The Fair Dinkum Matilda
Denis Gibbons

SONGS OF THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH
INCLUDING THE FIRST-EVER RECORDING OF
THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF WALTZING MATILDA

Here's a collection of Australia's finest bush songs. They comprise but a small portion of a library that has been pieced together by dedicated collectors over the past 45 years.

Australia's folk songs are a bit like a farmer's dog. They come from origins that are varied and often mysterious, but perfectly adapted to their environment.

The songs have an honesty and roughness that give them an enduring quality. 'Tarted up' in 20th century garb they're as fresh as they were a hundred years ago when Henry Lawson wrote, "The world was wide."

And wide it certainly was! A vast land dotted with lonely farms or stations. Tiny hamlets separated by endless miles of deserted almost virginal bush tracks.
Along these tracks were places where people (mostly bush workers or bush out-of-workers) would meet — grog shanties, road junctions, waterholes and river crossings.

These were the places where people caught up with the latest gossip, swapped yarns and sang what we now call folk songs.

Many of these bushmen were technically illiterate but were possessed with extraordinary talent. They had no idea that they were leaving us with a priceless cultural heritage.

1 CLICK GO THE SHEARS
Collected in "the sheds" by the late Dr. Percy Jones and recorded by Burl Ives on his first visit to Australia in 1952. The tune is an adaptation of an old English song "Ring the bell watchman".

2 THE DROVER'S DREAM
Of mysterious origin this is a true Australian song with dry Australian humour.

3 REEDY RIVER
One of the three Henry Lawson poems set to music in this collection. Having read Lawson's own tragic life I'm sure *Reedy River* is at least part autobiographical.

4 WALTZING MATILDA
This has become a typical folk song in it exists in many forms. When one reads Richard Magoffin's book "Fair Dinkum Matilda" it seems logical to accept Magoffin's theory that Banjo Patterson wrote lyrics to fit the Scottish tune Craigielea which Christina Macpherson (who was also a guest at Dagworth station) had heard some months before at a race meeting in Warrnambool, Victoria. Magoffin, who spent 20 years researching the story even found a copy of the original handwritten manuscript and had the authenticity verified by the Victorian Police forensic laboratory. We recorded this version from a copy of the original manuscript which appears in Richard's book "Fair dinkum Matilda".

5 ANOTHER FALL OF RAIN
A great shearing song written by John Shaw Nielsen who was born in Penola in 1872. His father John Nielsen also wrote poetry. Shaw Nielsen (as he was known) wrote poetry for much of his life. His sight failed before his 40th birthday and from that point on his writings were dictated. The song is set to an adaptation of an old American song "Little Old Home on the Prairie".

6 THE OLD BULLOCK DRAY
It was on a Sunday morning in 1952 that I first became aware that we had a folk song tradition. The ABC were playing a selection of folk songs collected by Dr. Percy Jones and recorded by Burl Ives. *The old bullock dray* set me on a path of discovery. In 1952 I was a budding announcer on (the then) 3UL Warragul. Having to pay four pounds ten board ($9) out of a salary of ($10) left no cash for trips to Melbourne and Burl Ives concerts. It was to be 35 years before I met this great actor, performer and character in person.

7 DENIS O'RIELLY
According to notes in Bill Scott's, "Complete Book of Australian Folk Lore" there are many songs like *Denis O'Rielly* in the English language. I'm sure that

you'll recognise the familiar theme. Mother's (perhaps now more than ever) worried about a headstrong daughter running off with a questionable man.

8 WALLABY STEW

Another traditional song that could only come from Australia. When I first sang this song in public it was considered quite risque. How times change!

9 LAZY HARRY'S

This song has always been a favourite of mine. Perhaps it's because I was brought up in a pub. I've always had the feeling that the shearers heading back to Sydney, pockets bulging, may have 'camped' at *Lazy Harry's* for some time. "Lazy Harry" remains a mystery, but the pub must have been something else!

10 THE BUSH GIRL

There is no song that conjures up the loneliness of the Australian bush in the 18th century better than this poem by Henry Lawson. It was a hard place for women, both old and young.

