

THE END OF THE CLAN ALPINE

(Ron Baxter)

The Clan Alpine, in Chittagong, it was her final run
She was heading for the 'breakers' out there in Taiwan
But the monsoon it came early, force 9, with a rolling swell---
From the Bengal Bay, it raced her way, now her story I will tell

Chorus:- For She'd a palm tree on the bow, a palm tree on the bow
And through a paddy field ploughed her keel, with a palm tree on the bow.

Her Master rang for half ahead, and both anchors he had laid
But still she started dragging, and the Chief said "I'm afraid---
We've lost water suction, though I cannot tell you how."
"I'll tell you why!" the Captain cried "we've a palm tree on the bow!"

Chorus

One mile from the river, when the water it went down
Hard and fast in that paddy field the Clan Alpine was found.
Then a 'Jobs worth' he arrested them, on the mast he nailed a writ
(Though it sounds surreal) for importing steel without the right permit!

Chorus

And of course the farmer from the owners did demand
Rent for the grounded ship that they'd parked on his land!
There they sold her to the breakers so her fate was signed and sealed
So there's no trace of Clan Alpine now in that paddy field!

Chorus

Note (RB) Another true tale of the Clan line

Note (RJC) Ron has passed various song lyrics to many singers over the years, usually with the instruction "Put your own tune to it." As a result of this policy, one of his songs by now has at least five different settings in existence, by different singers.

To explain why Ron is unable to pass on tunes with the words, some background info – Ron was a choirboy in his younger days, with a clear, strong voice – but when his voice broke, it really broke – somehow he lost the ability to self-correct, and his pitch-control went all over the place (a serious defect for a potential singer/songwriter!) At some of the early Fylde Folk Festivals, he won the Trumpeting Elephant Award at the annual "Worst Singer in the World" competitions. Sadly, even that did not prove a long-term achievement. Popular (sceptical?) demand led to him giving more and more demonstrations at local folk clubs – gradually his voice improved slightly, leading to his

ignominious rejection from the next competition, when the audience's perception was that he was faking it – practically a hanging offence. He lost his crown to the infamous and late-lamented Mary Smith of Weeton, Lancashire. A succession of truly tone-deaf squawkers has ensured that Ron never regained his former eminence. His voice has settled down to the point that he can give a quite tolerable rendition of "Amsterdam" or "M.V. Hardship" (due in soon from New Zealand), but you still might not want to sit in front of him at a singaround!

As Herga Kitty pointed out, a version of the Clan Alpine song can be found on Les Sullivan's CD. I missed Les's visit to Fleetwood Folk Club, so I don't know what tune he set this to. "Coming through the Rye" would just about work. And Kitty, my version hasn't got the "screw, screw, screw" lines – any other variations you can hear?

Somewhere I have a box full of hand-written scraps from Ron, some of which became fully-worked songs, some were reworked by him after I reached a "set" version – so it is quite possible that some of the songs I post in this thread will have alternate words/verses that I'm not aware of – or have lost/forgotten. Any remedial contributions gratefully accepted.

RJC