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`Preface`

'Come on in and take your coat off, settle down and listen to the band' from 'Rosie' by D. Swarbrick.

As we all know, a song is a combination of melody and lyric. Since I became involved in 'Fairport Convention', I've watched my friends writing in Hotel rooms, Airports, cars and bars the world over. Seeing ideas form on a scrap of paper and develop via the recording studio to a concert hall platform is a really fascinating process. I've always felt that Swarb, Richie, Sandy and Trevor are very underrated as composers. Their songs can't really be pinned down or put into any category. They cover a whole spectrum of feelings, love, anger, hope, fear, joy and they always make you think.

Hopefully, this book will put a little of their feelings and inspirations into your hands and if you get as much happiness as I have had in performing these songs, then their efforts will have been worth while.

Dave Pegg

'We travel over the sea and ride the rolling sky for that's the way it is that is our fortune. There are many ears to please many peoples love to try and everyday does start Rising for the Moon' from 'Rising for the Moon' by Sandy Denny
Meet on the Ledge

Words and Music by
RICHARD THOMPSON

Slowly

VERSE

A

Bm

A

Bm

A

F#m

1. We used to say that come the day we'd all be making songs
2. The way is up along the way the air is growing thin-
3. And now I see I'm all alone but that's the only way-

Em

G

D

G

D

or finding better words
Too many friends who tried
You'll have your chance again
These ideas never lasted
Blown off this mountain with the wind
Meet on the ledge were gonna meet on the ledge

A

Em

G

D

Em

When the time is up I'm gonna see all my friends
Meet on the ledge We're gonna meet on the ledge

G

D

Em

If you really mean it it all comes round again all comes round again

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RICHARD THOMPSON
Matty Groves

Traditional Arrangement by
S. Denny, A. Hutchings, D. Mattacks,
S. Nicol, R. Thompson, D. Swarbrick

2 When the meeting it was done
She cast her eyes about,
And there she saw little Matty Groves
Walking in the crowd.

3 "Come home with me, little Matty Groves
Come home with me tonight
Come home with me, little Matty Groves
And sleep with me till light."

4 "Oh I can’t come, I won’t come and
Sleep with you tonight
By the rings on your fingers
I can tell you are Lord Arnold’s wife."

5 "What if I am Lord Arnold’s wife,
Lord Arnold is not at home,
For he is out in the far cornfields
Bringing the yearlings home."

6 And a servant who was standing by
And hearing what was said,
He swore Lord Arnold he would know
Before the sun would set.

7 And in his hurry to carry the news
He bent his breast and ran,
And when he came to the broad millstream
He took off his shoes and he swam.

8 Little Matty Groves he lay down
And took a little sleep
When he awoke, Lord Arnold
He was standing at his feet.

9 Saying, "How do you like my feather bed, and
How do you like my sheets?
How do you like my lady
Who lies in your arms asleep?"

"Oh well I like your feather bed, and
Well I like your sheets.
But better I like your lady gay
Who lies in my arms asleep."

"Get up! Get up!" Lord Arnold cried,
"Get up as quick as you can.
Let it never be said in fair England
I slew a naked man!"

"Oh I can't get up, I won't get up
I can't get up for my life,
For you have two long beaten swords
And I not a pocket knife."

"Well it's true I have two beaten swords
And they cost me deep in the purse
But you will have the better of them
And I will have the worse."

"And you will strike the very first blow
And strike it like a man
And I will strike the very next blow
And I'll kill you if I can."

So Matty struck the very first blow
And he hurt Lord Arnold sore
Lord Arnold struck the very next blow
And Matty struck no more.

And then Lord Arnold he took his wife
And sat her on his knee
Saying, "Who do you love the best of us,
Your Matty Groves or me?"

And then spoke up his own dear wife
Never heard to speak so free,
"I'd rather a kiss from dead Matty's lips
Than you or your finery."

Lord Arnold he jumped up
And loudly he did bawl,
He struck his wife right through the heart
And pinned her against the wall.

"Oh, a grave, a grave" Lord Arnold cried,
"To put these lovers in,
But bury my lady at the top
For she was of noble kin."
Now I've been an engine driver all of my days and that's the only thing I can do.

Her hair was red her eyes were blue.

I hold a good head of steam everywhere that I'm seen back so I

But the wheels on the track kept calling me back so I

G

C    G    D    G

I bid that girl adieu I bid that girl adieu

Yes wherever my wheels rolled through

Yes wherever my wheels rolled through

C    G    C    G7

Blow whistle Steel wheels keep on humming

Hear that steel rail humming

D    G    G
Hold on darling, your engine driver is coming, he's coming through.