11 BILLY OF TEA

My father was always a gadget freak. He'd travel to exotic lands on business and return with the most amazing devices. One of the most interesting was a combination alarm clock and tea maker. The novelty soon wore off and the tea-maker was eventually consigned to the local dump. Any bushman will tell you that there is only one way to make a good cup of tea.

12 THE BILLYGOAT OVERLAND

The goat, whether it be "billies" or "nannies" played a vital role in settling Australia. But boy, did they smell!!

13 BOTANY BAY

This song is far too light hearted and happy to be an authentic convict song. I'm sure that many of you will not be surprised to hear that *Botany Bay* was written for a popular stage show called "Little Jack Shepherd". The convicts in real life had little to sing about!

14 THE BROKEN DOWN SQUATTER

Droughts and floods are as much a part of farming in Australia as the seasons — although nowhere near as reliable. When a farmer called Charlie Flower was reputed to have written this song in the last century, Australia was to face years of drought. Sheep and cattle died in thousands, the banks foreclosed their loans and many banks were forced to close themselves. So what hope for the poor horse?

15 THE OLD PALMER SONG

The hopefuls heading off for the goldfields on the Palmer River in far north Queensland had no idea what was in store. A few made a fortune, many lost everything — including their lives! The tune was borrowed and you'll recognise it as the theme for the ABC television series "Rush" which George Dreyfus so brilliantly adapted.

16 THE GUM TREE CANOE

To see the Murray River swirling silently past under a full moon is one of life's greatest and most unforgettable experiences. *Gum tree canoe* originated in America ..... but so what? So did many of our great pioneers.

17 THE WILD COLONIAL BOY

This is one of the most popular songs in my repertoire. A true folk song that originated here in Australia and then became popular in Ireland. No one really knows his true identity, but even a hundred years later we can all identify with him and even 'hero-worship' *The Wild Colonial Boy*.

18 THE MELODY OF THE RAIN

This is not an authentic folk song but listen to Richard Magoffin's words. I first heard this song while holidaying with the Webb brothers in Queensland in the 1970's. The dams and tanks were low; feed was almost non-existent and rain had not fallen for months. Suddenly, despite a forecast for stable hot dry weather, the skies opened up! Julia Webb invited the neighbours and we had the party to end all parties. Upper

Widgee will never be the same!

19 THE LIME JUICE TUB
The immigrants coming to a strange land were shown no sympathy by the old hands. The ships were called "Lime juice tubs" because passengers and crew were served regular doses of lime juice to prevent scurvy.

20 ANDY'S GONE WITH CATTLE
Another Henry Lawson classic. Lawson wrote both poems and stories about the loneliness of bush life. Particularly when the wife was left at home to look after the farm and perhaps several young children. She'd have no idea where the drover was, when he'd be home or even if he were alive.

21 SOUTH AUSTRALIA
It was the discovery of gold in California and later Australia that created the need for sailing ships that were big and fast. The "clipper" ships halved the sailing time from England. They brought out migrants and took back wheat and wool. I'm sure that this song existed in many countries and was sung in many languages.

22 WALTZING MATILDA
(Traditional version)
This is the version that is now universally recognised. It evolved from the original when Banjo Patterson sold the rights to his lyrics to an advertising agency who used the song as a commercial for "Billy Tea". It then became a popular marching song during the 1914-18 World War.

23 WALTZING MATILDA
(Queensland or Buderim version)
This is a perfect example of how folk songs change. In fact many people prefer this version to the well-known one. Certainly its easier to sing!!! By the way the guitar on this track is played by Charlie Gauld, the whistling provided by the late Bill Ackfield and the percussion by producer and arranger Lorraine Milne.

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Front cover photograph: This prize winning photograph was taken by the Adelaide Advertiser photographer John Miller during the State's 150th birthday celebrations in 1986 when Jim Kelly, a farmer from Naracoote in South Australia, took a load of wool to Adelaide in the traditional way.
Program notes: **Denis Gibbons**
Engineering and final mix: **Peter Thorp** in ABC studio 325 Melbourne.
Mastering: **Jim Atkins**
Musical backings, advice and everything else: **Brian Fitzgerald** (bass, synthesiser, drums, piano, recorder, harmonica and vocals).

