

Rock Island Line

One summer Brian and Michael came
across the road to number three.
They did not stay there long;
they'd gone the following year.

Brian's father bought him a guitar,
taught him three chords to play.
He was a star. We were jealous.
We had to make ours ourselves.

Michael found an old oil drum
covered in their garden grass.
Two stout sticks: bang, bang bang.
Percussion was sorted out.

My brother Steve remembered seeing
an old tea chest gathering dust
in the garage at number nine.
Mr D said we could take it.

An old broom handle, piece of string,
stand on a chair to reach that high.
He was master of the groove with
His wonderful one-string bass.

My mother delved in cupboards deep
brought out an old washboard.
Three metal thimbles from the sewing box;
the king of the rhythm, me.

We banged and plucked and scraped away,
played "Rock Island Line" over and again.
We were a skiffle group, we were the best.
We would soon make number one.

The neighbours winced, but mostly smiled.
except, of course, for Mrs C-J;
she just thought that everything fun
was part of the devil's plan.

It must have been a dreadful din,
no tune and barely heard words.
We thought that we were really cool,
Just like Lonnie Donnegan.