for that plethora of "x of y" names in Shetland, Orkney and the eastern half of Caithness.

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W. F. H. NICOLAISEN

B. COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

Goat-keeping in the Old Highland Economy—3

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to some aspects of goat-keeping which have not so far received much comment in the two earlier articles on the subject (Megaw 1963 and 1964), and to add to their general picture some particulars from Mid Argyll.

While it may well be true that goat-keeping provided the staple diet for the poorest members of a Highland community, there were three reasons for owning goats that were equally applicable to all strata of society. These were:

(*a*) the prophylactic property of goats' milk;
(*b*) the importance of goats as adjuncts to sheep management;
(*c*) the availability of goat-flesh in the "hungry-gap" months of spring.

The first aspect has already been touched on in these articles (Megaw 1963). It should perhaps be explained that it is very rare for a goat to contract tuberculosis when kept on

free range: goats' milk was thus the safest available, and it was doubtless noticed that children reared on it escaped bovine tuberculosis in all its forms. An extension of this observation led to the belief that goats' milk could cure tuberculosis, whence visits to the Highlands for the "goat-milk cure" are often mentioned in eighteenth-century documents. Bailie John Steuart of Inverness writes in 1730:

> "Donald McPherson, Merct. of this place . . . at present happens to be verie ill of a Decay . . ."
>
> "Donald McPherson I hear is on the way of recoverie as to his health, being gon to the Highlands to drink Goats Milk."
>
> ". . . I most [must] send to Badinoch, where the sd. Mr. McPherson has bean for some time past for the recoverie of his health; and I hear he is a deying . . ." (Steuart 1915:353, 355, 358).

A further extension of the idea was that the presence of a goat among cattle protected them from infection by a form of sympathetic magic; thus in the 1920's when my parents proposed keeping a milk-goat, the farm manager protested strenuously that if this were done everyone would think that our pedigree Highland herd (not used for milk) was suffering from tuberculosis and that the goat had been brought in to cure them. In deference to his feelings the idea was given up.

The second aspect is still a factor in Highland sheep management. Goats are placed on isolated grazings to eat down grass on dangerous cliffs, etc., where sheep might become trapped. For example there are feral goats on small islands in Loch Craignish to this day, and also on the islands in Small Isles Bay, Jura (one called Goat Island); the latter stock is, or was until very recently, regularly maintained by ferrying fresh breeding-stock trapped from the main Jura herds, of which there are several. The advantage of having goats grazing dangerous places must have been greater before the introduction of the Blackface, who is better able to negotiate such places than the older breeds were. However, no sheep, even a Blackface, will back out of a tight place or turn on a narrow ledge; and if a shepherd cannot visit his flock daily (as on an island), the goats were and are essential to prevent "clifting", as it is locally called.

The third aspect may be illustrated by entries in eighteenth-century rent-rolls. Kids were paid in to the laird's household

before Whitsunday, a time when lambing was most probably still in progress and when over-wintered cattle were unfit for slaughter even if they could be spared. Feral goats to-day kid in February or earlier, and a three-month-old milk-fed kid would be a welcome addition to a diet of salt meat and fish. It should also be noted that feral goats frequently rear twin kids where sheep would rear a single lamb at best; in fact until the introduction of antibiotics a 50 per cent survival crop (ewe:weaned lamb ratio) was locally considered satisfactory.

No evidence has yet been put forward in these pages for goat-keeping in Mid Argyll in the eighteenth century. I possess two sets of rent-rolls for the period, covering the estates of Kilberry in South Knapdale and Knockbuy (now Minard) in Glassary on Loch Fyne. Knockbuy was then owned by Archibald Campbell, 2nd of Knockbuy (1693-1790), one of the foremost improvers in Argyll, who has already made an appearance in *Scottish Studies* (Cregeen 1959). He married his second cousin, a Campbell of Kilberry whose elder sister conveyed Kilberry to another cousin. In this sister's widowhood Knockbuy was concerned with the management of the Kilberry farms and held tacks of some of them. His grandson eventually inherited both estates (and was the present writer's great-great-grandfather).

Knockbuy's own rent-rolls show his attention to enclosure and improvements; he imported "Yorkshire mares" and stallions, bulls, "Cunningham" (?Ayrshire) cows, and rams, and from the 1730's gave rent rebates to tenants undertaking dyke-building. From 1760 some tenants were charged in the rolls for "Dung"; presumably this was a payment exacted if they had not applied manure to their land in sufficient quantity during the year. One might expect him to wage war on goats—he was a tree-planter as well as a farmer—but on the contrary he required goats to be kept on some holdings, and supplied a stock to new tenants. The reason lies in the geography of these holdings. They can be seen to-day from the main Inveraray-Lochgilphead road near Minard; now almost all afforested, they run steeply upward from the coastal terraces to break into sheer crags on the skyline. Other farms where he insisted on goat-keeping lie on the high plateau above these crags. They can never have offered safe grazing for unherded sheep, and in spite of his employment of a fox-hunter there must have been many foxes in the dens of the cliffs.

Far from goats being owned by the poorest tenants, we find

the tenant of the estate mill of Knockbuy required to render a goat as part of his rent from the 1720's up to 1751-52. After 1753 kids no longer appear in the Knockbuy assessments, most farms having completed their enclosures; a result would be that the sheep could now be kept from the dangerous parts of the holdings.

There are no references to sub-tenants, except in a few cases where a widow was allowed to continue occupancy of a house as a nominal "cottar", paying at most the "casualities" (payments in kind) formerly charged; in some cases these occupancies were rent-free. There may have been sub-tenants on some holdings, but certain tenants were specifically barred from sub-letting.

The picture for Kilberry is rather different. Here there are larger areas of good arable on the raised beaches, and fewer stretches of dangerous cliff; though one farm where I would certainly have expected goats to be kept does not appear to have had any. Even to-day sheep, and occasionally cattle, are killed by cliff-falls there. There is no mention of kids or goats from Kilberry itself. There were, however, two outlying areas of hill ground, one on either side of the estate, and here it seems goats were kept, though not set in the rents as regular items. It appears that goats were accepted in lieu of wedders (though it is difficult to feel that two-year-old goat would eat as well as wedder-mutton); it may be that goats too were gelded, though I have not heard of this being done elsewhere.

The changing situation created by events in 1745 is too wide a subject to discuss here, but many adjustments had to be made. From the 1740's there had been a tendency to commute all kain rents of the outlying areas into a consolidated silver rent, though tenants continued to pay in kind or in cash. After 1757 goats finally disappear from the rentals.

It is suggested, then, that goat-keeping in this area at least was influenced by the value of healthy milk and early fresh meat as well as by the goats' usefulness in keeping sheep off dangerous grazings; that no local evidence is available for goat-keeping being confined to a sub-stratum of the community (if it existed here), and that there is a continuing belief in some kind of sympathetic magic attaching to goats. The keeping of goats ceased generally when the progress of enclosures simplified sheep management and gave a higher standard of food production generally. There is no evidence that goat-keeping was forbidden because of the risk of damage to trees,

although plantations had already been formed on both estates reviewed. In this last connection, one may refer again to Boswell (cited in Megaw 1963) who described a goat-keeper on Lochness being allowed a herd of sixty in return for looking after woodlands. His goats must have been herded away from his woods, and the same may have applied to Knockbuy and Kilberry.

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MARION CAMPBELL OF KILBERRY

Goat-Keeping in the Old Highland Economy—4

The information that has been gathered together in recent numbers of *Scottish Studies* (Megaw 1963 and 1964; Campbell 1965) is comprehensive enough to indicate that goat-keeping formed a much more significant part of the old Highland economy than previous commentators had supposed. Clearly historians will have to give the goat something like parity with sheep and cattle in accounts of the rural economy. Without wishing to add more detail to the picture that has emerged, I would like to make three points which may be of general interest.

Firstly, one of the reasons why goats have been insufficiently stressed in historical accounts of the Highlands is that they played a quite different part from cattle and sheep in the rent system. The latter were market animals whose meat and wool found acceptable sale throughout Scotland and even beyond her boundaries: because they were disposable outwith the estate, they formed the major part of the rents-in-kind paid to the landowners, and therefore were the principal support of landed income. The goat, on the other hand, was a subsistence animal kept primarily for its milk, and to a lesser extent for its

meat and skin: only the last item was disposable outwith the estate, and goats were not, therefore, paid over in rent except in very small numbers to satisfy the subsistence needs of the laird's own family. The Highland rentals (and likewise correspondence between landowners) will for this reason tend to give the impression of fewer goats on the ground than there actually were. The question of whether the goat was a shameful symbol of poverty hardly arises in this situation (Megaw 1963:207).

