

Ye Shine Whar Ye Stan!



Jock Duncan

SCOTTISH SONG: *the north-east tradition*

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~ the band ~

Brian McNeill – fiddle, bouzouki, concertina,
guitar & electric bass;

Peter Shephard – melodeons;

Gordon Duncan – cauldwind pipes, highland bagpipes,
whistles;

Chorus vocals – Palaver (Chris Miles, Aileen Carr, Mau-
reen Jelks), Peter Shephard & Tommy Bonnar.

JOCK DUNCAN was brought up in the ballad-rich farming country around New Deer and Fyvie in Aberdeenshire. He has been singing traditional songs and bothy ballads as long as he can remember.

Jock's father had the farm of Gelliebrae beside New Deer and Jock was born there in 1925. Three years later Jock's father took over at South Faddenhill of Fyvie when Jock's grandfather gave up the farm. Jock grew up to take his part in the every day work of the farm and by the age of 10 he was good enough to be driving a horse at the plough.

One of the major influences on Jock's music was his mother. Jock writes: My mother was what I would term 'the stang o the trump' [the best of the bunch], a fine pianist and accompanist to the many fine fiddle players who graced the great splores [house ceilidhs] she organised in the ben the hoose end at Faddenhill. We could listen or participate – singing the ald Scots sangs and ballads, the ald bothy ballads and the new cornkisters of Willie Kemp and George Morris. They were my pop idols made famous with the advent of their '78' Beltona records in the early 1930s. Halcyon days indeed!

Jock's elder sister Marion was a great singer, and also his father's cousin, Charlie Duncan, who often visited Faddenhill. It was from him he picked up the style of *Harlaw* and many of the bothy ballads including *Drumdelgie*. Jock's brother Jimmy played fiddle. Jock also plays moothie and diddles and as a boy he took chanter lessons with piper Peter Elder (ex. of the Scots Guards) who had a 'wee shoppie' beside Millbrex School – where Jock was a pupil.

Another major influence was the great traditional singer John Strachan, farmer at the farm of Crichtie the other side of Fyvie. Jock's father and mother knew him well and often invited him to the musical evenings at Faddenhill on a winter evening. John Strachan brought his songs into the local schools and to the WRI concerts in the local village hall – telling stories and singing songs accompanying himself with a concertina on his knee. Jock well remembers singing along with the chorus of *Down by the Farmyard Gate*. During the war the BBC broadcast an occasional programme of

songs and John Strachan stories live from Crichie. Jock's brother, Fred remembers hearing the programme when out in the desert in North Africa in 1943. Jock learned his versions of both *Bonnie Udney* and *Rhynie* from John Strachan.

When he finished school at the age of 14 Jock worked for a couple of years at Faddenhill. Then in 1943, when he was 18, he joined the Air Force and finished up in Lyon in France. After the war Jock was back in the North East working on farms for a short while and during that time Jock formed a bothy ballad concert party 'The Fyvie Loons and Quines'.

Then Jock moved from the area taking a job with the Hydro Board working first in Caithness and finishing up at Pitlochry where he has lived ever since. Being out of the North East put him out of touch with other singers and on his return visits he found the ballad singers fast disappearing. But Jock never lost his rich Doric speech nor his love of the old ballads and songs nor his sense of 'place' and knowledge of local tradition and history. His enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, traditional music has no doubt been partly responsible for launching his two sons into the world of piping. Iain as Pipe Major of the Vale of Atholl Pipe Band and Gordon being involved there and also as a very highly regarded solo piper.

In 1975 Jock entered and won the bothy ballad competition at the Kinross Festival and he has taken part in the Auchtermuchty Festival every year since it started in 1981. In 1978 Jock took part in the Bothy Ballad King competition held open air before an audience of over 12,000 at Turriff where he gained third place. Jock is now recognised as one of Scotland's finest traditional singers. The richness of his repertoire and quality and style of his singing reflect the pedigree of his musical influences. His knowledge of traditional songs, including as it does several of the older classic ballads and his all inclusive repertoire of bothy ballads is today unique.