Well I was

3 Some day I'll have to give up the iron line,
   And then I'll know just what I will find,
   I'll find me some shack by some old railroad track,
   So I can hear them motors whine,
   So I can hear them motors whine.
Rosie

Words and Music by DAVE SWARBRICK

Brightly

VERSE

Amaj7

Bm

E7

I know Rosie,
you're living in a world you didn't

A

D

Bm

Em7

make

(Instrumental)

And I know it's hard

A

Amaj7

Bm7

E7

feeling happy when the things you want aren't even there to take

F#m

Bm

E

(Chorus)

Come on Rosie and

D

C#m

Bm

rosin up the bow for the more I learn it's the less I seem to know

A7

D

C#m

Bm

Lie down cozy and let's learn to take things

A

D

Bm

slow for the more I learn it's the less I seem to know

Bm7

E

D

Oh my Rosie (Instr.) Come on

2. Throw away your uniform, now's the time to take life
   By the hand.
   Come on in and take your coat off
   Settle down, and listen to the band
John the Gun

Words and Music by SANDY DENNY

Slow beat VERSE

Em  G  Em  G  D`

My shadow follows me where ev'ry I should chance to go John the gun did say if you should chance to meet me as I wander too and fro sad would be your day

Em  A CHORUS  Dm  C  Dm

Put away your guns of steel, death comes too soon for all your mas'ter he may need you soon and you must heed his call

2. My life was mine and the light did shine 'Till the guns they did go through me So now I will never fall Ideals of peace are gold which fools have found Upon the plains of war I shall destroy them all.

3. I am the master of the games Which you will hardly every play So I will teach your sons And if they should die before The evening of their span of days Well then they will die young.

4. Condemn me not for always will I play the game of war In moonshine or in sun If any cross the path I choose to tread Their chances they are poor My name is John the Gun.

Lay Me Down Easy

Words and Music by
D. SWARBRICK and B. ROWLAND

Medium beat

CHORUS
Lay me down eas - y  Lay me down
c
G7  c  G

slow
The booze, and the nights with the boys leave me

wea - ry and low

Throw me a

D  G

rope

Toss me a line

I'm drowning in headache
So you drink the

To Coda ☞

If I

VERSE

I like the whiskey
I like the gin
But I don't much

live till tomorrow
if I survive
I shant touch a

care drop
For the state that I'm in
Swirling and

All the rest of my life
But if I ex-

C D G7 C
Hungarian Rhapsody

Words and Music by
DAVE PEGG

Medium tempo
CHORUS

Oh what a time we had down by the Danube
eating our goulash and drinking our wine
listening to gypsy bands playing cymbal-ions

everyone happy and things were just fine

1. Finished our food and got into the wagon to
2. Got to the gig although nobody else did_

Drive eighty miles and then do the show
Set up the gear and began to play
Farmers and soldiers just standing

busy truck-in' banging and bumping don't know where to go_

old Budapest_

3. Finished the last song and made for the exit
But the manager man had come up from the 'sticks'
He said why ain't you dressed like a 'poofthah' ensemble
Leaping pianos and waving your legs?

4. Into the van again out on the highway
Back to our Hotel to take a rest
Everyone swigging their 'Eigré Bitkaver'
Things really were funny in old Budapest.

Tam Lin

Moderato

INTRODUCTION

Em

D                G                D                Em                D
forbid

you maid-ens all that—wear gold in your hair to travel to Carter-

G                D                Repeat ad lib.                Em                D                G                D                Last time

baugh for young Tam Lin is there Instrumental

2 None that go by Carterhaugh but they leave him a pledge
   Either their mantles of green or else their maidenheads.

3 Janet tied her kirtle green a bit above her knee
   And she's gone to Carterhaugh as fast as go can she.

4 She'd not pulled a double rose, a rose but only two
   When up then came young Tam Lin says "Lady pull no more"

5 And why come you to Carterhaugh without command from me?"
   "I'll come and go" young Janet said "And ask no leave of thee."

6 Janet tied her kirtle green a bit above her knee
   And she's gone to her father as fast as go can she.

7 Well up then spoke her father clear and he spoke meek and mild
   "Oh and alas Janet" he said "I think you go with child."

8 "Well if that be so" Janet said "Myself shall bear the blame
   There's not a knight in all your hall shall get the baby's name.

