B. NOTES ON COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

Fear a' Churracain Ghlais

Seo mar a chuala mise bh'ann ma dheaghainn Fear a' Churracain Ghlais nan trì boghannan caorach (*sic*) 's na naong[1] saigheadan seilich a' dol a dh'iarraidh Nighean Rìgh Locha Tréig agus mar a faigheadh e i, i bhi aca fhéin.

Dh'fhalbh e agus rànaig e 'n caisteal agus bhuail e 'n dorus. Thanaig an dorsair 's dh'fhoighneachd e có bh'ann 's thuirt e gu robh esan, Fear a' Churracain Ghlais nan trì boghannan caorach (*sic*) 's na naong saigheadan seilich a' dol a dh'iarraidh Nighean Rìgh Locha Tréig agus mar a faigheadh e i, i bhi aca fhéin.

Chaidh an dorsair suas agus thill e nuas agus chuir e mach té 'ige ach dh'aithnich esan nach e Nighean Rìgh Locha Tréig a bha sen-ach 's thuirt e:

"Mar an cuir sibh," as esan, "a nuas ugam i 'n ceartair, a' chlach as àirde bhios as a' chaisteal 's i 's ìsle bhios ann an ceartair."[2]

"Tha," as an dorsair, "trì rudan agad ri dheanamh ma faigh thu i. Chiad rud," as esan, "tha fuamhaire mór a' fuireach as a' ghleann ad shuas air a bheil seachd cinn agus feumaidh tu mharbhadh." "Ceart gu leòr, ma tha," as esan.

Dh'fhalbh e 's bha e siubhal gos an do rànaig e 'n gleann, 's chùm e suas an gleann agus rànaig e taigh an fhuamhaire. Bhuail e aig an dorus. Thànaig a' fuamhaire mach 's dh'fhoighneachd e có bha seo. Thuirt e gu robh esan, Fear a' Churracain Ghlais nan trì boghannan caorunn 's na naong saigheadan seilich, agus dh'iarr e air tigh'nn a staigh. Chaidh e staigh 's shuidh e agus dh'éirich a' fuamhaire agus chuir e cnot air an dorus. Dh'éirich Fear a' Churracain Ghlais agus chuir e fhéin cnot air an dorus. Dh'éirich a' fuamhaire agus rinn e lasgan cridheil gàire chuir an taigh air chrith. Dh'éirich Fear a' Churracain Ghlais. Rinn e fhéin lasgan cridheil gàire. Chaidh an taigh air chrith. Leum na cnotan far an doruis, agus, 'n uair a leum, 'm bad a chéile gun deach e fhéin agus a' fuamhaire.[3]

Bha iad bogan eabair a mullach chreagan is chnoc agus 'n uair a bu lugha bhiodh iad fodha bhiodh iad fodha cho nan gliùinean agus 'n uair a bu mhutha bhiodh iad fodha bhiodh iad fodha go na sùilean gos ma dhéireadh thall an do smaointich Fear a' Churracain Ghlais gu robh e miosg a

The Man in the Little Grey Cap

This is how I heard it happened concerning the Man of the Little Grey Cap of the three bows of rowan and the nine arrows of willow going to seek the Daughter of the King of Loch Treig and if he might not have her let them keep her themselves.

He set out and reached the castle and knocked on the door. The porter came and asked who was there and he said that it was he, the Man of the Little Grey Cap of the three bows of rowan and the nine arrows of willow going to seek the Daughter of the King of Loch Treig and if he might not have her let them keep her themselves.

The porter went up and came back down and sent out a woman to him but he recognised that that was not the Daughter of the King of Loch Treig and he said:

"Unless you send her," said he, "down to me at once, the stone that is highest in the castle will be the lowest one in it presently."[2]

"You have," said the porter, "three tasks to perform before you get her. The first task:" said he, "there is a great giant living in that glen up yonder who has seven heads and you must kill him."

"Very well, then", said he.

He set out and kept going till he reached the glen and he kept on up the glen till he reached the giant's house. He knocked at the door. The giant came out and asked who was there. He said that it was he, the Man of the Little Grey Cap of the three bows of rowan and the nine arrows of willow, and he asked him to come inside. He went in and sat down and the giant rose up and put a bar on the door. The Man of the Little Grey Cap rose up and put a bar on the door himself. The giant rose up and gave a hearty peal of laughter which made the house tremble. The Man of the Little Grey Cap rose up. He gave a hearty peal of laughter himself. The house trembled. The bars leaped off the door and, when they did, he and the giant set upon each other.[3]

They made bog and mire on the tops of rocks and hillocks and when they sank least they sank up to their knees, and when they sank most they sank up to their eyes until at long last it occurred to the Man of the Little Grey Cap that he was among his enemies and far from his friends and he tripped the heels

naimhdean agus fad o chàirdean agus chuir e bacag aotrom aighearach air an fhuamhaire agus chuir e dhruim ri talamh.[4] Thug e mach an claidheamh agus shad e na seachd cinn dheth.

Thill e air n-ais go Loch Tréig 's bhuail e aig an dorus agus dh'fhoighneachd an dorsair có bh'ann, 's thuirt e ris gu robh esan, Fear a' Churracain Ghlais nan trì boghannan caorunn 's na naong saigheadan seilich agus gu robh e 'tilleadh air n-ais a' rithist—gun do mharbh e 'fuamhaire.

"*Well*," as esan, "tha dà rud agad ri dheanamh fhathast. Tha," as esan, "bann-fhuamhaire ann an gleann eile agus fcumaidh tu ise mharbhadh an toiseach."

Thill e air n-ais. Rànaig e far a robh bhann-fhuamhaire 'fuireach. Chùm e suas agus chual' e bhann-fhuamhaire 'tighinn. Ma bha 'fuamhaire air a robh na seachd cinn fiadhaich bha 'chailleach seachd uairean na b' fhiadhaiche. Chuile turus a bha i 'séideadh a h-anail bha i 'ga chuir air n-ais trì cheumannan agus a chuile turus a bha i tarrainn a h-anail 'ice bha i 'ga tharrainn 'ice ceum.[5] Ach a dh'ainneinn sen-ach chùm Fear a' Churracain Ghlais reimhe agus am bad a chéile gun deach e fhéin 's a' chailleach.

Bha iad bogan eabair a mullach chreagan is chnoc 's 'n uair bu lugha reagh iad fodha reagh iad fodha cho nan glùinean agus 'n uair a bu mhutha reagh iad fodha reagh iad fodha go na sùilean, gos ma dhéireadh thall smaointich Fear a' Churracain Ghlais a rithist gu robh e miosg a naimhdean agus fad o chàirdean agus chuir e bacag aotrom aighearach air a' chaillich agus chuir e 'druim ri talamh.[3] Chuir e chas air a h-amhaich agus dh'fhoighneachd e: "Dé", as esan, "d'éirig, a chailleach?" "O tha," as ise, "éirig mhath. Lig thus' air mo chois mi. Tha trùng òir agus trùng airgid agam-sa as a' ghleann ad shuas agus 's ann leat iad."

"'S ann liom sen," as esan, "agus do cheann comhla ris," agus shad e 'n ceann dhith.[6] Ach ma shad bu shuarach an t-sabaid a bh'aige reimhe seach an t-sabaid a bh'aige 'n uair sen a' cumail na (*sic*)[7] ceann on cholainn gos an do reoth an fhuil.[8]

Thill Fear a' Churracain Ghlais air n-ais go na chaisteil agus bhuail e 'san dorus a rithist 's dh'fhoighneachd an dorsair có bh'ann 's thuirt e gu robh esan, Fear a' Churracain Ghlais nan trì boghannan caorunn 's na naong saigheadan seilich a' dol a dh'iarraidh nighean Rìgh Locha Tréig agus gu do rinn e 'n dà rud a dh'iarradh air a dheanamh ma thràth.

of the giant lightly and gaily and laid him on his back on the earth.[4] He drew his sword and cast the seven heads off him.

He returned to Loch Treig and knocked at the door and the porter asked who was there and he told him that it was he, the Man of the Little Grey Cap of the three bows of rowan and the nine arrows of willow and that he was returning again —that he had killed the giant.

"Well", said he, "you have two tasks to perform still. There is," said he, "a giantess in another glen and you must kill her first."

He went back again. He reached the place where the giantess lived. He kept on going up and he heard the giantess coming. If the giant with the seven heads was fierce the hag was seven times fiercer. Every time she breathed out she drove him back three paces and every time she breathed in she drew him one pace towards her.[5] But despite that the Man of the Little Grey Cap kept going and he and the giantess set upon each other.

They made bog and mire on the tops of rocks and hillocks and when they sank least they sank up to their knees and when they sank most they sank up to their eyes until at long last it occurred again to the Man of the Little Grey Cap that he was among his enemies and far from his friends and he tripped the heels of the hag lightly and gaily and laid her on her back on the earth.[3] He placed his foot on her neck and asked: "What", said he, "is your ransom, hag?" "O", said she, "a fine ransom. You let me up. I have a chest of gold and a chest of silver in that glen up yonder and they are yours."

"That is mine," said he, "and your head along with it." And he cast off her head.[6] But if he did, the struggle he had before was trifling compared with the struggle he had then, keeping the head away from the body till the blood congealed.[8]

The Man of the Little Grey Cap returned to the castle and knocked at the door again and the porter asked who was there and he said that it was he, the Man of the Little Grey Cap of the three bows of rowan and the nine arrows of willow going to seek the Daughter of the King of Loch Treig and that he had performed the two tasks that he had been asked to perform so far.

Thuirt an dorsair ris gu robh aon rud eile aige ri dheanamh fhathast. Chan'eil cuimhneam dé 'n treas rud a bh'ann ach tha cuimhneam gu robh cunntais air gun do chuir e crioch air a' ghnothach sen cuideachd agus gun do thill e air n-ais agus gun d'fhuair e nighean Rìgh Locha Tréig airson a pòsadh; 's thug e dhachaidh i agus bha iad gu toilichte riamh as a dheaghaidh sen.