Peter Shephard, September 1996

Gruel

~ Brian - bouzouki; Pete - melodeon; Gordon - cauldwind pipes, low whistle; Chorus vocals - Palaver (Chris Miles, Aileen Carr, Maureen Jelks), Peter Shephard & Tommy Bonnar
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; publ. Springthyme Music

A favourite comic song about a cantankerous and newly wed weaver whose only desire was to sup his gruel – his porridge of oatmeal. Jock remembers his father humming and singing snatches of the song.

Jock: *Ma faither wisna a singer by any means – it's the only een I heard him gaun on wi. But his cousin from ower the hill of Belnagoak, Charlie Duncan, sang it with his melodeon.*

Oh there wis a weaver in the north,
And oh but he wis cruel,
For the very first nicht that he wis wad,
He sat an he grat for gruel. [i.e. cried
He sat an he grat for gruel,
Oh he couldna want his gruel,
For the very first nicht that he wis wad,
He sat an he grat for gruel.

“Oh there's nae a speen in aa the house,
For tae sup your gruel.”
“Oh the gairden spad'll dae wi me,
For I maun hae ma gruel.
For I maun hae ma gruel,
Oh I canna want ma gruel;
Oh the gairden spad'll dae wi me,
For I maun hae ma gruel.”

“Oh there's nae a dish in aa the hoose,
For tae sup your gruel.”
“Oh the horse's troch'll dae wi me
For I maun hae ma gruel.
For I maun hae ma gruel,
Oh I canna want ma gruel;
Och, the horse's troch'll dae wi me

She gaed ben the hoose for wine an cakes,
And brocht them ben on a stool,
“Oh gae wa, gae wa wi yer falderals, [i.e. go away
For I maun hae ma gruel.

For I maun hae ma gruel,
Oh I canna want ma gruel;
Oh gae wa, gae wa wi yer falderals,
For I maun hae ma gruel.”

Oh come aa young lassies and listen tae me,
An dinna mairry a weaver,
The very first nicht that he wis wad,
He sat an he grat for gruel.

He sat an he grat for gruel,
Oh he couldna want his gruel;
For the very first nicht that he wis wad,
He sat an he grat for gruel.

An the very first nicht that he wis wad,
He sat an he grat for gruel.

Jimmy McBeath also recorded the song on his album *Wild Rover no More* (Springthyme SPRC 1020).

Rhynie

~ Brian - fiddle; Gordon - cauldwind pipes
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; publ. Springthyme Music

Jock learned this masterpiece from the singing of the great John Strachan who sang it accompanying himself on concertina.

Jock: *He was never bettered at this song about the hand shearin days before the reaper made short work of it. This young man's first shearin wis an unhappy experience, wages were sma and it wis a hungry place and the farmer's laws were double strict.*

The song as sung by John Strachan was included in Norman Buchan's influential '101 Scottish Songs' published in 1962 and is in the Greig-Duncan Folk-Song

Collection (GD 348) under the title *Jock o Rhynie*. An old man, William Forsyth, told Greig that he 'remembered as a boy his mother sing Jock o Rhynie and this would take the song back to say 1830.' The farmer at Mains o Rhynie (in the high glens of Auchindoir in Strathbogie about 8 miles south of Huntly) from 1830 until his death in 1851 was John Gordon and he was known as 'Jock o Rhynie' – but there may have been earlier Jocks at Rhynie and the song could well be earlier. He is said to have denied his work was 'ill to work' although he admitted, probably with pride, that Rhynie's work was very hard.

Jock: *Folk think o Rhynie as being 'My God, that's a wild place, there canna be much growin up there.' It's hilly and there's a lot a sheepie grun, but it's [also] some o the finest corn growin country that ever wis.*

Jock never worked on Rhynie, but not long ago he and his wife Frances climbed the nearby hill Tap o Noth to look down over Rhynie.