9 For if my love were an earthly knight as he is an elfin grey
   I'd not change my own true love for any knight you have."

10 So Janet tied her kirtle green a bit above her knee
    and she's gone to Carterhaugh as fast as go can she.

11 "Oh tell to me Tam Lin" she said "Why came you here to dwell?"
   "The Queen of Fairies caught me when from my horse I fell

12 And at the end of seven years she pays a tithe to hell?
   I so fair and full of flesh and feared be myself

13 But tonight is Halloween and the fairy folk ride,
    Those that would their true love win at mile's cross they must hide.

14 First let pass the horses black and then let pass the brown
    Quickly run to the white steed and pull the rider down,

15 For I'll ride on the white steed, the nearest to the town
   For I was an earthly knight, they give me that renown.

16 Oh they will turn me in your arms to a newt or a snake
    But hold me tight and fear not, I am your baby's father.

17 And they will turn me in your arms into a lion bold
    But hold me tight and fear not and you will love your child,

18 And they will turn me in your arms into a naked knight
    But cloak me in your mantle and keep me out of sight".

19 In the middle of the night she heard the bridle ring
    She heeded what he did say and young Tam Lin did win.

20 Then up spoke the Fairy Queen, an angry Queen was she
    "Woo betide her ill-farred face, an ill death may she die

21 Had I known Tam Lin" she said "This night I did see
    I'd have looked him in the eyes and turned him to a tree."

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VERSE

Feel how the wind blows, December despair, bring me a ribbon to

tie up my hair, I'll be your bride, go where you go,

all of my life you'll be my beau.
2. The night's in your face, the sky's in your eyes,
The day's in my arms, when you're by my side,
Whenever you're weary I'll sing you a song,
Whenever you're lonely, I'll show you you're wrong.

3. So come from the window, let's climb the stairs,
All of my sorrows are none of your cares,
While life is in us, let's love all we can,
I'll be your woman if you'll be my man.
Angel Delight

Words and Music by
S. NICOL, D. SWARBRICK,
D. PEGG, D. MATTACKS

Brightly

John the wood went out one day to view the scene from a different angle,

Stood and watched the child at play tinkling on an old triangle. Dave the drum who was

passing by bought the toy with a coin he'd picked up. You should have seen the

gleam in his eye as he saw it soon, his, cleaned up, shined up.
La la la la la la la la la la la la la
A7
D
A7
la la la la la la la la la la la
Out in the rain if you
D
B
want a cup of tea Dodge the puddles in the yard. The lord of the land's coming
E
B
round to complain, It's hard
D.C.
A G F# C#7 F#
2 The peacock flew to a very high tree.
He didn’t like grass or concrete fairies.
Put me where the action is.
I’d rather be with the next-door fairies,
Simon is by the bathroom door,
In his hands is a herb shampoo,
Waiting for the water’s roar,
So little time, so much to do.
La la la la la, la la la la la la la la la la la la la.
La la la la la, la la la la la la la la la la la la.
Stand in a line, take a book along,
There’s time for a game of cards.
Now it’s your turn, and the water’s all gone.
It’s cold.

3 The next to appear was the mighty Glydd.
He needs a rest, or at least he says so.
You probably think that he’s flipped his lid,
’Cause he wears high heels and a snow-white trousseau.
Five feet three, yet he stands so tall.
And on the ground his feet are never.
Friends may come and friends may go,
But the fiddle bill goes on forever.
La la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la.
La la la la la la la la la la la la la la.
The music room would make you grin,
It’s as cold as a freezing pit.
There’s a hole in the wall where a lorry came in.
Let’s spit.

4 I quite like breast of chicken,
And I’m crazy about aspic and roast quails.
But the sight to make my pulse rate quicken
Is a dozen nice fat snails.
On the other had there’s Pegg on the bass
Whose tastes in food are very much wider,
You’ll see a smile light up his face
At a couple of kippers and a glass of cider.
La la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la.
La la la la la la la la la la la la la la.
Stand on the chair if you want to watch the box.
The fleas can jump a mile.
Peep thru the haze watching “Top of the Pops”,
And smile.
Sickness and Diseases

Words and Music by D. SWARBRICK and R. THOMPSON

VERSE

C D Bb F C Am
I do hate to see a rover riddled in the stones Now.

Bb F C D B7 Em
he's one step nearer to the ground (Instrumental) and

C D Bb F E A
I do hate to see a hawker broken in the bones (Instr.)

