# *NOTES ON COLLECTION AND RESEARCH*

## *A Preliminary Study for Wilkie's "Pitlessie Fair"*

KEITH ANDREWS

The National Gallery of Scotland has recently been able to acquire, in quick succession, two drawings which are not merely connected with each other, as paper, medium and style show, but which must have come from the same "sketch-book", if such it can be called, for there are no traces of any binding marks in either of the sheets. The first (D.4893) is a large black-chalk drawing (Plate VIII), depicting in bare outlines an irregular street of a small village, flanked by small houses and cottages, and empty of any animation. It is unlikely, at first sight, to set a connoisseur's heart alight with excitement, until it is realised that what is represented on this double-sheet is in fact a preliminary study for the architectural background of *Pitlessie Fair*, David Wilkie's earliest surviving painting (Plate IX, National Gallery of Scotland), signed and dated 1804, when the artist was 19 years old. This date may however be somewhat misleading, for it would appear from a letter, recently come to light (National Library of Scotland, Acc.MS. 4000) that he was still working on the picture at the end of December 1804.

The second sheet, also drawn on both sides (D.4904) in broad black chalk, on the same kind of paper, and showing an identical central fold as the sheet described above (though apparently cut along the two shorter margins) also has preliminary studies for *Pitlessie Fair*; in this case of some of the figures and several of the animals which occur in the final composition. On the reverse side there is a full composition-sketch of the group around the table on the left.

As far as is known, no other authenticated drawings or studies connected with this apprentice-piece have survived, and so both sheets are of exceptional interest for this reason alone. However, for students of the Scottish scene at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the sketch of the architectural background may prove to be of greater interest.

In the finished painting most of the geography of the place is rather obscured by the throng of people, animals, stalls and other accessories, so that the drawing shows much more clearly what the little village, near which the artist was born, must have looked like. We know from Allan Cunningham's *Life of Sir David Wilkie* (1843:58) that with regard to the preparations for *Pitlessie Fair* "He had, with that diligence for which he was ever remarkable, already visited Pitlessie, and made what may be called a working sketch of the place—house, and street, and stream." It would be tempting to see in this a reference to the *recto* of our drawing.

That it was in fact taken on the spot, is confirmed by the marginal notes on the materials of walls and roofs of the houses, which the artist jotted down in the upper right-hand corner: *1. harld wall*; *2. whinstone do.*; *3. tile roof*; *4. thack roof*; *5. old do.*; *6. brick*. Apart from its interest as the artist's *aide-mémoire*, this information incidentally is clearer and therefore more useful for the history of vernacular architecture than a study of the finished picture. On the whole the architectural framework containing the crowded staffage has been faithfully adhered to in the painting, except on the right-hand side, where, probably for reasons of balance and composition, the artist has allowed himself some poetic licence.

NOTE

This note has been adapted from a longer article (dealing also with the other studies on this sheet) which appeared in *Scottish Art Review*, 1966 (Andrews 1966:6-28).

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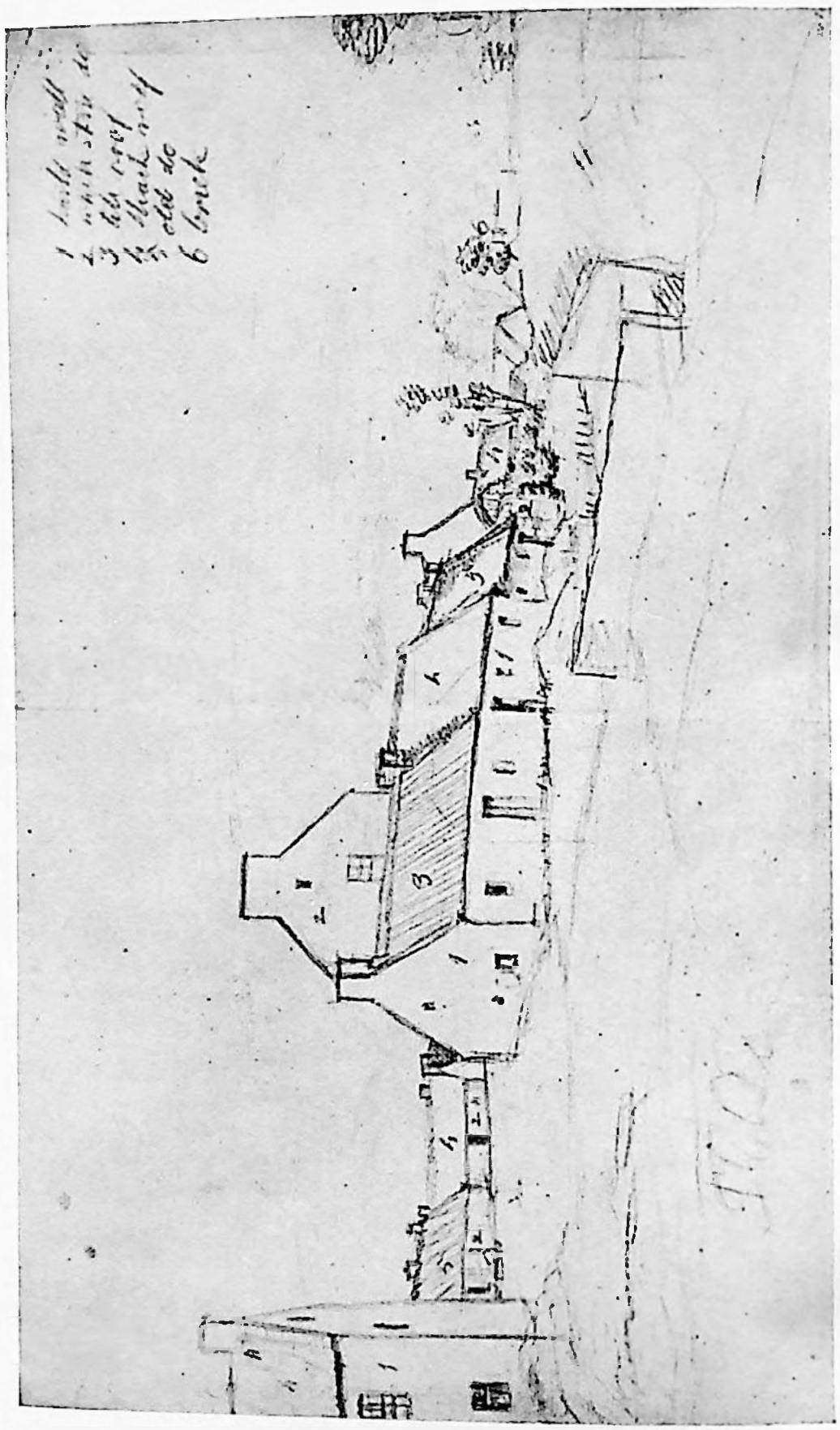
## *The Topography of "Pitlessie Fair"*

