

## The Song Collector

Chumbawamba

The Folk Society meet on Thursday nights  
Clear their throats and put their coughs to flight  
To sing the dusty cobwebs from the room  
A repertoire both in and out of tune  
Don't assume a singalong, or worse  
This history in song and countless verse  
Pays homage to the man who, long ago  
Collected all the songs the singers know  
Collected all the songs the singers know

Edward Alexander, man of action  
Armed only with his reel-to-reel contraption  
One hundred years ago in mac and boots  
Set out to faithfully preserve the region's roots  
And every night in some small village inn  
Fortified with fortitude and gin  
Mr Alexander, for a shilling  
Would thus record your song, if you were willing  
Would thus record your song, if you were willing

So word got round, and soon there formed a queue  
And the line of willing singers grew and grew  
Brass for oohs and aahs? You can't go wrong  
When there's someone paying a shilling for a song  
When all his tapes are filled up, Edward leaves  
There's a history preserved, so he believes  
But all the so-called singers back inside  
They know they took a city scholar for a ride  
They know they took a city scholar for a ride

For they shook the man for every coin he'd got  
With words and tunes all made up on the spot  
Invented tales not twenty minutes old  
So history, like ale, is bought and sold.  
The old contraption's packed away and boxed  
And a century is marked upon the clock  
So tradition holds that Edward's great collection  
Is honoured with a weekly resurrection  
Honoured with a weekly resurrection

And now the old Society sing the songs  
Word for word, and kept where they belong  
As once again, they eulogise the past  
You can hear the ghosts of history laughing last  
You can hear the ghosts of history laughing last