Jock: *Whit drew me to Tap o Noth wis the fine walk through the whin and up through the breem. You're gaun back 4, 5000 year because ye'd the vitrified fort on the top. And here's me standin on the top o the vitrified fort singin Rhynie, lookin down, a beautiful sunny day, on the hairst parks o Rhynie away in the distance. And I wis thinkin o Jock*

At Rhynie I sheared my first hairst,
Doun by the fit o Benachie,
Ma maister there wis ill tae fit, [hard to please
But laith wis I tae loss my fee.

Linten ourin ourin addie,
Linten ourin ourin ee.

Rhynie's wark is ill tae work,
An Rhynie's wauges is bit sma,
Rhynie's laws are double strick, [i.e. very strict
And that's fit grieves me warst of aa.

Linten ourin ourin addie,

Rhynie is a cauld clay hole,
It's name een like ma father's toun,
Rhynie is a hungry place,
And it disnae suit a Lawland loon.
 Linten ourin ourin addie,
 Linten ourin ourin ee.

Sair I've focht and sair I've vrocht, [i.e. worked
Until I won my penny fee,
And I'll ging back tae the gate I cam, [i.e. the way
 I came
And a better bairnie I will be.
 Linten ourin ourin addie,
 Linten ourin ourin ee.

The Lothian Hairst/Hairsters' Reel

~ Brian - concertina, fiddle; Gordon - low whistle
~ a) Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music;
 b) J. Duncan & B. McNeill; pub. Springthyme Music

In the days before the machine reaper, the harvest was brought in on many of the larger farms by hired harvest gangs. The Lothian Hairst (GD 404, Ord p264) celebrates the scything squads of the early 1800s who travelled south by boat from Aberdeen to Leith to cut the corn on the large farms of the Lothians before travelling north again by boat to bring in the Aberdeenshire harvest a month or six weeks later. In the previous song, Rhynie, the harvest is cut with the shearing hook or sickle but, by the early 1800s, the scythe in its Scottish form was in widespread use.

Jock: *It is scything – 'I follaed at the point' as it says in the song – at the point of the scythe, cutting about six feet wide, wi the lassies gathering and binding the corn behind.*

Jock has always remembered parts of the *Lothian Hairst* and he got the full text from his cousin, long retired Dr. Duncan Murray, who used to sing the song as a loon and who took part in John Strachan's broadcasts from Crichtie during and before the war.

On August twelfth fae Aiberdeen we sailed upon
 the Prince,
And landed safe on Clifford's Field's the harvest
 to commence;
For six long weeks the country roun, fae toun tae
 toun we went,
And we took richt weel wi the Lothian fare and felt
 richt weel content.

Oor gaffer Willie Mathieson, fae sweet Deeside
 he came,
Oor foreman cam fae that same airt and Logan was
 his name;
For brisk young lads we haed twa score and oor las-
 sies were but few,
But Logan treated us sae weel and he kept a
 decent crew.

Noo I follaed Logan on the point, sae weel's he laid
 it down,
Sae nimby as he led a squad ower mony's a
 thristly toun;
My mate and I we got nae chance for Logan's watch-
 ful eye,
And wi the lads we could get nae sport for Logan
 was sae fly.

He cleared the bothy every nicht afore we went
 to sleep,
Neither did he leave bit one, so strick his rules
 did keep;
An fen we came tae Aiberdeen, he'll weel deserve
 a spree,
For the herding o us aa sae weel, for the Lothian
 tumes were free. [i.e. lads

Oh noo the corn is aa cut doun and we are on
the pier,
Fareweel ye Lothian feather beds and aa the
Lothian cheer;
Fareweel McKenzie, Reid and Ross and aa the
jovial crew,
And Logan, Chapman, Jock and Pratt and the Royal
Stewarts too.