CHORUS

D B7 E
Sickness and diseases pull you down pull you down

A D F# 1,2,3 E 4
Sickness and diseases pull you down

2 Everybody's got the sickness, everybody's down
Running to the doctor with a pound
Doctor, doctor, do you have a needle
Big enough for me.

3 My friend Willy? He looks so ill,
His face as white as milk,
Everybody runs for miles when he's in town,
He's got every known disease,
And some without a name.

4 If you want to live to be,
A poor man or a prince,
Pay good attention when,
Evil times abound,
Always listen to what your mother said,
And stay in bed at night.
Rising for the Moon

Words and Music by
SANDY DENNY

Medium beat VERSE

I travel over the sea and ride the rolling sky, for

that's the way it is, that is my fortune. There are

many ears to please, many people's love to try, and

every day's begun rising for the moon

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2. There’s a heart in every place,
    There’s a tear for each farewell,
    For that’s the way it is,
    That is my fortune
    I’ll lure you as the lute,
    That the wayward gypsies sell,
    With the sinking of the sun,
    Rising of the moon.

3. We travel over the sea,
    And ride the rolling sky,
    For that’s the way it is,
    That is our fortune.
    There are many ears to please,
    Many peoples love to try,
    And every day’s begun
    Rising for the moon.
Slowly

**CHORUS**

Just a roll, just a roll,
just a roll, on your drum

G D

Just a roll, just a roll, and the war has begun.

Em D

Now the right things the wrong things.

D G D

no more excuses to come just one step at a time

G C D G D

and the war has begun. She's run away she's

G D

run away and she ran so bitterly

D G C D G

Call to your colours my friend don't you call to me

D G D

Don't you cry, don't you cry
Don't you cry, up on the sea

G D D G C D G

— Don't you cry, don't you cry, for your lady and me

Moderato

It's nice to sit on the highest cliff for a minute or two.

And it's nice to ride a stallion or go sailing in a galloon with a good crew.

And it's nice to walk the clover when it's wet all over with the morning dew. Did you ever see a dog's nose quiver when the wind blows?

That's me with you.

Instrumental

Soft as whiskers on a horse's chin. Me with you.

Just like a Cheshire cat I can do it again.

Happy as King Arthur and his magic blade.

Sitting by the lizard in the shade.

Happy as a fox out on a midnight raid.

Happy as a landlord when his rent gets paid.

2. Breaking up the fresh bread dropping crumbs on the bed.
   I'm a lout.
   Smiling at the morning.
   And tying up a shoe string.
   I'm going out.
   I'm happy as a heifer chewing the cud.
   Happy as a bubble in mud.
   Did you ever hear a tune slide.
   Swinging from the inside.
   That's me with you.

3. If you take some yellow
   And a little bit of blue.
   Your bound to get green.
   And if you keep a horse from water.
   Sooner or later he turns mean.
   Now it's nice to have a nibble.
   But don't let it go and spoil the meal.
   I'm a feather full black crow.
   Beady on a hedgerow.
   That's me with you.

4. It's nice to stroll.
   When the storm has rolled
   And it all smells new.
   And it's nice to seem wise.
   When you've only surmised.
   And you hadn't really got a clue.
   When you think you don't belong.
   And there's none that sings your song.
   Think who's tougher than a toennail.
   And lighter than a cats tail.
   That's me with you.
Now Be Thankful

Words and Music by
D. SWARBRICK and R. THOMPSON

Slow beat

VERSE

G

D

C

Am

G

G

D

1. When the stone is grown too cold to kneel,
in crystal waters I'll be bound

G

D

C

Am

Em

D

8

G

D

C

cold as stone wear-y to the sounds up-on the wheel
fierce as fire wear-y to the sounds up-on the wheel
Now be thank-ful for good things be-low

To Coda

Now be thank-ful to your mak-er for the rose, the red rose blooms for

Am

Em

D

Am

G

D

Am7

D

Am7

D7

D.S. al Coda

Coda

Am

Em

D

all to know (instr.)