Guitars: **Andrew Pendlebury**
Recorder: **Ade Monsbourgh**
Autoharp, guitar and vocals - Waltzing Matilda (Traditional version) **Alan Hawking**
Waltzing Matilda (Queensland version) arranged: **Lorraine Milne** who also played percussion with **Charlie Gauld** guitar. The whistling was provided by the late **Bill Ackfield**
Effects: Jail door slammed by **Peter Kiely** at the old Wentworth Jail. Bullock driver, **Rusty Richards**, Scottsdale, Tasmania.
Preparation for CD: **Martin Wright**

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The songs in this collection were recorded for a Radio Australia program called "Understanding Australian folk songs". The program ran for many years on Radio Australia and attracted mail from all over the world.
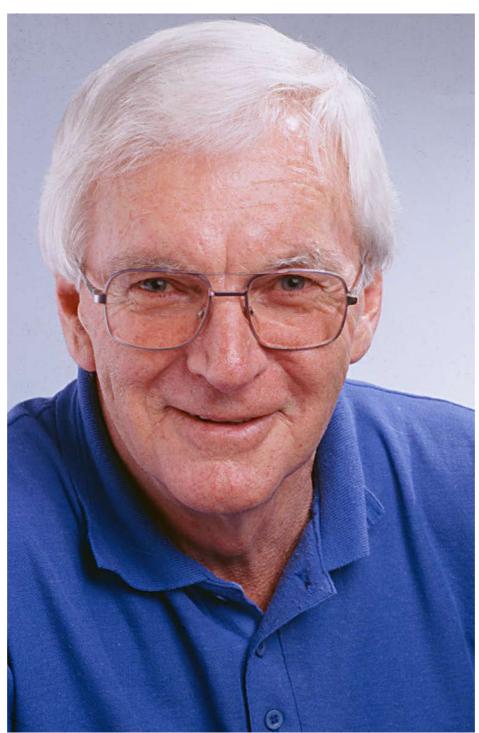
Denis Gibbons

grew up in a small pub at Port Elliot in South Australia, and was taught by the Sisters of Mercy at Victor Harbor and the Christian Brothers at Rostrevor College in Adelaide. He had many jobs before going into radio in 1951.

He spent 20 years with the Macquarie Broadcasting Network and in 1982 he received an Advance Australia Award, for "his outstanding contribution to Australian Folk Music". He has three children and five grandchildren.

Denis has been captivated by Australian folk music since he heard songs from the late Dr Percy Jones collection in 1952. Within a few months he had his own program on 3SR Shepparton and two years later made the first of many recordings.

He has sung Australian folk songs from Simpson's Gap in Central Australia to Government House in Victoria.

In the early days of TV he had a regular spot before the news on Channel nine, sang on Bert Newton's Late Show and appeared with Irish Tenor Patrick O'Hagen on ABC TV. He now works as a producer at Radio Australia in Melbourne.

Alan Hawking

I was privileged to have the late Alan Hawking accompany me on several of these songs. We had known each other for 35 years. Alan's untimely death after what should have been a routine surgical operation shocked the music world and left a close and loving family shattered. It was the end of an era as Alan's brother Russ had died a few years previously. The Hawking Brothers made a lasting contribution to Australian country music. Fortunately some memories don't fade and I'll always remember 'The Hawks' as great musicians and two wonderful human beings with a great sense of humour. Thanks to Dianne Hawking for letting me use these tracks.

Ade Monsbourgh

came into one of our 'mixing' sessions one Sunday morning and was persuaded to add some backing. I could write a book about Ade. He started playing jazz with the legendary Graham Bell in 1932, the year that I was born. I can remember sitting at a country airstrip one day waiting to take off in an aging DC3. "There's a big crowd at the airstrip," I said to Ade.

"Yes," he replied casually. "They're all here to see this plane take off!"