I recorded this text (S.S.S.RL.922.2) in North Uist in December, 1955, from my cousin Donald MacDougall, blacksmith, of Struan Ruadh, Malacleit. In all, I have recorded from him a total of twenty-four items of oral narrative, all of them interesting, and a number of songs. He is now aged about fifty and learned this tale as a boy from his grand-aunt and grand-uncle, Christina and Angus MacRury, also of Struan Ruadh.

Although some of the motifs which figure in the text occur also in other tales (see notes), it has certain unique features and I have not encountered anything quite like it in published sources. For example, I know of no other instance of a hero or character with a name like "The Man of the Little Grey Cap, of the Three Bows of Rowan and the Nine Arrows of Willow." And, again, the formula wherein the hero says that "if he may not have the princess they may keep her, but if they do, etc.", is an unusual one.

Admittedly, the winning of a princess by the successful accomplishment of various tasks is a commonplace in international tales (compare Aa.-Th.577, etc.) but this usually occurs only as an episode in a longer story. Further, the tasks accomplished by the Man of the Little Grey Cap are not of the kind usually found in types such as Aa-Th.577.

The text is unfortunately incomplete, the narrator having forgotten what the third task was. In this connection, it is interesting to note an incident which must have many parallels in the transmission of popular tales: Donald MacDougall told this tale to the late Angus MacLeod, tailor, also of Malacleit, who was himself an excellent story-teller. Having learned it, MacLeod added a third task of a fight with a bull for the sake of "completeness". He probably invented this episode, but it is just possible that he may have transposed it from another story. (See also Note 3 below.) Fights with bulls are not very characteristic of Gaelic tales, but one does occur as

The porter said to him that he still had one more task to perform. I cannot remember what the third task was but I do remember that it was accounted that he accomplished that mission also and that he returned and that he got the Daughter of the King of Loch Treig in marriage; and he took her home and they lived happily ever after.

a task in the quest for *Nighean Dubh Gheal Dearg* "The Daughter of Black White Red" (Campbell 1890:59). This tale, incidentally, bears a further resemblance to the present text in that the Son of the King of Erin goes to seek a princess and is given tasks to perform. His other tasks are, however, of a much more usual type, such as cleaning out a byre, which has not been cleaned for seven years (Augean stables), catching a wild horse, etc. All the tasks are accomplished in the regular way by means of magic help, and, in fact, the story as a whole differs widely from that of *Fear a' Churracain Ghlais.*

NOTES

[1] In the Sollas area of North Uist the form [nʌ́:ŋ] is regularly used by some speakers for *naoi* "nine"; it is, for instance, my own pronunciation. It can also be heard as [nʌ́:ŋŋ] and [nʌ́:ŋǵ], the last occurring most often when pronounced in isolation.

I cannot say what the exact distribution is, but the common North Uist form is [nʌ́:ɣ].

[2] Compare "The Battle of the Birds" (Campbell 1890:28, 41): The cook's son and the butler's son are sent out in turn in an attempt to deceive the giant who has come to claim the prince. On discovering their identity the giant returns and threatens the king: "Out here thy son, or in a twinkling the stone that is highest in the castle will be the lowest."

[3] Compare "The Lad of the Skin Coverings" (MacDougall 1891:38, 52): Fionn and the Big Lad enter a house in which they find eighteen score and eight *amhaisg* (mercenaries), who spring up and each put a bar on the door: the Big Lad puts on one bar so firmly that all the others fall off. *The amhaisg* all give a great peal of laughter: the Big Lad gives a laugh which drowns all theirs. On being asked, they say that they are laughing at the prospect of playing football with his head: he answers that he is laughing at the prospect of braining all of them—which he does.

This makes better sense than the episode in the present text. As a matter of fact, when Donald MacDougall first told me this story he added, without prompting, that he thought there was something about *amhaisg* at this point. He later withdrew this, again without prompting. This suggests two possibilities:

(*a*) That here we have a trace of the missing third task, a fight with *amhaisg*, fused with the first task of killing a seven-headed giant. This seems not unlikely.

(*b*) That the episode of the *amhaisg* belongs to another tale, in which case the incidents of barring the door and of laughing were probably not an original part of the story of *Fear a' Churracain Ghlais*.

[4] This Wrestling Run occurs in a number of Gaelic tales with slight variations. For further references see MacKay 1940:xv, 232.

[5] Compare, amongst other occurrences, "Conall Cra Bhuidhe" (Campbell 1890:116, 126). Conall, telling his own story, relates how he stole the spear of the snoring giant and "every time he breathed in, I thought I should go down his throat, and, when he breathed out, I was just as far back again."

[6] This motif also occurs in a number of Gaelic tales. The defeated ogre reveals where his or her "ransom" is to be found and is immediately put to death. The hoard usually consists of "a chest of gold and a chest of silver", sometimes with the addition of the "White Sword of Light" and vessels of salve. The motif generally occurs in association with the Wrestling Run (see note 3, above).

[7] A slip on the part of the reciter.

[8] For further references to the motif of the Self-Returning Head (Thompson Motif D 1602. 12, etc.), see MacKay 1940:38.

REFERENCES

CAMPBELL, JOHN F. (ed.)
1890 *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*. 2nd ed. Vol. I. London.

MACDOUGALL, J. (ed.)
1891 *Folk and Hero Tales*. Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition. Argyllshire Series, No. III. London.

MACINNES, D. (ed.)
1890 *Folk and Hero Tales*. Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition. Argyllshire Series, No. II. London.

MACKAY, JOHN G. (ed.)
1940 *More West Highland Tales*, Vol. I. Edinburgh.
1960 *More West Highland Tales*, Vol. II. Edinburgh.

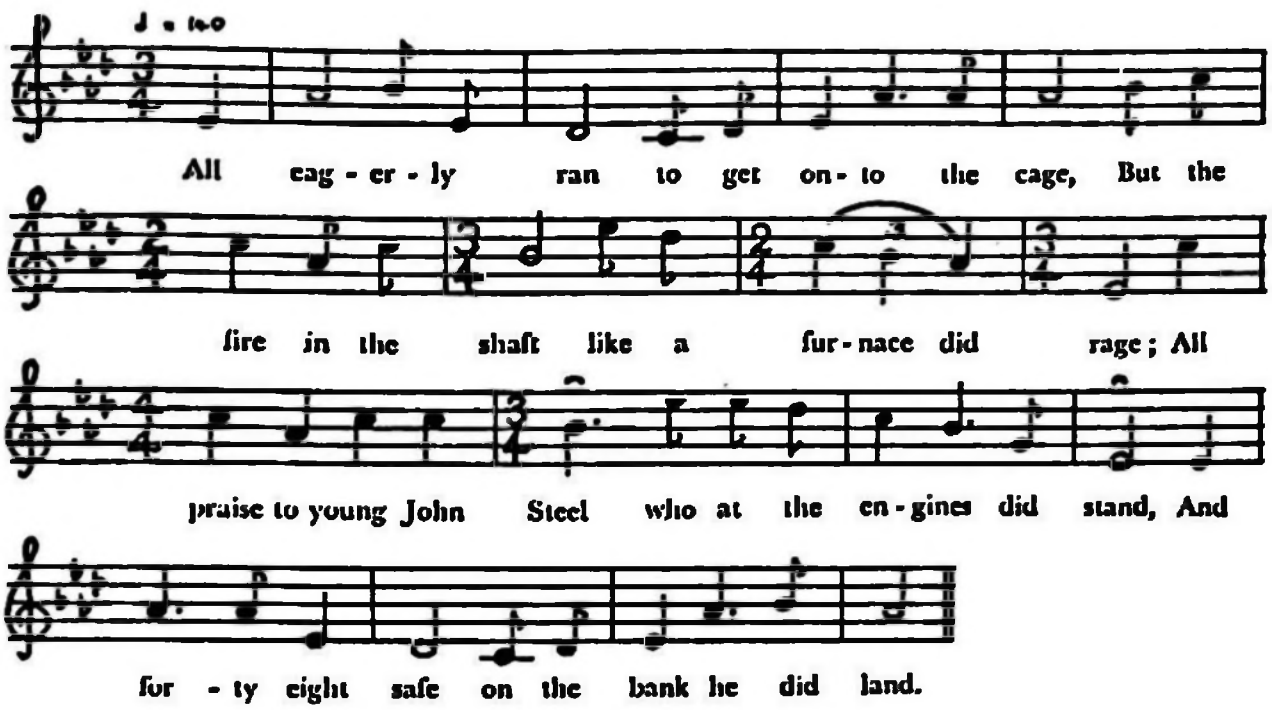
S.S.S.
RL. 922.2. School of Scottish Studies, Sound Recording Archive.

DONALD A. MACDONALD

A Colliery Disaster Ballad

The Scottish miners have a rich folk-song, much of which understandably reflects the arduous nature of their work, and its ever-present perils. Disasters like the Blantyre Explosion of October 22nd 1877 and the Donibristle Moss Moran Disaster of August 26th 1901 have been movingly commemorated in rough-hewn ballad stanzas. The following song, never previously recorded, was obtained from Rab Morrison, a 53-year

old miner, who is at present working in the Woolmet Colliery, Midlothian.



It was 18 and 70, Aprile the ninth day;
Ninety-six men and boys for their work took their way.
In health and in strength down the shaft they did go,
Never dreaming of how many would lie low.

For about twelve o'clock on that same fatal day,
"The pit-shaft's on fire!", the roadsman did say.
And quick through the workins the alarum he gave,
All praying to their maker their sweet lives to save.

All eagerly ran to get on to the cage,
But the fire in the shaft like a furnace did rage.
All praise to young John Steel who at the engine did stand,
And forty-eight safe on the bank he did land.

William Ralston, William Rushford and young David Muir,
By that terrible disaster you will see them no more.
Patrick and Peter M'Comiskie, aye, and Swanson likewise,
By that terrible disaster in their cold grave now lies.

