

Peter's Private Army

Martin Graebe

Now peo-ple come and ga-ther round, though our coats are rag-ged and our fa-ces brown. You see we are no
com - mon band, at the call of our count - ry we all did stand.
Tip - a - tap - tip, hop - and - skip it's Pet - er's Pri - vate Ar - my

1 Now people come and gather round
Though our coats are ragged and our faces brown
You see we are no common band
At the call of our country we all did stand
Tip-a-tap tip, hop and skip
It's Peter's Private Army

2 Number one is Peter Dunn
His arm blown away by a big French gun
It's him our little band does lead
With the money bag tied to his sleeve
Tip-a-tap tip, hop and skip
It's Peter's Private Army

3 And number two is Peg-leg Hugh
His dancing done since Waterloo
With his fiddle tucked beneath his chin
He'll wave his stump to keep the time
Tip-a-tap tip, hop and skip
It's Peter's Private Army

4 And number three is Blind Jack Bree
Lost both his eyes in the King's navy
But still his squeeze-box he can play
And the notes roll out like an ocean wave
Tip-a-tap tip, hop and skip
It's Peter's Private Army

5 And number four is Harry Taw
Caught a bullet in the throat in the Peninsula
But he's wind enough on his fife to toot
He can say as much as we although his voice is mute
Tip-a-tap tip, hop and skip
It's Peter's Private Army

6 And number five is Mad Jim Ives
We sometimes wonder if he's dead or alive
But when he hears the fiddle thrum
He'll beat like hell on his pigskin drum
Tip-a-tap tip, hop and skip
It's Peter's Private Army

7 And now we're marching off again
You can hear us fading down the lane
And we hope that you've been kind to us
'Cos we've given much for you in the foreign wars
Tip-a-tap tip, hop and skip
It's Peter's Private Army

At one point in my career my interest in historical oddities and my professional life as a developer of new food products came together when I was working on Ambrosia 'Traditional Rice Pudding'. In establishing the background for that product I used information on the retail market in milk products in the middle of the last century from Henry Mayhew's 'London Labour and the London Poor'. This book also gave me the ideas for a couple of songs, one of which was 'Peter's Private Army'. Mayhew interviewed both legitimate tradesmen and the less honest with equal enthusiasm. One of his shadier interviewees described 'The Shallow Lurk' - the confidence trick in which the participants dressed up to pretend they were ex soldiers or sailors in order to elicit sympathetic small change. If all the 'sailors' who claimed to have served on the Victory at Trafalgar had actually done so the ship would have sunk under their weight before leaving harbour.