

LUCY BROADWOOD, 1858—1929:

HER CONTRIBUTION TO THE COLLECTION AND STUDY OF GAELIC
TRADITIONAL SONG

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To the student of Gaelic traditional song the name of Lucy Broadwood (apart from its pianistic overtones) is associated with her editing of 105 songs collected by Frances Tolmie (1840-1926), published as a double number of the *Journal of the Folk Song Society* in December 1911. Not only, however, did she edit this important collection—editing which involved extracting from the collector the details that make the documentation and annotation of value—but herself collected and studied Gaelic song tunes.

I had known for some time of the existence of Gaelic material among her papers in Cecil Sharp House in London, but was chiefly interested in the biographical matter in the letters and other communications from Frances Tolmie that she had preserved. It was not until 1960 that I had the privilege of going through a quantity of material, Lowland Scottish as well as Gaelic. As a matter of interest I isolated the Gaelic from the rest and suggested both in London and in Edinburgh that this would be of particular interest to the School of Scottish Studies. Mr. Frank Collinson supported the suggestion in both places, with the gratifying result that through the kindness of the English Folk Dance and Song Society the School received the material on extended loan.

A first glance over the music MSS reveals a small but choice collection of carefully transcribed and well-documented material.

Leaving aside a few tunes noted by others, some correspondence, programmes and other small items, the musical transcriptions and annotations fall into three main groups:

A. 52 tunes collected in Arisaig in the summers of 1906 and 1907, all but two from the same singer, Catrinian (Kate) MacLean, who had learned them from her father;

B. About 20 transcripts of tunes collected in London from April to July 1908 from the singing of Farquhar MacRae, M.D., and John MacLennan;

C. 33 tunes transcribed from 17 phonograph cylinders, recorded by Dr. MacRae for Miss Broadwood from 1908 onwards, from friends and relatives in Lewis and Wester Ross.¹

The part played by Lucy Broadwood in the folk song movement of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth and her work for the Folk Song Society² as secretary, editor and finally president, is well known. The Society's most important activity was the *Journal*, consisting mainly of songs collected by members, documented and annotated. For several years there was no permanent editor, each issue being handled by a small editing committee of whom one—frequently Miss Broadwood herself—was editor.

Lucy Etheldred Broadwood was the great-grand-daughter of John Broadwood (1732-1812) who left his native Cockburnspath, Berwickshire, and went to London to make harpsichords for the Swiss, Burkhardt Tschudi. The Broadwoods, Northumbrian yeomen, had settled in Lowland Scotland in the seventeenth century. John married Tschudi's daughter, Barbara, the firm later becoming "Tschudi and Broadwood" and eventually "John Broadwood and Sons".

In 1843 his grandson, the Rev. John Broadwood, squire of Lyne, near Horsham, Surrey, made what is now regarded as practically the beginning of the scientific approach to English traditional song by having printed privately a small book of songs collected from singers on his estate and in the neighbourhood. It was notable in that the tunes were printed *exactly as sung* without any supposed improvement or embellishment. Broadwood, who got the village organist to note the tunes as he sang them or played them on his flute, had a tussle with his amanuensis as to the writing of the modal intervals as he gave them—but won the day.

His niece, Lucy, grew up at Lyne, "but the Broadwoods had also a town house which was visited from time to time by many musical celebrities from Europe . . . This combination of rural background and urban culture was the basis of her character . . . Circumstances made it unnecessary for her to adopt the professional career for which she certainly had the aptitude," Vaughan Williams (*JEFDSS* 1948:136).

Her musicianship was of a high order, whether as pianist, singer or composer of accompaniments for the folk songs she

collected. *English County Songs* (1893) in which she collaborated with A. J. Fuller Maitland show not only her musical imagination and taste but bear the same stamp of authenticity as her uncle's *Sussex Songs* half a century before.

Her concern with folk song was not, however, limited to the English counties. On holiday in Arisaig in June 1906 she noted twenty of the songs in group *A* above, all but two from the singing of Kate MacLean. "She learnt the songs almost all from her father, who learnt them from boyhood upwards from boatmen, crofters, weavers, bards, etc." (*JFSS* 35(1931):280).

Kate's father, Ewan, aged 80, had sung to Miss Broadwood, but his voice was too frail and weak for her to be able to note from him; it was only the day before she left that she met his daughter. They went on to a hillside overlooking the sea and from about two until five and again from eight until ten in the evening one sang while the other noted the tunes, eighteen in all. Kate had brought with her, to refresh her memory for the words, *Sàr Obair nam Bàrd Gaelach*, or *The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry* by John Mackenzie (Glasgow 1841), and *An t-Oranaiche* by A. Sinclair (Glasgow 1879).