Secondly, though goat-meat and goat-milk were not saleable beyond the estate, the skin had some slight value for sale in the market. There are many descriptions of peasants trading in the hides and skins of various animals at local markets on the edge of the Highland line, and some specific statistics of the export of goat skins from Scotland in the seventeenth century. The contemporary Mar report on Scottish trade suggested that between 16,000 and 17,000 goat skins left the country annually between 1611 and 1614 (Mar and Kellie Report 1904:71). Most of these probably went to London: Professor Lythe gives an indication of the volumes on that route in his comment that "in peak years such as 1621-2 up to 8,000 goat and 16,500 kid-skins were sent" (Lythe 1959:220). By the end of the century this traffic had grown to an average of around 50,000 goat and kid skins a year, with a maximum in 1698 of 57,000 goat skins and 43,000 kid skins. No doubt this was inflated above normal by the need to slaughter large numbers of stock in the prevailing famine of that year, but the total of 100,000 skins is nevertheless quite remarkable (P.R.O. Customs).

Thirdly, although these trade figures can hardly be treated as proof that goat-keeping had expanded in the seventeenth-century Highlands, it is surely reasonable to suppose that the goat population expanded at least in proportion to the striking growth of the human population between the early sixteenth century and the late eighteenth. In this context, it is worth reconsidering the dilapidation of the Highland woodlands in the eighteenth century. The most commonly accepted view attributes the critical condition of the forests by 1800 to the activities of English lumber merchants and iron-masters after the Union, followed by the massive invasion of the Lowlanders' sheep whose indiscriminate grazing prevented natural regeneration (Fraser Darling 1955:5). This explanation is not easy to accept: lumbering was carried on only intermittently and locally in those few places where facilities were available

to float wood to the sea. The iron-masters were few and far between, and generally unsuccessful. In any case, it was in the interests of both these parties to preserve the woods for rotational cropping rather than to cut and destroy their business in one orgy of exploitation: had they been important in the Highland scene, one would have expected the forests to survive—indeed the Speyside forests did survive just where the lumbermen were most active over a long period, and in the south of Scotland the primaeval oakwoods in Nithsdale survived in a similar way due to the steady demand for bark and timber by local tanners and lead miners.

Dilapidation due to uncontrolled grazing by sheep is another matter: it was certainly a feature in the decline of the old forests in the nineteenth century, but had the Lowland sheep spread quickly enough, far enough and thickly enough to account for the widespread damage that was already becoming evident over a wide area before 1770? It is surely clear that the sheep were only replacing another and more destructive animal when they arrived, and it is significant that the recent scholars of our native pine-woods did in fact single out the goat from a list of grazing animals as particularly responsible for severe damage to the eighteenth-century forests, quoting specific instances in Glentanar, at Loch Arkaig and in the Black Wood of Rannoch (Steven and Carlisle 1959: 85, 96, 139, 165). Indeed, if goats were as common as the recent contributors to this journal are suggesting, and if their numbers had been increasing in proportion with the human population since 1500, the major blame for the incalculable damage done to the natural environment by erosion of the trees may have to be laid at the door of the native peasant rather than at the door of the intruding Englishman and the Lowlander. We still spice our history with enough emotion for this to be an unwelcome thought in some quarters.

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T. C. SMOUT

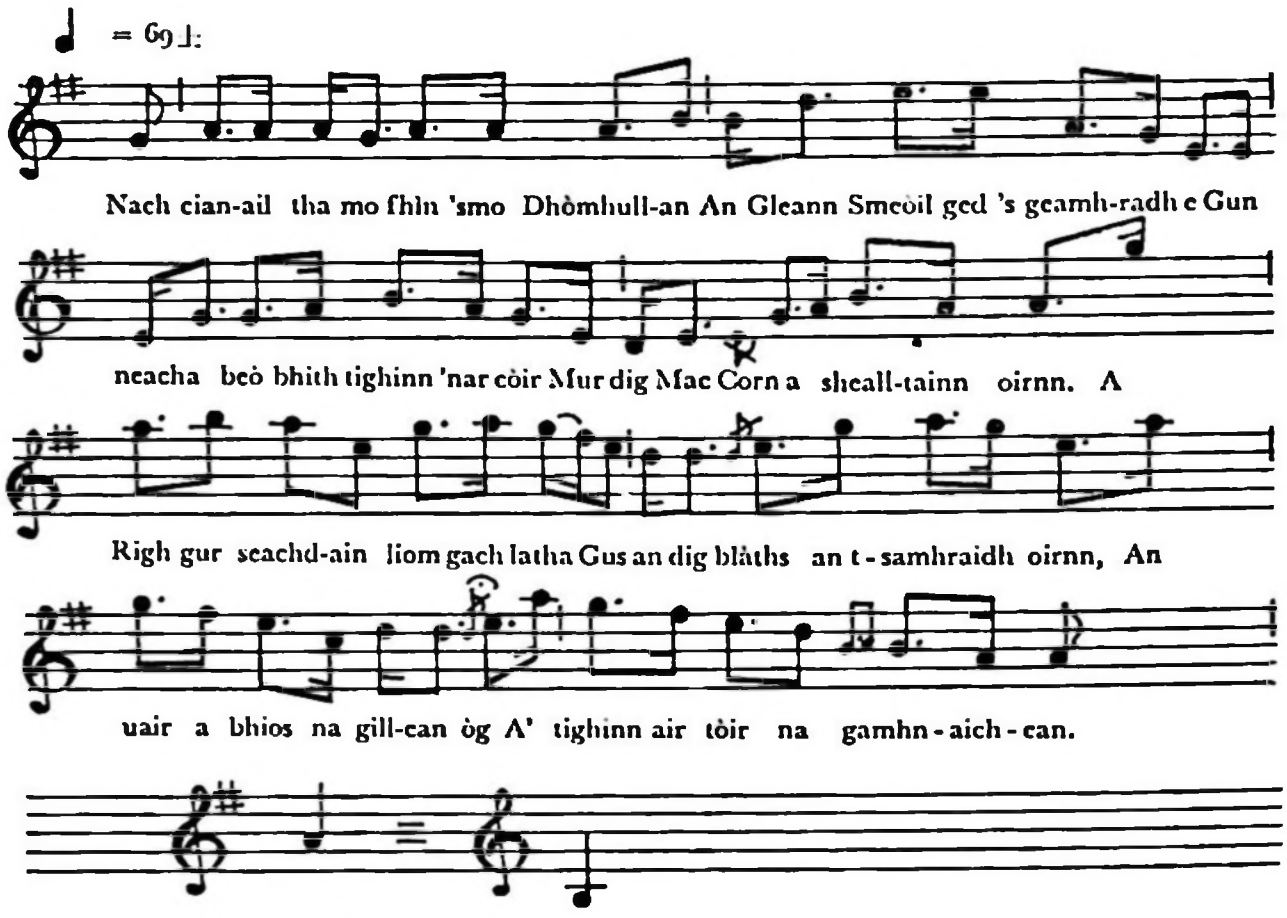
Oran nan Dròbhairean (The Drovers' Song)

I first heard *Oran nan Dròbhairean*, about 1943, from the late Donald S. MacKay, Durness, Sutherland, and that title is the one used by himself. In the spring of 1958, I made a number of recordings in the parish of Durness, among them four variants of this song. By 1958, however, Mr. MacKay's health had failed greatly and he was able to record only two stanzas. In the meantime Mr. James Ross had recorded the song from Mr. Hugh MacRae, Skirinish, Skye, who, as he himself explains, had learnt it from the same source. Similarly, the versions sung by Mr. Christopher M. Campbell and Mr. Andrew Stewart, both in Durness, were also learnt from D. S. MacKay; but the fifth variant, that known by the late Donald Stewart, Laid, comes from a different part of the parish (the west side of Loch Eriboll) and is to some degree independent of the others.