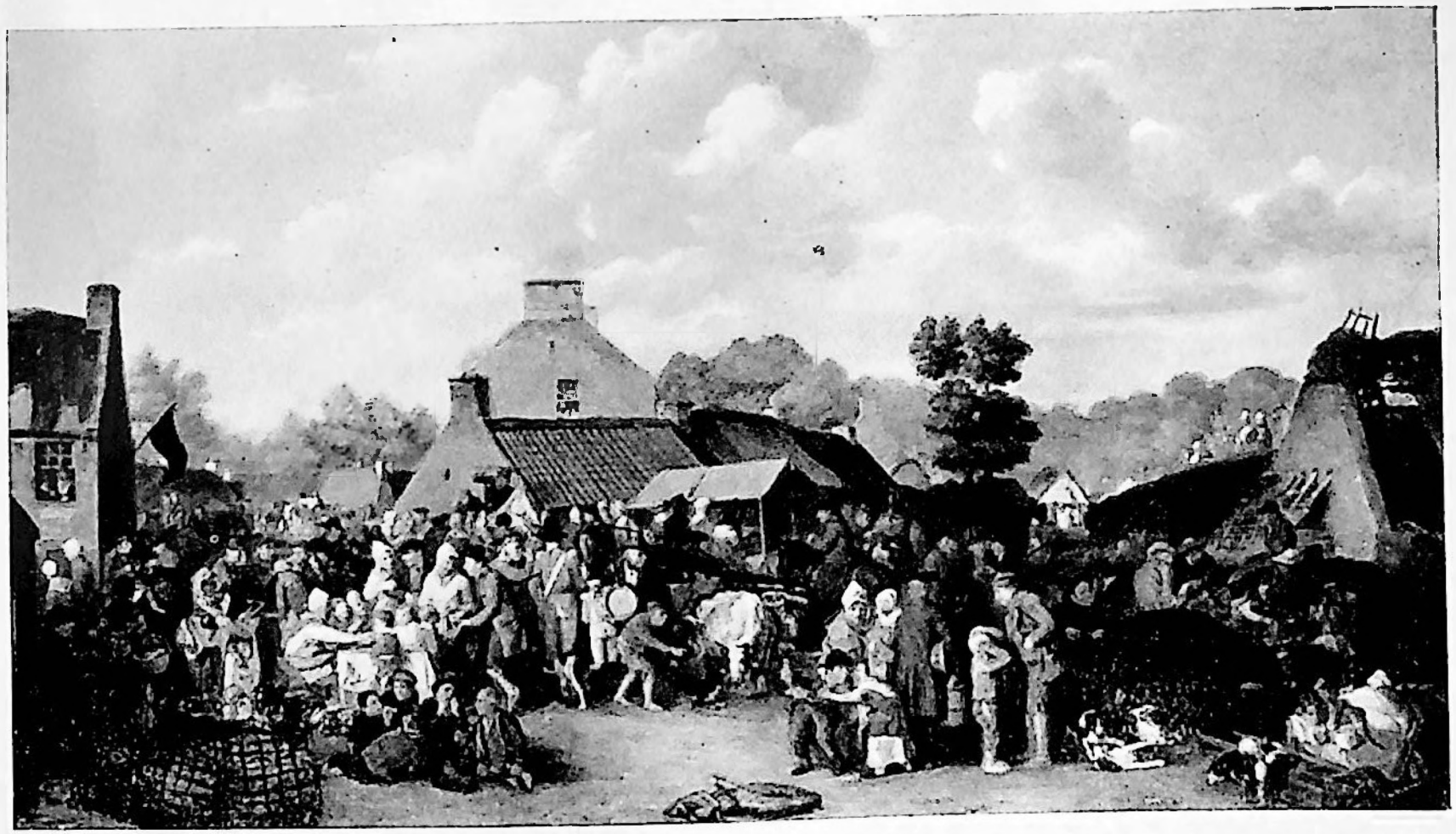
B. R. S. MEGAW

The fairground was not, as might be thought to-day, the triangular green at the south end of the village adjoining the road to Cupar. Improbable though it now seems, the drawing shows that the fair was held in the middle of the village where the road crosses obliquely a narrow tributary of the Eden (Plate X).

PLATE VIII



Sir David Wilkie, background for *Pitlessie Fair*
Black chalk, 13¼ × 22½ in. Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Gallery of Scotland
Block by courtesy of the *Scottish Art Review*
(See page 177)



Sir David Wilkie, *Pitlessie Fair*
Oil on canvas, 23 × 42 in. Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Gallery of Scotland
Block by courtesy of the *Scottish Art Review*
(See page 177)

The scene of Wilkie's *Pitlessie Fair* to-day
Photograph by W. S. Megaw, May 1966
(See page 178)

The two-storey house whose gable-end dominates the centre of the drawing, now known as "Burnbrae", is remembered to have been "a licensed house", and was marked "P.H." by the Ordnance surveyors in 1857 (Fig. 1). The picturesque row of


FIG. 1.—Pitlessie village: enlarged detail from survey of 1857 (O.S. 6 inch to 1 mile, first edition). Wilkie's view was taken looking north-west from the point where the burn passed obliquely beneath the village street.

tiled and thatched cottages flanking the burn in 1804 was demolished some sixty years ago, but their façades survive as part of the garden wall: even their doorways and built-up windows can still be discerned there, though road-widening has removed a gable end. On the left of the drawing, the thatched house of two storeys with gable built out into the roadway opposite the row of cottages has also been demolished, so that the space formerly available as "fairground" was even more restricted than would now appear.

"There were formerly," wrote the minister of Cults about 1838, "two annual fairs in Pitlessie, for the sale of agricultural stock, chiefly cattle, the one held on the second Tuesday of May, old style, and the other on the third Wednesday of

October, old style. The latter has for some years been discontinued; the former is still kept, and . . . is one of the best attended fairs in the county of Fife" (N.S.A. 1845:576). As Wilkie was already at work on the painting of *The Country Fair* in August 1804, following his preliminary studies, it was clearly the May fair that inspired this "portrait of a village with its people".

These, the then minister maintained some thirty years later, included "portraits of Wilkie himself, his father, brothers and sisters, and of many other characters well known in parish and neighbourhood" (N.S.A. 1845:567). Allan Cunningham, who gives a lively account of the scene depicted, tells us that "his father [the Rev. David Wilkie], who is represented standing conversing with a publican, looked grave at this till someone suggested that he seemed in the act of warning the other to keep a decorous house" (Cunningham 1843:62).

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1843 *The Life of Sir David Wilkie.* London.

## *The Soldier's Bible*

HAMISH HENDERSON

The following version of A.T. 1613 was written down in 1954 by Mr. John Elliot, Hangingshaws, Yarrow. It is part of a manuscript book entitled "Short Stories of the Borders, with Robers, Gosts and Fairyies". Spelling and punctuation have been retained:

on one occasion A soldier of the name of Robert Marshal was caught playing cards during A church sermon, he had the cards spread befor him in A pew when asked by the sergent to put them away, he refused and he was taken befor his commanding Officer The Colonel asked what charge was being brought against the soldier, for playing cards in church sir was the reply. well said the Colonel turning to the prisoner what have you got to say for yourself. I am A private soldier

sir replied the prisoner and I neather have bible or pray book. the only thing is A pack of cards, and I hope to satisfay you sir of my purity of my intensions. when I see the two it reminds me of the father and son. when I see the ace it reminds me there is only one God when I see the three it reminds me of the holey Trinity, when I see the four it reminds me of the four evangelists mathew mark luke. John. when I see the five it reminds me of the virgins who trimmed there lamps. five were wise and five were folish and were shut out, when I see the six it reminds me in six days the lord made heaven and earth, when I see the seventh it reminds me that God rested on the seventh, when I see the eight it reminds me of the eight persons who were saved when god destroyed the world namely noah and his wife his three sons and their wifes, when I see the King it reminds me of our great King and lord god almighty. when I see the queen it reminds me of the queen of sheba who was as wise as King solomona.

