

# A Lewis Man's Song Notebook

MORAG MACLEOD

Two songs recorded from Roderick Campbell appear in the issue of *Tocher* (No. 43) dedicated to Hamish Henderson. The recordings were made by Hamish himself in 1958, but mention is made of a notebook given to me by Eric Cregeen, which was given to him by Mr Campbell. It contains seven 'little songs', songs that would be sung to children, either to put them to sleep or to amuse them. It contains, as well, six waulking songs, including versions of the two collected by Hamish Henderson. In the interview quoted in *Tocher* No. 43, Mr Campbell mentions that he learned the songs from his mother who was Annie Maclean from Arnol, and his sister (presumably Mòr who was married to Donald Smith from Bragar).

The original text with translations, and music where available, are given below. Mr Campbell occasionally varied the vocables on tape, slightly, from those he wrote in the notebook. The text given underneath the music corresponds with that on the tapes. Where he has left the refrains incomplete, I have left them thus.

Roderick Campbell was born in North Bragar in Lewis in 1881. He was a teacher in St Kilda for a short time, and then in Argyll and the Islands for about forty years. He retired from teaching in 1943, but it was not until 1948 that he moved to Ardrishaig, where Hamish Henderson and Eric Cregeen made recordings of him.

Both Roderick and his brother Peter won the Bardic crown at the National Mod, in 1930 and 1929 respectively. Roderick moved to Stornoway in 1958, but moved again shortly after that to Glasgow, where he died in 1963.

## ORAIN BHEAGA LITTLE SONGS

There are, I think, many reasons why little songs have not been given the attention that has been given, for example, to waulking songs in recent times — but only in recent times. Both have been kept alive through their functional nature, but the time is coming when these songs will be known only from published versions. Songs for play with children would have been sung more publicly than those for actually lulling them to sleep. It is possible that only members of the household would hear lullabies, as mothers or anyone else nursing a child would be hoping for peace and quiet at such a time, and visitors would cramp the style of any singer. It is likely also that mothers would invent words as they sang, to suit the circumstances and names of the particular child. The songs, therefore, developed independently. This may account for the fact that no two versions

of little songs are exactly the same, in spite of their shortness. The only influence on the memory would be that of the household in which the person heard the song in childhood.

Chaidh na féidh seachad ort  
am bealach dubh a' ghàrraidh.

Siodagan, seòdagan, etc.

Leag iad thu, thog iad thu  
am bealach dubh a' ghàrraidh.

The deer went past you  
in the dark breach of the garden wall.

They knocked you down, they lifted you up  
in the dark breach of the garden wall.

Chaidh na féidh seach - ad ort Chaidh na féidh seach - ad ort

Chaidh na féidh seach - ad ort Am beal - ach dubh a' ghàrr - aidh.

SA 1958/193 A3

Siodagan, seòdagan, cuid an leinibh bhig  
Chaidh am bodach leis a' chreig, 's chan ith e mìr a-nochd.

Tìribh seo, buailibh seo, cuid an leinibh bhig  
Chaidh am bodach leis a' chreig, 's chan ith e mìr a-nochd.

Siodagan, seòdagan, (sheedugan, shodugan), the little infant's food  
The old man fell over the cliff, and he'll not eat a bite tonight.

Dry this, thresh this, the little infant's food  
The old man fell over the cliff and he'll not eat a bite tonight.

These two would not seem to be the same song, but Roderick Campbell gives them the same refrain. This may have been quite a common occurrence, and something

similar may be seen in some of the other songs in this collection. The second rhyme is in *Aithris is Oideas*, and I know it myself from childhood, or a form of it, used when a child was getting impatient for his gruel to cook. The words were

Bruich, bruich, bruich, cuid an leinibh bhig,  
leanabh beag a' call a chéille, 's a chuid fhéin a' bruich.

Cook, cook, cook, the little baby's portion,  
The little baby going mad while his own meal is cooking.

It was spoken, not chanted or sung, and the last 'bruich' would form the first word of a repeat of the verse. A baby's food would usually be prepared separately, and one would not expect the baby to understand the words used. The rhythm of the words was of paramount importance in an attempt to distract the baby in its fretting. Could Roderick Campbell's version possibly be for an older child, to accompany the motions of eating, with the food 'falling over the cliff' into the child's tummy?