The opening stanza of each variant is printed below, with the melody, in the order in which the singers' names have just been mentioned.

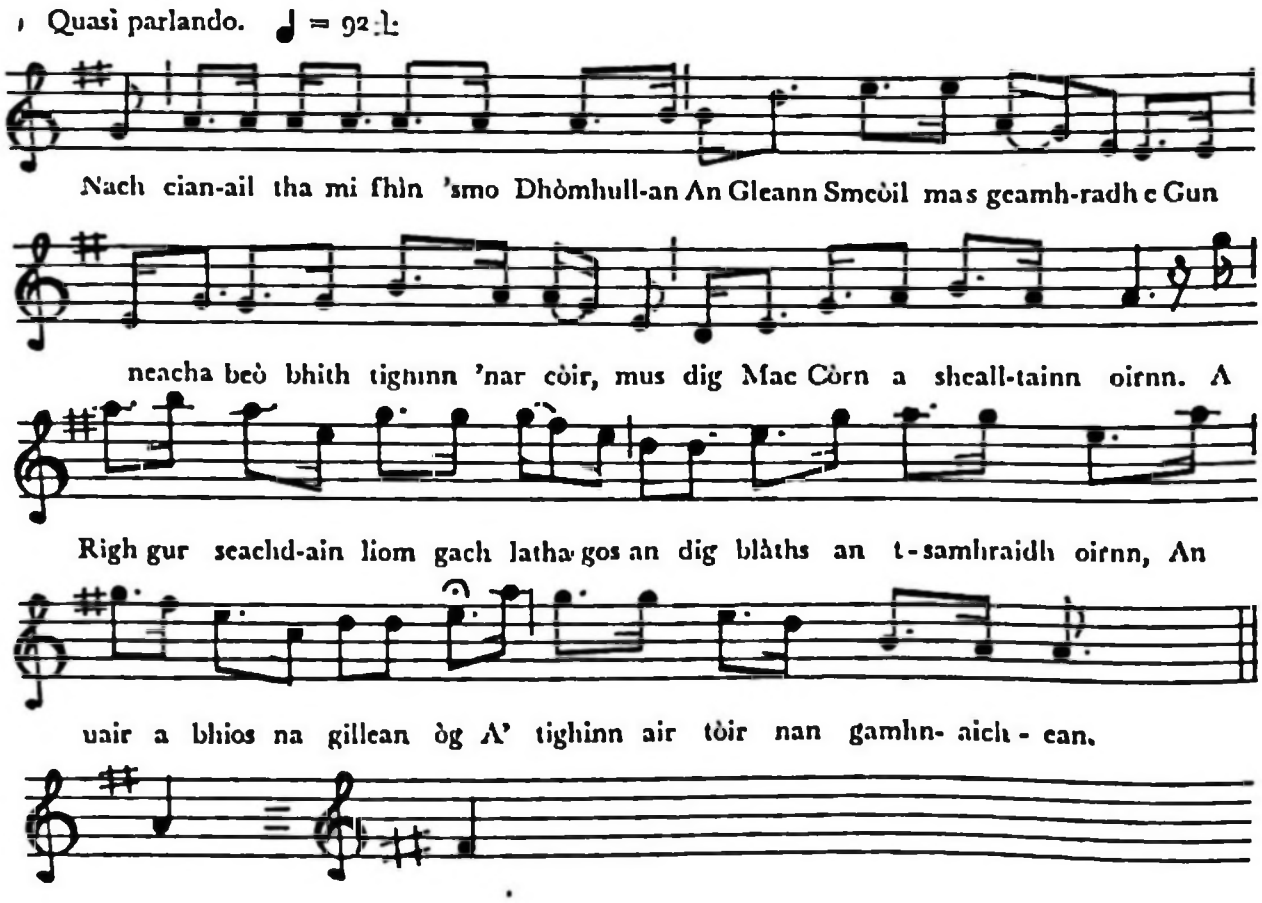
The MacKay, Campbell, and A. Stewart variants are all restricted to a couple of stanzas, viz. those that correspond with stanzas 1 and 2 of MacRae's version and with stanzas 1 and 4 of D. Stewart's version. All five singers have more or less identical texts in these: the slight variations that do appear are not at the moment relevant. I have therefore taken Hugh MacRae's text, as it is the fullest, to represent the variant known to D. S. MacKay and learnt from him by the three other singers; and in the translation of Donald Stewart's text I have omitted stanzas 1 and 4.

Donald S. MacKay. RL162(2)



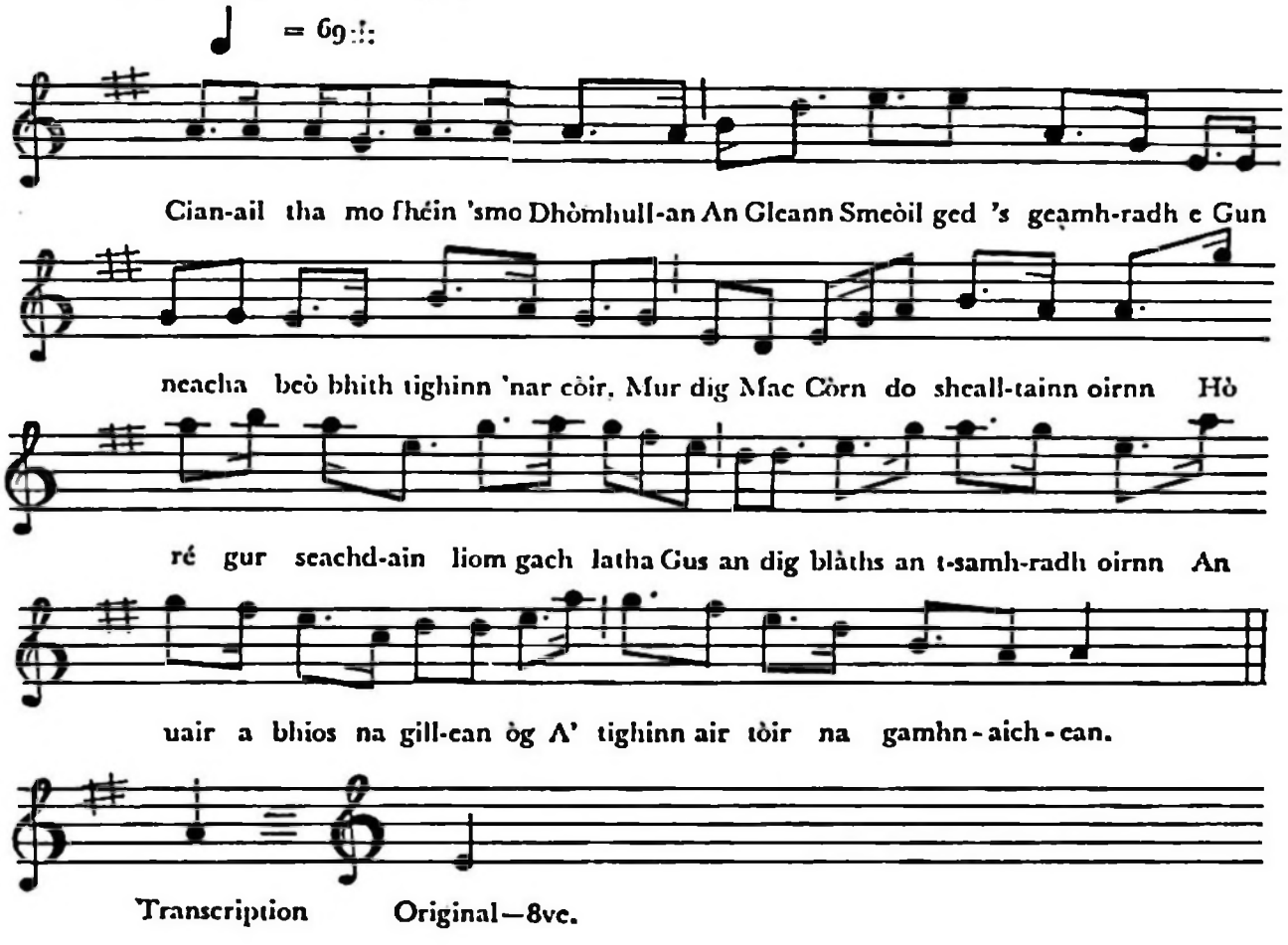
Transcription Original.