Now widows and orphans who are now left to murn,
By that awful disaster they will never return.
But God is so merciful, as all mankind knows,
He will share in their sorrow, and soften their woes.

Rab Morrison, the singer, was born at Northrigg, two miles from Armadale, West Lothian. His father was a miner. He started working in the pits when he was thirteen, getting

1/11d. a day in the Woodend Colliery. Since then he has been all round the Lothian pits, and has learned songs wherever he has gone.

He first heard the "Starlaw Disaster" ballad sung when he was eighteen, but he had seen the text of it before then; it was on a ½d. broadsheet which his father had "lying about the house". A young miner, Jimmy McGovern, knew the tune of the ballad, but did not have much of the text; consequently, a fair exchange was promptly effected.

Rab thought the song was about the "Blantyre Disaster"—this was, indeed, his title for it—but the facts as related in the ballad do not confirm this supposition. The date, and the names of the deceased, identify the event as the Starlaw Disaster, which happened on Saturday, April the 9th, 1870. The following account of it appeared in *The Scotsman* on the following Monday:

> A colliery accident, by which seven men lost their lives, and several others were more or less seriously injured, took place at Starlaw, near Bathgate, on Saturday. It was caused by the wood work of the upcast shaft catching fire. The alarm was given a few minutes before noon, and at this time there were 56 men and boys in the pit. The work of extricating them was carried on under prodigious difficulties, the unfortunate men being literally dragged through the flames that filled the shaft. At length the cage rope was burned through, thus sealing the fate of seven men who remained in the pit, and whose bodies were not recovered till the fire had been got under, and the ventilation of the pit restored at a late hour in the evening. Of those who have been injured, one lies in a hopeless and another in a precarious condition.

On another page of the same issue of *The Scotsman*, a more detailed account of the disaster shows that the words "all praise to young John Steel" were amply deserved. They refer to the engineman, James Steel, who saved the lives of most of his mates by raising and lowering the cage with the utmost expedition.

> The attempt to quench the fire proved utterly futile. In spite of all the water that could be poured down, the flames kept gathering strength with frightful rapidity, till they blazed out with such violence as to render it almost impossible to approach the pit-mouth. Meanwhile, the brave Steel, though exposed to scorching heat, stuck manfully to his engine, lowering and raising with the utmost precision the cage which formed the only hope of the poor miners below. Of course, only the cage in the downcast was avail-

able. The other being attached to the same drum, had made two or three descents into the roaring furnace of the upcast, when the rope yielded to the fire, and it dropped to the bottom. Fortunately, the rope in the downcast held on for a few minutes longer, though it, too, caught fire shortly after the other. Thanks to Steel's nerve and presence of mind, no time was lost, the cage, we are told, being lowered and raised in little more than a minute. For five or six trips it came up loaded with miners, 8 or 9 men having in each case packed themselves into a space intended for four. So deftly was the operation managed, that as fast as the poor fellows, running from various distances in the workings, arrived at the pit-bottom, the cage was there to receive them and whirl them aloft to safety. It may readily be supposed, however, that the passage to the open air, swift as it was, seemed all too long to the occupants of the cage. The wood-work of the apparatus caught fire; the iron-work was nearly red-hot; in the up-cast shaft, separated from them only by a thin partition, a raging furnace threatened destruction; while the burning rope by which they were suspended seemed likely every instant to give way and leave them to their fate. So far, the actual progress of the fire had been confined to the upcast, but the down-draft carried the smoke and flame over the top of the partition into the downcast, and so into the pit, rendering the air quite stifling . . . At length, after several batches of eight or nine each had been safely brought to bank, the cage on its next descent came up empty. By this time, the fire had burst through the top of the partition and was blazing in full volume from both sections of the shafts, cutting off all possibility of ventilation, and giving rise to the most serious apprehensions as to the safety of those still in the pit.

Four more men—one of whom, William Rankine, subsequently died—were brought to the surface by the heroic James Steel; then the rope broke, and all hope for the seven miners still below had to be abandoned. Here are the names of the doomed seven, as printed in the newspaper:

James McNeill (45) leaves widow and four children.
William Rushford (35), widow and five children.
John McNeil (35), widow and five children.
William Wands (22), three months married.
Peter Comiskie (27), widow and one child.
Patrick Comiskie (24), widow and one child.
William Muir (17), unmarried.

Exactly a week after the disaster, a meeting of Lothian miners (convened at the instance of Alexander MacDonald, President of the National Association of Mineworkers) was

held in the Masonic Hall, Dalkeith. MacDonald spoke ("to a crowded hall") about the Mines Regulation Bill, then before Parliament. He declared that the then prevailing system of mine inspection was a farce, and that the government inspections were mere "accident enquiries". The new Bill should, he said, provide for heavy penalties in cases where mine owners failed to provide adequate safeguards, and where culpable negligence led to loss of life.

By late April, the campaign to secure amendments to the Mines Regulation Bill, a shilling advance in wages and shorter hours had gathered such momentum that McDonald decided to issue an appeal for a one-day strike:

". . . I would take the liberty of suggesting that you would suspend labour in every colliery, in every district, in every mining county in Scotland on the 13th or 14th of May". (Page Arnot 1955:51)

Meanwhile, the balladmaker was probably already at work. The *Scotsman* report, quoted above, is proof that the song provides an excellent factual précis of the event; it is both chronicle and elegy. We may safely infer that the author was a miner-balladeer who composed the song almost immediately after the disaster. "It goes to the heart, the thought of the pitman stirred by the drama of some strike or disaster, who sits by candle-light with a blunt pen in his fist, staring at a piece of paper on which he has written the opening phrase: 'Come all ye bold miners . . .', and who wrestles by scratch and score with his rough, stubborn muse, till day dawns and the pit buzzer blows, and another ballad has come bawling or timorous into the world." (Lloyd 1952:17).

One of the dead miners, as we have seen, was a boy of seventeen. No wonder, therefore, that the unknown balladmaker chose for his tune a variant of a familiar Scottish tune for "The Bonny Boy is Young But He's Growing"—the exquisite elegiac ballad, not in Child, which Cecil Sharp called "Still Growing". Although it has been collected all over the British Isles, and in America, "Still Growing" is very likely of Scottish origin. Robert Burns collected a fragment of it, and "embellished" it with other stanzas of his own composition (Johnson 1792: No. 377). James Maidment prefaced the version ("The Young Laird of Craigston") which he printed in *A North Countrie Garland* (1824) with a circumstantial historical note identifying the "bonnie lad" with John Urquhart, Lord Craigston, who was married to a girl several years his senior,

and died in 1634 while still a youth. Maidment's version retains some prosaic details ("He's likewise possessed of many bills and bonds") which suggest that it is in fact an 'ancestor' variant of "Still Growing" as it now circulates, and not merely an early Scottish localisation.

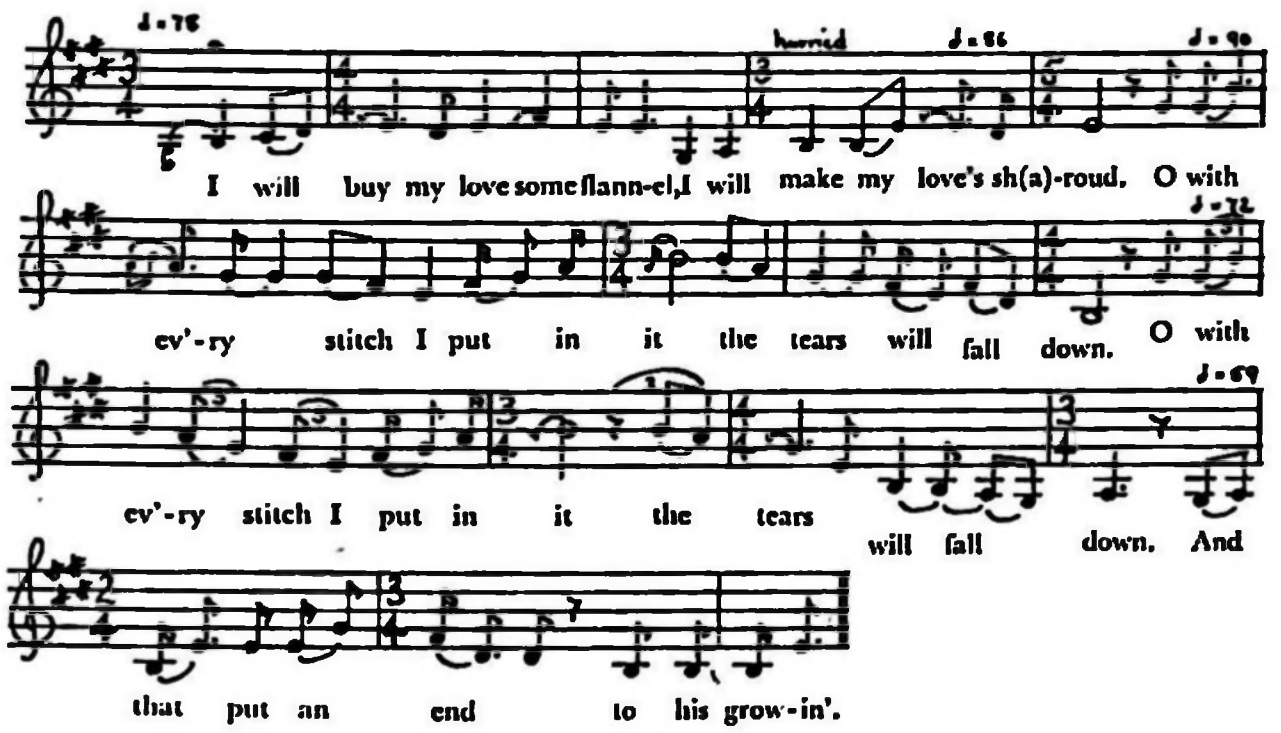
In 1960, I recorded from Lizzie Higgins (daughter of Jeannie Robertson, the Aberdeen ballad-singer) a version of "Still Growing" which she had learned in the tattie-fields of Angus. The text of this version is as follows:

O father, dear father, pray, what is this you've done?
You have wed me to a college boy, a boy that's far too young.
For he is only seventeen and I am twenty-one.
He's my bonny, bonny boy, and he's growing.