very good said the Colonel every card in the pack except one. which is that sir the knave well sir I will gave A defination of that to if you will promise not to be angery with me, I will not be angary said the Colonal if you do not term me the knave. well sir the greatest knave I know is the sergent who brought me here I do not know said the Colonel if he is the greatest knave, but he was probably acting as he thought was his duety, when I count the spots on A pack of cards continued the soldier I find there are 365 which reminds me of the days in the year, there are 52 cards in A pack which reminds me of the number of weeks in A year, there are 13 cards in each suits which reminds me of the weeks in A quarter, there are four suits which reminds me of the four seasons so you see sir that A pack of cards serves for A bible and an almanack go said the Colonel for you are more larned then I am

NOTE

A.T. 1613 ("Playing-Cards are My Calendar and Prayerbook") is a widely diffused international tale; it has been reported all over Europe, as well as in the U.S.A. and Spanish America. An Anglo-Irish version recorded in Newcastle, Co. Wicklow, by Professor Séamus Ó Duilearga was published in *Béaloideas* (Vol. 15, 1945, pp. 261-3). In a note on this version, Professor Ó Duilearga states: "There is a letter headed 'Christian Cards' in the *Sunday Times*, 31 Dec. 1933, in which a version of the tale is reprinted from an undated almanack, entitled *Perpetual Almanack*, or *Gentleman Soldier's Prayer Book*."

Printed versions may have helped to keep the tale in circulation,

but it also had widespread oral currency among soldiers and farm-servants. It was still quite common British Army folk-lore in World War II, especially among Scottish regular soldiers, and I heard versions very similar to Mr. Elliot's from a Pioneer Corps sergeant in Sussex (1940) and from a private in the 5th Camerons at Enfidaville, Tunisia (1943).

## *An Taillear agus a Bhean*

DONALD A. MACDONALD

A.T. 1351, *The Silence Wager*, is well enough attested in Scotland in ballad form, *The Barring of the Door* (Child 275) being widely known. As a prose tale, however, despite its international distribution,[1] it seems to be distinctly rare in modern Scottish oral tradition. Indeed the only sources known to me are the late Angus John MacLellan, Hàcleit, Benbecula, and his neighbour, Peter MacCormick, who learnt it from him.[2]

The following text (S.A. 1953/273 A 12) is, on balance, the best of three tellings recorded from Angus John MacLellan. The recording was made by the late Dr. Calum Maclean in Benbecula on 3rd January 1954. The two others were made in 1949[3] when Mr. MacLellan, who was then aged 66, told Dr. Maclean that he had learnt the story from his father, Donald MacLellan, also of Hàcleit, some 30 years before.

Bha siod ann tàilleir agus bha e air a chumail uamhasach trang. Cha robh duine 'cumail taighe ris ach . . . a bhean: cha robh teaghlach ann. Bhiodh esan a' tàilleireachd daonnan 's bhiodh a bhean ag obair a' snìomh mar a bhiodh na seann chailleachan o shean daonnan. A neist, a feasgar a bha seo, gu mi fhortanach, dé ach 'n'air a bha ch-uile sian seachad, thug a bhean an aire nach robh diar uisge 'staigh: "'S fhearr dhut," ors ise, "dhol dha'n tobar."[4]

"Cha déid", ors esan. "'S mise nach déid sin," ors esan. "Rinn mi barrachd ort fhéin a dh-obair an diugh, ach theirg thus ann, no fan as."

"Cha déid mi ann," ors ise, "ach theid thus ann." 'S thòisich an còmhdach.

"*Well*," ors ise, "a chiad dhuin' againn a chanas facal brìdhneadh, 'sè theid dha'n tobar."

Bha seo . . . math gu leòr. Thug an tàilleir 'ige 'n tàilleireachd—briogais na seacaid (? na 'b'r'ith de) bha e 'dianamh

's thòisich e air tàilleireachd agus dh'fhalbh a bhean agus thug i 'ic a' chuibheall agus thòisich i air snìomh.

Neist, thòisich an tàilleir air gabhail a' phuirt:[5]

"Dow ri idili àrum
Dow ri idili àrum
Dow ri idili how ri idili
How ri idili àrum,"

ors am bodach.

"Dan di ridili dow ri idili
Dan di ridili hàrum
Dow ri hidili how ri hidili
How ri hidili hàrum," [6]

ors a' chailleach.

*Well*, a nist, bha iad a' sealltainn air a chéile agus cha robh 'n còrr ann.

Ach dé ach thachair gu robh fear . . . cuideigin a' tighinn a' rathad, agus far a' robh 'n taigh aca-san aig crois na ròidean ann a shin—mar tha taigh . . . a staigh aig Lianacleit—cha robh fios aig an duine bhochd có rathad a ghabhadh e, agus chunnaig e an taigh a bh'ann a sheo agus solus as. Thuirt e ris fhéin gu rachadh e chon an taighe agus gun innseadh iad dha a' rathad dòigheil, far a robh e dol.

Dh'fhalbh e agus bhuail e as an dorust agus sheall an tàilleir air a bhean agus sheall a bhean air an tàilleir agus cha robh 'n còrr air ach:

"Dow ri idili àrum
Dow ri idili àrum
Dow ri idili how ri hidili
How ri hidili hàrum,"

ors am bodach.

"Dan ti ridili dow ri hidili
How ri hidili hàrum
Dow ri hidili how ri hidili
Dow ri didili hàrum,"

ors a' chailleach.

Agus bha 'n duine bochd an sheasamh a staigh.

"'N innseadh sibh dhomh," ors esan, "a' rathad," ors esan, "go leithid seo a dh-àite?"

Thòisich am bodach air ais air a phort, 's thòisich a' chailleach. Bha e 'coimhead orra.

"'M biodh sibh cho math," ors esan, "agus gun innseadh sibh dhomh," ors esan, "a' rathad go leithid seo a dh-àite?"

"Dow ri idili àrum
Dow ri idili àrum
Dow ri hidili how ri hidili
How ri hidili àrum,"

ors am bodach.

"Dan ti ridili how ri hidili
How ri hidili hàrum
Dow ri hidili how ri hidili
Dow ri didili hàrum,"

ors a' chailleach.

"Hó, chlann an Fhir Ad, cha bhi mise fada toirt bridhinn asaibh."

Agus ghearr e leum chon na caillich agus sgioblaich e leis i, cruinn, cothrom, còmhladh go miadhain an ùrlair agus chuir i dìreach car-a-mhoiltein dhith air an ùrlar 's bha 'm bodach ag obair air . . . tàilleireachd:

"Dow ri idili àrum
Dow ri idili àrum . . .

"A Mhic an Fhir Ad," ors esan, "gu dé tha thu dol a dhianamh ma choinneamh mo dha shùil."

"Dha'n tobar thu, dha'n tobar thu," ors ise.