Hugh MacRae. RL358(2)

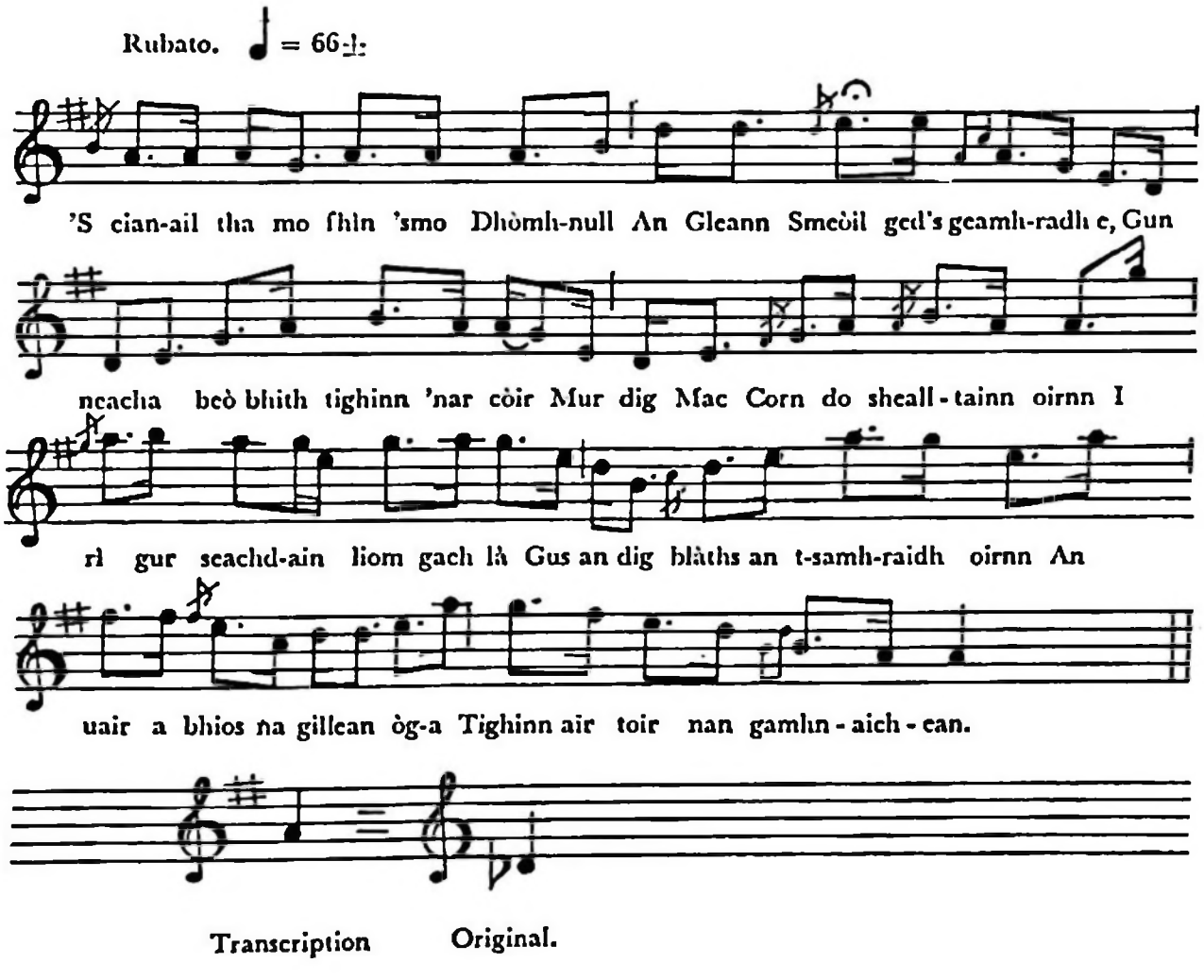


Transcription Original —8ve.

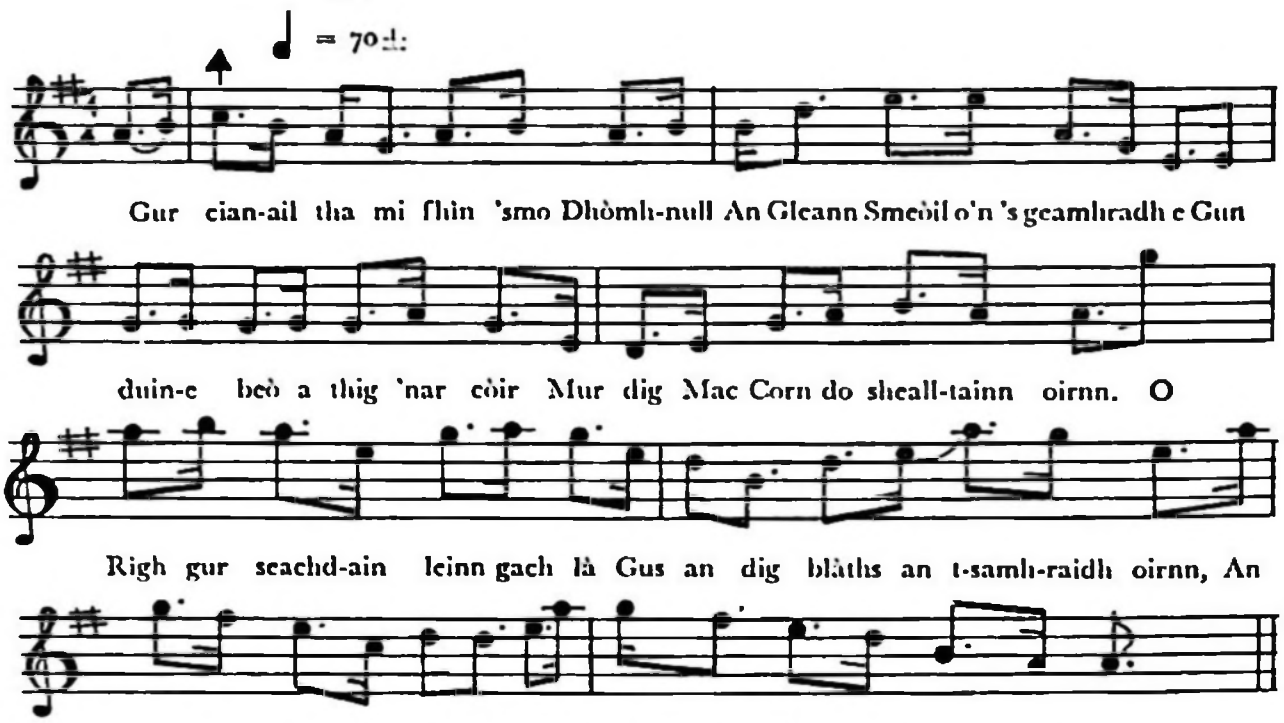
Christopher Campbell. RL164(2)



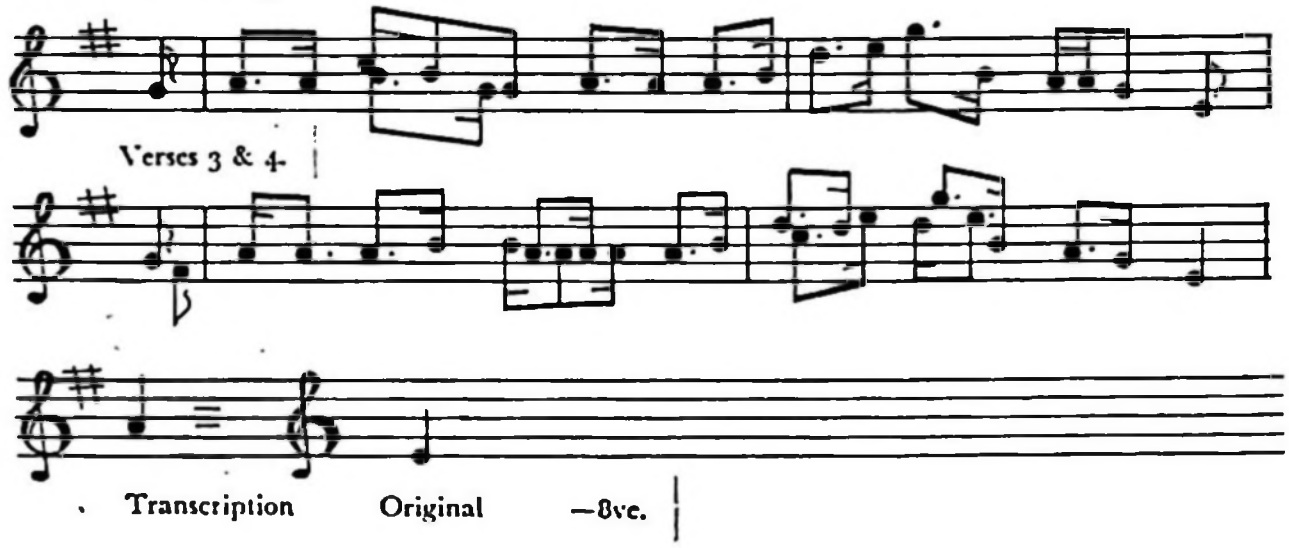
Andrew Stewart RL161(7)