For we were going through college, and some boys were playing ball
When there I saw my own true love, the fairest of them all.
When there I saw my own true love, the fairest of them all—
He's my bonny, bonny boy, and he's growing.

For at the age of sixteen years he was a married man,
And at the age of seventeen the father of a son.
And at the age of twenty-one he had become a man,
But the green grass o'er his grave it was growin'.

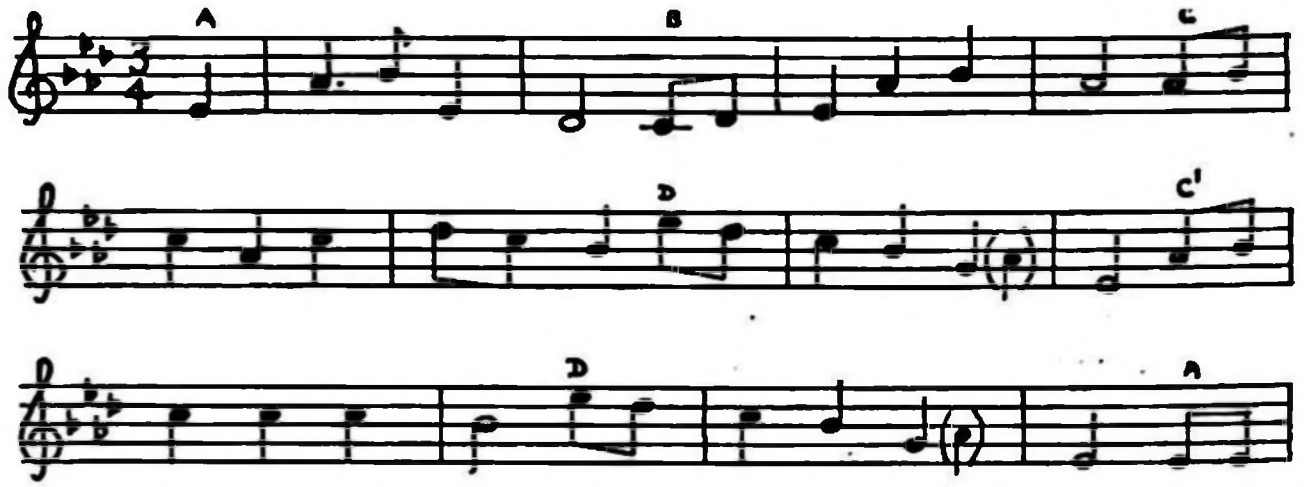
I will buy my love some flannel, I will make my love's shroud;
With every stitch I put in it, the tears will flow down.
With every stitch I put in it, the tears will flow down,
And that put an end to his growin'.



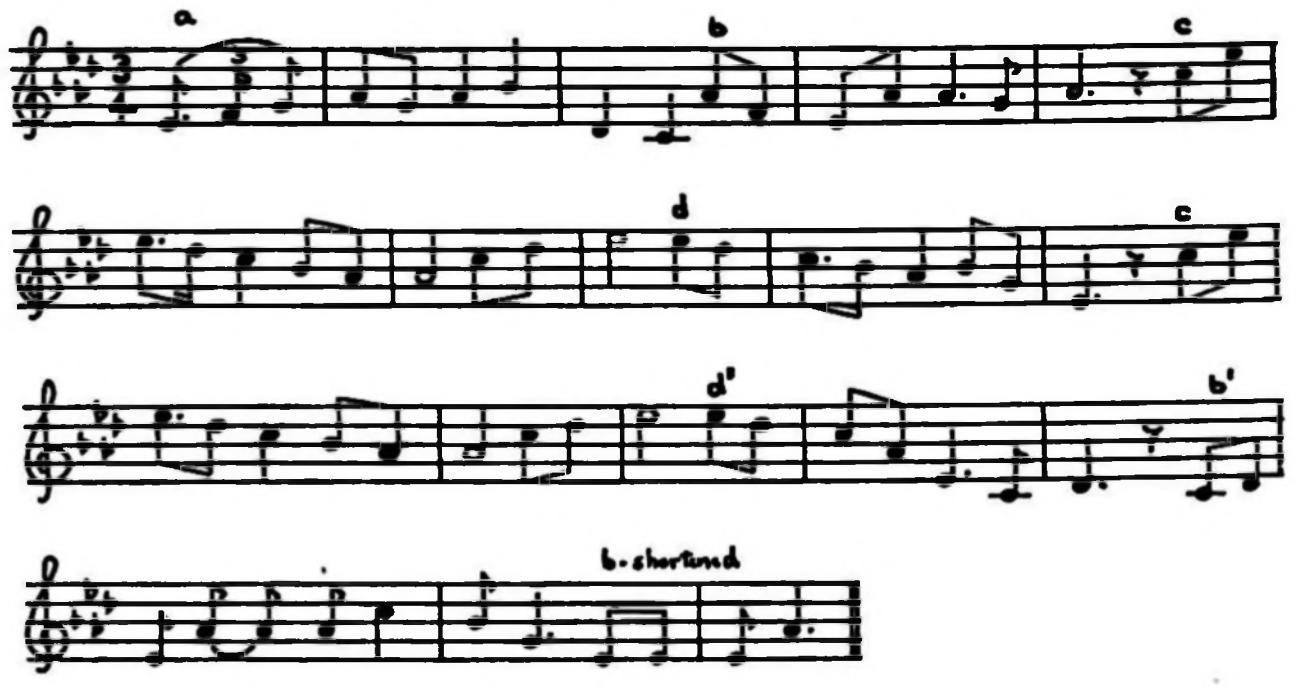
I am indebted to my colleague Miss Gillian Johnstone for the following note on the resemblance between Rab's tune for the "Starlaw Disaster", and the haunting melody for "The Bonny Boy" sung by Lizzie Higgins:

The resemblance between these two tunes is indeed striking, and may be seen very obviously in the norms. It must be realised that these "norms" never actually occur in performance, and may never have occurred; but on the evidence of all the renderings for the several verses, and taking into consideration the normal pattern of spoken word-stresses, it is possible to find a version which may form a kind of ideal, purely conceptual, of which all actual renderings are variations. In the norm here I have transposed Lizzie Higgins' tune from E^{b} to A^{b} to facilitate comparison.

Norm 1 (Rab Morrison, "The Starlaw Disaster")



Norm 2 (Lizzie Higgins, "The Bonny Boy")



Both melodies have a simple 4-line structure, the first AB, CD, C^1D, and AB, and the second a little more complicated, ab, cd, cd^1, b^1 b-shortened. There are two main differences between them, in phrase endings and in degree of ornamentation, and I would like to suggest that these are modifications of a single tune under the influence of two very different traditions of singing style and applied to two different types of song.

Rab Morrison has the classical ballad style, where the melody is the vehicle for the words but does not enhance them except in a very general way. It is a narrative style, with a steady, fairly fast movement, carrying the listener through a series of events in different moods, moods which are rarely commented on by the singer in his rendering. The structure of the song is foursquare, each line considered basically a unit, as in spoken ballads, and each mid-line phrase ending carrying the melody directly on to the next phrase. Lizzie Higgins, in contrast, has a much slower, more declamatory, expressive way of singing, and this demands ornamentation. Not only are all possible gaps in the basic melody filled with repeated and adjacent notes, but grace-notes are found in addition to these. "The Bonny Boy" is a one-mood song, and the melody has a dramatic shape of its own. It opens prosaically, not even a modulation disturbing or quickening the even flow of the first line. This turns out to be an effective introduction to the bold emotional heights and depths of the second and third lines. The song finishes with a quiet tailpiece of a fourth line, in a delicate contrasting rhythm, its finality and pathos emphasised by the shortened last phrase. The second and third lines have a four-part structure of their own, with a sustained climax in the middle of each which is perfectly borne by the repeated notes at the end of the first phrase and beginning of the second. The modulation at the end of the third line provides a breakwater for the emotion and prepares the listener for the relief and balancing effect of the fourth.

Thus the modifications of the norms evolved in the different singing styles are seen to be functional, and the two songs, basically so alike, perhaps indeed the same, turn out to be in detail and effect so very different.

REFERENCES

JOHNSON, JAMES
1792 *The Scots Musical Museum.* Vol. IV. Edinburgh.

LLOYD, A. L.
1952 *Come All Ye Bold Miners.* London.

MAIDMENT, JAMES
1824 *A North Countrie Garland.* Edinburgh.
PAGE ARNOT, R.
1955 *A History of the Scottish Miners.* London.
SHARP, CECIL
1904 *Folksongs from Somerset,* Vol. I. London.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am indebted to Mr George Hamilton, Gilmerton, for drawing my attention to this item in Mr Morrison's repertoire.

HAMISH HENDERSON

Transcriptions and Musical Notes by GILLIAN JOHNSTONE

Some Gaelic Place-Rhymes

Printed below are some fine examples of Gaelic place-rhymes which have reached the archives of the School of Scottish Studies recently.

The first of them was kindly sent to me in 1960 by Mrs M. C. Macfarlane of Taynuilt who learned it from her father. It refers to the small farms in Glen Lonan and Glen Luachragan on the south side of Loch Etive and, according to Mrs Macfarlane, did not serve "any particular purpose but was just a play on the vowel sounds emphasising positions of the various place."

Clacha dubh an aghaidh sruth
Aig bun a' bhruthaich bhòidhich;
Bàrr-a-goillein 'n oir na coille
'M moch an goir an smeòrach;

Barra-glas a' bhruthaich chais
's e laiste leis an neòinean;
Dùn t-samhnachain nan samhnachan
Far nach gann an lòn dubh ;

Baile 'n deòra an uchd na treòir
An corraichead Mhuc Càrna;
Luachragan nan cluanagan,
A' tuathrachadh gu sàile.

