me to a lad as lives there;  
For once he was a true lover of mine.

Tell him to bring me an acre of land,  
Betwixt the wild ocean and yonder sea strand,  
Betwixt the wild ocean and yonder sea strand;  
And then he shall be a true lover of mine.

Tell him to plough it with one ram's horn,  
And sow it all over with one peppercorn,  
And sow it all over with one peppercorn;  
And then he shall be a true lover of mine.

Tell him to reap it with a sickle of leather,  
And bind it together with one peacock feather,  
And bind it together with one peacock feather;  
And then he shall be a true lover of mine.

And now I have answered your questions three,  
I hope you'll answer as many for me,  
I hope you'll answer as many for me;  
And then thou shalt be a true lover of mine.

Is any of you going to Scarborough Fair?  
Remember me to a lass as lives there,  
Remember me to a lass as lives there;  
For once she was a true lover of mine.

Tell her to make me a cambric shirt,  
Without any needles or thread or owt through't,  
Without any needles or thread or owt through't;  
And then she shall be a true lover of mine.

Tell her to wash it by yonder wall,  
Where water ne'er sprung, nor a drop o' rain fall,  
Where water ne'er sprung, nor a drop o' rain fall;  
And then she shall be a true lover of mine.

Tell her to dry it on yonder thorn,  
Where blossom ne'er grew sin' Adam was born,  
Where blossom ne'er grew sin' Adam was born;  
And then she shall be a true lover of mine.

And now I have answered your questions three,  
And I hope you'll answer as many for me,  
And I hope you'll answer as many for me;  
And then thou shalt be a true lover of mine.

# False Sir John



[www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue42\\_4/False\\_Sir\\_John.mp3](http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue42_4/False_Sir_John.mp3)

Anon

Voice



False Sir John a - woo - ing\_ came, To a la - dy young and fair, May



Col-vin was this la - dy's\_ name, And her fath-er's on - ly heir, Her fath-er's on - ly \_



heir.

False Sir John a-wooing came,  
To a lady young and fair,  
May Colvin was this lady's name,  
Her father's only heir,  
Her father's only heir.

He woo'd her while she spun the thread,  
And while they made the hay,  
Until he gained this maid's consent  
To mount and ride away,  
To mount and ride away.

It's bring-a me some of your father's gold  
And some of your mother's fee;  
I'll take thee to some far-off land  
And there I'll marry thee,  
And there I'll marry thee.

She's gone into her father's coffers,  
Where all of his money lay,  
She's took the yeller and left the white  
And lightly skipped away,  
And lightly skipped away.

She's gone into her father's stables  
Where all of his steeds did stand,  
She's took the best and left the worst  
In all of her father's land,  
In all of her father's land.

She's mounted on a milk-white steed

And he on a dapple-grey,  
And they rode till they come to a lonesome spot,  
A cliff by the side of the sea,  
A cliff by the side of the sea.

Light down, light down, said false Sir John,  
Your bridal bed you see,  
It's seven women have I drowned here  
And the eighth one you shall be,  
The eighth one you shall be.

Have off, have off your Holland smock,  
With borders all around,  
For it's too costly to lay down here  
To rot on the cold, cold ground  
To rot on the cold, cold ground.

Cast off, cast off your silks so fine,  
And lay them on a stone,  
For they're too fine and too costly  
To rot in the salt sea foam,  
To rot in the salt sea foam.

Take off, take off your silken stays,  
Likewise your handsome shoes,  
For they're too fine and too costly  
To rot in the sea with you,  
To rot in the sea with you.

Turn around, turn around, thou false Sir John,  
And look at the leaves on the tree,



For it don't become a gentleman  
A naked woman to see,  
A naked woman to see.

Oh false Sir John has turned around  
To gaze at the leaves on the tree,  
She's made a dash with her tender little arms  
And pushed him into the sea,  
And pushed him into the sea.

Oh help, oh help, May Colvin,  
Oh help or I shall drown,  
I'll take thee back to thy father's house  
And lightly set thee down,  
And lightly set thee down.

No help, no help, said May Colvin,  
No help will you get from me,  
For the bed's no colder to you, sir,  
Than you thought to give to me.

Than you thought to give to me.

She's mounted on the milk-white steed,  
And led the dapple-grey,  
And rode till she come to her father's house  
At the breakin' of the day,  
At the breakin' of the day.

Then up and spoke that little parrot,  
Said May Colvin, where have you been,  
And what have you done with false Sir John,  
That went with you riding,  
That went with you riding?

Oh hold your tongue, my pretty parrot,  
And tell no tales on me,  
And I'll buy you a cage of beaten gold  
With spokes of ivory,  
With spokes of ivory.

## Bowie, Bowerie



[www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue42\\_4/Bowie\\_Bowerie.mp3](http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue42_4/Bowie_Bowerie.mp3)

Anon

Voice

Bow - ie, bow - er - ie, A lord once lived by the deep blue sea,  
He had daughters one, two, three, Bow - ie, bowerie, bowie, Bowerie, bow downer-ie

*Bow-ie, bow-er-ie,  
A lord once lived by the deep blue sea,  
He had daughters one, two, three,  
Bow-ie bow-er-ie bow-ie,  
Bow-er-ie bow down-er-ie.*

A young knight came his court to pay,  
He did choose the beauty and gay.

The daughters walked on the ocean's rim,  
The mean one pushed the beauty in.

"If you will lend your lily-white hand,

I'll give you my fee and all my land."

"I'll neither lend you either hand,  
'Cause I'll have your lover and your land."

The miller pushed her farther in  
He wanted of her silver pin.

And when she died, the fiddles played,  
Her father heard how she had been slayed.

The miller and the ugly one  
Hanged for the murder they had done.