all to know

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Mr. Lacey

Words and Music by
ASHLEY HUTCHINGS

Medium beat

1. Please Mister Lacey
   let me work your loving machine

2. Where Mister Lacey
   where d'you learn just what to do

3. Why Mister Lacey
   why d'you do the things you do

Please Mister Lacey
   let me work your loving machine
   will you

Where Mister Lacey
   where d'you learn just what to do
   can you

Why Mister Lacey
   why d'you do the things you do
   it's

let me control the handles
   you know it's the best thing I've ever seen

fix me up now with a teacher
   I want to become an inventor too

true no one here understands you
   but maybe one day they'll catch up with you

G C7 G D

Friendship Song

Words and Music by
B. GALLAGHER and G. LYLE

Moderato

If you're stuck and you're in a jam and you're

short of a helping hand come and get it come and get

'cause anything I can do for you anyway

I can be of use come and get it come on and get
Being friends with a friend's a wonderful thing when things can be so tough. You never can tell when the time may come our friendship will turn to love. If you're looking for company, I've got more than enough for me come, and get it.
John Lee

Medium beat

VERSE

John Lee your headache's growing, the cold wind's blowing but the sea's without a ripple

CHORUS

John Lee you're turning around your fate again. Oh John Lee

To Coda ♪

Lee

Oh John Lee

Lee

Dear John come and work at the glen just

write me when and I'll send someone to meet you

Em

Bm

Cmaj7

B

John gone to where he started from He's not worked long just beginning to belong it

Em

Bm

Cmaj7

B

hasn't been a very good day The Missus wants to halve my pay

Em

Bm

Cmaj7

B

Close the door and douse the lights. It's quiet at night when she's turned up tight

Sometimes I feel when they're all in bed it's almost like the whole world's dead and

so I lay me down to sleep I pray the Lord my soul to keep

Oh John Lee

2 John Lee's been made a freeman
His heart's a seaman but his flesh won't make a sailor
Working in a big hotel, waiting for the bell that's
Ringing for his labour.

3 John Lee, your chances are good, you'd better touch wood
We think things must get better.
John Lee, you're a friend so true she wants to help you
Miss Keyse has sent a letter.
Our Band

Words and Music by
DAVE SWARBRICK

Medium beat

No one knows the time of day, 'cause every body's tossed their
No one knows the way to the show, but every body's hoping that the

Clocks away, sitting in the sun we lie and lay
Others all know, someone goes to telephone and Joe

Praying for a tan, better than all the others in our band
Please, Mister Bigg, where's the gig, where's all...
Pray-ing for a tan
better than all the oth-ers in our band

the oth-ers in our band, our band has brains amongst its

mem-bers And if some for-get to ar-rive you can bet there's
always one remembers

Lyrics at D.S.

No one worries there isn't a rush
No one hurries there's never a fuss
And nothing is too much trouble for us
When everybody's rich
You only work for fun
Just ask the others in our band
When everybody's loaded
You only work for fun
Just ask the others in our band.

OUR BAND 1976
Walk Awhile

Words and Music by
D. SWARBICK and R. THOMPSON

Brightly

G CHORUS

Walk a while walk a while walk a while with

Am

me, The more we walk to gether love, the better we'll agree

G

We'll agree

Fine

G VERSE

One hand in your mouth and a finger in your eye Un - der - takers

C

D

bow their heads as you go walking by

2 Here comes another Sunday
Ringing on the bell. And here comes your own dear child
With another tale to tell

3 Bring along the brewers head,
Bring the cuckoo tree,
Bring your lady mother along
To keep us company.

4 Two miles down the road
Henry Tomkins wife
Three miles down the road
He's running for his life.
There are some human concepts that transcend the individuals who are associated with them from the outset: this is true of political institutions, religions and even ideas. It is also true of music.

It was true, for many years, of the Byrds, whose only connecting link was Jim (Roger) McGuinn. It is true of the Soft Machine, though Mike Ratledge was for a long time the sole survivor, and now even he is gone. And it is particularly true of Fairport Convention, now in its eleventh incarnation in slightly less than nine years but still true in some almost indefinable way to the principles already evident when I first saw them play the Middle Earth in Covent Garden towards the end of that year of love, 1967.

Those were the days when the closest they got to folk music was in their electric interpretations of Joni Mitchell songs like "Chelsea Morning", at a time when that lady was still a solo singer to the tune of her own guitar in the familiar Greenwich Village mould. The band in those days was Richard Thompson and Simon Nicol (whose father's house in North London gave the band its name) on guitars, Ashley "Tyger" Hutchings on bass, Martin Lamble, who was to be killed in that terrible M1 motorway crash in the June of two years later, on drums, Judy Dyble, on vocals, and electric autoharp, and Ian Macdonald (later known as Ian Matthews), a late addition who arrived during the making of their first album for Polydor, the male vocalist.

