



MICHELLE LAVERICK  
THE HELM WINDS  
SONG BOOK



# MICHELLE LAVERICK

## THE HELM WINDS SONG BOOK

This songbook contains all the lyrics to the collection as well as some simple notation for the guitar parts. I do notate my own music, so if I don't play it for a while, I can go back and refresh my memory. That's numbered finger positions and to where the changes are made. I'm usually making very small single-note changes in a verse, which by their nature are hard to document – especially for someone like me with no formal musical training. So, I've opted just to note the changes but not where they happen in the song. You'll be able to put your fingers in the right place, but just necessarily at the right time. But if you listen – the music is quite simple. Well, not always simple. If anyone wants a video tutorial, I'd happily do one just let me know?

To make this a bit nicer to look at, I've populated it with images from my video of the Helm Winds which was created by the rather wonderfully talented (both musically and visually) Marry Waterson.

# THE HELM WINDS

This song was written on a songwriting retreat called Humankind, hosted by Katie Spencer and Iona Lane in 2024. I went there with a bit of a tune and this idea about how the wind shapes the trees - just like our environment shapes us, the humans who live within it. The Helm Winds blow around Cross Fell and High Cup Nick, near the source of the River Tees. The locals, often called the fell footers, have grown pretty used to its powerful forces.



# THE HELM WINDS

Here in the valley, protected by hills  
Here the trees are allowed to grow tall  
And they have five hundred memories  
One for every leaf that did not fall

And up here on the heights of the Peak  
Where they grow up, lying down  
They learned to bend with the wind  
So they could never be torn down

*They didn't know how young they were until they were older*

But you and I  
We're not the trees  
we wish we could have been  
So, when the Helm Winds had blown  
Leaning into the wind was all we had ever known

C-G-C-F-C-E with capo2 which makes D-A-D-G-D-F#

#### Here in the valley

0-5-0-7-0-8  
5-5-0-6-0-7

#### Verse1/3

5-5-0-0-0-3  
5-3-0  
x-0-2-0-0-1

#### Verse2/4

0-5-0-7-0-0  
5-5-0-0-0-3  
x-0-2-0-0-1

0-0-0-7-0-8  
3-1-0  
0-0-0-2-0-0  
0-0-0-5-0-0  
0-0-0-4-0-0  
0-0-0-2-0-0  
3-1-0

#### Chorus/1/2

0-0-0-7-0-8  
3-1-0  
0-0-0-2-0-0  
0-0-0-5-0-0  
0-0-0-4-0-0  
0-0-0-2-0-0  
3-1-0

And this is the place we both come from  
This is the place we no longer belong  
The glorious sunsets and the sulphuric skyline  
And the broken ox-bow river

We both left behind

*They didn't know how young they were until they were older  
We didn't know how young we were until we got older  
You don't know how young you are until you get older  
I didn't know young I was until I got older*

## BIRDS THAT DO FLY

This is my first - and so far, only - song on tenor guitar. I really hope more will come along, because I love the instrument. I was inspired to pick up both an acoustic and an electric tenor by the wonderful playing and singing of Lucy Farrell, known for her solo work and as part of the Furrow Collective.

The song itself was sparked by a train journey from Scarborough to York after seeing Paul Weller play at the open-air theatre. I don't take many train trips these days, but there's something special about how your mind slowly unwinds as you stare out of the window. On that journey, a bird flew past in a long, elegant arc, and I found myself wondering what it would be like to be that bird and see through its eyes. Birds seem to occupy a magical element in our culture, and so I was drawn to the idea of being a bird, but also the limits of such a transformation.

Tenor Guitar in C-G-C-G tuning. There's lots of tricky elements to the song which over time I've just internalised. Why not make up your own tricky elements?



## BIRDS THAT DO FLY

I wish that I  
Could be like that bird  
That flew over me  
from Scarborough to York  
And if I could just fly  
I'd be like that bird  
With a wild glint in my eager eye  
With a wild, wild glint in my eager eye

I'll may never have the skills I need  
To know the names of all trees  
I will learn all the bird songs  
Get the names of the birds wrong  
and you may look once  
and you may look twice  
and you may stare once  
and you may stare twice  
For I know I'm creature of strange device  
But aren't we all such creatures of strange device

*But it was never to be  
Nature played this trick on me  
There are words that must never be spoke.  
We are nature's cunning folk*

For I was always Penelope  
With no suitors at my door  
And you are always out there  
On your Southern Ocean  
Miles away from my shore