In 1907 Miss Broadwood returned to Arisaig armed with a phonograph. As well as recording thirty more songs she carefully checked those she had noted the year before. The words, however, were her problem. Without a knowledge of Gaelic she could neither underlay the words to the tunes nor provide translations.

She wrote from Arisaig to Scourie in Sutherland where a young London friend, Winifred Parker, was studying Gaelic with the Rev. Dr. George Henderson. Could she suggest someone who would help? Dr. Henderson at once named Miss Fanny Tolmie, whom he had met some years before at Dr. Alexander Carmichael's in Taynuilt (*JFSS* 16(1911):146). At his suggestion she had later sent him the manuscript, words and tunes, of a number of traditional songs that she had collected from her youth onwards. He had not so far found a suitable repository for this collection; perhaps the F.S.S., described to him by Miss Parker, might be the answer.

So it proved to be. March 1908 saw Miss Broadwood's tunes in Miss Tolmie's hands in Edinburgh, while in London the committee of the F.S.S. were delighted with the offer of Miss Tolmie's own collection for publication under their auspices. The original plan was that it should occupy the next issue but one of the *Journal*, No. 13, in 1909. Unforeseen

difficulties caused delays, however, and it eventually became No. 16, December 1911.

Miss Tolmie re-wrote Miss Broadwood's tunes and underlaid them with the appropriate words. In the case of unpublished words—usually laments of not-too-distant origin—she knew where to turn for information; to the Rev. Thomas Sinton, Dores, for instance, or the Rev. Dr. Archibald MacDonald, Kiltarlity, her niece's husband. Copious notes in Miss Broadwood's hand are to be found in the manuscript. Many years later, after the death of both ladies, these songs were printed in four successive issues of the *Journal*, edited by Frank Howes, while Martin Freeman provided further translations or paraphrases where necessary and Anne Gilchrist added some annotations.

Group B. In London during 1908 Miss Broadwood had still further contact with Gaelic. Winifred Parker introduced Dr. Farquhar MacRae who sang into her phonograph and in turn brought his friend, John MacLennan, precentor at the Gaelic services at Crown Court Church of Scotland, Covent Garden. In a letter to Miss Parker (31.5.1908) Miss Broadwood—after describing how each, in the absence of the other praised his friend's singing and beautiful Gaelic—wrote:

Between the two I have already got fifty-one songs! Thank you so much. It is entirely owing to you that these delightful old tunes are being saved, and one has had this interesting peep into Gaelic life in London. At present I have only had time to note a very few of the songs.

At the annual general meeting of the F.S.S. following the publication of the Tolmie *Journal*, in the Steinway Hall on the evening of Saturday, 16th March 1912, the customary recital following the business was divided between Gaelic songs from Dr. MacRae and Mr. MacLennan and English songs collected, arranged or both by Lucy Broadwood, Clive Carey, Cecil Sharp and Vaughan Williams. Dr. MacRae and Mr. MacLennan sang seated and without accompaniment, to give the impression of an ordinary ceilidh at a fireside. Miss Broadwood introduced the following programme, notes having been supplied to her by the singers:

Mr. MacLennan

Oran do Bhonnipart³
Am bobero b'eibhin
Bhanarach dhonn a' chruidh

MacCrimmon's lament

Mo bhreacain dubh

Rowing songs

(a) *Iorram chuain*

(b) *Corrie Bhreacan*

(c) Tobermory (2 fragments)

Lullaby (composed by Applecross crofter)

Morag (composed by author of Dairymaid),

Cuir a nall duinn am botal (noted by L.E.B. from Kate MacLean, Arisaig)

Dr. MacRae

Shepherd's song

A sea song (by Big Donald MacRae)

The cuckoo of the grove (by William Ross)

My own little Donald (by Neil MacLeod)

Oran gaoil, a love song [possibly *Màiri Laghach* (E.B.)]

When Lucy Broadwood gave up the editorship of the *Journal* in 1927 Vaughan Williams, after referring to her *English County Songs* and *Traditional Songs and Carols* (1908) "fitted with her own felicitous pianoforte accompaniments" continued:

Rumour has it there is also a collection of beautiful Gaelic airs known at present only to a privileged few. Is it too much to hope that in the comparative leisure which will now be hers she will find time to issue these also to the world? (*JFSS* 31 (1927):44)

She lived less than two years after that, but it speaks highly for the condition in which she left the MSS that it was practicable to publish the Arisaig part of this collection posthumously.

Her wide knowledge of tunes through actual collecting and through printed sources, Gaelic included, allowed her to make striking comparisons between songs as widely separated by geography and language as, for example, "*Màiri bhàn Dhail-an-eas*" (*A' Choisir-chiuil*, p. 52) and "The London man o' war", sung to Cecil Sharp by Captain Vickery at Minehead, Somerset, in 1904 (*JFSS* 31(1927):15).