*The Tailor and the Wife*

There was once a tailor and he was kept very busy. He had no-one living with him except his wife: there was no family. He was always working away at tailoring and his wife worked at spinning, as the old wives always used to do in the old days. Now, this evening, unfortunately, what should happen after everything was done, but that his wife noticed that there was not a drop of water in the house:

"You'd better," said she, "go to the well."[4]

"I will not," said he. "I will do no such thing," said he. "I have done more work to-day than you have, but you go or stay as you like."

"I will not go," said she, "but you shall." And the argument started.

"Well," said she, "the first one of us who says a word will be the one who goes to the well."

This was fine. The tailor took up his tailoring, a pair of trousers or a jacket (? or whatever) he was doing and he began to sew and his wife went and got out the spinning wheel and began to spin.

Now the tailor started to sing a *port*:[5]

"Dow ri idili arum
Dow ri idili arum
Dow ri idili how ri idili
How ri idili arum,"

went the old man.

"Dan di ridili dow ri idili
Dan di ridili harum
Dow ri hidili how ri hidili
How ri hidili harum," [6]

went the old woman.

Well, now, they were looking at each other, and that was all there was to it.

But what should happen but that someone was passing that way, and where their house stood, at the crossroads there—like the house . . . in at Lianacleit—the poor man did not know which road he ought to take, and he saw this house with a light showing. He said to himself that he would go to the house and that they would tell him the right way to the place where he was going.

He went and knocked at the door, and the tailor looked at his wife and the wife looked at the tailor and it was nothing but:

"Dow ri idili arum
Dow ri idili arum
Dow ri idili how ri hidili
How ri hidili harum,"

went the old man.

"Dan ti ridili dow ri hidili
How ri hidili harum
Dow ri hidili how ri hidili
Dow ri didili harum,"

went the old woman.

And the poor man was standing inside the door.

"Would you tell me," said he "the way," said he, "to such-and-such a place?"

The old man started up again on the *port* and the old woman started up. He was watching them.

"Would you be so good," said he, "as to tell me," said he, "the way to such-and-such a place?"

"Dow ri idili arum
Dow ri idili arum
Dow ri hidili how ri hidili
How ri hidili arum,"

went the old man.

"Dan ti ridili how ri hidili
How ri hidili harum
Dow ri hidili how ri hidili
Dow ri didili harum,"

went the old woman.

"Ho, you children of Yon One, I won't be long getting speech out of you!"

And he leaped towards the old woman and bundled her with him holus bolus to the middle of the floor and she went head-over-heels on the floor, and the old man was going on with his tailoring:

"Dow ri idili arum
Dow ri idili arum . . .

You son of Yon One," said he, "what are you going to do in front of my very eyes."

"To the well with you; to the well with you," cried she.

NOTES

[1] International distribution as noted by Thompson (1961:400): Finnish, Lithuanian, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Scottish, Irish, English, French, Catalan, Dutch, Flemish, Walloon, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovenian, Russian, Greek, Turkish, Iran, Palestine, India, Chinese, Spanish American, Portuguese American, West Indies, French-Canadian.

[2] Peter MacCormick is himself a good story-teller. I recorded his version in Hàclcit last year (SA 1965/84 B 1). It is very similar to Angus John MacLellan's version and Mr. MacCormick told me that he had in fact learnt the story from Mr. MacLellan.

[3] These are:

(*a*) I.F.C. MS. 1156:161-5. Manuscript text of recording made by Dr. Calum Maclean for the Irish Folklore Commission from

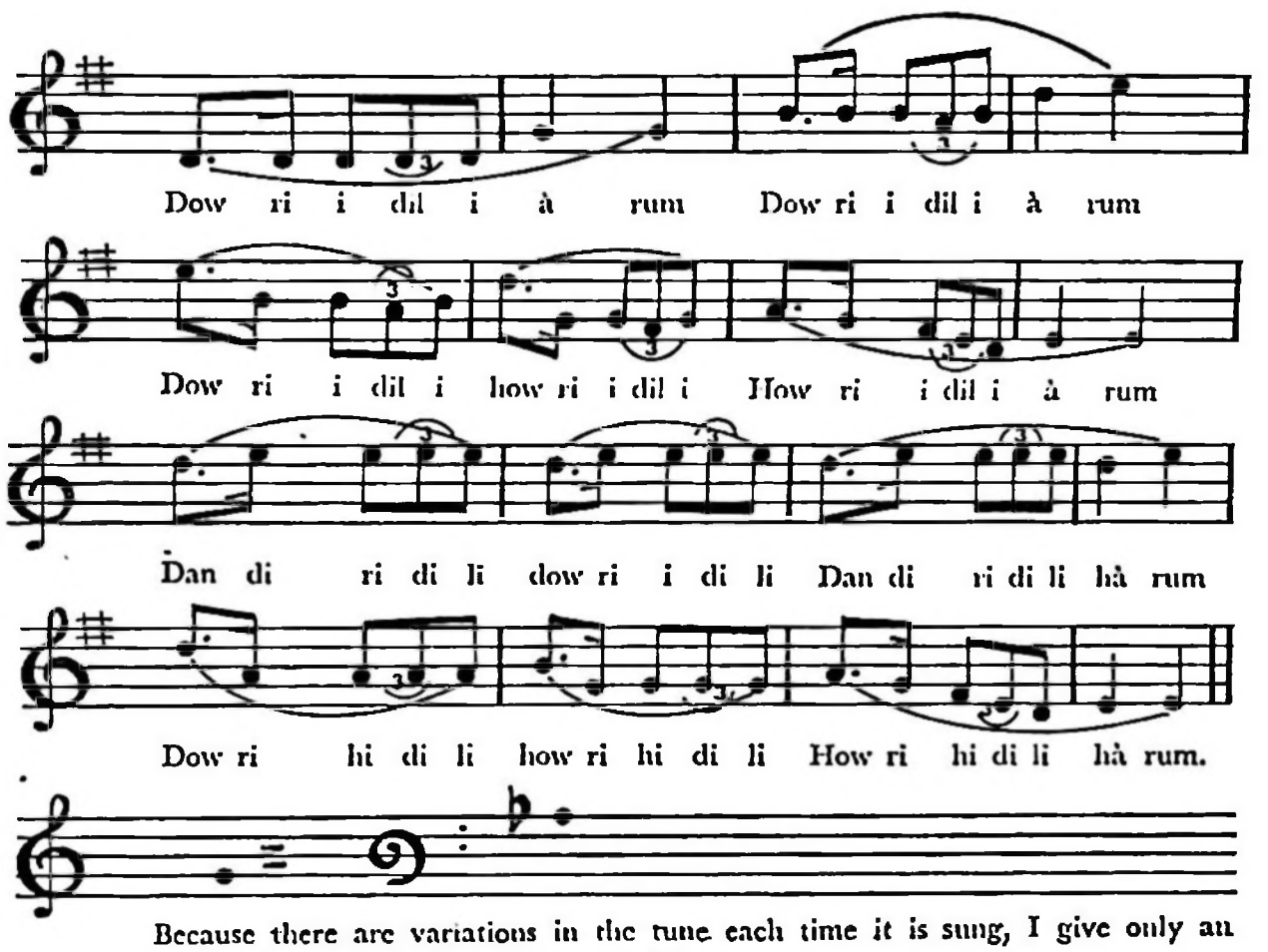
Angus John MacLellan at Hàcleit, 22.6.49. The School of Scottish Studies has a microfilm copy.