*Banaltram shunndach*

Banaltram shunndach thogadh 'n leanabh beag (three times)  
Lit' agus bùrn a thogadh 'n leanabh beag

Mir' agus mùirn a thogadh 'n leanabh beag (three times)  
Lit' air a' ghlùin a thogadh 'n leanabh beag.

It's a cheerful nurse would rear the little baby;  
porridge and water would rear the little baby.

Play and merriment would rear the little baby;  
porridge at the knee would rear the little baby.

Ban - al - tram shunn - dach thog - adh 'n lean - abh beag Ban - al - tram shunn - dach

thog - adh 'n lean - abh beag Ban - al - tram shunn - dach

thog - adh 'n lean - abh beag Lit' ag - us burn a thog - adh 'n lean - abh beag

A version to be found in *Eilean Fraoich* (p. 33), recommends porridge *without* water, that is, presumably, made with milk only. The barring in *Eilean Fraoich* is, I think, wrong, and should be as it appears in *Amhrain Anna Sheumais*, i.e. the first bar line should be after the second Bb. Mr Campbell's version differs from those slightly, in melody and in rhythm. A text, with an explanatory note, appears in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, Volume XVI, 107.

*Cagaran gaolach*

Cagaran, cagaran, cagaran gaolach  
Cagaran laghach air fear de mo dhaoine.

Dèan an cagaran 's dùin do shùilean,  
's ó, ma chaidil thu, slàn gun dùisg thu.

Tha bó dhubh agam, tha bó dhubh bhuam,  
tha trì bà brice 's a' bhruthaich ud shuas.

Lovable little darling, little darling, little darling,  
Lovable little darling, one of my kin.

Murmur softly and close your eyes,  
and oh, since you've slept, may you waken in good health.

I have a black cow, I'm missing a black cow,  
there are three piebald cows up yonder hill.

The first two verses are well known as taught in schools, or for Mod competitions. The third verse is known in many variations in oral tradition, and is sung on the cassette, *Orain*, by Christina Shaw.

*Gheibh thu caoirich*

Gheibh thu caoirich, gheibh thu crodh (three times),  
gheibh thu buaille fearainn, gheibh (pronounced 'gheo').

Gheibh thu othaisg dhubh na ciora (three times)  
gheibh thu laogh dubh na bà  
gheibh thu othaisg dhubh na ciora  
's a' bhó bhiorach leis an àl.

Gheibh thu caoirich, etc.

Caith do bhrògan dubha dubha  
caith do bhrògan dubh' a Nèill

Caith do bhrògan dubha dubha —  
Shiubhail iad, 's cha dèan iad feum

Gheibh thu caoirich, etc.

Théid mo ghaol suas am fireach  
théid mo laogh don an tràigh,  
théid mo ghaol suas am fireach,  
breacan guailne air mo ghràdh.

Gheibh thu caoirich, etc.

You'll get sheep, you'll get cattle,  
you'll get cattle pasture, that you will.

You'll get the pet sheep's black one-year-old,  
you'll get the cow's black calf.  
You'll get the pet sheep's black one-year-old,  
and the horned cow with its young.

You'll get sheep, etc.

Wear out your black, black shoes,  
wear out your black shoes, Neil.  
Wear out your black, black shoes —  
they've worn out, and they will not do.

You'll get sheep, etc.

My love will go up the hill,  
my little one will go to the shore,  
my love will go up the hill,  
my darling wears a shoulder plaid.

You'll get sheep, etc.

Gheibh thu caoir-ich, gheibh thu crodh Gheibh thu caoir-ich, gheibh thu crodh

Gheibh thu caoir-ich, gheibh thu crodh Gheibh thu buai-le fear-ainn gheibh.

Sung as a lullaby by, for example, Jessie MacKenzie on SA 1957/15 A.5, but the text is different.

Maraich' thu ma bhios tu buan  
's cha chuir am muir ort, a luaidh

Maraich' thu ma bhios tu beò  
's cha chuir am muir ort, a sheòid.

Both verses may be translated, 'You'll be a sailor, if you're spared, and you will not be seasick, my love / my hero.'

The verse, 'Wear out your shoes ...' etc. is sung by the Campbell family of Roag, Dunvegan, as a reel with a very interesting stress-pattern in the second 'turn' of it.

Meal do bhrògan, caith do bhrògan  
Meal do bhrògan dubha, Nèill,  
Nuair a rachadh i na siubhal,  
Meal do bhrògan dubha, Nèill.

