

YOUR BLACKBIRD

I was hatched out of an egg, but you could never tell
The nest was all demolished and we never kept the shell.
I'd three sisters and a brother but now you'd never know
We split up from each other and our own sweet way we go
(Chor) With a riddly-tiddly I-doe and a twitter all the day.

I was fledged in springtime, but you could never tell
My baby feathers all dropped out and who knows where they fell.
I was fond of caterpillars and never wondered why.
They turn into butterflies and then away they fly.
Chor: With a riddly-tiddly I-doe and a twitter all the day.

I learned to fly in summertime as everybody does
With a flap a flit and a flutter and sometimes it's a buzz.
Ah, you could surely tempt me with an apple if you please,
Or maybe some sultanas and a little piece of cheese.
Chor: With a riddly-tiddly I-do and a twitter all the day.

For here I am, your blackbird and this is how you tell:
See me sitting on the fence and hear me sing so well
With me riddly-tiddly I-doe!

Allan Richardson 2017

A QUID'S WORTH OF DREAMS

If my numbers come up and I win the jackpot
I won't bother washing these dishes.
I'll just throw them away, buy a new lot next day
As I set out fulfilling my wishes.
Then I'll ring up the boss and tell him to get lost
And I'll laugh and hang up as he screams –
Lord, I'm having such fun and I've not even won –
No, I've just bought a quid's worth of dreams, ah –
Only a quid's worth of dreams.

I shall spend as I choose and take a world cruise
But I won't know which way is best.
So bother the price, I'll just have to go twice
First west-to-east then east-to-west.
Then just for a laugh I'll fill up the bath
With Champagne - or peppermint creams,
And I feel no distaste at this reckless waste
'Cause it's only a quid's worth of dreams, ah –
Only a quid's worth of dreams.

Any time that I like - a new coat, a new bike,
A new car, a new place in the sun.
And investing what's over will keep us in clover
And maybe a business to run.
I've such a long list of things I can't resist
And it isn't as daft as it seems:
It's just pie in the sky but it's still a best buy
'Cause it's only a quid's worth of dreams, ah –
Only a quid's worth of dreams.

I shall have to take care, make sure I do my share
Of good works to make the world better.
I want to be kind, but how shall I find the
Right answer to each begging letter.
It's a full time job – not getting ripped off
Or losing it all in mad schemes.
Don't know where to begin, think I'd rather not win
No I'll just keep the quid's worth of dreams, ah –
Only a quid's worth of dreams, hey –
Hang on to your quid's worth of dreams.

BISCUITS

Herbert Goodsall was a driver, it was what he'd always been.

He could drive a bus or an army truck or a fancy limousine.

Kemps were biscuit makers out at Cricklewood;

Herbert Goodsall was their chauffeur: Kemp's Biscuits they were good,

My dears, ... Kemp's Biscuits they were good.

Herbert Goodsall was our Grandad – Stella was his wife.

He'd a small flat, a small pension and free biscuits for life.

He came for lunch on Sunday as often as he could

And he always brought a bag for us – Kemp's biscuits they were good,

My dears, ... Kemp's Biscuits they were good.

Shortcakes and Digestives, Gingers, Arrowroot, Marie

Nice called "niece" and Osbornes, Morning Coffee and Rich Tea,

Lincolns, Garibaldi's, Arctic Wafers, Custard Creams

Bourbons and Choc-o-lait, the biscuits of our dreams my dears,

The biscuits of our dreams.

Our hungry brains soon knew them all, by name, by sight, by taste

When food was not abundant biscuits never went to waste.

Mum said "Once they're gone they're gone, you know what happens then."

The biscuit tin stays empty until Grandad comes again my dears,

Till Grandad comes again.

Shortcakes and Digestives, Gingers, Arrowroot, Marie

Nice called "niece" and Osbornes, Morning Coffee and Rich Tea,

Lincolns, Garibaldi's, Arctic Wafers, Custard Creams

Bourbons and Choc-o-lait, the biscuits of our dreams my dears,

The biscuits of our dreams.

HATFIELD

By the fence at the end of the runway a boy in short trousers stands,
Closely watching the Comet as it takes off and circles and lands;
And primary school is done, it's off to the Tech. next year –
The horizon is far, the way is clear for an aircraft engineer.

Tiger Moths and Mosquitos and Vampires called this place home
And everyone's dad worked for DeHavilland at Hatfield aerodrome.
On open-days you could get closer and stand right under the wings,
And see naked aluminium taking shape into beautiful things.

Youth is the time for plans to plot the course we'll steer
And youth is the time for courage, for visions bright and clear.
With knowledge and the strength that all true learning brings,
With love and truth and beauty we'll serve all living things. *

As the School Song died on our ears we all took different paths
And some of us never became engineers 'cause we couldn't do the maths.
And Hatfield made pieces of aeroplanes and rockets to fight the cold war,
Until by-and-by everyone's dad didn't work there any more.

There's a university now on a boulevard called Mosquito Way
And test pilot heroes live on in the street names and nobody flies there today;
Test pilot heroes live on in the street names, and nobody flies there today.

Allan Richardson 2015

**These four lines are from the Hatfield School Song, 1953*

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

As I roamed on the meadow green I saw a meadow brown,
Gatekeepers with ringlets danced, all up that grassy down.
By dappled hedgerows speckled wood and on the heath small heath,
And little blue things that close their wings and show the underneath;
 you just see underneath.

