Female Drummer

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I was brought up in Yorkshire and when I was sixteen
I walked all the way to London and a soldier I became

cho: With me fine cap and feathers, likewise me rattling drum
They learned me to play upon the ra-ba-da-ba-dum
With me gentle waist so slender, me fingers long and small
I could play upon the ra-ba-dum the best of them all

And so many were the pranks that I saw upon the breech
And so boldly did I fight me boys although I'm but a wench
And they buttoned then up me trousers so up to them I smiled
To think I'd live with a thousand men and a maiden all the while

And they never found my secret out until this very hour
When they sent me out to London to be sentry at the Tower
When a young girl fell in love with me and she found that I's a maid
She went out to me officer me secret she betrayed
He unbuttoned then my red uniform and he found that it was true
"It's a shame", he says "to lose a pretty drummer boy like you"
So now I must return to me mum and dad at home
And along with me old comrades no longer can I roam

recorded by Steeleye Span on "Please To See The King" (1971)

One of the many songs in which a young girl dresses up as a man and joins the Army. This one is special because there's no lover involved nor does she become pregnant. The second verse refers to the habit punishing the young servicemen (drummer boys, midshipmen etc.) for petty offenses with lashes on the bare bottom while being bent over breech of a cannon. I would really like to know how she pulled off the trick of not being found out. MJ

MJ