Clachadow facing the stream
At the foot of the beautiful slope;
Barguillean at the edge of the wood
Where early sings the thrush.

Barglass of the steep slope
Which is ablaze with daisies;
Duntanachan of the large river trout
Where there is no scarcity of blackbirds.

Balindore in the breast of the ploughed land
In the steepness of Muckairn;
Luachragan of the small pastures
Lying northwards towards the sea.

Another rhyme was recorded by my colleague, Mr Donald A. MacDonald in October 1962 from Mr Peter Morrison of Sandbank, Grimsay, North Uist. Mr Morrison, now 73, used to hear his mother sing it when she was spinning. It is item RL 1897 A.2 in the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive, and refers to places in North Uist.

Refrain 1 { Hó-ro Iolaraidh, Iolaraidh, Iolaraidh
Hó-ro Iolaraidh, 'm Baile Sear, Bearnraidh.

'S fhada bhuam Lìrinnis, Càirinnis, Grìminnis,
'S fhaha bhuam Lìrinnis, 'm Baile Sear, Bearnraidh.

Refrain 2 { Hó-ro Iolaraidh, Iolaraidh, Iolaraidh,
Hó-ro Iolaraidh, baile ceann tràghad.

Tao' siar, tao' siar, tao' siar Sholais,
Tao' siar, tao' siar, tao' siar Sholais,
Tao' siar, tao' siar, tao' siar Sholais
Beinn Dubh a' Chaoil, Aird a Bhorain.
(Refrain 1 & 2)

Fraoch a Ròmaidh 's muran a Bhàlaidh,
Fraoch a Ròmaidh 's muran a Bhàlaidh,
Fraoch a Ròmaidh 's muran a Bhàlaidh
'S fhada bhuam Druim Dubh Bhaile Ràghaill.
Refrain (1 & 2)

Mo bheannachd fhìn do thìr na lochan
Do thìr an fhraoich 's nan daoine cosant'
Do thìr an àigh is b' àird' a moladh
Do thìr mo ghràidh far 'n tàmhainn sona.
Refrain (1 & 2)

Refrain 1 { Hó-ro Illeray, Illeray, Illeray,
Hó-ro Illeray, Baleshare, Berneray.

Far away from me are Liernish, Carinish, Griminish,
Far away from me are Liernish, Baleshare, Berneray.

Refrain 2 { Hó-ro Illeray, Illeray, Illeray,
Hó-ro Illeray, township at the head of the shore.[1]

The west side, west side, west side of Sollas (three times)
Beinn Dubh of the Strait, Ard a' Mhòrain.

Heather from Ronay and bent from Vallay (three times)
Far from me is Druim Dubh of Balranald.

My own blessing to the land of the lochs,
To the land of the heather and of the industrious people,
To the land of joy, whose praise was highest.
To the land of my love where I would rest in happiness.

Another version of the same song was contributed to our archives by the Rev. William Matheson (RL 1335 A.5).

W. F. H. NICOLAISEN

NOTES

[1] This probably refers to Illeray and is taken in that meaning here. Mr Morrison, however, considers it to be a "lost" name.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank my colleagues Mrs Agnes MacDonald, Mr Donald A. MacDonald and Miss Marion MacLeod for the extensive help so freely given in the transcription, translation and general preparation of the Gaelic texts.

Examples of the Toirbhsgeir Tusker, or Peat Knife in Antiquity

This note is intended to illustrate the assistance that ethnological studies (in their material aspect) can bring to archaeological interpretation. I have selected a small group of implements which are an element in two large Iron Age hoards (plus one other find of the same period) found in the Border counties. These appear to me to have been both misdescribed and misinterpreted. I have endeavoured to correct the description and provide I think a more realistic interpretation.

The hoards concerned were found at Eckford, Roxburghshire, and at Blackburn Mill, Berwickshire, and both have the disadvantage of being nineteenth century "accidental" finds. They, together with the Oxnam, Roxburghshire, find also illustrated, are preserved in the National Museum of Antiquities. These metal work hoards were considered at length by Curle (1931-2:314 *et passim*) and comprehensively catalogued

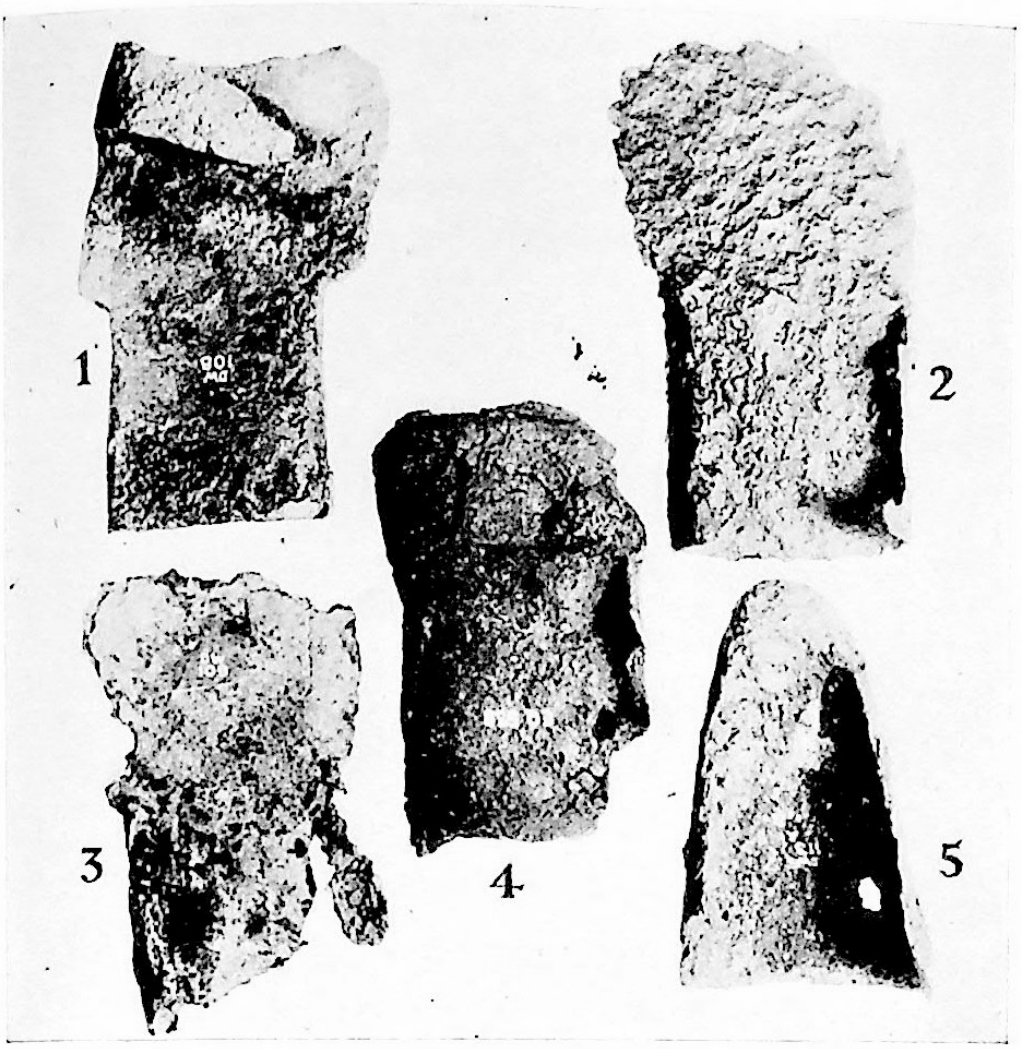


FIG. 1—Implements from Iron Age hoards.
(See p. 103).

FIG. 2—Peat spade from Glenuig, Moidart, Inverness-shire.
(See p. 105).

and illustrated by Piggott (1952-3:1-50). The particular elements with which this paper is concerned and which are illustrated by photograph (Pl. II) have been considered in isolation to the remainder by Payne (1947:82-111) and by Stevenson (1960:1-5).

I shall consider the objects which are enumerated 1-5 in Pl. II, fig. 1, individually as they have been described by the authorities cited. I give the National Museum reference in brackets with each item.

1. Blackford Mill (DW 108).

Curle—a hoe.

Piggott—a peat knife (although describing the wing or cutting blade—now folded over—as a foot rest). Further it is suggested that the close resemblance of this object to the modern implement may indicate intrusion.

Stevenson—A winged peat spade and considers its comparable state of preservation to other items in the hoard and indeed its character, as compared with 2, 3, and 4 below, to argue for contemporaneity.

2. Eckford (DWA 9).

Curle—a hoe or ploughshare.

Payne—a ploughshare—although the broadest early socketted share in Britain.

Piggott—a ploughshare with comparable examples from Traprain, and nos. 3, 4, and even 5 in this text.

Stevenson—casts doubt on the ploughshare interpretation and considers this object with nos. 3 and 4 below as comparable to 1 and similar in nature as possible narrow blade spades.

3. Blackford Mill (DW 109).

Piggott—sees this fragmentary example as a corroded form of 1 (this would cast doubt on the possibility of intrusion but thinks it comparable to his ploughshare 2.

4. Oxnam (EQ 538). (Found under a Roman cairn and probably of similar period.)

Payne—ploughshare.

Piggott—a comparable example of ploughshare to 2.