The Cruel Mother

– Brian - concertina; Chorus vocals
– Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

Jock learned this ancient supernatural ballad from George Kidd, farm grieve at a neighbouring farm back in around 1935 when Jock was 10 or 12 years old – and he never heard the song from anyone else. The ballad is number 20 in F.J. Child's 'The English and Scottish Popular Ballads' and Greig-Duncan has three tunes and four fairly full texts from the North East (Last Leaves & GD 193). The ballad is still in the living tradition in England and in North America and Bronson has 47 versions, texts and tunes, in his 'The Singing Tradition of Child's Popular Ballads'. But to find a new version in the 1990s as full as Jock's is remarkable – and sung with such style and authority.

Jock: *I used tae visit him quite a lot, Geordie. He wis grieve in the 30s at North Faddenhill – we were South Faddenhill. Fen he retired he bought a wee croftie away in the hill o Auchmunziel at New Deer and there he scuttered aboot, rearin a calf, and keepin a hen or two. Geordie used tae sing that song tae me even fen he wis retired. It wis one o his favourites. It wis in the 50s the last I saw o Geordie.*

Jock's version is unique in many ways but is perhaps most similar to the North East version collected by Peter Buchan in the early 1800s (Buchan: 'Ballads of the North of Scotland' 2: 217/ Child 20 version I). This includes the use of flower and plant symbolism in the chorus: the rose being the flower of passion and the lindie – the linden or lime tree, having significance as a holy tree giving

protection against evil somewhat akin to the Rowan.

A maiden was coorted seiven years an a day,
Hey tae the rose and the lindie O,
Until her beau did her betray,
Doun by the greenwood sidey O.

She leaned her back against a wa,
And bore him bonnie bairnies twa.

Then she took oot a wicked knife,
And dang awa their precious life. [i.e. stabbed

Oh she beeried them 'neath a marble stane,
And then went hame a maiden again.

Ae nicht she looked ower her castle wa,
And saw twa bonnie boys at the ba.

“Oh bonnie bairnies gin ye were mine,
I wad feed ye on fine cakes an wine.”

“And I'd lat ye drink the ferra coo's milk, [i.e. farrow
cow
And dress ye in fine satin an silk.”

“Oh cruel, cruel mither when we were thine,
We didna feed on cakes an wine.”

“Nor did we drink on the ferra coo's milk,
Nor did we dress in satin an silk.”

“For you took oot a wicked knife,
And you dang awa oor precious life.”

“Oh bonnie bairnies ye'll tell tae me,
Fit kin o pain for ye I mith dree.” [i.e. what pain I
might endure

“Cruel, cruel mither we’ll tell tae ye,
Fit kin o pain for us ye maun dree.” [i.e. what pain
you must endure

“It’s seiven lang years a fowl in the woods,
An seiven lang years a fish in the floods.”

“Then it’s seiven lang years a tongue to the bell,
Hey tae the rose and the lindie O,
And the rest o the time in the flames o Hell,
Doun by yon greenwood sidey O.”

Hash o Benagoak

~ Brian - bouzouki; Pete - melodeon; Chorus vocals
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

A George Morris composition. This song is typical of the later bothy ballads or ‘cornkisters’ of the early 20th century. Jock first heard the song on a ‘78’ sung by George Morris when it was issued around 1932 when Jock’s family got a loan of a gramophone from a neighbour.

A ‘hash’ is a large farm. But the Hash o Benagoak was a mythical fairm toun conjured up by Geordie, inspired no doubt by the Hill of Belnagoak not far away.

Jock: *Geordie had a hotel in Oldmeldrum and he and his brother in law, Willie Kemp, both wrote songs and competed tae write the best eens. Although Geordie wis niver fee’d – he wis niver in ferm work – he succeeded in getting the atmosphere o the ferm touns just right.*

Oh sax month come Martinmas I fee’d in
Turra Toun,
They said I wis the smairtest chiel in aa the
country roun.
Wi a ring dum day, a ring dum day,
Ring dum diddle come a dandy O.