(*b*) Log 353-4. Recorded from Angus John MacLellan at Carnan Inn 28.7.49 by Professor Derick Thomson and J. Anthony on disc. Now in the School of Scottish Studies Archives.

[4] The quarrel in other versions of A.T. 1351 is more usually about barring a door, but it may also be about who is to have a particular delicacy, who is to do the housework, make the bed, return a borrowed pan, etc.

[5] The song, consisting of meaningless vocables, would not count as speech. The first of the 1949 texts (see Note 3 above) explains that the tailor and his wife always hummed a song as they worked. Incidentally, these vocables cannot be properly rendered in traditional Gaelic orthography.

[6] My colleague Miss Morag MacLeod has kindly supplied the following transcription of the tune:




Because there are variations in the tune each time it is sung, I give only an approximation to the basic melody.—M. M.

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Log
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SA
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# *The Heugh Mills at Dunfermline*

BASIL SKINNER

Detailed contemporary illustration of Scottish water-driven grain-mills is sufficiently uncommon to make a newly recorded painting of the Heugh Mills at Dunfermline worth a brief notice. Mills feature as picturesque elements in the landscape work of the Nasmyths and their contemporaries, but inevitably artistic rather than factual considerations weigh most. In the painting now reported[1] the design, appearance and exterior arrangements of an interesting series of mills can be clearly seen.

The Heugh Mills were situated immediately below the Frater of Dunfermline Abbey, lying on the steep hillside between the present Monastery Street and the river in Pittencrieff Glen. Peter Chalmers in his classic history of the town (Chalmers 1859:81) describes three mills—a flour mill, a meal mill and a snuff-mill—but the first of these was evidently the most important and is more specifically treated by him in *New Statistical Account* (1844:891).

That mills existed on this site for some centuries is evident not only from references in the records of Dunfermline Abbey (Innes 1842) but also in Slezer's view of the Abbey in 1693[2] which shows two mill buildings and two kilns beside the mill-lade (Plate XI). Again Thomas Pennant records in 1772:

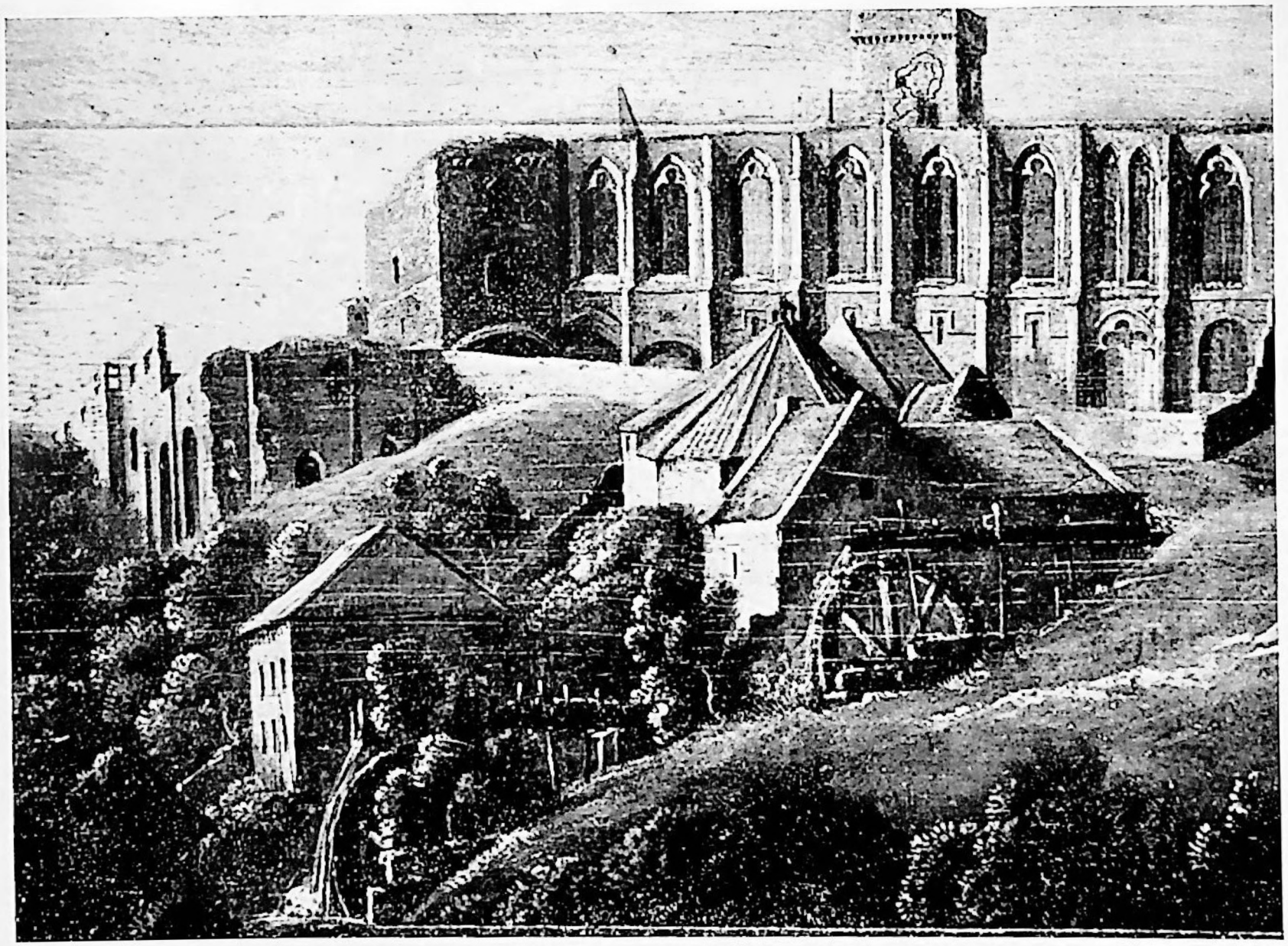
> The town wants the advantage of a river but has a small stream for economic uses which is conducted through the street in a flagged channel. At its discharge it joins another rivulet then, arriving at a fall into a wooded dell of a hundred feet in depth, becomes again useful in turning five mills, placed one below the other with room for as many more. Three of the mills are for corn; the fourth for flax, the fifth for beating iron.[3]

The building described in the *New Statistical Account* and illustrated in the painting was erected in 1784 or 1787 and constituted the only flour-mill (as against several grain-mills) in Dunfermline at the period. In 1819 the water-power proving inadequate in summer, a steam engine was installed and at that time the average annual manufacture was 7194 bolls.

The painting by Andrew Wilson (Plate XII) is dated 1793. The three mills are shown against the background of the conventual buildings of the Abbey, while to the right linen is

PLATE XI

The Heugh Mills at Dunfermline, 1693
Detail from Slezer's "View of Dunfermline Abbey" in his *Theatrum Scotiae*
(See page 188)



The Heugh Mills at Dunfermline, 1793
Detail of painting entitled *View of Dunfermline*. Oil on wood 24½ × 44 in. Signed Andrew Wilson 1793. In the collection of R. H. A. Hunt, Esq., of Logie House, Dunfermline
(See page 188)

put out to bleach or dry on open ground nearby. Behind the uppermost mill can be seen a large octagonal kiln for drying grain, just such as accompanied the mills in the Water of Leith village at Edinburgh. The arrangement of the three mills is made possible only by the fall of the ground. The mill-lade is carried in wooden troughs to over-shoot first the wheel of the top mill, then—the water collected and conducted through further troughs—to provide over-shot drive for the second mill. The method of drive adopted in the third and lowest mill cannot be seen but could well have been either over-shot or under-shot. Each of the two wheels shown must have measured about 15 ft. in diameter. All this can be seen equally plainly in plan in Wood's map of Dunfermline of 1823 (Wood 1828).