I know I've got daemons, daemons in my head,  
But don't we all have daemons waiting for us underneath the bed  
So won't you please, please, please  
Be gentle with us

And here I tried  
To put some roots down  
But my tubers they fell  
On to stoniest of ground  
maybe we could made a home  
if you had stuck/been around

### Main Verses:

0-5-0-0, 0-4-0-0, 0-2-0-0  
5-5-0-0, 4-5-0-0, 5-0-0-0

### It was never meant to be:

0-2-5-0, 0-5-7-0

### And here it tried:

0-2-0-0  
0-4-0-0



## HIGH FORCE

In late March, 2025 I went up to Middleton-in-Teesdale to see Johnny Campbell play at the Teespot Café. I had a secondary reason too - a chance to spend some time in the area and visit the stunning waterfall, High Force. I dimly remembered going there as a child... or maybe I'd just invented the memory. As you get older, memory becomes increasingly unreliable, and you start to wonder whether your memories are really events or just the stories you've told yourself about them. I went to High Force hoping it would inspire me, and it didn't disappoint.

Around the same time, I had this desire to write a lullaby or cradle song. I'd been listening to Laura Marling's Patterns in Repeat on repeat, and someone very close to my heart was expecting. So the closing parts of the song are really about that person and their child - someone geographically far away, but often in my heart and mind.

Up at High Force I was struck both by the fragility of nature and by how some parts of it endure for thousands, if not millions, of years.



## HIGH FORCE

We know blossom it doesn't last long on the tree  
It's all too soon blown away by this wind

Blue skies. I see that the leaves are leaving  
And soon there'll be no more leaves left  
Blue skies. I see the leaves are a-leaving  
And this will be as bright as it gets

For a hundred million years and more water has been plunging  
thru this gorge and it will keep on rolling on

*When I am gone the river will roll on  
The river will run through me  
seals will guide back to the sea  
And although I am not here  
I will keep you close; I will keep you so dear  
And I will keep this fire warm for you tonight*

[D-A-D-F#-A-D]

**We know the blossom**

0-0-0-0-0, 2-2-0-1-0-0

**For hundred million years**

4-4-0-3-0-0, 2-2-0-1-0-0

**When I am gone...**

0-x-0-8-5-0, 0-x-0-7-5-0, 0-2-0-1-0-0

**But the time it must come...**

5-5-0-4-0-2

But the time it must come I must be moving on  
I will still be here for you long after I have gone.

*When I am gone the river will roll on  
And the river will run through us forever*

Outside the storms well they may be ragging  
Inside you are safe in your mother's arms  
She will gather you up  
We will gather you up

I will gather you up  
in a cradle of stars

## THE SNOW IT MELTS THE SOONEST

I first heard this song on the Unthanks' in Winter album, released in 2024. Aside from it being a brilliant traditional song (Roud 3154, dating back to the 1800s), I was drawn to it after reading comment in KLOF magazine, where a singer said he felt awkward singing it because of the inherent misogyny. And he's right - the main bloke in the song isn't exactly someone you'd want to end up with. But, as with all old songs, if you read between the lines, it's easy to hear a man full of sound and fury... while the woman in the story feels like she's quietly keeping her powder dry.

I was also inspired by Frankie Archer's freedom in rewriting and adding verses to traditional songs. If a tradition is going to stay alive, it can't be frozen in amber; it survives by being re-imagined and re-energised for the present day. That's what I love about folk - it's a living, breathing thing. And sure, while I protect the copyright of my own recordings, if anyone in the future wants to take my songs, change them, reinterpret them, or record them, go ahead. Don't wait until I've been dead 75 years. I'd be overjoyed that anyone thought my songs were worth carrying on. Fill your boots.

So, I lightly rewrote the last verse and added a new one from the woman's point of view. A stroke of inspiration from Ben Haynes was getting my musical pal, Bex Fawn Johnstone, to sing those lines - I think the contrast between our voices really works - plus the contrast between an English and Scots accent is great.



## THE SNOW IT MELTS THE SOONEST

The snows they melt the soonest  
when the wind begins to sing  
And the corn it ripens fastest  
when the frosts are settling in  
And when a woman tells me that  
my face she'll soon forget  
Before we part I'll wage a crown  
she's fain to follow it yet

The snows they melt the soonest  
when the wind begins to sing  
And the swallow flies without a thought  
as long as it is spring  
But when spring goes and winter blows,  
my love, then you'll be fain  
For all your pride to follow  
me across the raging main

**Tuning:** Sometimes I play this in standard with the low E string dropped to D. Other times I take it down two steps and drop to the C. In the recording I think we used D. The decision when I play live is down to how much hassle it would be to retune.