Auld Willie fee’d me, Robbie never spoke,
Tae come an caw the second pair at the Hash o
Benagoak.

The foreman’s like a constable he niver faas asleep,
It’s up an doun the lang rigs he niver slacks a theat.
[i.e. slackens the traces

The second billie, that’s masel, I caw a pair o brouns,
[i.e. drive a pair of brown horses
Ragnails on the foreman’s heels, I fairly keep ma
rouns. [i.e. keeps up with the foreman

The third he comes fae Foggieloan and he’s a
pinted chiel, [i.e. a neat young man
His horse and his harness are aye lookin weel.

We hae a gallant kitchie lass, her name is
Bessy Broom,
But, fegs, ’twould take a saidle girth her middle tae
ging roun.

Sharnie Taes, the bailie, faith, he’s a sturdy chiel,
An roun about the kittle neuks he gars the
barra reel.

Syne we hiv an orraman an (he) seldom caws
the ploo,
There’s aye plenty orra work and files some
needs tae pu. [i.e. other work

Robbie has a sister and she’s perjink and neat,
But faith she keeps the kitchie billies unco scant
o meat. [i.e. hungry

Willie rises in the mornin an gies the door a crash,
An oot aneath his pickie-say, “I think we’ll hae a
thrash.” [i.e. foreman’s hat

Then he has a brither and he's wrang amon the feet,
Tae see him knypin roun the close twould nearly gar
ye greet. [i.e. jogging]

Come aa ye jolly horsemen, ye'll gyang tae the ploo,
The orra lad tae caw the neeps and Sharnie fill
and pu.

The author o this canty lay if ye wint it tae
be known,
Spier ye at the herrin boats at the pier o Foggyloan.
Wi a ring dum day, a ring dum a day,
Ring dum diddle come a dandy O.

Foggyloan is the local name for the town of Aberchirder.
Since Aberchirder lies some 10 miles from the sea, the
town has no herring boats and no pier (last verse). So the
author of the song intended to remain unknown!

Bogie's Bonnie Belle

~ Brian - concertina, fiddles; Gordon - low whistle
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

Perhaps because of its subject matter Bogie's Bonnie Belle
has rarely been in print but most traditional singers in the
North East have a version in their repertoire.

The farmer 'Bogieside o Cairney' or 'Bogie' for short,
did not approve when his daughter Belle fell pregnant to
one of his fee'd farm servants, and the young lad was
'sent packing without a penny o his fee' in spite of his
love for Belle and his offer to 'mairry wi Isabella and gie
the bairnie his name.' Instead, in a tragicomic turnaround,
Belle runs off with a 'tinkler lad wha bides in Huntly toun'
– and 'wi pots and pans and ladles they scour the country
roun.'

The song is based on an event that took place around
1843. In the 1930s George Morris recorded a version
rewritten to exclude some of the sexually explicit details
but this did nothing to inhibit the survival of the full story
in the oral tradition. The song is sung to a variety of rather

beautiful tunes.

Jack: *There was a lassie o the travelling people – that's
her tune – a lassie McPhee. She belonged to Banchory
but it wis in Banff that I heard her – at a soiree. It wis
more or less a picnic and there wis chapejohns aroun
the place an they sell oot bits an pieces and this lassie
wis singin that song. I kent aa the song. I kent Morris's
an I didna bloody like it, an I kent a lot o ither eens. I
decided tae tak it doun, tae write doun her een . An she
gied me the notes [the words] o the last verse, which I
thocht wis better nor anything.*

Ae Witsun fair in Huntly toun, 'twas there I
did agree,
Wi auld Bogieside o Cairney, a saxmonth for
tae fee;
Tae caw his twa best horses, likewise his cairt
dee o ploo,
And dee onything at fairmwark that I be socht
tae do.

Noo Bogie hid a dother braw, her name was Isabelle,
The floer o her nation, there wis neen could
her excel;
Wi rosy cheeks and ruby lips an hair a gowden hue,
Oh she was neat, complete an handsome an comely
for tae view.