To-day quite substantial remains of the mills survive although much overgrown by trees, and they can be seen from the War Memorial in Monastery Street or inspected more closely after a precipitous climb from the footpath below. The outer walls of the mill buildings stand to a height of 18 or 20 feet, the lower courses showing masonry of two different periods, although no sign could be seen of the date-stone "1733" recorded by Ebenezer Henderson as at the foundation-level of one of the buildings (Henderson 1879:428). On the east wall of the top-most mill, wheelscrapes of three different radii indicate that the position or size of the millwheel there was altered. At the very top the stone-built tunnel of substantial size designed to carry the lade forward under Monastery Street can clearly be seen.

The Andrew Wilson who signed this painting may be identifiable with the landscape painter of that name who was born in Edinburgh in 1780 and studied with Alexander Nasmyth before going to London in 1797; if so this picture is the talented work of a boy of 13. Otherwise the signature may be that of a hitherto unrecorded local man.

NOTES

[1] *View of Dunfermline*: oil on wood 24½ × 44, signed *A'w Wilson pinxit* 1793: collection of R.H.A. Hunt, Esq., of Logie House, Dunfermline. Sincere thanks are due to Mr. Hunt for his permission to publish this painting.

[2] John Slezer: *Theatrum Scotiae*, 1693.

[3] Thomas Pennant: *A Tour in Scotland in 1772* (London 1776) 3:212. A water-colour drawing of the Mills by Moses Griffith is in the Thomas Pennant collection in the National Library of Wales. My thanks are due to Mr. Basil Megaw for bringing this to my attention.

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## *Some Eighteenth-Century Shetland Wool*

M. L. RYDER

The purpose of this note is to describe some pieces of cloth in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland. The first of these (NA325) has some raw wool with it, both being associated with Sir John Sinclair (1754-1835) although there is no evidence that the raw wool and the cloth have any connection. The catalogue records this cloth as a small portion of Sir John Sinclair's superfine brown cloth made from Scots wool, enclosed in a letter dated 25th April 1792 from Lord Fife in London to Mr. W. Rose his factor at Montcoffer House near Banff. The letter reads: "Inclosed you have a bit of Sir John Sinclair's superfine Clooth all made of Scots wool. I sppos you had rather I had sent a coat but indeed I sent you all I got, it is really very fine." The letter appears to be from the Fife papers, and was given to the museum in 1896 by Dr. W. Cramond who, according to Tayler and Tayler (1925), had access to these. The wool staple is pinned to a separate sheet of similar paper, on which is written the following, in apparently similar handwriting to that of the address on the letter: "Shetland wool from Sir John Sinclair, 1792". This wool is clearly contemporary with the cloth, but it is not recorded in the catalogue, and so may have no connection at all with the cloth.

The cloth is a fine, soft-handling, milled fabric that has been raised to give an appreciable nap. The yarns have become so close together in the milling that the weave structure is obscured. One system of yarns has an S twist, and the other a Z twist, and as this is more tightly spun it is probably the warp.

The second group of specimens comprise some clothes found during peat-cutting on the croft of Kurkiegarth, Voe, about 1926. They were not associated with a skeleton, being in a bundle three feet deep. Most of the clothes are in a poor state of preservation, the most recognisable item being a green jacket apparently of the eighteenth century. The other cloths are of brown colour, being apparently peat-stained or naturally pigmented. They include plain, 2/2 twill, and herringbone

TABLE

*Wool fibre measurements*

| Source | | Length (mm.) | Fibre diameter range (microns)* | Mean diameter | Most frequent diameter | Diameter distribution |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Voe* | | | | | | |
| brown yarn | (*a*) | — | 14-54<br>1 at 86 | 27 | 20 | skewed-to-fine (hairy medium) |
| yarn | (*b*) | — | 16-62 | 35 | 22 | skewed-to-fine (hairy medium) |
| green yarn | (*a*) | — | 12-60<br>1 at 70 | 27 | 22 | skewed-to-fine (hairy medium) |
| yarn | (*b*) | — | 14-70<br>1 at 102 | 30 | 20 | skewed-to-fine (hairy medium) |
| *Sinclair* | | | | | | |
| cloth | (*a*) | — | 16-40 | 24 | 26 | skewed-to-fine (generalised medium) |
| | (*b*) | — | 16-40 | 24 | 22 | |
| staple | | 75 | 10-30 | 20 | 20 | symmetrical (fine) |
| *Modern Shetland* | | | | | | |
| white | | 110 | 16-34 | 23 | 22 | almost symmetrical |
| white | | 140 | 16-46 | 27 | 20 | skewed-to-fine |
| moorit | | 100 | 12-46<br>1 at 54 and 60 | 24 | 18 | skewed-to-fine |

* One micron = 0·001 mm.

weaves. The green cloth has a weave that is a combination of plain weave and 2/2 twill. Both systems of yarns are S-spun. One has 24 yarns to the inch and the other 30. Microscopic examination of the brown 2/2 twill showed that only the coarse fibres are naturally pigmented, the fine fibres have a blue-green dye. The green cloth, too, has pigmented, coarse fibres, and the fine fibres show the bilateral effect common in fine wool in which one side of the fibre has a natural pigment, and the other takes up the dye. The diameters of the fibres in each yarn have a primitive skewed-to-fine distribution together with a few hairy fibres or kemps (see Table). They were thus of a type described as "hairy medium wool" found in Norse textiles from Scotland (Ryder 1964).

