

What's in the bag ?

I made this one up many years ago after bumping into a notorious local poacher cleaning sea-trout in a wash-hand basin in the toilets of the Mercat Hotel in Haddington. Haddington, like Berwick, absorbed a lot of words from “the Cant” – the jargon of the Border Gypsies. My poacher acquaintance had a wide knowledge of the Cant, so I couldn't resist slipping some of it into this song.

I wis drinkin in the “Mercat” when I bumped intae this bloke,
An his troosers looked like they had been pit in the tub tae soak.
He offered me the contents o a muckle plastic poke,
An I thoct, “There's something fishy goin on!”
 Singin, what's in the bag, sir, what's in there?
 It's fresh fae the Tyne, an it's dreepin on the flair.
 There's a polisman in the corner wi a cauld suspicious stare,
 An he kens there's something fishy goin on.

Noo, the prood Cockinny fishermen, they ploo the ocean deep,
An the anglers on the Whiteadder their weekend vigils keep.
Ah, but whae's that splashin in the Tyne when the hornies are asleep?
I doot there's something fishy goin on.

Wi a lump o salmon on a plate, a man can dine in style,
An if ye want tae sell them ye can make yersel a pile.
But the money's no much yuis when ye're sittin in the jyle,
When they've kent there's something fishy goin on.

I jan what's in the gonnie, gadgie; nash avree fae here!
For ye've chored them fae the pannie, noo we'll tober oot the keer.
For the hornie's deekin at us, an it's time tae disappear,
For they ken there's something fishy goin on.

(Words and tune original.)