5. Blackford Mill (DW 113).

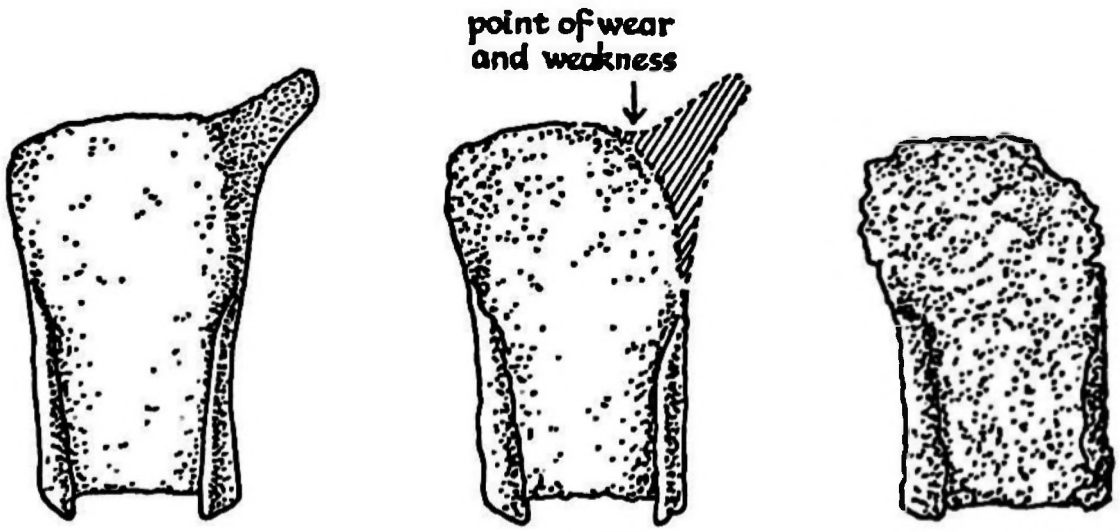
Curle—a ploughshare (or sock in normal Scottish usage).

Payne, Piggott—both accept this interpretation.

Certainly this object may be eliminated from the present assessment; although Piggott states otherwise it appears to this writer to bear no resemblance to any of the other items illustrated, being of thick cross section, pointed and of relatively massive proportions where the others are thin and blade-like.

In fact, despite Payne's supposition of a horizontal plough sock without turning capacity, nos. 2, 3 and 4, even when corrosion has been allowed for and it appears uniform, have always been blade-like objects, flat ended, and thin in cross section and would, if used as plough socks, have buckled on stones in a short space of time. Furthermore, the presence at that time of probable ploughsock 5 would seem to obviate any need for such flimsy devices. From their shape and their proportions the objects 2, 3 and 4 would appear to be blades and it is possible to argue with Stevenson that they were narrow blade spades. I should like to carry the matter a stage further, however.

Object 1 possesses a characteristic wear profile as the normal focus of wear on the peat knife is at the angle of wing and blade—the other edge of the blade receives virtually no wear at all. This wear is also concentrated on the lines of weakness in the implement where the wing has been folded at right angles to the blade. The initial stage of breakage or of corrosion tends to be either the fracture of the relatively flimsy wing itself as in 1 where the tip has disappeared, or the separation of the whole side of the blade with wing. I have endeavoured to represent the stages of this latter disintegration below.



TOIRBHSGEIR (peat knife)

Possible stages of corrosion and wear.

The striking characteristic of the corrosion pattern I indicate is the effect created of unbalance on the blade—a bulging or flaring to one side. This is I think quite obvious in the photographs of objects 1, 2, 3, 4 and it should be noted that as the reverse face of object 1 has been photographed in respect to the others, all four in fact flare in precisely the same manner. I would suggest then that while 1 is a peat knife at the middle stage of disintegration, 2, 3, and 4 are also probably peat knives which have lost their left hand face (as the user sees the implement) and that in fact all are left hand wing/right footed implements such as are in common use today (see Pl. II, fig. 2). In common use that is in the Highlands; the Border peat spade of recent times has been very much more a true broad spade.

It is no part of this note to consider the evolution of peat cutting in the Borders; that must await further evidence and research. This note merely seeks to demonstrate that it is possible to use the remarkable continuity of Iron Age technology to the present day, to interpret early objects in terms of current or recent usage.

REFERENCES

CURLE, J.
1931-2 "An inventory of objects of Roman and Roman provincial origin found on sites in Scotland not definitely associated with Roman constructions." *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 66:277-397.

PAYNE, F. G.
1947 "The Plough in Ancient Britain." *The Archaeological Journal* 104:82-111.

PIGGOTT, S.
1952-3 "Three metal work hoards of the Roman period from Southern Scotland. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 87:1-50.

STEVENSON, R. B. K.
1960 "Notes on Early Agriculture in Scotland." *The Agricultural History Review* 8:1-5.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The photograph, Pl. II, fig. 1, is published by kind permission of the Keeper of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh. Fig. 2 on the same plate was taken by Prof. Ian Whitaker in May 1959.

IAN A. CRAWFORD

Sgeulachd Mhicheil Scot

'Se droch dhuine a bh'ann am Mìcheal Scot. Bha an diabhal aige mar each 'ga mharcachd. Bha e 'g obair anns an dòigh sin ùine mhór. 'Nuair a bhiodh iad a' dol bharr sàile dh'fhaighneachdadh an t-abharsain do Mhìcheal dé'n dòigh a bh'aige air a mharcachd feuch am faigheadh e a shradadh bharr a mhuin. Dh'éigheadh Mìcheal, "Marcaich thusa dhiabhuil na 's àirde." Ach co-dhiù mar a thuirt mi roimhe bha e 'g obair anns a dòigh so ùine mhór.

Bha sagart ann agus bha e ag ionnsachadh ann an colaiste, 's mu 'n deach e do'n cholaiste bha leannan aige. Bha e 's an cholaiste gus an d'fhuair e na bòidean. Dh'fhalbh e an sin as a' cholaiste 's thug e aghaidh air tighinn dhachaidh. Thàinig e gu tigh-fuirich agus thuirt e ris fhéin gu'n caitheadh e an oidhche ann. Dh'iarr e seòmar dha fhéin 's an tigh. Bha e leughadh 's an t-seòmar gun duine ach e fhéin 'nuair a dh' fhosgail an dorus 's thàinig boirionnach a stigh, agus sgàil air a h-aodann. Thog esan a cheann 's sheall e oirre ach cha d'thuirt e guth rithe.

"Cha n'eil thu 'g am aithneachadh idir," ars' ise.

"Tha mi smaointeachadh gu bheil mi 'gad aithneachadh," ars' esan. Co bh'ann ach a sheann leannan.

"'S fhearr dhuit," ars' ise, "na gnothaichean a ghabh thu a leigeil dhiot agus pòsaidh mi fhìn 's tu fhéin."

"Cha n'eil sin furasda dhomh," ars' esan.

"Tha e furasda gu leòr," ars' ise, "ma thogras tu fhéin."

Laigh i air leis a' bheul gus an tug i air làmh-sgrìobhaidh a chur ri pàipear gu'm pòsadh e i. "Nuair a fhuair ise sin dh' fhalbh i 's ghearr i mach air an dorus. An déidh dhi falbh smaointich esan gu'm b'e spiorad o'n dcomhan a bh'innte air a chur g'a bhuaireadh. Chaidh e dhachaidh a là-ar-na-mhài-reach agus dh'innis e dha athair an rud a rinn e agus thuirt e gu'n robh e falbh feuch am faigheadh e greim air a' ghealladh a thug e dhi.

"Falbh," ars' athair, "gu Mìcheal Scot agus ma tha fios aige [*sic*] duine 's am bith air an droch àite tha fios aige-san c'àite bheil e."

Ach co-dhiù ràinig an sagart Mìcheal Scot agus dh'innis e dha a' rud a bha e 'g iarraidh.

"Cha n'eil fhios agam-sa a laochain c'àite a bheil e na's motha na th'agad fhéin gcd a bha mi fichead turas ann. Ach co-dhiù ma dh'fhalbhas tu air a shon cùm t'aghaidh ris an àird a tuath."

The Tale of Michael Scot

Michael Scot was an evil man. He had the devil for a horse to ride and he acted in this way for a long time. When they went across the sea, the Adversary used to ask Michael how it was that he was able to ride him, so that he could shoot him off his back. Michael would cry, "Mount higher, Devil!" Anyhow, as I have already said, he acted in this way for a long time.

There was a priest who was studying at a college, but before he had gone to college he had had a sweetheart. He remained at college until he took his vows. Then he left college and made to return home. He came to a lodging-house and said to himself that he would spend the night there, and asked for a room. He was reading in his room all alone when the door opened and a woman came in with a veil over her face. The priest raised his head and looked at her but he said nothing to her.

"You don't recognise me at all," said she.
"I think I recognise you," said he.

Who was it but his old sweetheart. "You'd better renounce these things you've taken," said she, "and you and I will get married."

"That's not easy for me," said he.

"It's easy enough," said she, "if you want to."

She nagged at him until she made him write it down on paper that he would marry her. When the woman got this she bolted out of the door. After she had gone it came into his mind that she was a spirit come from the Devil to tempt him. The following day he went home and told his father about the thing he had done and said that he was going off to see if he could seize the pledge he had given her.

"Go to Michael Scot," said his father. "If anyone knows of the evil place and where it is, he does."

Anyway, the priest came to Michael Scot and told him what he was looking for. "I have no more idea where it is, my boy, than you have yourself—though I have been there twenty times. But if you do go looking for it keep your face to the north."

Dh'fhalbh an sagart. Bha e a' falbh 's a' siubhal a là 's do dh'oidhche 's cha robh tuar air dad fhaighinn. Thàinig e an sin gu gleann. Bha e a' faighinn droch fhàileadh an t-saoghail as a' ghleann. Chunnaic e brugh de thigh ann an ceann a' ghlinne. Chaidh e stigh. Bha seann duine liath a stigh.

"'S math a tha fios agam-sa," ars' an seann duine, "ceann do sheud agus do shiubhail."

"Tha mise," ars' an sagart, "gu math toilichte as a sin. An urrainn dhuit innse dhomh," ars' an sagart, "dé 'n t-astar a th'agam ri dhol fhathast."