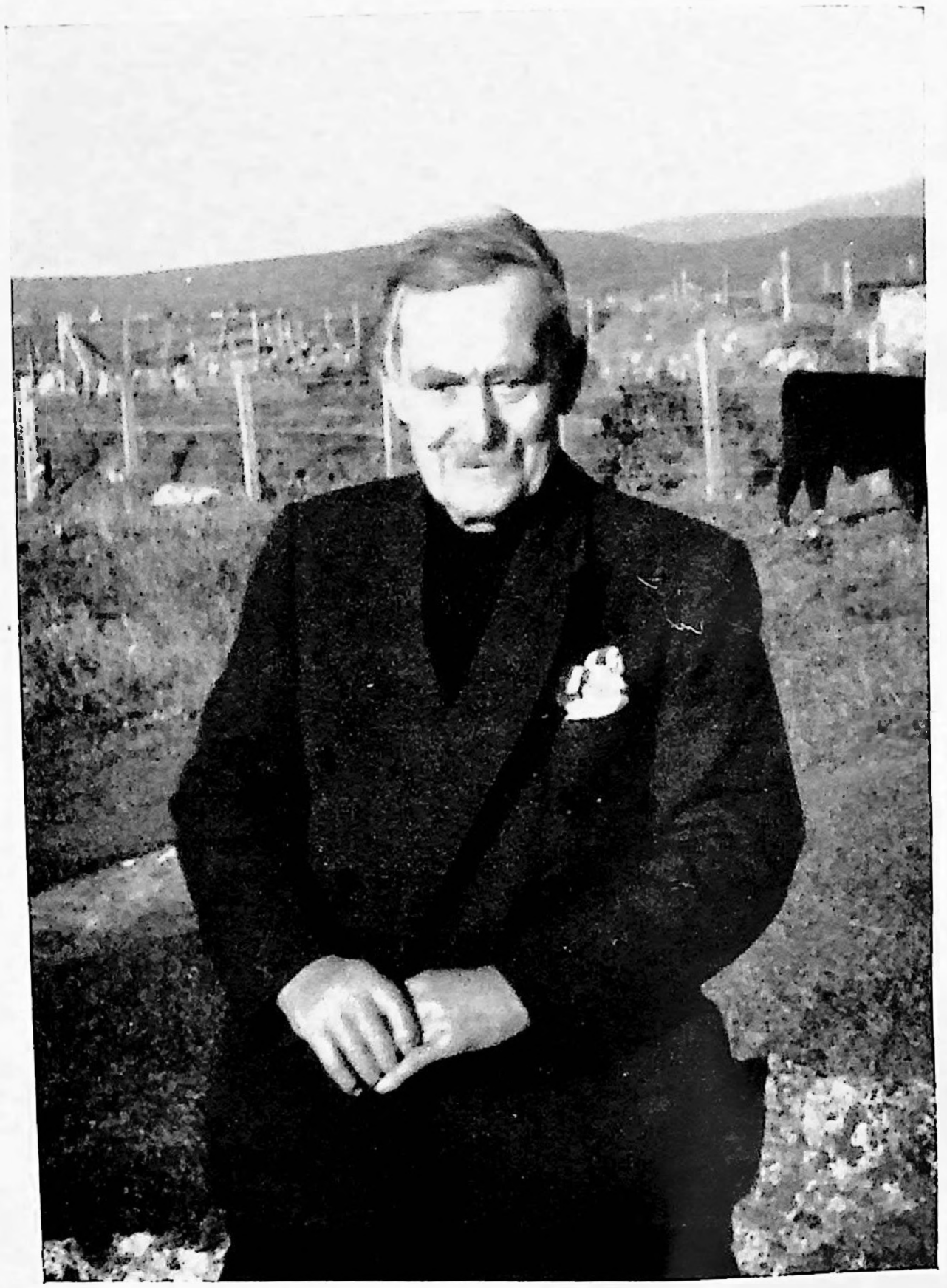
Although one cannot rule out the possibility that this was not a native Shetland product, the fleece type certainly corresponds to the "beaver" variety of Shetland described by the Highland Society Committee (1790) as having long hairs projecting beyond the wool.

The wool in Sinclair's cloth has the fibre diameter range, and skewed-to-fine distribution, characteristic of a native Scottish short wool such as the Shetland (see Table). Many of the fibres have a sparse distribution of granules internally, which could be pigment granules. The wool could therefore have been pale brown, or grey, before it was dyed.

The staple specimen, however, has the characteristic length, diameter and crimp of Merino wool (Ryder 1963). There are about 12 tight, regular crimps per inch, which corresponds to 60's quality Merino (or at least "Comeback", which is a $\frac{3}{4}$ Merino cross-bred). Modern Shetland wool is longer, and coarser (see Table), and the diameter has a primitive skewed-to-fine distribution as opposed to the symmetrical distribution around the most frequent value found in this specimen and in the Merino.

It is unlikely that this specimen does in fact contain any Merino influence because Sinclair was at this time advocating Shetland sheep to provide a substitute for Spanish Merino wool (Mitchison 1962), and in any case the first Merinos did not arrive in Edinburgh for his British Wool Society until 1791 (Carter 1964) only a year before the date on the staple. One is therefore led to the conclusion that it is wool from the "kindly" variety of Shetland sheep which produced finer, more uniform wool than the others (Highland Society 1790). This staple therefore provides support for the claim in this report that Shetland wool in the past could indeed be very fine and uniform. There is evidence for the existence of a true fine wool in Roman specimens from the continent (Ryder, unpublished measurements), and a Roman specimen (FR483) from Falkirk, which could possibly have been imported, had a symmetrical distribution, with a mean fibre diameter as low as 17 microns. The two yarns in some medieval cloth from Loch Treig (HT170) were of the same type of wool and had mean diameters of 18 and 20 microns respectively (Ryder 1964). Sir Joseph Banks, who regarded the Shetland sheep as too primitive to grow fine wool (Mitchison 1962) was clearly wrong if he assumed that all Shetland sheep were of the hairy "beaver" type.

PLATE XIII



ANGUS MACLELLAN, M.B.E. ("Aonghus Beag")
1869-1966

At Frobost, South Uist, 1962
Photographed by Dr J. L. Campbell
(See page 193)

I am grateful to Miss A. S. Henshall and her colleagues at the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland for providing the samples, the descriptions of the cloth and the information given in the introduction.

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# *Angus MacLellan* M.B.E. (*"Aonghus Beag"*)

1869-1966

J. L. CAMPBELL

With the death of Angus MacLellan last March at Frobost in South Uist in the ninety-seventh year of his age, one of the last of the great Gaelic storytellers of the Hebrides recorded by the School of Scottish Studies has gone from us. "Aonghus Beag" was one of the comparatively small number of Gaelic storytellers who survived, fortunately, into the days of the tape recorder. I shall not attempt to compare him with others whom I have known, such as Duncan MacDonald, Seonaidh Caimbeul ("Seonaidh mac Dhomhnaill 'ic Iain Bhàin"), James MacKinnon in Barra ("Seumas Iain Ghunnairigh") or Neil Gillies ("Niall Mìhcheil Nìll") all of whom, alas, have also passed away. It is enough to say here that all of them were strong and interesting personalities, the like of whom can hardly long survive the disappearance of monoglot Gaelic speakers; but Angus MacLellan was particularly interesting, and particularly valuable to the School of Scottish Studies, owing to the enormous amount of material which he preserved with a memory which was unclouded up to the time of his death at a very advanced age, and to the very

vivid and lively way in which his stories were told. He is a person to whom the folklorist and the social historian of the future are going to be greatly indebted.

My personal acquaintance with "Aonghus Beag" went back to the winter of 1948-49, when he was living in the house of his nephew the well-known piper Mr. Angus Campbell, and I was taken there by the late Rev. Fr. Alec MacKellaig, parish priest of Bornish, to meet Angus MacLellan and hear some of his stories. At that time, no recording machine was available. In November of 1949 I returned to South Uist with an American machine, the Webster wire recorder, on an expense grant given by the Leverhulme Foundation.[1] The late Dr. Calum MacLean was then working in Benbecula with Angus MacMillan ("Aonghus Barrach") and other reciters; as he had not time to reach Angus MacLellan himself, he suggested that I should undertake the recording of some of his stories, although at the time the principal purpose of my visits to Uist was to record songs, particularly waulking songs.