'Enjoy your shoes, wear out your shoes, enjoy your black shoes, Neil, when she put on speed, enjoy your black shoes, Neil.' It is sung by Mary Ann Kennedy on the cassette *Strings Attached*, published by Macmeanmna, Skye 1991.

*Hó na dèan cadal fada*

Hó na dèan cadal fada  
Hó, na dèan cadal trom —  
Seall a steach fo bhruaich do leabaidh  
Gheibh thu gàirdean rag is trom.

M'ulaidh, m'eudail fhéin mo luran  
M'ulaidh m'eudail fhéin mo rùn  
Dùin an t-sùil is dèan an cadal  
socair siobhalt air mo ghlùn.

Ho, do not sleep for long,  
ho, do not sleep deeply —  
look, underneath your bed  
you'll find a rigid, heavy arm.

My treasure, my own jewel, my love  
 my treasure, my own jewel, my dear,  
 close your eyes and go to sleep  
 gently, peacefully, on my knee.

Hó na dean ca - dal fa - da Hó na dean ca - dal trom

Seall a steach fo bhruaich do leab - aith Gheibh thu gàir - dean rag is trom.

SA 1958/193 A6

The second verse is conventional, and could be a spontaneous composition of the person from whom Roderick Campbell heard it.

The first verse belongs to a song traditionally attached to Lochaber. Mrs Kate Nicolson, South Uist, was recorded by Donald Archie MacDonald telling the story of the song, on SA 1963/15. It is told in Gaelic, and this is my translation.

Well, it was about a girl of Lochaber origins who was in service out by the Rough Bounds out there a long time ago. She was working in a house, and she knew fine what was going on (happening) to other poor souls who were staying the night. And this fellow came ...

D.A.M. And they were killing them, were they?

They were killing them. This fellow came, and she recognised him, and she did not know how she could manage to tell him about things. There was no Gaelic in the household. But when he went to sleep, she began as if she was lulling a child, and making a sort of song, as she was able, which saved him his life. And when he got away, he married her, as well he might!

D.A.M. Yes, indeed. And how did the song go?

'S a ghaoil na dean cadal idir  
 Chràidh, na dean cadal trom  
 Fhir a mhuinntir Loch Abar  
 Chràidh, na dean cadal trom.

My dear, do not sleep at all  
 Darling, do not sleep deeply;  
 You from Lochaber  
 Darling don't sleep deeply.

Kate Nicolson sings three verses on this recording. Versions of the song with a story have also been recorded from James C. M. Campbell, Kintail, on SA 1951/45, SA 1957/103 and SA 1973/1975.

*Hó mo luran*

Hó mo luran, hé mo luran  
 hó mo luran, fliùr mo ghràidh-sa,  
 dèan an cadal air mo ghlùinean,  
 dùin do shùilean ciùine tlàtha.

Bidh mo luran anns a' mhùileann,  
 thèid e sgiobalt' chun na h-àirigh;  
 thèid mo ghaol-sa mach an taonach  
 chruinneachadh nan caorach bhàna.

Hó mo luran, etc.

Rinn thu 'n cadal, 's dhùin do shùilean,  
 thùirling brat o'n Ti as àird ort;  
 tha thu cuairtiche le m' aoibhneas  
 ainglean caoibhneis cumail blàiths ort.

Hó mo luran, etc.

Ho, my love, hey, my love  
 ho my love, my beloved flower,  
 go to sleep on my lap,  
 close your soft, gentle eyes.

My love will be in the mill,  
 he'll go smartly to the shieling;  
 my darling will go out by the hillside  
 to gather the white-faced sheep.

Ho, my love, etc.

You have gone to sleep, your eyes have closed,  
 a cloak from the Most High covers you;



you are surrounded by my happiness,  
kind angels keep you warm.

Ho, my love, etc.

Hé mo lu-ran hé mo lu-ran Hé mo lu-ran fiùr mo ghràidh - sa

Dean an ca - dal air mo ghùin - ean Dùin do shùil - ean ciùin - c tlàth - a.

SA 1958/193 A5

Like *Cagaran Gaolach*, this is familiar more as a song learned in school and for Mod competitions. The words have a flavour of self-conscious composition by a literate person.