The snows they melt the soonest  
when the wind begins to sing  
And the bee that flew when summer shone  
in Winter cannot sting  
And I've seen a woman's anger melt  
between the night and the morn  
So it's surely not a harder thing  
to melt a woman's scorn

So don't you bid me farewell, you hear,  
nor farewell I'll receive  
For you maybe be with me, my love,  
but you'll kiss and take your leave  
And you can wait here till the moorcock calls  
and the marten takes the wing  
For the snows they melt the soonest  
before you know anything

**The chords are:**  
Dm, Am, Dm  
Dm, Am, Dm,  
Dm, Am, G, F  
Dm, G, Dm, Am, Dm

**For the dark piece in the instrumental!**  
**I twang this chord with all my might!**  
0-0-0-1-3-0

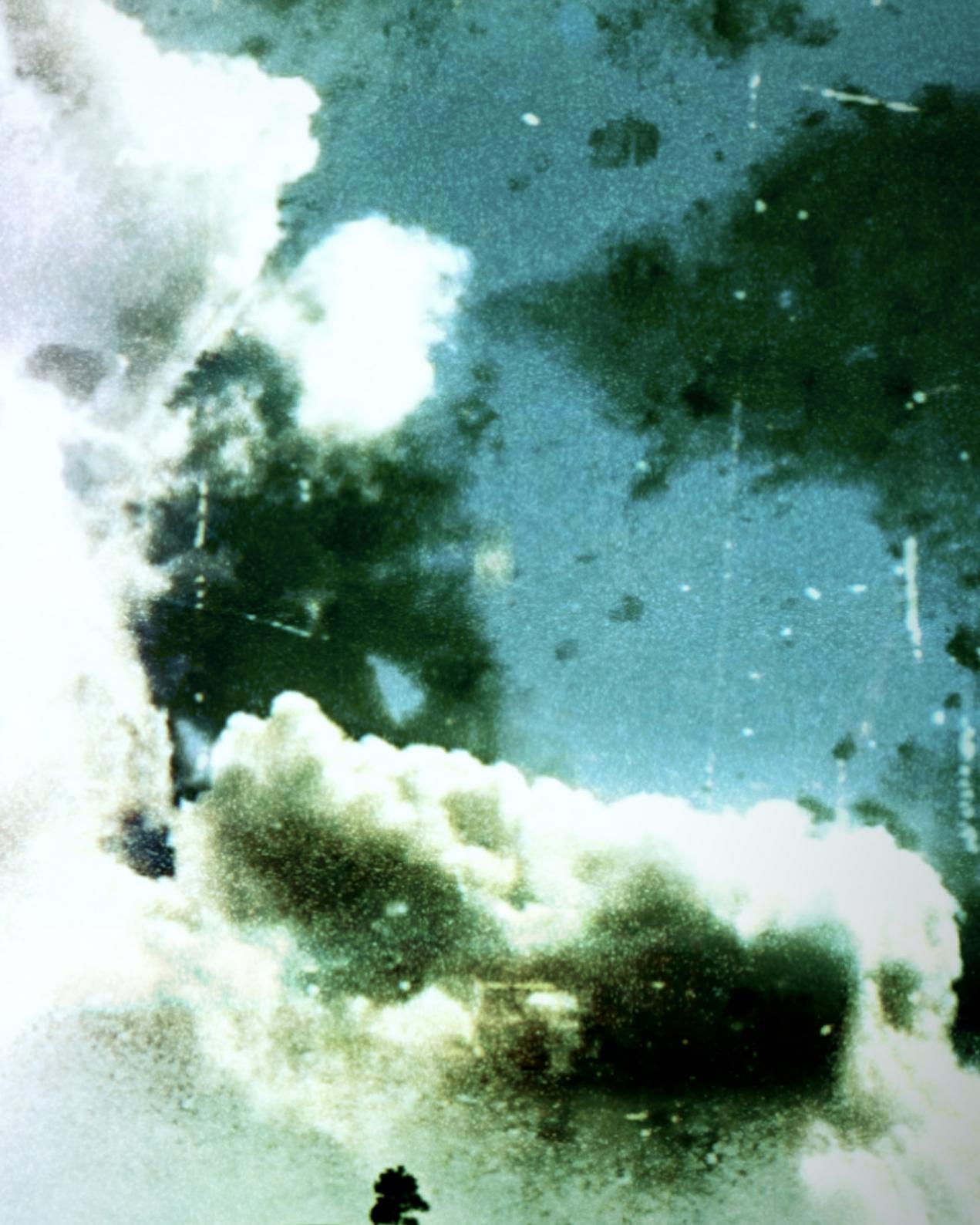
Oh, the snow it melts the soonest  
when the winds begin to cry  
Yet a woman's heart grows colder  
when she's bound by love's sly lie.  
So mark me now, my fleeting love,  
your words won't hold me fast,  
For the storm you thought would follow me  
is yours to face at last.

