

THE FARMER'S BOY

Vaughan Williams' notes by the title of this song
'Songs sung to me April 14 1904 by Mrs Charles White
(Fyfield Essex), Mr Sam Chiles (Willingale Doe Essex) and an
unknown singer at the Bell Willingale Doe'.

This is the first of several appearances of this song in
Vaughan Williams' Essex collection, it was very popular with
country folk and was also reproduced on many broadsides, in
fact most collections contain one. This probably caused the
song to spread widely.

Vaughan Williams notes 'for rest of words see county
songs'. In fact Lucy Broadwood gives two versions in this book.⁽¹⁾

The sun had set behind yon hill across yon dreary moor
When weary and lame a boy there came unto a farmer's door

The Farmers boy

The sun had set be- hind yon hill a- cross yon dreary moor when weary and lame a
 boy there came un- to a far- mers door

(1) —————
 (2) ————— or (1) (2)

(1) English County Songs L Broadwood

In the folk song journal Vaughan Williams records that Mr Chiles was the parish clerk of Willingale. His spelling of the name was obviously the way he heard it pronounced. We have now established that his name was Samuel George Childs who died on 2nd August 1940 aged 80. He was thus a youngish man when Ralph Vaughan Williams met him. He was churchwarden and his daughter Edna Veal recalls him and his friends singing at The Bell that stands across the road from the church.

Sunday March 11 1979

We visited Edna Veal, Mr Samuel Childs' daughter, who told us her father worked at Torrells Hall where he was a farm labourer. He was also Parish Clerk and from our interview it rather seems that he and his family sang more religious hymns etc than folksongs. She remembers him singing at Christmas when the family met. The Ship that never returned being in his repertoire. She said that when he sang Sweet Primroses, which appeared to be his favourite (out of a limited repertoire) he would pronounce Stepp-ed up to her as a two-syllable word. She didn't remember her mother as a singer but she cleaned the church and Edna herself sang in the choir.

Edna lived at Mount House in a road which continued to Dukes farm and her father and presumably her mother moved in with her as the house was too big.

There seems to be a relation with the Horsnells somewhere though this was rather confused (due to ageing memory). Her mother Ellen Childs was a Horsnell before marriage and a Gladys or Grace Horsnell moved to Harlow and her father's sister married a Horsnell.

Sunday March 25 1979

A visit was made to 'Sugar' Bailey of Writtle who formerly lived at Radley Green and he said Samuel Childs lived at Pound House cottages originally then moved to Mount House that stood at the bottom of Rouse Lane next past Pound House on the right. There was a big mound, originally taken away in the 30's, probably mounted by a windmill. He then moved to a council house with Edna Veal who had been living with him after moving out from Leytonstone during the war. Samuel Childs had five children.