#### ORAIN LUÀIDH WAULKING SONGS

Hì liù a ra hù a  
Gur tu mo chruinneag bhòidheach  
Hì liù a ra hù a.

A nighean bhuidhe tha 's a' ghleann,  
na fir an geall do phòsadh.

Gur binn' thu na na cuthagan  
's a' bhruthaich 's am bi neòinean.

Gur binn' thu na na clàrsaichean,  
gur ait thu na na ròsan.

Rachainn fada fada leat  
nan gealladh tu mo phòsadh.

Rachainn leat a dh'Uibhist  
far am buidhicheadh an t-eòrna.

Rachainn leat a scar 's a siar  
gun each, gun srian, gun bhòtainn.

Falt buidh' ort mar na ditheanan  
's a' chùr ga chur an òrdugh.

Rachainn do na h-Innsachan  
nam biodh do dhaoine deònach.

Rachainn leat a dh'Eirinn  
as do léine ghil gun chòta.

Chuala mi na minisdeirean  
bruidhinn air do bhòidhchead.

Mise muigh an cùl na tobhta  
's tusa staigh a' còrdadh.

Hi liù a ra hù a  
You are my beautiful girl  
hi liù a ra hù a

Yellow-haired girl in the glen,  
men are keen to marry you.

You are sweeter-voiced than cuckoos  
on the daisy-covered hillside

You are sweeter-voiced than harps,  
more cheering than roses

I would go far, far away with you  
if you would promise to marry me

I would go with you to Uist  
where the barley ripens

I would go east or west with you,  
with no horse or reins or boots

Yellow hair on you like flowers,  
with a comb keeping it in place.

I would go to the Indies with you  
if your people would approve.

I would go to Ireland,  
with you in nothing but your shift.

I have heard ministers  
speaking of your beauty.

Me outside at the back of the house wall,  
you inside arranging your marriage.



A dhiù a ra hù à Gur tu mo chruinn - eag bhòidh - each A  
dhiù à ra hù à Nighean bhuidh - e tha 's a' ghlèann, Tha fir an geall do phòs-adh.

SA 1957/15 B4

This is one of the most popular waulking songs, especially in Lewis and Harris. Versions appear in *Eilean Fraoich* (pp. 79 & 80), and in *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* (p. 222).

*O ró mo chuachag*

Hi rì liù hó  
O ró mo chuachag  
Bhi rì liù lé hó.

Cha b'fhada bhiodh mo leannan  
ùghinn á Beannaibh a' Chuailein.

'S nuair a thigeadh e dhachaigh  
's mi nach fhaireadh an gruaimèan.

Tha mo cheist air a' ghille  
thug an linne mu thuath air.

Le bàta beag biorach  
nach tilleadh tonn uaine.

Fuil a' bhric air do léine  
fuil an fhéidh air do ghualainn.

'S truagh nach robh mi le mo leannan  
ann an lagan beag uaigneach.

Fo dhubhar na coille  
far an goireadh a' chuachag.

Cha b'e uisg' an lòin shalaich  
thug mo leannan gu cuan leis.

Ach uisge-beatha nan gleannaibh  
air a staladh trì uairean;

Uisge-beatha na Spàinne,  
fion làidir gun truailleachd.

Tha mo cheist air a' ghille  
thug an linne mu thuath air.

Hi ri liù lé ho  
o ró, my dear young girl  
hi ri liù lé ho

My sweetheart would not take long  
to come from the bens of Cuailean

And when he would come home,  
I would certainly not feel sad.

I admire the lad  
who went towards the northern firth

with a sharp-stemmed little boat  
which a green swell would not hold back.

Trout's blood on your shirt,  
deer's blood on your shoulder.

Oh, to be with my sweetheart  
in a lonely little hollow,

In the shade of the forest  
where the cuckoo calls.

It was not water from a dirty pool  
that my sweetheart took to sea

But whisky from the glens,  
thrice stilled;

Whisky of Spain,  
strong, fine wine.

I admire the lad  
who knows the times.

Hi ri liù lé hó Hó ró mo chuach-ag Hi ri liù lé hó

Cha b'fha-da bhiodh mo leann-an tugh'n à beann-aibh a' Chua-lein (Hi)

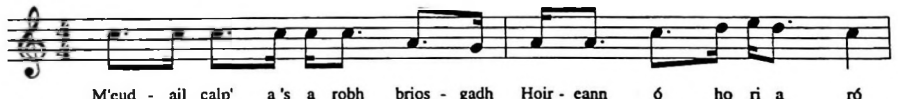
SA 1957/15 B3

Another popular song, using motifs contained in other songs, (see *Hebridean Folksongs*, Volume 3, 18–33). There are two versions in *Eilean Fraich*, pp. 233 & 234).