Ae nicht she went a ramblin and she socht me for
her guide,
Roun by the woods o Cairney and roun by Bogieside;
I slippit my airm around her waist and tae the grun
did slide,
And there I spent a lang lee nicht wi the Belle o
Bogieside.

Noo twenty weeks has passed and gone, that lassie
lost her bloom,
The roses fell fae aff her cheeks and she's began
tae swoon;
Noo forty lang weeks has passed an gone, that lass
brocht forth a son,
And I was quickly sent for tae see fit could be done.

Fen Bogie heard the story, he cried, "I am undone,
Since ye've beguiled my dother my sorrows are
begun."
I said, "Aul man, ye're fairly richt, an I hung my heid
wi shame,
But I will mairry wi Isabella the morn an I'll gie the
bairnie my name."

Although I said I'd wad the lass, "Oh no, that
widna dee,
Ye're nae a fittin match for Belle, nor she a match for
ee." [i.e. for ye
And he sent me packin doun the road wioot a penny
o my fee,
Oh come aa ye lads o Cairney side, a last fareweel
tae ee.

Noo Belle has gaen aff wi a tinkler lad and she bides
in Huntly toun,
Wi pots and pans and ladles they scour the
country roun;
Wi pots and pans and paraffin lamps, aye, and rousers
as well, [i.e. watering can
Aroun about be Foggyloan does Bogie's Bonnie
Belle.

Glenlogie

– Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

Gavin Greig commented that this was one of the most popular North East ballads (FSNE 58, Child 238, Last Leaves 131). The ballad is often known by the alternative

title *Jean o Bethelnie*, as in the earliest text provided to F.J. Child in 1768. Jean is in some versions Jeanie Gordon and in others Jeanie Melville. Jock is certain the song should refer to Jeanie Meldrum who came from a landowning family who at one time owned Fyvie, Meldrum and Tolquhon Castles and most of the land in between. The Meldrums had sold Fyvie Castle in the mid 1500s to Alexander Seton who became Lord Fyvie and was created Lord Dunfermline. Hence, 'I'll wad ye to Dunfermline' in the song. Bethelnie is 5 miles south east of Fyvie.

Jock: *This wis an awfa familiar song fin I wis young – even at the school. Grace Leslie, the teacher at Fyvie school used tae sing it. She wis a tremendous singer and much socht after in the 30s and 40s to sing on the radio. She sang on John Strachan's concerts tee – fae Crichtie. John used tae sing snatches and auld Willie Allan at Tifty used tae hae bits an pieces. Willie had a wee croftie and he worked a pair of horse till his late 70s and he wis a tremendous singer and we used tae land up there whiles, wi Willie.*

There wis nine and nine nobles
Rode through Banchory fair,
And bonnie Glenlogie,
Wis the pride that wis there;
There wis six and six maidens
Dined in the King's ha,
Bonnie Jean o Bethelnie
Wis the flooer o them aa.

Doun cam Jeannie Meldrum,
She cam trippin dounstair,
And she's chosen Glenlogie
Amang aa that wis there;
She called on his footboy,
Who walked by his side,
Spierin, "Fa is that young man, [i.e. who
An far does he bide?]" [i.e. where

“Oh he’s tited Glenlogie
Fan he is at hame,
He’s of the noble Gordons,
Lord John is his name.”

“Oh Glenlogie, Glenlogie,
If ye should prove kind,
My love it is laid on ye,
I’ve made up my mind.”

Oh he turned aboot lightly,
As the Gordon’s dee aa,
“Oh thank you Jeanie Meldrum,
Bit I’m promised awa.”

She called on her handmaids
Tae mak her a bed,
Wi ribbons an napkins
To tie up her head.

“Oh lay me doun gently
Wi ma face tae the wa,
Tak the rings fae ma fingers,
My jewels an aa.”