Donald Stewart RL164(8)



Variations:



Hugh MacRae: Oran nan Dròbhairean

Seo òran a chuala mi bho . . . seann duine shuas ann an Dùthaich Mhic Aoidh bho chionn bliadhna na dhà air n-ais agus tha mi dol g'a ghabhail mar a chuala mi an duine fhéin 'ga ghabhail[1]—sin Maighistir Domhnull MacAoidh a Durness ann an Dùthaich 'ac Aoidh.

Nach cianail tha mi fhìn 's mo Dhòmhullan
An Gleann Smeòil mas geamhradh e
Gun neacha beò bhith tighinn 'nar còir
Mus dig Mac Corn a shealltainn oirnn

A Righ! gur seachdain liom gach latha
Gos an dig blàths an t-samhraidh oirnn
An uair a bhios na gillean òg'
A tighinn air tòir nan gamhnaichean

Siod far a robh na seòid—
Na dròbhairean nuair ghluaiseadh iad
Na Bàideanaich bho sliabh gu tràigh
'S an Clàrca 'na dhuine-uasal orr'
Bha MacPhàrlain is Mac Mhaoilean
'S Mac an t-Saoir a Ruadhainn ann
'S ma sheasas iad aig tòir na prìs
Chan fhearr a' rìgh na 'n tuathanach

'S bha iomadh glòir ann an Gleann Smeòil
Nuair thigeadh oirnn a' samhradh ann
A' ghrian mar òr dol sìos fo sgleò
Is ceòl an crò nan gamhnaichean
Bhiodh iomadh spòrs aig sean is òg
'S bu shòlasach bha'n danns' aca
Bhiodh iasg is feòil ri dìosgail bhòrd
Bha sùgh an eòrna is branndaidh ann

Siod far a robh na balaich ghasda
Chridheil thapaidh sheannsgeulach
'S nuair thigeadh iad air tòir na mart
Cha bhiodh an achlais gann aca
'S O! bu toigh liom a' fear fialaidh
A bha riamh mar shamhl' orra
Le osan gearr is féileadh-beag
Is daor a chuir e Chaingeis orr'

Donald Stewart: Oran nan Dròbhairean

Gur cianail tha mi fhìn 's mo Dhomhnull
An Gleann Smeòil on 's geamhradh e
Gun duine beò a thig 'nar còir
Mur dig Mac Corn do shealltainn oirnn
O Righ, gur seachdain leinn gach là
Gus an dig blàths an t-samhraidh oirnn
An uair a bhios na gillean òga
Tighinn air thòir nan gamhnaichean

'S na gillean òg tha gleusda, gasd
Tha tapaidh, sgairteil, luathchoiseach [2]
Nuair thigeadh sibh air thòir na mart
Cha bhiodh bhur n-achlais gann agaibh

Bu ghasd sibh riamh air siubhal sliabh
Bu fearail, fialaidh, greannmhor sibh
Bu gheal ur bian bu ghasd ur fiamh
Air am bitheadh miann nam banntighearnan

'S cha b'i . . .[3] Ghalld' a chuireadh stad
Air lùths n-ur cas le banntaichean
Nuair thigeadh sibh air thòir nam mart
Mus digeadh tart an t-samhraidh orr'
Ach breacan ciatach nam ball fialaidh
A bha riamh mar shamhl' agaibh
An t-osan gearr 's an (*sic*) féileadh-beag
'S chan fhaic sibh caitheamh chaingeis aig

Ach siod an t-àit' am bi na séoid
Na dròbhairean nuair ghluaiseas iad
Na Bàideanaich bho sliabh gu tràigh
'S bidh 'n Clàrcach 'na dhuin-uasal ac'
Bidh Mac Phàrlain ann is Mac Maoilean (*sic*)
'S Mac an t-Saoir a Ruadhainn ann
'S ma leanas iad air tòir na prìs
Chan fhearr an rìgh na 'n tuathanach

Ach nuair thig oirnne tòs a' Mhàigh
'S an crodh air àird na fuarbheannan
Bidh laoigh gu leòr a' ruith m'an chrò
'S bidh maighdean òg 'gam buachailleachd
Bidh daoine fialaidh 'g inns' na sgeul
'S gun goirinn sè sheann sgiàlaichean [4]
Bidh mnathan fialaidh dèanamh maitheas
Gu luinneach, subhach, càirdeasach.

Hugh MacRae: The Drovers' Song

This is a song I heard a year or two ago from an old man in MacKay's country and I'm going to sing the song as I heard him sing it.[1] The man is Mr. Donald MacKay, Durness.

1. How sad are we, my little Donald and myself, in Gleann Smeòil when winter comes: not a living soul coming near us unless MacCorn should happen to visit us. God, every day seems to me like a week until the warmth of summer arrives, bringing the young men who come to gather the farrow cows.

2. What stout fellows the drovers were when they got on the move: the Badenoch men with herds from the moor to the sea's edge, and Clark a gentleman at their head. MacFarlane

was there and MacMillan, and Macintyre from Ruthven; if they stand firm for their price, the king himself is no better off than the farmer!

3. It was glorious in Gleann Smeòil when summer came to us there: the sun setting in a golden haze and music in the farrow cows' fold. Both young and old were amply entertained: how cheerfully they danced! Fish and flesh made the tables creak; there was barley bree and brandy.

4. Excellent, vigorous, lively lads they were, and full of ancient stories; and when they came to seek the cattle, they would not arrive empty-handed. Oh, we liked the generous man, with his kilt and short hose, who was typical of the best of the kind—he made it an expensive Whitsuntide for them!

Donald Stewart: The Drovers' Song

2. The fine, skilful young men who are brisk and strong and fleet of foot would not arrive empty-handed when they came to seek the cattle. You were ever expert at walking the moors; you were manly, generous, and cheerful; your skin was bright, your appearance was excellent, you who were the ladies' desire.

3. When you appeared to collect the cows, before the drought of summer had come upon them, you wore not the Lowland dress that curbs the vigour of the leg with its fastenings but the kilt and short hose and the splendid, ample plaid that was ever your emblem; nor would you exchange it for any other habit.

5. At the beginning of May, when the cattle are on the high ground of the cold mountains, calves in plenty will run about the fold, with young girls herding them. Generous men will be there telling stories—I could call on half a dozen reciters of ancient tales[4]—generous women will be there doing good, happily, jovially and affectionately.

The "Drovers' Song" is the only Gaelic composition I know that expressly celebrates the drover's trade in Highland cattle which, particularly in the mid-eighteenth century, played a major part in the economic life of Scotland. The song commemorates the hardy and open-handed men who brought the droves to the trysts of the south, notably the Falkirk Tryst, *Féill na h-Eaglaise Brice*, still remembered and often alluded to in Gaelic oral tradition.

