

Black Water Side (a.k.a. "Blackwaterside")

Words & Music:
Traditional English

This song is the basis for Led Zeppelin's "Black Mountainside". It is less strummed with chords as played around the vocal line. It is very free and the instrument follows the voice instead of the other way 'round. This traditional English way of playing is beautiful and worth wrapping your brain around and learning. Olav Torvund recommends "Fingerstyle Guitar: New Dimensions and Explorations" by Stefan Grossman, which goes through the English artists who excel in this style. I can't wait to buy it. Jamie Phillips' tab does a really nice job of notating this style.

Mudcat Café Lyrics:

[Source: *Ballads Migrant in New England, Flanders*. Collected from James Shephard, Baltimore, VT, 1933.]

On a bright summer's morning as I went a-walking, viewing the streams that gently did flow.
As the bright sun arose, the hills did adorn, surrounding the banks of the Black Water Side.

Says he, "My dearest jewel, it's long we have courted,
We're both fit for marriage, I solemnly vow,
And if you're inclined in wedlock to join,
Either `Yes' or `No' you must answer me now."

She says, "I'm oppressed and quite in distress. I'm quite unprepared to answer you now.
My fortune is low, as you very well know, and to be your bride, you know I'm not fit.

I had some friends went to America
And with my old mother, I mean to reside.
I'll here take my lot in this low little cot
On the lovely sweet banks of the Black Water Side."

"Well, if you do, you may happen to rue. I've another in view that won't me deny.
To labor in vain, I'll not ask again. I'm not set on coaxing, as you may rely.

I gave you the proffer. Accept as the offer
In wee bans of wedlock, we soon would be tied.
You know I adore you and praise none before you,
You blooming sweet maid of the Black Water Side.

"At the age of sixteen, if she's handsome and clean. As for her fortune, I'm sure I don't care;
As for her clothing, it never will grieve me. With you I'd range this world so wide.

You're the maid I admire, so grant my desire,
It's you I require from the Black Water Side."

This maid she arose. To her mother she goes, telling the story as plain as you see.
She got her consent and away they both went. They were joined in Wedlock's sweet unity.

Their health did increase and troubles grew less.
In peace and in happiness they both do reside.
The truth I am telling. You will find their dwelling
On the lovely sweet banks of the Black Water Side.

Black Water Side Tab (Bert Jansch version)

Tabbed by Jamie Phillips [thanks, Jamie!]
 Tuning: DADGBE (dropped D) & Capo: 5th Fret

Amazing tune but a real pain to transcribe! There are bars of 2,3,4,5 and 6; the asterisks let you know how many beats. You will have to work closely with the record to capture the fine nuances of the rhythm and structure. There are also slight variations from verse to verse and in the instrumental. Some of the fingering can be changed to suit you; most of them I arrived at for reasons of tone. I think mine is a little different to the Stefan Grossman transcription, though I stick by it - it sounds really authentic especially when you sing along. Good luck and have fun!

Rhythm: Varies

Beat*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
E		-----		-----		-----		-----		3h-5h3-2--0--	
B		-----		5--		-/7-----		/7-----		7-----	
G		-----		7-----		-----		7-----		0-----	
D		-----		/7-----		-----		-----		-----	
A		-----		4--		-/5-----		/5-----		-----	
D		-----		0-----		-----		0-----		0-----	

*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
-----		-----		-----		-----		-----	
3-----		3-----		1-----		1-----		1-----	
0h-2h0-----		2-----		2-----		2-----		2-----	
4-2-0-----		0-----		2-----		2-----		2-----	
-----		-----		3-----		3-3-----		3-----	
0-----		0-----		-----		-----		0-----	

Repeat bar below 3 times on intro and start again; continue through on verse without repeats.

*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
-----		-----		-----		-----		-----	
3-----		3-----		3-----		-----		-----	
0-----		0-----		0h-2h0-----		5-----		2-----	
0-----		0-----		-----		4-2-0-----		0h-2h0-----	
2-----		2-----		-----		-----		3-----	
-----		0-----		-----		-----		0-----	

*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
-----		-----		-----		-----	
3-----		0h-1h0-----		0-----		3-----	
0h-2h0-----		2-----		-----		0-----	
-----		4-0-----		-----		4-0-4-5-----	
0-----		5-----		-----		2-----	
-----		-----		-----		0-----	

*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
-----		-----		-----		-----		-----	
2-----		0-----		0-----		0-----		0-----	
0h-2h0-----		3-----		0-2-4-----		5-----		5-----	
-----		3-----		2-----		-----		4h2-0-2-----	
0-----		0-----		3-----		0-0-2-4-----		2-----	
-----		-----		-----		-----		0-----	

*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
-----		-----		-----		-----		-----	
2-----		0-----		0-----		2-----		0-----	
0h-2h0-----		3-----		0h-2h0-----		3-----		0h-2h0-----	
-----		3-2-----		-----		3-2-----		3-2-----	
0-----		3-----		-----		3-----		0-----	