On the other hand, while it would be a mistake to think of them as hardline folkies who gradually sold their souls for rock 'n roll, it would be equally erroneous to think that they knew nothing of the native traditions back in those days. Ashley once told me that when they started out they couldn't make up their minds what kind of band they wanted to be, a Bloomfield-style electric blues band, a West Coast art rock band like the Airplane, or even a Kwskin-style jugband. Ironically, at that time Ashley, whose current projects are closer to a recreation of traditional music techniques, probably knew least about English folk, but he remembers the others passing around copies of the monumental ten-volume Alan Lomax "Caledmon" collection of the Folk Songs of Britain, with its authentic field recordings of the many traditions of these islands.

They had a personnel change between their first and second albums, as well as a change of record label. Judy Dyble left to become part of an interesting folk duo, Trader Home, with Irishman Jackie McAuley, who were probably ahead of their time. That folded after one album for Pye, and Judy seemed to settle down to a quieter married life, though she surfaced recently on a previously unissued early recording by King Crimson, of all people.

She was replaced by Alexandra Elene MacLean Denny, a young Wimbledon girl who'd studied music at school but decided to become a nurse when she graduated. She was a regular around the Soho folk scene, but it was obvious that it would be too small to hold her, especially on a semi-professional basis. She was looking anxiously for a new direction and again, in the light of subsequent events, it was ironical that her motivation was to broaden her scope outside the strictly folk repertoire. She made a couple of albums, one as a "friend" guesting with folk veteran Alex Campbell for a budget label, and another in Denmark, with an ex-bluegrass band, formerly the Strawberry Hill Boys, now better known internationally as the Strawbs. One of the songs on that latter album was her first effort at songwriting, the brilliantly beautiful "Who Knows Where the Time Goes?", which was actually recorded by Judy Collins (as the B-side of a hit single, and the title track of a great album) before Fairport got round to the song on their third album.

Sandy's "Potheringay" (which was to provide the name for her own band at the end of 1969) was one of the eight self-penned songs on Fairport's second album, the first of the great "classic" period by all reckonings, "What We Did On Our Holidays". Their first album included seven, as a matter of fact, but none of them was particularly remarkable. But in addition to Sandy's, the second one included the hilarious "Mr Lacey", a homage to a zany sculptor they very much in evidence around the London scene who was also a member of the Alberts, a brass trio who led every Aldermaston anti-bomb march I went on, and the tremendous "Meet on the Ledge", a portent of great things to come from Richard Thompson.

The album also included two songs that were at least semi-traditional, the American "Nottoman Town" from the repertoire of Jean Ritchie of Kentucky, which had served to provide the tune for Bob Dylan's angry "Masters of War", and "She Moves Through the Fair" a song with words by Irish poet Padraic Colum to a traditional tune adapted by Herbert Hughes which was popularised around the London folk scene by the great Irish tinker singer, Margaret Barry, who told me she learnt it from a 78 of Count Mackornment. Such are the devious workings of the folk process!

By the time the band's third album, "Unhalfbricking", came out, changes in personnel between albums had become a Fairport tradition. Although he sang on one track, Ian Matthews had left to form "Southern Comfort". It was a fairly amicable break, as have been most of Fairport's changes over the years, and Richard Thompson played on Ian's first solo album.
Epilogue

By the time it came out, though he was pictured on the sleeve, drummer Martin Lambe was dead, on the eve of the American tour that was to have broken the country's most promising band internationally. For a time it looked as if the band would not make it into the Seventies.

Guesting on a couple of the tracks, including the single, "Si Tu Dois Partir", a French translation of Dylan's "If You've Got to Go, Go Now", which for some obscure reason did better, chartwise, than any other single they've ever done, was a jazzy folk fiddler by name of Dave Swarbrick. Swarb had played for several years with one of the country's most respected folk groups, Ian Campbell, and then had worked as a duo with singer Martin Carthy, producing in the process a couple of records that have become collectors' pieces.

With an ancestry traceable back through Scott Skinner, the great Scottish traditional stylist, bluegrass fiddler Kenny Baker and jazzer Stephane Grappelli, Swarbrick played fiddle on three items and mandolin on one. There was an English traditional track on the album, "A Sailor's Life", from the repertoire of Isla Cameron, a rubato tour de force which the eminent folklorist, A.L. (Bert) Lloyd, has hailed as an electric interpretation which is contemporary without being false to the spirit of the original. Actually, like so many developments which seem, with the benefit of hindsight to have had a sort of historical inevitability about them, "A Sailor's Life" happened more or less by accident, evolving out of a pre-gig singaround in the dressing room that worked so happily that they immediately performed it on stage that very night. Nevertheless, it does seem to have been a precursor to the album that followed, the most wholly traditionally-oriented "Lieve and Lief", adorned with pictures of the ballad scholar, Professor Child, and the English folksong collector, Cecil Sharp.