The five variants printed above all derive from the oral tradition of one parish in the north of Sutherland; if the song

is known in any other part of the Highlands, it has not so far come to light. Apart from the fact that "Little Donald" was supposed to be the poet's dog, which I was told by Mr. D. S. MacKay, I have no traditional information about the personal names, nor do I know who the author was. The lonely Gleann Smeòil, where he found winter long and tedious, was said by Mr. Donald Stewart to be somewhere in Sutherland, but I have failed to locate it in that county. My colleague Dr. W. F. H. Nicolaisen informs me that no glen of this name appears anywhere in the School of Scottish Studies index of place-names.[5]

But it does occur in at least two other songs,[6] both of which are ascribed to natives of Wester Ross. If Gleann Smeòil is therefore a real place-name, and not merely a romantic appelative, *Oran nan Dròbhairean* may provisionally be regarded, in the absence of other evidence, as being of Ross-shire provenance.[7]

At all events, the song itself is a composition of a conventional kind and tells us little about the actual circumstances of the drovers' life. It is still possible to recover this kind of information from oral tradition, although, naturally enough, first hand accounts of droving are now rarely to be heard.[8]

The following is a brief example, recorded in 1952 by the late Calum I. MacLean of the School of Scottish Studies from Donald MacDonald of Laggan, Badenoch, who was then in his seventy-fifth year.[9]

"Bha féilltean gu leòr 's an àite bho chionn trì fichead bliadhna air ais. Bha iad a' tighinn le crodh. Cha robh caoraich ann ach crodh. Bha féill an Cinn-Ghiùthsaich, féill aig Drochaid Charra, féill an uras aig Allt na Frìthe a chuile rathad gu Féill na Manachainn. 'Se féill mhór a bh'ann a Féill na Manachainn. Bha m'athair a' ceannach air Féill na Manachainn. Bha féill an Allt na Frìthe—Freeburn—féill aig Drochaid Charra, féill an Cinn-Ghiùthsaich is Féill an t-Sléibh. Bha mise air Féill an t-Sléibh. Cha robh auctioneers ann—a chuile duine a' reic is a' ceannach an cuid fhéin. 'N uair a dhèanadh iad baragan bha iad a toirt sgailc air làimh a chéile gun robh am baragan dèante.[10] 'N uair nach dèanadh iad baragan, bha iad a' falbh is theagamh gun digeadh iad air ais an ceann fichead mineid. Bha mi air Féill Dúin is Féill na h-Eaglais Bhreac. Agus bha an t-aon rud a' dol air adhart

an sin cuideachd, an t-àon chòrdadh. Bha iad a mach air stance aig an Eaglais Bhreac.

Choisich mi fhìn le spréidh dh'an Eaglais Bhreac, 'n uair nach robh mi ach mu cheithir bliadhn diag. Bha sinn a' dol a mach ri Gàdhaig agus a' tighinn a staigh aig Struthan dar a rachainn ri Gàdhaig. Dar a bha sinn a' dol ri Druim Uachdar bha sinn a' gearradh dheth aig Dail na Ceardaich[11] a mach ris a' mhonadh. Cha robh sinn a' tighinn a staigh tuillidh gus an robh sinn a null faisg air Abar-Pheallaidh. Bha sinn a rithist a' gearradh cros ri Sliabh an t-Siorra dar a bha sinn a' dol dh'an Eaglais Bhreac—Sheriffmuir—tha mi air call cuimhne air na h-ainmeannan a bha air na h-àitean. 'S ann air na seann rathaidean a bha sinn a' dol fhad's a b'urra dhuinn an leantainn. Bha sin an còmhnuidh a' dol air na seann rathaid agus a' gearradh thar a' mhonaidh. Air a' rathad bha sinn a' tighinn a staigh air taighean a mach ri Gàdhaig. Bhiodh sinn an oidhch' an àite ris an abair iad Coire Bhran. Well bha geamair a' fuireach urad a sin is bhiodh sinn a' fuireach 's an taigh aige-san. An ath latha bha sinn a' tighinn a staigh aig àite ris an abair iad Bruar, far an robh geamair eile. Is bha sinn a' dol a staigh an sin agus a' fuireach an oidhch' ann. Dar a thigeadh sinn a mhàn gu Struthan a rithist bha stance féill ann, stance cruidh is bha sinn a' cur a' chruidh a staigh an sin agus a' fuireach an sin an oidhche. An uair sin bha sinn a' gearradh a mach a null ri Taigh na Fùr.[12] Bhiodh sinn an oidhche sin an Taigh na Fùr. Bhiodh sinn oidhche eile ann an Drochaid—c'ainm seo a theireadh iad rithe?—Drochaid Chonasad a theireadh iad rithe, cha 'reid mi—Tummel Bridge.[13] Is bha sinn a rithist a' dol air adhart gu Abar-Pheallaidh is a' dol tro' Abar-Pheallaidh is a mach fos a chionn is a' dol air adhart gu rathad Sliabh an t-Siorra. Chan' eil cuimhne agam air na h-ainmeannan an déidh sin a' dol chun an Eaglais Bhreac. Dar a bhiodh sinn a' dol gu Féill Dùin a rithist bha sinn a' cumail a staigh ro' Dùn-Blàn is a rithist a' tionndadh air ais air a' rathad a tha a' dol air ais ris an Oban is ri na h-àitean sin gus an digeadh sinn gu Dùn. Chan' eil Dùn ach mu cheithir mìle air ais o Dùn-Blàn. Bha sinn a' fuireach a sin.

Bha sinn a' coiseachd fad a' latha leis a' chrodh. Bha cù againn. Bha cù aig a chuile duine. Bheireadh e tuilleadh is còig lathaidhean a' dol 'un an Eaglais Bhreac. Bhitheadh—tha mi cinnteach sia fichead mìle ann co dhiubh na tuillidh. Chan' eil an Eaglais Bhreac thar còig mìle diag na fichead

mìle a Glasachu. Cha chreid mi nach biodh sinn seachd na ochd lathaidhean air an rathad. Cha robh sinn a' dèanamh fichead mìle 'sa latha. Cha robh leis a' chrodh uair 's am bith. Cha dèanadh sinn ach theagamh dusan mìle 'san latha na ceithir mìle diag air a' char a b' fhaide. Cha rachadh sinn fos cionn sin. Tha mi a' creidsinn nach robh sinn a' dèanamh sin fhéin.

'N uair a bha an fhéill seachad, bha sinn a' tilleadh dhachaidh. Chan' eil beachd agam riamh air a' chrodh a thoirt air ais a siod gun an creic. Bhiodh e tuillidh is cosdail an toirt air ais. 'S ann air an train a bhiodh iad a' tighinn air ais ri mo latha-sa an còmhnuidh.

Bha m'athair—'se dròbhair a bh'ann. 'S ann ris an dròbhaireachd a bha eisean. Bha e a' coiseachd dhachaidh dar a bha e na b'òige. Bha neart dhiubh a' coiseachd dhachaidh. Mhaireadh an fhéill aig an Eaglais Bhreac dhà na trì lathachan. An uair ma dheireadh a choisich misc ann, bha sinn a' fuireach an taigh tuathanach. . . . Sin an t-àite a's an robh sinn a' fuireach. Bha an crodh air an fheirm. Bha mi ochd bliadhn diag dar a bha mi ma dheireadh ann. Chan' eil fhios 'm nach robh mi naodh bliadhn diag.

Bha dà fhéill Dùn ann có-dhiùbh. Chan' eil cuimhne 'm. Cha robh mise ach aig aon Eaglais Bhreac anns a' bhliadhn có-dhiùbh. Bha mi aig dà Fhéill Dùn ann an aon bhliadhna. 'Se féill mhór a bha ann a Féill Dùn. Bha móran cruidh is eich ann."

Translation

"Sixty years ago there were lots of trysts in this place and people used to come with cattle—no sheep, only cattle. There was a tryst in Kingussie, a tryst at Carrbridge, a tryst up at Freeburn—all the roads leading to the Beauly Tryst. My father used to buy at the Beauly Tryst. There was a tryst . . . on the Sliabh: I was there myself.

There were no auctioneers: every man buying and selling his own. When they struck a bargain they would shake hands with a slap, signifying that the contract was sealed.[10] When they failed to agree they would separate and probably return in twenty minutes' time.

I was at the Doune Tryst and at the Falkirk Tryst. The same business went on there too—the same kind of bargaining procedure. At the Falkirk Tryst they were on an open stance.

I myself have walked to Falkirk with cattle when I was only about fourteen years old. We used to go out by Gaick and if we went that way we would turn inland at Struan. When we took the Drumochtar road we would cut across country at Dalnacardoch[11] and follow the open moor without turning inland any more until we were approaching Aberfeldy. Then we'd take a short cut down towards Sheriffmuir on the way to Falkirk: I've forgotten the names of the places. We always took the old roads, as far as we could follow them. We took the old roads and cut across the moor.