## A CHRISTMAS PARTING SONG

I wrote this song in January/February 2024 and then had to sit on it for the whole year, because no one wants to hear a Christmas song in March - least of all me. Christmas comes but once a year - and for many that a cadence that is all too frequent. The subject matter is pretty obvious, so I won't labour it with too much explanation. It does what it says on the tin.

There are a few Teesside references in the song, but really the setting could be any (de) industrialised part of the UK. If you don't know it, the Nitram Tower is a bit of an icon in Teesside - up there with, though never quite eclipsing, the threatened masterpiece that is the Transporter Bridge. I got a brilliant view of it heading south on the A19 from Newton Aycliffe, where my big brother lives, down onto the A66 as I made my way to the Young'uns 20th Anniversary Boro Bash.

It became a piece of family folklore that my dad painted the old ICI logo that used to sit on the side of the building for decades. I later discovered that practically every kid in Teesside grew up thinking some relative of theirs painted it too. Maybe that's just the (in)famous Teesside sense of humour - the constant, gentle "taking the piss" - doing its thing.



## A CHRISTMAS PARTING SONG

It's the time year again  
making our away back to where it all began  
back to the towns we wanted to call home  
back to the towns where we were born

And the twinkling lights of this time of year  
always bring in a tear - to the eye  
as the Cleveland hills rise to the East  
two cooling towers heave into view

*And I've been making this journey  
For most of my life  
for how much longer  
I dare not say  
But if you are not here  
Would I ever return?*

*To my home*

And when I was just little bitty kid  
Everyone claimed that their dad  
Had painted the white and the blue  
Of the Nitram Tower

Now we spend The Holidays  
Holed up in your little flat  
With ceaseless stories of yesterday  
And I recorded them  
- so I will always have that

Never fear  
I'll be back this time next year  
Like your little bird you know I've always flown  
And you'll see me and the van  
From your kitchen window  
And I'll be home

Now the time it has come  
And I must be moving on  
I was born to ramble  
I was bound to roam  
But never found a house to call home

In these final moments  
That we have  
I will hold you in my arms  
As if this is our last goodbye...  
Please let me have one more farewell

And I be home....  
take me home...drive me home...carry me  
home...bring me home  
Where I will be...

Safe there in your arms again  
Safe there in your arms

**Tuning:** Tune to Standard Pitch, but tune the 6th string UP to F#. Then put the first capo on strings 5/4/3/2/1 on the 2nd fret. And partial (3-string) capo on 456 on the 4th fret. You need to position caps such as you can still reach the 6th string on the 4th fret (yes, I know it's a stretch!) and 6th string on the 4th. You want to hold the guitar almost in a classic style with the headstock near you had to prevent you straining your wrist. Those with smaller hands - use a 3rd capo (go on you know you want to) to take up a semi-tone at a time to make more comfortable. This does mean you will have to change the key - but that's easier than growing bigger hands.

Finger positions relative to the nut given the complexity around the double capo. There loads of crazy hammer-ons and pull-offs so these are just the basic shapes

**It's that time of year again**  
0-0-0-6-9-0, 5-0-0-0-6-0

**And the twinkling lights of this town**  
5-0-0-0-6-0, 4-0-0-7-0-2-0-0-0-6-0

**Never fear**  
0-0-11-10-0-0, 0-0-6-0-0, 0-0-8-0-7-0

**And I'll be home** - is a run on the 5th string...  
(a cutaway helps!)  
14, 13, 11, 9, 8, 6

**And I'll be....**  
0-9-8-0-7-0, 0-9-9-0-7-0, 0-9-8-0-7-0, 9-9-0-0-7-0,  
0, 9-9-0-0-7-0, 9-9-0-0-6-0, 9-9-0-0-7-0

## OAK AND ASH AND THORN

This is the “bonus” track on the CD - a single I released earlier this year. The song first became a song when Peter Bellamy recorded it in 1970, though it began life as A Tree Song, a poem from Rudyard Kipling’s 1906 book Puck of Pook’s Hill. Some people see Kipling’s poem as a nostalgic or romanticised vision of merrie old England, and prefer his exceedingly good cakes to his poetry. Since Bellamy’s version, countless musicians - including the Unthanks and the Long John’s - have done their own interpretations.