In those days there was no electricity in South Uist apart from the Lochboisdale Hotel, Daliburgh Hospital and one or two private houses. To the Lochboisdale Hotel Angus MacLellan very kindly came on 23rd November 1949 for a first session, and recorded three ballads and two stories, the Ballads of the Sea-Hag (*Muilgheartach*), of the Smithy, and of Kismul,[2] and the stories of the Widow's Revenge on Clanranald and the Reason why the Sea is Salt. During the next two years (when I was also working with many other reciters) he recorded a further thirteen stories for me on wire. All this material was copied on to tape for the School of Scottish Studies, and probably all of it has been recorded from him directly on to tape again since 1957.

So vigorous was Angus MacLellan both physically and mentally that in 1949 I had the impression that he must be a man of about 65 years of age at the most. I was astonished to learn years later that by November 1949 he had passed his eightieth birthday. Even then, and for some years later, it was his habit to spend several weeks alone every summer in the thatched house beside Loch Eynort in which he had been born on the 4th of July 1869, in order to look after his sheep; he had the reputation in Uist of being a first-class handler of sheep.

By late 1951 it was apparent that even such a good wire

recorder as the Webster was going to be superseded by tape, and it was also clear that when the proposed installation of electricity by the Hydro Board in South Uist took place, recording was going to be very much easier to do there. It was resumed in the winter of 1957-58 with a Grundig, my machine being at times used by the Rev. Fr. John MacLean, parish priest of Bornish, and from the spring of 1958 many more visits were made to Uist with the main object of recording Angus MacLellan and his sister Mrs. Campbell, in view of their age, the vividness of their memories, the immense amount of traditional material which they knew, and their eagerness to record it. Between this time and his death in March 1966 Angus was also recorded for the School of Scottish Studies by the late Dr. Calum Maclean (from 1958 to 1960, 111 items), then by Mr. D. A. MacDonald (1963 to 1965, 80 items) and by Dr. Alan Bruford in November 1965 (6 items). Fr. MacLean recorded 18 items in 1957-58, and the writer over 200 items (of which about 90 were autobiographical) between April 1958 and August 1965.

As a precise catalogue of all this material would take up a considerable amount of space, and would also necessitate the checking of recordings both in the School of Scottish Studies and the Canna archives, it is not attempted here. It is sufficient to say that Angus MacLellan's stock of tales included all kinds of things, Fingalian stories and ballads, international folk-tales, ghost stories (not that he himself believed in ghosts), fairy stories, local history, and many personal reminiscences. Also, every now and again he would break into song, singing with a remarkably strong and true voice such things as songs made by the Bard of Laisgeir which I have certainly never heard sung by anyone else. He had a most interesting version of the air of *Oran na Comhachaig*, "The Owl of Strone", which has been transcribed and printed by Mr. Francis Collinson in his *Traditional and National Music of Scotland* (London, 1966, p. 60); this kind of air may have been used for the chanting of bardic verse. Evenings spent at Frobost in recording songs and stories from Angus MacLellan and his sister (now in her hundreth year) passed very quickly and often lasted into the small hours of the morning. All folklorists who have visited them have been much indebted to the help, kindness and hospitality of Angus MacLellan's niece and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Patrick MacPhee.

Some of the stories and ballads Angus MacLellan used to

recite are among the classics of traditional oral Gaelic literature, and it is exceptionally fortunate that most of these were recorded more than once from him by different persons. Such stories were the Youthful Exploits of Fionn MacCumhail,[3] How the Fingalians Lost their Hunting, the Rowan Mansion, the Death of Diarmaid, the story of Conall Gulbann,[4] the story of the Donn Ghualainn,[5] An Gadaiche Greugach ("The Old Robber relates three adventures to free the sons of the King of Ireland"), Bobban the Carpenter, and others. In many cases too, Angus MacLellan could remember the names of the persons from whom he had originally learnt the stories, a matter of some interest in connection with the transmission of such traditional material.

All these and many other songs and stories, and Angus MacLellan's many personal reminiscences—he was reliving the first thirty years of his life, including the years he spent working on mainland farms, with great vividness while I was working with him in 1960 and 1961—were told with great verve and vigour and with particularly effective dialogue, the more so since Angus MacLellan possessed to a remarkable degree the capacity for acting the different characters in his stories, and could imitate their Gaelic dialects when doing so, as listeners who heard some of his shorter tales broadcast by the BBC will remember.

In the 1965 New Year's Honours list, Angus MacLellan received the award of the M.B.E. for his extensive contribution to the preservation of Gaelic oral literature, an award which gave the greatest pleasure to his many friends, not only for personal reasons, but because of the honour that it reflected on Gaelic storytellers as a class and the recognition of the value of the oral Gaelic tradition that it implied. This honour was celebrated by a very well attended céilidh held in Bornish parish hall on 13th May 1965, where Angus MacLellan himself recited a ballad, and not a word of English was used throughout the proceedings. His sister was unable to come to this céilidh, but a tape recording of most of it was played to her afterwards.

In the same year Angus MacLellan was elected a chieftain of the Gaelic Society of Inverness. It was then the fervent hope of his friends that he would live to reach his hundred years, and record still more traditional songs and stories while doing so. This, however, was not to be. In the severe winter of 1965-66 there were signs that his vitality was beginning to

lessen, and on 16th March 1966 he passed away after a brief spell of illness. He had lived a long life and had faced the hardships of poverty in South Uist and ill-paid hard work on mainland farms with good humour, courage and integrity sustained by his religion, circumstances common in the old Gaelic world; in old age he had achieved well-deserved honour and comfort. He leaves behind him recordings of Gaelic folk-tales and folklore on which scholars may work for many years to come, and an account of Scottish rural life in the 1890s from the ploughman's point of view which should be of permanent interest to the social historians. He must have been one of the greatest contributors to the archives of the School of Scottish Studies. These things are his memorial.

NOTES

[1] Apart from this, official encouragement took the form of the impounding of this wire recorder by the British Customs for six months after arrival from America. Wire recorders are usually denigrated, but the Webster was a good machine and must have been the best of them.

[2] See Donald MacLeod, *Orain Nuadh Ghaeleach* (Inverness 1811). The ballad is not in praise of Kismul Castle as is sometimes supposed, but in praise of a house built by a Ruairi MacNeil at Steinn in Skye which is likened to Kismul Castle. There is a wood-cut of the house at the end of the poem, p. 176.

[3] Compare the version taken down by Fr. Allan McDonald from Alasdair Johnston on Eriskay and printed by the Rev. Dr. George Henderson in the *Celtic Review*, Vols. II and III.

[4] See Alan Bruford's important article on *Eachtra Chonaill Gulban* in Vol. XXXI of *Béaloideas* (1963) 1-50. A transcription of the recording of *Conall Gulban* made by Angus MacLellan will be printed in the next volume of the *Transactions of The Gaelic Society of Inverness.*

[5] A version of the Táin Bó Cuailgne story. This was printed by Dr. Calum Maclean in *Arv* 15 (1959) 160-80.

## THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF CELTIC STUDIES

The Third International Congress of Celtic Studies will be held in Edinburgh from 23rd-29th July 1967. The Organising Committee, under the presidency of Professor Jackson, has arranged for five plenary sessions, thirty-two sectional meetings in sixteen parallel sessions, one full-day and one half-day excursion to places of particular interest to Celtic studies. There will be a number of receptions for members of the Congress.

Organising Secretary is Dr. W. F. H. Nicolaisen, School of Scottish Studies, 27 George Square, Edinburgh 8, to whom all enquiries should be addressed. EDITOR