On the way, out by Gaick, we would meet some houses and we'd spend the night in a place called Coire Bhran. There was a gamekeeper living there in whose house we used to stay.

The following day we came to a place called Bruar where another gamekeeper lived. We'd go in there and spend the night there. Then when we came to Struan there was a tryst stance there—a cattle stance—and we put the cattle in there and spent that night there. After that we cut across to Trinafour[12] and we'd be another night in Drochaid—what did they call it again?—Drochaid Chonasad, I think they called it—Tummel Bridge.[13]

Then we went on to Aberfeldy, through Aberfeldy, and out again on the high ground, heading for the Sheriffmuir road. After that, I don't remember the place-names on to Falkirk.

Then, again, when we used to go to the Doune Tryst we kept on through Dunblane, turning west later on the road that heads back towards Oban and these places, until we came to Doune. Doune is only about four miles away from Dunblane. We stayed at Doune.

We used to walk all day long with the cattle. We had a dog—everyone had a dog. It took more than five days to go to Falkirk: it was a journey of, I suppose, at any rate a hundred and twenty miles or more. Falkirk is no more than fifteen or twenty miles from Glasgow. I think we'd be seven or eight days on the way—we didn't do twenty miles a day. No, never with the cattle: we'd do twelve miles perhaps, or fourteen at the most; but we wouldn't exceed that. I believe we didn't do even that.

When the tryst was over, we returned home. I don't remember ever having brought the cattle back unsold: it would be too expensive to bring them back. In my day it was always by train they came back.

My father was a drover, a professional drover, and when he

was a younger man he used to walk home—lots of them did that.

The Falkirk Tryst lasted two or three days. The last time I went to it we stayed at a farmer's house . . . The cattle were on that farm. I was eighteen years of age, or perhaps I was nineteen, when I went there for the last time.

There were at least two trysts at Doune. I don't really remember but I was only at one "Falkirk" in a single year and I was at two Doune Trysts.

Doune Tryst was a big tryst: there were lots of horses and cattle there."

Despite the formal panegyric aspect of the Drovers' Song, it is interesting to note that one or two details can be linked with evidence drawn from written sources.

The time of year at which the drovers appeared in Gleann Smeòil, for instance, and the kind of cattle that they collected, finds an echo in a statement such as this, made by James Robertson in his *General View of the Agriculture of Inverness-shire*, of 1813 (Haldane 1952:28). "The manner of disposing of their dry cows or young bullocks is somewhat curious. When the drovers from the South and interior of Scotland make their appearance in the Highlands, which always happens during the latter end of April or the beginning of May. . ."

Another point is that of the drovers' dress. In both variants, the kilt is mentioned; Donald Stewart's version of the song in fact gives the impression that the Highland dress was the insignia of the drover's trade. This, as we shall see, may be of considerable significance.

Before all forms of Highland dress were proscribed by the Disarming Act of 1746, drovers would not, of course, be dressed differently from the rest of the commonalty; nor after 1746, were any special concessions made to them as a class.[14] But though the Disarming Act was at first rigorously enforced, it appears that by 1760 the ban had been relaxed greatly. I have no direct evidence that drovers took special advantage[15] of whatever lenience was shown by the authorities in this respect, nor that in 1782 they responded more enthusiastically than others to the repeal of the act. Nevertheless, to my mind, such an attitude would be perfectly natural in their situation. For as a number of Gaelic poets complain, the author of the Drovers' Song among them, Lowland dress was a severe encumbrance to freedom of movement. And the same complaint

was expressed by others. Duncan Forbes of Culloden indeed goes so far as to say "that as the Highlands are circumstanced at present, it is, at least it seems to me, an utter Impossibility, without the advantage of this Dress, for the Inhabitants to tend their Cattle, and to go through the other parts of their Business, without which they could not subsist . . ." (Dunbar 1962:5).

Thus the statement in Donald Stewart's text, concerning the drovers' devotion to the kilt, seems to me to bear the complexion of truth. The drovers' trade, entailing as it did a great deal of walking, often over difficult country, could in the circumstances be said to demand such a garb.

But the significance may be wider than that. After the repeal of the Disarming Act the kilt was never again universally worn in the Highlands, but its appeal as a symbol of the old order remained. The celebratory references in a large number of songs to the "lads of the kilt", the soldiers of the Highland regiments, who were exempted from the general prohibition in the Act of 1746, shows this clearly enough. Now, if the drovers did in fact favour Highland dress, they would naturally enough evoke a comparable, though doubtless less romantic, response. Moreover, the very nature of the drovers' free, wandering life must have had an appeal for a people who for centuries regarded cattle-raiding as an aristocratic pursuit. As Haldane (1952:21) points out: "To a Highlander of the eighteenth century, divided at the most by one generation from such a way of life and possessing beyond a long lineage of cattle-reiving ancestors, it was but a short step to a more legitimate and only slightly less adventurous form of cattle driving." And the same point is implied by Sir Walter Scott in *The Two Drovers*. "The Highlanders in particular," Scott says, "are masters of this difficult trade of driving, which seems to suit them as well as the trade of war." Such an attitude surely helps to explain why the drover is worth commemorating in song.

All this assumes, of course, that the Drovers' Song was composed after 1746. Now the existence of two quite distinct textual variants indicates a fairly long process of oral tradition, possibly stretching back to a point before that date. But here again the description of dress is relevant. According to a letter written in 1768 by Ivan Baillie of Aberiachan (*sic*), the *féileadh-beag* (the *little* kilt, as opposed to the *breacan* or belted plaid) appears to have been unknown before 1725-30 (McClintock 1950:46 ff.).

If this is so, and Baillie's evidence can be corroborated from other sources (McClintock *loc. cit.*), the case for assigning the song to the first half of the eighteenth century is somewhat weakened. It is certainly noteworthy that a description of the dress and appearance of drovers at the Crieff Tryst in 1723 makes no mention of the *féileadh-beag*. "The Highland gentlemen were mighty civil, dressed in their slashed waistcoats, a trousing (which is breeches and stocking of one piece of striped stuff) with a plaid for a cloak and a blue bonnet. . . . Their attendance was very numerous all in belted plaids, girt, like women's petticoats down to the knee; their thighs and half of the leg all bare." (Haldane 1952: 24.)

In the light of such evidence as exists, then, I would take *Oran nan Dròbhairean* to be a composition of the late eighteenth century.

It is interesting that the drovers are mentioned as reciters of "ancient stories". Travelling craftsmen are well known to have been important agents in the spread of oral tradition; in this respect the opportunities offered to drovers cannot have been fewer. Angus MacColl of Mull tells (in a recording in the School of Scottish Studies; SA 1953/97) how the Mull drovers used to spend the whole night listening to stories in the little inn at Rubha an Fheurain (Grass Point). This was in a Gaelic context, but the same kind of entertainment, involving similar exchange of news and songs and tales, must have been available to them further afield. The trysts were always important social occasions, involving many more people than just those who came to buy and sell cattle. In a description of the Falkirk Tryst in 1849 (Haldane 1952:241) when the "uncouth Cumberland jargon" could be heard amid "the prevailing Gaelic", the tents on Stenhousemuir were "constantly filled and surrounded with a mixed multitude of cattle dealers, fishers, drovers, auctioneers, pedlars, jugglers, gamblers, itinerant fruit merchants, ballad singers and beggars".

Although this description applies to the tryst at a later date than the one suggested for the composition of the Drovers' Song, we may assume that earlier trysts also attracted the same motley crew. The allusion to ballad singers serves to remind us that Lowland melodies, which have been known in the Highlands from at least as early as the seventeenth century, may well have passed from Lowlander to Gael in surroundings just like these.

It may be no more than a coincidence that the Drovers'

Song itself is sung to a variant[16] of the Lowland "Wat ye wha I met yestreen", but it is just possible that the poet chose a melody of a kind which he realised was popular with the men he was celebrating.