Brimstone flew with orange tips, whites tangled round the green,
Then all at once a comma punctuates the scene.
Strange to tell, a quick tortoise-shell, proud peacocks with no tail;
And they know well what we can't tell – the female from the male;
 . . . the female from the male.

Then I saw an admiral, without a ship in sight.
Sailing down the orchard – the admiral was white.
But red ones fluttered all around, and now and then one settles
To sup the daisy nectar, or to lay its eggs on nettles;
 . . . the babies eat the nettles.

A painted lady in her flight appeared to stop and think.
Resting in the sunshine - white, black and dusky pink.
A pretty ringtone softly played and I was not alone,
But answering my true love's call and the butterfly had flown
 . . . the butterfly had flown.

ANNIE HAYWOOD

Annie Haywood works her way through other people's houses
And when she leaves she keeps the keys in the pocket of her trousers.
She cleans for a priest and a businessman and several working mothers
And what she knows of each of them she does not tell the others.
They talk to her about themselves but all they know of Annie:
She bought her daughter's wedding dress and now she's twice a granny.

(Chorus)

She clears up other people's mess
More perfectly than they would;
For making so much happiness
Three cheers for Annie Haywood.

The darkest corners of their lives are an open book to Annie
The dust and cobwebs out she drives from every nook and cranny.
She does their loos, puts out their waste and cleans their deep fat fryer,
She makes no judgement on their taste in books or night attire.
Long days at the office are not nice, with all the grief that's in there
But coming home is paradise the day that Annie's been there.

(Chorus)

Annie's a master-craftsman with every home appliance,
She has no boss or agency but she's never short of clients.
For just one week in every year Annie makes a trip
She takes a small apartment and she leaves it like a tip.
She also leaves a small bouquet of roses and verbena
And a neatly written note to say thank you to the cleaner.

(Chorus)

Allan Richardson

The Milkmaid and the Software Engineer

'Tis of a fair young maiden, Mary she was called.

Her Mum and Dad were barristers and they were quite appalled.

She would not go into the law with all the family,

She fancied agriculture and she got a good degree, ... she got a good degree.

Now it's of a poor old farm in the English countryside,

It started looking up again when they diversified.

With business units in the barn, they built a brand new dairy,

With a fine organic milking herd and a manager called Mary, ... a manager called Mary.

Now it's of a fine young fellow, came from a mining town,

They called him Jack but he never went back and he did not follow them down.

He was hooked upon computers, and it never did him harm,

For now he owns a software house with an office on a farm, ... an office on a farm.

'Twas one fine summer's morning, inspecting of her cows,

This young man a-driving by her interest did arouse.

He slammed on the brakes and nearly went into the wall,

Of all the sights he'd seen this was the fairest of them all, The fairest of them all.

"Hello, I'm Jack," "I'm Mary, I work here," "I do too,"

"Why don't we climb this hillside and just admire the view".

And so they found a grassy bank and laid upon the ground,

And very soon they both could feel the world go round and round, ... the world go round and round.

Who knows where the time goes, but still it does elapse.

While she's managing the dairy and he's designing apps,

And when the day is ended, all weary from the strain,

They find each other's arms and make the world go round again, ... the world go round again.

So come all you barristers' daughters, likewise you miners' sons,

Remember father's footsteps are not the only ones.

For if you care to make your own and tread them without fear,

You could be the milkmaid and the software engineer,... the milkmaid and the software engineer.

Allan Richardson 2018

John Waylett (or Bells of Ash)

Seventeen-seventeen to this parish there came
A travelling craftsman, John Waylett by name.
Three bells he cast at the Churchwarden's call,
To ring in the tower of Peter and Paul.

All down the years over Ash they have pealed -
The Vineyard, Old Hopground, and Archery Field.
Calling the faithful on Sunday to pray,
Weddings and holidays, each Christmas Day.

Striking no more in times of great war,
Lest there be occasion to tell of invasion.
Till dangers decrease and fighting should cease -
Then finally joyfully ring in the peace.

Down to new ears their old cadences tracing
Through traffic noise, aeroplanes, motorbike racing.
Ring the changes for three centuries -
Nine coronations and ten jubilees.

Removed to Whitechapel, the year Twenty Ten,
Re-tuned and re-hung to make music again.
And so all those moments that history tells
Unfold to the music of John Waylett's bells.

Allan Richardson 2017

Let the Music take me

You turn on your chair and still seem to bear
The cares of the everyday.
Then over your face comes a smile of grace
When you hear that music play.

Borne on the sound you can feel all around
The spirits softly rise.
But your eye just lingers on the wrist and the fingers
Of the fiddler as he flies.

*Let the music take me, Oh, let it move and shake me
If I'm dreaming please don't wake me, just let it play...
Let the music take me – oh let it take me away.*

The choruses chime and the chairs creak in time
As feet tap the beat to the song;
Then your mind wanders back and you start losing track
But the melody takes you along.

Time goes so fast that your drink seems to last
If it's not spilt under your chair;
Then they play the last one and the encore is done
And the cheers ring out on the air.

The people depart with a glow in their heart
And strangers kiss goodnight;
They've bought their CDs in hope to reprise
These moments of delight.