"Cha téid thu fad 'sam bith tuilleadh," ars' an seann duine. "Cha n'eil e ach beagan air an taobh thall dhe so. Chì thu clach ghorm anns an talamh agus 's e sin an dorus, agus bheir thu leat a' choinneal so agus lasaidh tu i. 'Nuair a dh'fhosglas an dorus éighidh tu air a h-ainm-se Catriona Nic Leóid—agus mur a bi i ann no mur a bi i deònach am pàipear a thoirt dhuit teannaidh tu ceum a stigh leis a' choinneil."

Dh' fhalbh an sagart 's ràinig e an leac is bhuail e i.

Dh'fhosgladh an leac, las esan a' choinneal 's dh'éigh am fear a bh'air an t-slabhraidh rud 's am bith a bha e 'g iarraidh a ghreasad uige.

Dh'éigh an sagart air Catriona Nic Leòid 's thàinig naoidh naoidheannan a bhean a h-ainme chon an doruis. Cha robh i an sin idir. Dh'éigh e a rithist 's thàinig naoidh naoidheannan eile 's cha robh i ann idir. Dh'éigh e rithist 's thàinig naoidh naoidheannan eile 's bha i an sin.

"Thoir dhomh," ars esan, "an gealladh a thug mi dhuit."

"Cha tòir," ars ise, "agus is mi nach tòir." Theann esan ceum a stigh leis a' choinneil. Dh'éigh am fear a bh'air an t-slabhraidh.

"Greas uige rud 's am bith a tha dhìth air no théid thu ann an leaba Mhìcheil Scot a nochd." 'Nuair a chuala Catriona so shrad i an gealladh chon an t-sagairt.

"Matà," ars' esan, "o'n thàinig mise an so—'s gu'n toireadh Dia gu sàbhailt as mi—feumaidh sibh leaba Mhìcheil Scot a shealltainn dhomh."

Dh'fheuch iad dha i 's bha ballachan deighe air an dara taobh dhith agus gabhail uaine as an taobh eile.

Dh'fhalbh an sagart a mach 's thug e aghaidh air an taobh as an tàinig e. Thill e dhachaidh a thigh athar agus an gealladh aige. Chuala Mìcheal Scot gu'n tàinig e agus ghabh e cuairt g'a choimhead.

Off went the priest. Day and night he journeyed on and there was no sign that he was going to find anything. Then he came to a glen, and he kept being aware of the most unpleasant smell in the glen. At the head of the glen he observed a mound of a house. He went in and there was an old grey-headed man inside.

"I know the object of your journey very well," said the old man.

"I'm glad to hear that," said the priest. "Can you tell me how far I've still got to go?"

"You don't have to go much farther," said the old man, "it's only a little way beyond this. You will see a dark-blue stone in the ground: that is the door. Take a candle with you and light it. When the door opens, call her by name—Catriona MacLeod—and if she is not there or is unwilling to give you the paper, step one pace forward with the candle."

The priest went off, came to the flagstone and struck it and the flagstone was opened. The priest lit the candle. The person working the (door-) chain called out to hurry up and announce to him whatever it was he wanted.

The priest called for Catriona MacLeod and nine times nine women of her name came to the door. She was not there at all. He called again and another nine times nine came and she was not there at all. He called again and another nine times nine came and there she was.

"Give me the pledge I gave you," said he.

"No," she said, "not I."

He moved in a step with the candle. The person working the chain shouted, "Hurry up and give him whatever he wants or else you will go to Michael Scot's bed tonight!" When Catriona heard this she tossed the pledge to the priest.

"Well now," said he, "since I have come here—and may God bring me safely out of it—you must show me Michael Scot's bed."

They showed it to him: it had walls of ice on the one side and green flame on the other.

The priest left and went back the way he had come. He went home to his father's house with the pledge in his possession. Michael Scot heard of his arrival and came to see him. Michael

Dh'fhaighneachd Mìcheal dha ciamar a chaidh dha.

"Chaidh glé mhath dhomh-sa," ars' an sagart, "ach 's e mo thruaighe thusa an là a dh'fhàgas tu so."

"Am faca tu an leaba agam?" arsa Mìcheal Scot.

"Chunnaic," ars' esan.

"Bha fios agam," arsa Mìcheal, "gu'n robh i ann, ach cha do leig iad fhaicinn dhomh fhéin riamh i."

"Ach a Dhia Mhóir," arsa Mìcheal, "thoir thusa dhomhsa maitheanas air son na rinn mi. Cha dean mise car gu bràth tuilleadh ach a' falbh air mo dhà ghlùin ag iarraidh maitheanas air Dia gus an tuit mi marbh."

Thionndaich e ris an t-sagart, 's thubhairt e.

"'Nuair a bhàsaicheas mise," ars esan, "ni thusa teine 's caithidh tu ann mo chorp agus loisgidh tu mi. Chì thu calman agus fitheach a' tighinn. Ma bheir am fitheach leis an luath, caithidh tu air falbh leis a' ghaoith i. Is ma bheir an calman leis i gabhaidh tu cùram dhi agus tiodhlaicidh tu i."

'Nuair a bhàsaich Mìcheal loisg an sagart a chorp agus cha b'fhada gus an deach e 'na luath. Thàinig fitheach agus thàinig calman 's bha iad a' seòladh os cionn luath Mhìcheil. Thuirt am fitheach ris a' chalman.

"Dé chuir thusa an so? 'Sann dhomh-sa a rinn e a h-uile car a rinn e riamh."

"'S ann," ars' an calman, "ach 's ann dhomh-sa a rinn e an car mu dheireadh."

Theirinn an calman air an luath 's thug e leis làn a bheòil. Ghabh an sagart cùram de'n luath 's thiodhlaic e i.

Bha cràidheach ann agus bha e 'g aoradh do Dhia ann an uamha creige fad fichead bliadhna agus eun a' tighinn uige le bhiadh a Flaitheanas. An là bha so bha an t-eun fada gun tighinn agus dh'fhaighneachd an cràidheach dha dé bha 'g a chumail.

"'S mór sin," ars' an t-eun, "an rud a bha 'gam chumail an diugh. Bha banais agus mór shòlas againn ann am Flaitheanas an diugh agus anam Mhìcheil Scot air tighinn ann."

"Mìcheal Scot," ars' an cràidheach "duine bu mhallaichte a bha riamh air an t-saoghal agus mise an so ag aoradh do Dhia o chionn fichead bliadhna."

Dh'fhalbh an cràidheach 'na mheall teine do na speuran.

Fhuair e àite Mhìcheil Scot ann an Ifrionn agus fhuair Mìcheal Scot aite-san ann am Flaitheanas.

asked him how things had gone with him. "Very well for me," replied the priest, "but God help you the day you leave here!"

"Did you see my bed?" asked Michael Scot.

"Yes," he said.

"I knew it was there," said Michael, "but they never let me see it myself. Oh God," said he, "forgive Thou me for all I have done. I will never do one thing ever again but go about on my two knees asking forgiveness from God till I drop dead!"

He turned to the priest. "When I die," said he, "you will make a fire and you will cast my body on it and burn me. You'll see a dove and a raven approaching. If the raven bears away the ashes, scatter them to the winds, but if the dove bears them away, take care of them and bury them."

When Michael died, the priest burnt his body and it soon turned to ashes. A raven came and a dove came and they sailed above Michael's ashes.

"What sent you here?" said the raven to the dove. "It was for me he did everything he ever did."

"Yes," said the dove, "but it was for me he did the last."

The dove descended on the ashes and bore away a mouthful. The priest took care of the ashes and buried them.

There was a holy man worshipping God in a rocky cave for twenty years, and a bird used to come to him with food from Heaven. One day the bird was late in coming and the holy man asked it what had kept it late.

"No small thing," said the bird, "is that which has kept me late today. We had a feast today in Heaven and great joy with the arrival there of the soul of Michael Scot.

"Michael Scot!" said the holy man. "The most accursed man who ever lived—whereas I have been here worshipping God for twenty years!"

The holy man went off in a blaze of fire to the skies.

He got Michael Scot's place in Hell and Michael Scot got his place in Heaven.

This "Tale of Michael Scot" is taken from the MS collection of folk-tales made in Eriskay in the thirties by Mr. Donald MacDonald, a native of the island and now schoolmaster there. He made this collection on behalf of the Irish Folklore Commission in Dublin whose library now houses the original MS. The text given here is printed *literatim* from a microfilm copy kindly presented to the School of Scottish Studies by the Director of the Commission, Prof. J. H. Delargy.

The story is an international folk-tale—"The Devil's Contract" (Aa-Th. 756B)—schematised as follows (Thompson 1961:260-1):

1. *Journey for the Contract.* (a) A boy who has been sold to the devil before birth journeys to hell to get back the contract. (b) A hermit from whom he has asked the way, directs him to a robber, his brother. (c) The robber takes him to hell.

2. *The Fires of Hell.* (a) In hell the youth obtains his contract and (b) sees the fiery bed or chair prepared for the robber.

3. *The Penance.* (a) Thereupon the robber does penance until his staff puts forth fresh blooms and fruit; assured of forgiveness, he dies happy.

4. *The Hermit.* (a) The hermit is astonished but reconciles himself to God's judgment; or (b) blasphemes God and is damned.

The story is well known in Ireland, but of the seven versions[2] cited by Thompson (loc. cit.) only four conform at all closely to the archetype. A journey to Rome (in all but one, to visit the Pope) appears in four versions, in two of them this being made on the Devil's back. In one of these, the Devil keeps urging his rider to utter certain words (the reciter did not know what they were) which, if spoken by the rider, would enable the Devil to hurl him into the depths of the sea.