By that time, two things had happened, one good, the other bad. Dave Swarbrick had become a full-time member of the band (though Martin Carthy had declined to join with him) but Martin Lambe was dead. By the prosaic method of an ad in the MM, they found Dave Mattacks as a replacement. It was altogether a happy choice, for no one had yet solved the problem of fitting conventional drumkit rhythms around the freer phrasing of the folk without putting them into a rhythmical straitjacket that would destroy their subtlety entirely. Mattacks wasn't, at first sight, the ideal man to solve this equation, for he seemed to have had little to do with folk music in any shape or form - unless the "Come Dancing" school of ballroom dancing is a form of folk, which I rather doubt. He was a graduate of the palais bands, that now almost obsolete forcing-bed for so many useful jazz and swing musicians. Coming at a time when the rhythmic innovations of jazz percussion pioneers like Max Roach and Kenny Clarke were being absorbed into the general musical vocabulary, he was able to approach the problem with more sensitivity than any of the newly evolving breed of rock drummers.

Though much has been made of the traditional emphasis of the album (especially by those "purists" who felt that the later, more contemporary approach of some versions of Fairport had been a departure from the path of true traditionalism in many ways its significance was its contemporary approach, even when the subject was traditional. Actually, the album did contain three original songs, though these were to traditional-sounding tunes, one of them the ballad melody "Willie o' Winsbury" ("Farewell Farewell"). Of the more traditional material, one, "Reynardine", a vulture tale of a foxy gent who lured a credulous lady into his mountain lair, had been extensively reworked by Bert Lloyd. The fine "Matty Groves" and "Tam Lin" were worked up from written texts (one dictated to them over the phone) and bore little relation to any versions of the ballads as they were ever sung in tradition, though their "Matty Groves" resembles that performed by the fine American traditional-style singer and banjo-picker, Hedy West. This is not to minimise their value, for the category judgment, folk or non-folk, should never be confused with the value judgment, good or not good. There are terrible folk songs and brilliant non-folk, and since in any case a true folklorist regards a traditional song as having been cut off from its functional roots when it is taken out of its community, the distinction can be fairly unerring.

Strangely enough, though in retrospect "Lieve and Lief" seems so significant, it was less successful in sales terms than "Unhalfbricking" and not half so successful as the next album but one, "Angel Delight", which actually got into the top ten albums for just one week in mid-1971. This success, ironically enough, came after a whole series of those personnel convulsions which have become a hallmark of Fairport's history over the years and which Dave Swarbrick believes, probably correctly, have been a source of strength and inspirational renewal rather than weakness. First Ashley Hutchings and Sandy Denny left, Ashley to form the first of two versions of Steeleye Span with which he was to be associated as bassist, Sandy to form that lovely and under-rated band, Fotheringay. Swarb brought in his old Brummie mate from the Campbell group, Dave Pegg on bass, and the vocal chores were shared between Richard Thompson, Simon Nicol and (increasingly) himself. Then, after "Full House" (the last Fairport album, incidentally, to be produced by the brilliant young American, Joe Boyd, whose full contribution
to the development of British folk-rock has never been adequately acknowledged. Richard left to pursue his solo songwriting career.

The changes were coming so frequently that it was a matter for public comment that no one left between "Angel Delight" and its successor, the remarkable "Babbacombe Lee", the story of a true "man they couldn't hang" tale, which Swarb discovered in a tattered Edwardian newspaper. The term concept album is bandied about so readily that it has become almost devoid of meaning, but here was a true concept, excitingly and thoroughly realised, with a gripping background plot and the most eclectic range of influences yet, from Sam Larnar's traditional "Sailor's Alphabet" to harmonies that seemed to hark across to Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys.

Having conquered yet another peak, the inner restlessness of the band reasserted itself, and to such an extent that though it continued to play in public, nothing worth issuing was recorded between 1971 and 1973, when a somewhat transitional album, "Rosie", with guest appearances by Sandy and Richard, as well as friends like Ralph McTell and Linda Peters (now Mrs Thompson) and drummers Gerry Conway and Timi Donald, came upon the scene. First Simon Nicol and then Dave Mattacks had left to join Ashley Hutchings' latest enterprise, the Albion Country Band, meaning that there were now no longer any of the original 1967 band left. Swarb was the oldest member (July 1969) and Dave Peg the next (December of the same year).