*Hoireann ó hi ri a ró*

M'eudail calpa 's an robh briogadh —  
 dhìreadh tu bheinn air a sitheadh  
 thigeadh tu far an robh mise —  
 O, na ruigeadh, cha bu mhisde.  
 'S truagh nach robh mi le mo leannan  
 'n taobh na beinne guirme caise  
 gun duine bhith oirnn am fagas  
 ach leanabh beag gun shalbh, gun astar  
 nach innseadh an sgeula dhachaigh.  
 'S truagh nach robh mi le mo chéile  
 'n taobh na beinne guirm ag éirigh  
 gun duine a bhith gar n-éisdeachd  
 ach na rionnagan 's na reultan.  
 Mhic an fhìr tha 'n tìr nan gleannaibh,  
 gheall thu mo phòsadh gun cheannach  
 's buaile chur fo chaoirich gheala.  
 Bha mi latha falbh nam beannaibh,  
 có thachair rium ach na fearaibh;  
 dh' fheadraich iad có dhiubh a leanainn.  
 Thuirt mi riuth' nach b'iad bh'air m'aire,  
 gur e bh'agam mac fir baile  
 aig am biodh na caoirich gheala.  
 Siud mo leannan, 's cha b'e fuath e  
 's cha b'e neul na gaoithe tuath e,  
 's cha b'e 'n gormshuileach air chuan e  
 's cha b'e 'n glaisean 's an là fhuar e.  
 Mhic an fhìr tha 'n tìr an eòrna,  
 gheall thu na preasanan dhòmhsa —  
 cùl mo chinn a chur an òrdugh.

My love the leg with the springy step —  
 You would climb the hill, however steep,  
 you would come to me —  
 Oh, if you did, it would not be a bad thing.  
 A pity I was not with my sweetheart  
 beside the steep green mountain,  
 with no-one near us  
 except a little child who could not walk, or go far,  
 who would not tell a tale home.  
 A pity I was not with my love  
 beside the green hill, on rising,  
 with no-one listening to us  
 but the stars.  
 Son of him who is in the glen country,  
 you promised to marry me without dowry  
 and to fill a fold with white sheep.  
 One day I was walking the hills,  
 whom should I meet but the men;  
 they asked which of them I would follow.  
 I told them they were not on my mind,  
 that I had a gentleman's son  
 who had white sheep.  
 There goes my love, no fearsome thing,  
 no cloud of the north wind he,  
 no unskilled eye at sea his,  
 no grey-face on a cold day.  
 Son of him in the land of barley,  
 you promised me presents —  
 to set my back hair in order.



M'eud - ail calp' a's a robh brios - gadh Hoir - eann ó ho ri a ró



M'eud - ail calp' a's a robh brios - gadh Hoir - eann ó ho ri a ró.

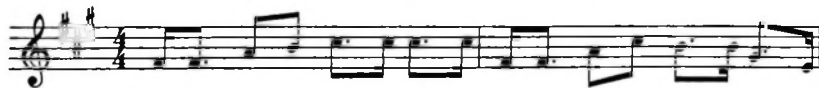
*Fhir a' chinn duibh*

Fhir a' chinn duibh ó a hiù a  
 Fhir a' chinn duibh hiù a éile  
 Fhir a' chinn duibh ó a hiù a.

'S moch an-diugh a rinn mi éirigh  
 Ma 's moch an duigh, bu mhuich an-dé e  
 Ghabh mi mach ri srath nan geugan;  
 Shuair mi 'ghruagach dhonn gun éirigh.  
 Mhic an fhir tha 'n cùl an t-sléibhe  
 dam bu dual bhith uasal spéiseil,  
 's math a nighinn fhìn do léine,  
 's cha b'ann le uisge na féithe  
 ach bùrn na h-aibhne 's brais a leumadh.  
 O na stracadh bann do léine  
 Na stracadh, gu fuaghainn fhéin i  
 le snàthad chaol is snàth féille

Black-haired one, o a hiù a  
 black-haired one, hiù a éile  
 black-haired one, o a hiù a

Early I got up today,  
 if early today, earlier yesterday,  
 I went out by the glen of the branches;  
 I found the brown-haired girl still in bed.  
 Son of him who is at the back of the hill-slope  
 whose habit was to be noble and kind,  
 well could I wash your shirt,  
 not with water from the creek  
 but water from the fastest running river.  
 Oh, if the hem of your shirt should tear (or: let the ... not tear)  
 If it did, I would mend it myself  
 with a fine needle and good thread.