For me, it reads like an environmental protest song, looking back to a time when this country was covered in trees. There’s also, to my ears, a quietly political message: the priest feels like a stand-in for earthly powers trying to control ordinary people, and there’s something wonderfully subversive about everyone meeting in the woods to conjure summer in. It suggests we’re currently stuck in a kind of dark, in-between season - somewhere between autumn and spring.

I’ve added a verse to try and express those feelings, and I’ve dropped a couple of Kipling’s verses that never really spoke to me. Sorry, Mr Kipling. Maybe a new future will come where we rediscover solidarity and community, a way of living that’s in tune with nature - one that throws off this current unnatural, unkind rule and finds room for everyone in the forest.



## OAK AND ASH AND THORN

Of all the trees that grew so fair,  
old England did adorn,  
Greater were none beneath the sun  
than were Oak, and Ash, and Thorn

We'd Sing Oak, and Ash, and Thorn, good sirs,  
All on a midsummer's morn.  
Surely we'd sing of no little thing  
In Oak, and Ash, and Thorn.

Yew that was old, in churchyard mould, he breaded a mighty bow (boe)  
And Alder for shoes did wise men choose, and beech for cups also  
But when you have killed, and your bowl is filled,  
and your shoes are clean, outworn

It was back you must speed  
for all that you need for the Oak, and Ash, and Thorn

Elm, she hates mankind and waits, til every gust be laid,  
To drop a limb on the head of him that anyway trusts her shade,

**Tuning:** Two steps down from  
Standard Tuning (D-G-C-F-C-D).  
I'm using thumb in the claw hammer  
style to play the 6th string on  
the 5th fret.

**Of all the trees**  
5-0-7-5-5-5  
5-0-7-5-5-7  
5-0-7-5-5-8  
5-0-7-5-5-7  
5-0-7-5-5-5  
5-0-7-5-5-5  
5-0-7-5-8-5  
5-0-7-5-7-5  
5-0-7-5-5-5

But whether a lad be sober or sad, or pissed-up wth beer from the horn,  
He'd take no wrong when he lied along 'neathOak, andAsh, andThorn

Oh, but do not tell the priests our plight, for they would call it a sin  
For we've been out in the woods all night, conjuring summer in,  
And I bring you good news by word of mouth,  
good news for cattle and corn  
Cos as sure as the sun come up from the south,  
There will be Oak, and Ash, and Thorn.

With crimson berries bright,  
And Birch, so pale, tells the olden tale  
Of the fading Northern light.  
But when frost is set and the snow is wet,  
And the fire crackles 'til morn,  
the strength you'll find, in the branches intertwined,  
Will be if Oak, and Ash, and Thorn

**Greater none beneath**  
1-3-3-2-1-0

**Than the oak and ash...**  
0-2-2-0-0-0



1. HELM WINDS
2. BIRDS THAT DO FLY
3. HIGH FORCE
4. THE SNOW IT MELTS THE SOONEST\*
5. A CHRISTMAS PARTING SONG
6. OAK AND ASH AND THORN

Michelle Laverick – lyrics, vocals, guitar, harmonium

Ben Haynes – bass, electric guitar, percussion

Gillian Frame – fiddle

\*Bex Fawn Johnstone – additional vocals

Studio – Ben Haynes, [HaynesMusic.com](http://HaynesMusic.com)

Mastering – Sam Proctor, Lismore Mastering

Design – Martin Rowsell, [simplymarvellousmusic.com](http://simplymarvellousmusic.com)

Imagery – Marry Waterson

Helm Winds Video – Marry Waterson

© & © 2025 Michelle Laverick.

All rights of the producer and of the owner of the recorded work reserved.

Unauthorised copying, hiring, renting, public performance and broadcasting of this record prohibited

[LINKTR.EE/MICHELLELAVERICK](http://LINKTR.EE/MICHELLELAVERICK)  
[MICHELLELAVERICK.COM](http://MICHELLELAVERICK.COM)