Gradually the band put itself back together, beginning another era in the history of this constantly changing but in some ways amazingly consistent association of musicians. Trevor Lucas, Australian folk singer turned record producer (and ex-member of Fotheringay) was in charge of the making of "Rosie" and it was hardly surprising that, by the end of the album, he was an official member. He brought in American guitarist Jerry Donahue, another Fotheringay stalwart, who lent the band's jigs and reels an intriguing country slant, with his agonisingly bent notes and complex Jerry Reed style fingerpicking. Mattacks came back from mysterious Albion.

"Rosie" was in many ways a Swarbrick solo, with five of the songs from him, plus the inevitable instrumental medley featuring him heavily. Trevor's contribution shouldn't be forgotten, though, for his "Knights of the Road" was an interesting exercise in seeing if the vein of truck driving songs recently exploited so brilliantly in America by C.W. McCall had any validity in Britain. By the time of "Nine", however, we had ourselves a proper band again, uniquely different from all that had gone before, but still recognisably in this seemingly indestructible tradition of what Fairport stood for. The instrumentals were more American-style, featuring a bluegrass tune ("Brilliance Medley") and a Donahue original, and there were a couple of more traditionally oriented songs (one with original melody), as well as Trevor's excellent "Bring 'Em Down". My personal favourite, however, was Swarbrick's sensitive setting of Richard Lovelace's beautiful 17th Century lyric, "To Althea from Prison", with its gently discordant play-out.

When a band issues a live album, it is often a sign that something is going on internally which hinders a studio made artifact, but with such an exciting live band as Fairport, there is always more live material in the can than can reasonably be expected to see the light of day. There was that album that Joe Boyd recorded at the Troubadour in America, for instance, with Richard Thompson singing "Matty Groves", which got the thumbs down from the band, quality-wise (though parts of it are excellent; I've heard it). "Live Convention" in 1974 was, indeed, a sign that things were happening and the clue was the appearance of Sandy Denny on several tracks.

Sandy, who had become Mrs Lucas, had been appearing at various Fairport gigs over the years (who can forget that notable Rainbow concert which reunited, for just one seemingly never-ending evening, most of the past and present members of the band?) but she did not seem to have been receiving the acclaim for her solo work which was hers by right. Eventually, she rejoined the band officially, for what was to prove to be a brief stay, but not until she had made a very solid contribution to their eleventh album, "Rising for the Moon", running to six songs. During the making of the album, Dave Mattacks left to concentrate on solo and session work, to be replaced by Bruce Rowlands, a fine percussionist whose background (ex-Joe Cocker) kicked the rhythmic sound of the band in a slightly funkier direction.

It is interesting to note that while "Rosie" sounded more like a Swarbrick solo album, Fairport's latest, "Gottlie o' Gear" was originally conceived as a solo excursion, but it has an unmistakable Fairport sound, despite the inclusion of people like hornmen Jimmy Jewell and Henry Lowther and the duo, Gallagher and Lyle, on their own "Friendship Song" ("Come and get it"). But it was engineered by Simon Nicol, who also played guitar on it.

Controversy has always surrounded each of the changes in the line-up of the band, and there is no reason to expect that this latest Fairport will be any different. But it needs to be remembered that at least two members of the new line-up have been in the band for getting on for seven years, and have seen it through as many changes; for consistent
membership they outrank by several years any of the "originals".

In addition to the two Daves, Swarbrick and Pegg, the new band includes Bruce Rowland on drums, Breton guitarist Dan ar Bras, whose work with Alan Stivell has shown him to be a more than worthy successor to Thompson, Nicol and Donahue, an interesting innovation in the shape of Roger Burridge on second violin, and ex-Wizzard keyboardist Bob Brady.

There is no sign at all that the rich vein of English-based rock (whether traditional or contemporary in origin) that was displayed by Fairport's very first single, "Ribbon Bow", is at all played out now. Indeed, judging by the quality of the material now coming into the repertoire, songs like the satirical "Our Band" and the rhapsodic "Lay Me Down Easy", the vein is rich as ever.

There's a lot more gold to be mined yet.
KARL DALLAS, April 1976

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UNHALFBRICKING                       ILPS 9102
LIEGE AND LIEF                       ILPS 9115
FULL HOUSE                           ILPS 9130
ANGEL DELIGHT                        ILPS 9162
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