Fhir a' chinn duibh ó a dhiù a Fhir a' chinn duibh dhiù o éi - le



Fhir a' chinn duibh ó a dhiù a Moch an-diugh a rinn mi éi - righ.

This refrain is better known in Lewis than elsewhere, but the main text has echoes of other waulking songs. There is a version in *Eilean Fraoich* (p 58).

*'S na hì a hù, Chalamain*

'S na hì a hù, Chalamain  
Fallain gum bi thu.  
'S na hì a hù Chalamain.

'S ann a chuir mi mach m'acair  
air a' charraig nach dìobair.

Air a' charraig nach caraich  
gus an caraich mi fhìn i.

O, fhir a' chùil bhuidhe,  
's trom an cumha do ghaoil mi.

O, fhir a' chùil steudaich  
's mór an déigh th'agam fhìn ort.

O fhir a' chùil shocair  
nach dochainn na cirean.

O Chalaim nan Calam,  
sùil mheallaidh nan nighneag.

'S math thig siud air mo leannan,  
bròg than' a' bhuinn aotrom.

'S na hì a Chalamain (little Calum)  
Well may you be  
'S na hì a hù Chalamain.

I dropped my anchor  
on the rock that will hold.

On the rock that will not move  
until I move it myself.

Oh, man of the yellow hair,  
I deeply mourn your love.



Oh, man of the curly hair  
great is my love for you.

Oh, man of the gentle hair  
which combs cannot spoil.

Calum of all the Calums  
with eyes that bewitch the girls.

It well becomes my sweetheart,  
a fine-made shoe with a light sole.



A hi a hù Cha - lu-main Fall-ain gum bi thu Na hi a hù Cha - lu-main.  
'S ann a leig mi slois m'ac - air Air a' charr - aig nach dìob-air.

SA 1957/15 B5

This song also has a strong Lewis provenance, but is known elsewhere, sometimes with *Chalumain* replaced with *Chaluum Bhàin* (Fair-haired Calum). A similar refrain appears in *Orain Luaidh Màiri Nighean Alasdair* (p. 57) but the remaining text is very different. The first two couplets here are reminiscent of a time in the 1940s and 50s when religious words were put to waulking song tunes.

See *Tocher* No. 43, and there is a version in *Eilean Fraoich* (p. 60).

*Mo nigh'n donn ó gù*

Mo nigh'n donn, ó gù  
Hì rì liù hó  
Mo nigh'n donn hó gù

Mo nigh'n donn, choisim geall  
far na champaich na scòid.

Mo nigh'n donn a' chùil bhàin,  
's toil leam màran do bheòil.

Mo nigh'n donn a' chùil duinn,  
bheirinn oidhch' air do thòir.

Bheirinn oidhch' agus oidhch'  
airson coibhneas do bheòil.

'S nan tigeadh tu 'na mo lion  
's mi nach iarradh an còrr.

Nach ann oirnn a bhiodh an t-sealbh  
's cha b'e airgead no òr.

Chuirinn suas ri do chluais  
ite chuachach an eòin.

My dear girl, ó gù  
Hì rì liù hó  
My girl hó gù.

My dear girl who won wagers  
where warriors sat together.

My dear girl of the fair hair,  
I like the murmurings of your lips.

My dear girl of the brown hair  
I would spend a night trying to win you.

I'd give night after night  
for the kindness of your speech.

If you came into my net  
I would ask for nothing more.

How prosperous we would be,  
and not with silver or gold.

I would set up beside your ear  
the cup-shaped feather of a bird.

Mo nigh'n donn ó gù Hì rì l ó Mo nigh'n donn ó gù

Mo nigh'n donn chois - inn geall Far na champ - aich na seòid.

This is a very popular song. There is a version in *Eilean Fraoich* (p. 68) and it is sung by Christina Shaw on the cassette *Orain*. See *Tocher* 43.

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