This motif of the magic journey on which a man is borne on the back of an evil spirit (Thompson 1956:374) appears in the only other Michael Scot story known to me in Gaelic: *Mar a fhuair Mìchell Scot fios na h-Inid as a Ròimhe agus a chuir e crìoch air a' bhi' dol an sin g'a sireadh.* ("How Michael Scott obtained knowledge of Shrove-tide from Rome, and how he caused the going there for the purpose of ascertaining the knowledge to cease.") (Campbell 1889:46-53). George Buchanan is the hero in a version in the School of Scottish Studies Archive (RL 1493.A 1). It is also touched on in the story-teller's introduction to the present tale. In each tale the

supernatural steed tries to dislodge his rider either by obtaining the secret of his "horsemanship" or by making him utter certain words. In the notes to the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Sir Walter Scott retails some of the stories of Michael Scot that were still current in the lowlands at that time. (Logie Robertson 1926:64-5). In one of these Michael Scot makes a journey to Paris, where he is carried on the back of his familiar demon in the shape of a black horse. Here again the request for the formula appears. As in the Gaelic story of Michael Scot's ride, the required formula is the Paternoster—evil spirits being known to disappear at the mention of God's name. But Michael Scot only replies, "What is that to thee? Mount Diabolus and fly!" The words ascribed to him in the introduction to the present story are strikingly similar.

It is probable then that this international motif of the journey on a demon's back first became associated with Michael Scot in the lowlands, whence it was borrowed into Gaelic. How he came to be associated with 756B is more difficult to answer. The use of his name here may be quite fortuitous: it is sufficient that Michael Scot was a noted wizard. On the other hand, unless it is a coincidence that some Irish variants of 756B contain the episode of the journey to Rome on the devil's back, we may suggest that there existed a Gaelic-Irish ecotype of 756B in which this journey is a motif. That is to say, a story was known which told how Michael Scot travelled on a demon's back; hence it was natural that his name should be introduced in other tales that contained the same motif. Which of these interpretations is true remains, in the absence of much more evidence, obscure.

The motif of the raven and dove, though integral to 756B, does not appear in the Irish tales cited by Thompson, but it is known elsewhere in Scottish Gaelic tradition, particularly in the story of the death of Coinneach Odhar (MacKenzie 1909: 79; *cf.* MacDonald 1961:183).

NOTES

[1] At the end of his transcript of the story presented here, Mr. MacDonald gives the following details about collecting it:

"I obtained 'Sgeulachd Mhicheil Scot' from Duncan MacInnes (73) a fisherman, residing at Rudha Bàn, Eriskay, Isle of South Uist. Duncan is better known as Donnachadh Nan Sgeulachdan (Duncan of the Stories) and he is one of the few that are left in Eriskay of the really good story-tellers.

I wrote this story down on July 12th, 1933."

[2] The versions, all from *Béaloideas*, are: Vol. 1 (1928) 304-5: "Brian Bráthir" (in Séamas Ó Duilearga "Measgra Sgéal ó Uíbh Ráthach"); 4 (1934) 64-5: "An Flaithbheartach" (in Mairtin Ó Cadhain "Sgéaluigheacht Chois-Fhairrge"); 14 (1944) 209-11: "Déan Breathnach, an Locharnach" (in Seán MacGiollarnáth "Sgéalta ó Mhicheál Breathnach"); 18 (1948) 74-7: "Seomra Ó," and 77-9: "Breithiúnachas Aithrighe" (in Seán Ó Dubhda "Díoghlaim Duibhneach"); 21 (1951-2) 65-73 and 73-8: "An Seomra I n-Ifreann" *a* and *b* (in Seán Ó Súilleabháin "Scéalta Cráibhtheacha"). See also Séamas Ó Duilearga, *Leabhar Shedin Í Chonall* (Baile Átha Cliath 1948) 420-2.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am very grateful to Prof. J. H. Delargy and Mr. Donald MacDonald for permission to publish this story.

REFERENCES

Campbell, Lord Archibald
1889 *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition.* Vol. I. London.
Logie Robertson, J.
1926 *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott.* London.
MacDonald, Rev. Norman
1961 "Notes on Gaelic Folklore II." *Arv* 17:180-97. Uppsala.
MacKenzie, Alexander
1909 *The Prophecies of the Brahan Seer* (*Coinneach Odhar Fiosaiche*). Stirling.
Thompson, Stith
1956 *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature.* Vol. II. Copenhagen.
1961 *The Types of the Folktale.* Helsinki.

JOHN MACINNES

C. OTHER NOTES

The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow (Child 214)

Writing well over fifty years ago, the great collector of Scottish folk-song, Gavin Greig, held that " 'The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow' is unquestionably the most widely known of our old ballads," (*Folk Song of the North-East*, Peterhead, 1907-09, No. LVII). This he maintained on the basis of his direct personal contact with folk tradition, in apparent contradiction of the then extant published records. In Francis James Child's definitive collection, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, for example, *The Twa Sisters*, *Lord Randal*, *Lamkin*, *Sir Hugh*, and *Mary Hamilton* are all represented by more versions than *The Dowie Dens*, and *The Elfin Knight* and *The Cruel Mother* by an equal number.

In our own day, however, the collecting done by members of the School of Scottish Studies has borne out Greig's contention. *The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow* (also known as *The Braes o' Yarrow*) is indeed the classic ballad most frequently collected in Scotland today, being represented in the School's archives by more than twenty versions. These have been gathered from all sections of the country, and exhibit a great deal of fascinating variation within the basic type. So well known is the ballad, that it has appeared in several instances as one of the few Scots songs in the repertoires of native Gaelic singers.

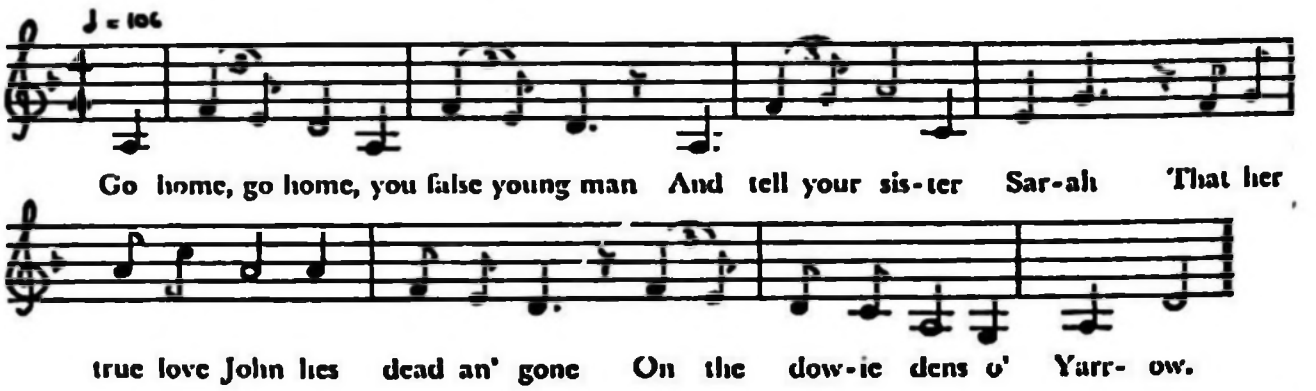
One of the finest versions in the School's collection is the following, collected from John Adams of Glenlivet, in October, 1953, by Hamish Henderson. Mr. Adams indirectly attested to the popularity of the ballad by recalling that it was one of the few songs his father had chosen to write down from his own extensive repertoire, forty years earlier.

The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow

There lived a lady in the north,
You could scarcely find her marrow;
She was courted by nine noblemen,
And the ploughboy John o' Yarrow.

As he cam' ow'r yon high, high hill,
And doun the glen so narrow,
T'was there he spied nine armed men,
Who fought with him at Yarrow.

It was three he slew, and three withdrew,
And three lay mortally wounded,
But this fair maid's brother stepped in behind,
And stabbed his body thorough.



Go home, go home, you false young man,
And tell your sister Sarah
That her true love John lies dead and gone,
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

Oh she went ow'r yon high, high hill,
And doun the glen so narrow,
T'was there she spied her brother John,
Returning home from Yarrow.

Oh, brother dear, I've had a dream;
I fear it will prove sorrow;
For I dreamt that you were spilling blood,
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

Oh, sister dear, I can read your dream,
And I fear it will prove sorrow:
Your true love John lies dead and gone,
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

Her hair it being three quarters long,
And the color o' it being yellow,
She twined it round his middle sma',
And bore him home from Yarrow.

Oh, daughter dear, dry up your tears,
And give up all your mourning,
For I'll wed you to a better far
Than the ploughboy lad o' Yarrow.

Oh, father dear, you may hae seven sons,
Though you wed them a' tomorrow,
There's nae a fairer flour in a' the lond
Than the ploughboy o' Yarrow.

Oh, mother dear, go mak' my bed,
And make it soft and narrow;
For the lad that died for me today,
I'll die for him tomorrow.

Now this fair maid, being sore with child
To the one she loved so dearly,
Has turned her pale face to the wall,
And died with grief and sorrow.

I am engaged in a study of *The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow* in Scottish tradition, and would be indebted to any reader who could supply me with a version or versions of it. Information regarding the history of the ballad, details of when, where, and from whom the version was learned, and comments on the ballad's popularity in any Scottish community would also be most useful, and will be gratefully acknowledged.

RICHARD BAUMAN

The music was transcribed and prepared for publication by Miss GILLIAN JOHNSTONE

Book Reviews

Scotland, from the earliest times to 1603. A New History of Scotland, Vol. I. By William Croft Dickinson. Nelson. 1961. vii+408 pp., with a map. 42s.

This book, the first volume of a two-volume *New History of Scotland*, covers in one broad sweep the entire field of Scottish history to the year 1603. Starting with an introductory chapter in which briefly he discusses general historical and geographical trends and influences, the author passes from the prehistoric inhabitants of Scotland to the people and customs of the Scotland of James VI, interspersing his narrative of political events—which must be seen as a framework rather than as a direct contribution to the political history of Scotland—with passages on the Church, administration, constitutional development and social life in country and town. To do all this in the course of one volume implies that the late Professor Dickinson was writing for the general reader, not the historical specialist, and this position he makes quite clear at the outset. It is essentially as a general work that his achievement must be judged.