Finally, the tune too has a link, albeit a tenuous one, with the west of Ross-shire. It is given in Stewart's Collection (1804:I, 158) as the melody to which William Ross's *Buaidhean an t-Samhraidh* is to be sung. Now, William Ross's maternal grandfather came from Wester Ross, and he himself taught school in Gairloch from 1786 to 1790. Admittedly Ross's songs were greatly admired and spread quickly to other parts of the Highlands, so that even if the author of the Drovers' Song borrowed his tune from William Ross's composition, it does not follow that he must have heard it in Ross-shire. But in the absence of other variants, which might throw a glimmer of light on these speculations, the possibility of such a connection seems worth mentioning.

NOTES

[1] Mr. MacRae sings stanza 1 as a refrain. Mr. MacKay, curiously, sang *mo fhìn*; as did also Mr. Campbell and Mr. Andrew Stewart.

[2] The rhyme here suggests that this couplet may have been the opening lines of another stanza.

[3] The singer seems to have gone wrong: the third syllable [ju:], is unintelligible, but the general sense of the stanza is clear.

[4] The last three words are poorly articulated. The transcription and translation are very tentative.

[5] This index at present contains information from the one-inch Ordnance Survey maps of Scotland only. It also appears, however, that Gleann Smeòil has never been discussed by any of the many authors who have dealt with Scottish place-names in the past.

[6] The two songs are both known as *Màiri Laghach*. According to John MacKenzie in *Sar Obair nam Bard Gaelach* the older song was composed by Murdoch MacKenzie of Loch Broom to his own daughter, and the second by John MacDonald of Scoraig.

According to oral tradition MacDonald composed his song to a Lewis girl who later became his wife. If this story is accurate, the reference to Gleann Smeòil is not to be taken literally. But since MacDonald seems to have borrowed the refrain from MacKenzie's song, he may also have borrowed the place-name and used it romantically. MacKenzie, incidentally, seems to have been a drover himself: he was known in Gaelic as Murchadh Ruadh nam Bó, "Red haired Murdoch of the Droves".

[7] Since writing the above, I have been informed by Mr. Hugh MacRae that a grandson of John MacDonald, author of *Màiri Laghach*, told him that Gleann Smeòil was in Strathcanard in Ross-shire. But, he adds, someone else informed him that it was in Strathbran, which is also in Ross-shire.

[8] For an example of a longer and more detailed account, see *Recollections of an Argyllshire Drover* by Eric Cregeen in *Scottish Studies* 3(2):143-62.

[9] This account is printed as transcribed by Dr. Calum Maclean, except that the use of accents, apostrophes, etc., has been regularised. Since the recording was destroyed after transcription, apparent inconsistencies in morphology, e.g. *Dùin/Dùn* as genitive of Dùn, and in the realisation of certain forms such as *'san latha/'sa' latha*, have been allowed to stand.

[10] I remember hearing in my boyhood that when the old drovers shook hands they said, *Siod eadar—iomlaid!* (lit. "That is mutual exchange", i.e. "It's a deal!").

[11] The late Mr. Alexander MacDonald, Trinafour, Perthshire, told me that several generations of Kennedys, originally from Lianachan, Lochaber, were blacksmiths at Dalnacardoch and used to shoe cattle for the drovers (RL 2195/B5).

[12] So in Dr. Maclean's transcript. But the name is obviously Trinafour, in Gaelic Trian a' Phùir.

[13] But Tummel Bridge is Drochaid Teimheil. I have not located Drochaid Chonasad.

[14] "Drovers were exempt from the Disarming Acts of 1716 and 1748," Haldane (1952:25). Drovers, however, are not specifically mentioned in any of the relevant acts.

[15] Haldane (1952:24) quotes from the New Statistical Account for Monzie, Perthshire, a description of the drovers at Crieff Tryst, which recollects that they were "bare-kneed". This might suggest that before the repeal of the act—Crieff Tryst came to an end in 1770—drovers were wearing Highland dress. But the phrase in the New Statistical Account is "barefooted". (*The New Statistical Account of Scotland* 10:270.)

[16] I owe this observation to the Rev. William Matheson, lecturer in Celtic, Edinburgh University. Mr. Matheson however holds that these Lowland song titles in Gaelic anthologies do not necessarily refer to melodies imported direct from the Lowlands of Scotland, but to variants of tunes current over a wider area of Europe. The Lowland titles, according to this view, were merely used as a convenient way of identifying the melodies.

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JOHN MACINNES

Hallowe'en at Fortingall, Perthshire

The celebration of Hallowe'en (*Samhuin*) on 31st October constituted one of the two most significant calendar festivals

of the Celts. The other great feast, that of *Beltane*, took place on 1st May. Traditions of these ancient festivals are still current in the Scottish Highlands, and in most areas, vestigial rites of some kind or another are still carried out by the younger people. The celebration of Hallowe'en as a communal festival, accompanied by activities which show a direct link with earlier superstitious ritual, continued in Fortingall until well into the present century. Here the festival of *Beltane* was observed by lighting the fires under the ancient yew tree in the churchyard until this was stopped due to damage done to the tree (Stewart 1928:37). And, bearing in mind the earlier Celtic association of Hallowe'en with the dead, and with the inhabitants of the otherworld, it is perhaps noteworthy that the great communal bonfire at Fortingall was built on the mound known as *Carn nam Marbh* "The Mound of the Dead". It is believed that under this mound are buried the bodies of victims of a plague, brought there by an old woman, in a cart pulled by a white horse, or according to some versions of the story, on a sledge (*Ibid.*: 36). Whether the mound, now surmounted by a stone bearing an inscription and known as *Clach a' Phlàigh*, "The Stone of the Plague" is in fact a burial cairn or a clearance cairn has not yet been established, but the significant factor is that it is locally *believed* to contain human remains. Although people living a few miles from Fortingall knew of the annual festivities, only the local populace seems to have actually taken part in them. The other villages had the usual bonfires (*samhnagan*) which were built by the children.

The following information is taken from a conversation, recorded on 28th April 1965, with Duncan MacGregor, J.P., of Balnald, Fortingall, aged 68, who actually took part in the Hallowe'en celebrations as a boy. Now a joiner, he is the fifth generation of a family of cartwrights who have lived in the same house in which he now lives, and practised their trade at Balnald.

Hallowe'en was held at Fortingall on 11th November.[1] All the members of the village, young and old, took part in it. For months before the actual celebration, the young people gathered and stored great quantities of whin from the hill and the brae face, where it was once very plentiful, and night after night the boys would carry it down the hill. Then it was made into a huge pile, with the addition of any wood shavings available, and empty tar barrels. The older men from the farm and other members of the community, including the coachmen

from Fortingall Hotel would then construct the bonfire on the top of the mound, *Carn nam Marbh*. When it was blazing, everyone joined hands and danced round the mound, clockwise and anti-clockwise. The whole village gathered to take part in the ceremony. Then, as the fire went down, some of the younger boys took burning faggots from the flames and ran throughout the field with them, finally throwing them into the air and dancing over them as they lay on the ground. Later still, when the last embers were glowing, the boys would leap over the fire, marking who should leap furthest. When the bonfire was finished, the young people went home and ducked for apples while the older people went to the Hotel and had a dance there. There was no guising apparently on Hallowe'en as the huge bonfire occupied everyone's attention during the evening.

The last great bonfire was lit in Fortingall about 1924. The festival died out there, not because of lack of interest on the part of the people, but because it was stopped by the keeper who claimed that the large-scale stripping of whin from the hill deprived the game of cover.

NOTE

[1] Duncan MacGregor dates the big Fortingall market *Féill Ceit* to this date also, and thinks there may be a link between the date of the market and that of the celebration of Hallowe'en. Stewart (1928:187), however, gives the date of *Féill Ceit* as being December 6th and 7th. The ground outside the gates of Fortingall Church is still a market stance and the public have the right to park their cars there to this day.

REFERENCE

STEWART, ALEXANDER
1928 *A Highland Parish*. Glasgow.

ANNE ROSS

C. BOOK REVIEWS

The Dewar Manuscripts, Volume One. Scottish West Highland Folk Tales collected originally in Gaelic by John Dewar. Edited with Introduction and Notes by the Rev. John Mackechnie. Glasgow: William Maclellan. 1964. Pp. 400; 35 photographs; genealogical tables. 63s.

When J. F. Campbell of Islay was publishing his West Highland Tales, John Dewar, a woodman on the Argyll estates, was encouraged by him and the 8th Duke to gather