The Gaelic tune (A)—perhaps originally in the Dorian mode but harmonised in *A' Choisir-chiuil* in a vague E minor—has been transposed down a third to allow it to end on the same final as the mixolydian English tune (B). Miss Broadwood noted that the tune was a great favourite for the ballad "The

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with two staves labeled A and B. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 6/8. The melody in staff A is simple and folk-like, while the accompaniment in staff B provides a steady rhythmic and harmonic support. The piece concludes with a triplet in the final measure of the fourth system.

painful plough" in 6/8 or 4/4 time, and cognate with "Lazarus" and "Maria Martin", etc.

One more tune may be mentioned, chiefly for biographical interest, for it is Lowland Scots, not Gaelic. It is one of two versions (words similar but different tunes) of "The little wee croodin' doo", sung by her father, Henry Fowler Broadwood. Alongside is printed for comparison Dr. MacRac's version of "Lord Ronald", remembered from his childhood as sung by his mother while spinning. Lucy Broadwood adds the following note:

The first musical impression that I ever remember came from this song, sung by my father as I sat astride his knee when little more than two years old, and in our Tweedside home.⁴ I understood nothing of the plot and remember wondering why

tears poured down my cheeks, for I was not conscious of naughtiness but rather of a strange new joy. My father learnt the song when a little child from his mother, the daughter of Daniel Stewart of Glenfinlas and Glenbuckie in the Braes of Balquhidder in Perthshire. (*JFSS* 19 (1915):117-9)

She regarded this tune as a variant of *Cuir a nall duinn am botal*.

Captain Evelyn Broadwood, her nephew, tells me in a letter (6.1.1960) that Daniel Stewart was a surgeon who left Scotland for the West Indies, and there his daughter Margaret—Lucy Broadwood's grandmother and his great-grandmother—was brought up. Referring to Margaret's mother's family, the Murrays, he adds "Hence Lucy Broadwood's admiring recognition of our cousinship with Professor Sir Gilbert Murray".

Frank Howes, who took over the editorship of the *Journal* from her in 1926, wrote:

Her contribution to folk song was very great in sheer extent: collector, arranger, annotator, she was also an editor who set such a stamp on the business of editing that her methods were universally accepted and adopted. (*JEFDSS* 1948:139)

It was fortunate for Gaelic song that Frances Tolmie's collection found its definitive form in this editorial frame-work; perhaps the last word may come from Mr. John MacLennan in the letter he wrote to congratulate Miss Broadwood:

I have scarcely dipped into the songs yet, the introduction has claimed my attention. It is perfectly clear to me that you write upon Gaelic song to a far greater extent from within than I had thought possible, and I shall expect to be spoken to in Gaelic the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you. (30.12.1911)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to Captain Evelyn Broadwood for information about the family's Highland ancestry.

The late Mrs. Winifred Parker of Fairlie, Ayrshire, kindly lent me in 1953 letters she had received from Miss Broadwood, Miss Tolmie and others. (She had married her cousin, Col. Chevallier Parker of Fairlie, who predeceased her.)

Acknowledgments are also due to Messrs. Bayley and Ferguson, music publishers, Glasgow and London, for permission to quote the tune of "Màiri Bhàn Dhail an eas" from *A' Choisir-chiùil*; Dr. Maud Karpeles, O.B.E., for permission to quote the tune of the "The English man o' war", collected by Cecil Sharp.

NOTES

- ¹ Mr. John MacInnes, casually looking over Miss Broadwood's list of songs, singers and localities, could identify a family here and there. It would be interesting to discover if these songs are still remembered, and how far they have changed in two generations.
- ² Founded in London in 1898 by a number of enthusiastic collectors and distinguished musicians, the Society was amalgamated in 1932 with the English Folk Dance Society, founded by Cecil Sharp in 1911. The story of the Folk Song Society's independent life has been extensively treated in issues of *JEFDSS* celebrating the Jubilee and Diamond Jubilee of the earlier Society (1948 and 1958). For an excellent and informative short account, with portraits of three of the pioneers, Sabine Baring Gould, Frank Kidson and Lucy Broadwood, see Howes 1958:251-2.
- ³ Miss Broadwood had discovered four variants in the verses of this song. Here and below the spellings are those of her original notes.
- ⁴ Henry Fowler Broadwood succeeded to the Lyne estate in 1864 (when Lucy was six years old) on the death of his brother, the Rev. John.

REFERENCES

HOWES, FRANK

- 1958 "A Folk-Song Jubilee." *The Musical Times* 99:251-2.
- JEFDSS* *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*. 1932- (in progress).
- JFSS* *Journal of the Folk Song Society*. 1899-1931.