Noo up spak her faither,
A wae man wis he, [i.e. a sad man
“Ach, I’ll wad ye tae Dunfermline,
He’s mair gowd than he!”

“Oh na, na dear faither,
Oh na that winna dee,
If I canna get Glenlogie,
For him I will dee.”

Her faither’s ain chaplain,
A man o great skill,
He wrote a braid letter,
An indited it weel.

“Oh, pox on ye Logie!
Oh must it be so,
This lass has laid her love on ye,
Must she dee in her woe?”

When Glenlogie got the letter,
A licht lauch gart he,
But fen he read the letter,
A tear blinned his ee.

“Oh saddle my black horse,
And saddle my broun,
Bonnie Jean o Bethelnie
’ll be deid e’er I win.”

Fen he got tae Bethelnie,
There wis naethin there,
But weepin an wailin,
Vexation an care.

Oh pale and wan was she
When Glenlogie cam in,
But reid and rosy grew she
When she kent it wis him.

“Turn roun Jeannie Meldrum,
Turn tae your richt side,
And I’ll be your bridegroom,
If ye’ll be my bride.”

Noo Jeannie’s got mairrit
An her tocher doun tauld, [i.e. dowry counted
Bonnie Jean o Bethelnie
Wis sixteen year auld.
Bethelnie, Bethelnie,
Ye’ll shine whar ye stan,
And the hedder bells aa roun ye [i.e. heather
Shine on Fyvie’s lan.

Other recordings: Margie Sinclair of the folk group Mirk
(Springthyme SPR 1009).

Bonnie Udney

~ Brian - concertina, guitar; Pete - melodeon; Gordon - low whistle
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

A song that sings the praises of Udney (5 miles east of Oldmeldrum) and her 'rovin blades' who 'tak great pleasure in a-courtin fair maids.' Greig has a number of versions (GD 1089) with various spellings of the town indicative of local pronunciation. He comments that the song is constantly being asked for in the columns of papers which encourage the hunt for old songs (FSNE 32). But the song does not originate in Aberdeenshire: Logan's 'Pedlar's Pack' has the related song Bonnie Paisley, the Sam Henry collection has Bonnie Portrush and Greig mentions other versions with Portmore, Kilkenny, Ury and Yarmouth and links the song back to a song *Over Hills and high Mountains* dating from the late 1600s in Chapell's 'Old English Popular Music.'

Joek: *John Strachan had this song and it wis John I heard first. But of course Georgie Morris wis a great favourite. I've heard many versions o it – an tunes an aa, fen I wis young. Widney wis the pronunciation. Never naebody heard o Udney: 'It's Widney boy. Are ye gaun down tae Widney the nicht?'*

Oh Widny, bonnie Widny, at present adieu,
Wherever I wander I'll still think of you;
Through hills and through valleys how often I roam,
Through brushwood and brambles myself all alone.

It is not the journey that I have to go,
It is not the long road that vexes me so;
Tis the leaving o Widny and all friends behind,
Oh Widny, bonnie Widny ye're aye in my mind.

Oh Widny, bonnie Widny how endearing
your charms,
The longer I see you the more my heart warms;
Take me back to Widny and her that loes me,
And there I wid hie me until that I dee. [i.e. stay till
I die

Noo the young men o Widny, they are aa
rovin blades,
And they tak great pleasure in a-courtin fair maids;
They will kiss them an clap them an they'll spend
their money free,
O aa ye airts o Scotia bonnie Widny for me.

Let us drink and be merry lads, let us drink and
gyang hame,
For if we bide ony langer we'll get a bad name;
We'll get a bad name boys and fill ourselves fu,
For the lang walks o Widny they are aye tae
gang through.

Other recordings include Jane Turriff (Springthyme SPRCD 1038) and Lizzie Higgins (Springthyme SPRC 1021).

Bonnie Lass o Fyvie

~ Pete - melodeon; Gordon - low whistle, cauldwind pipes
& Chorus vocals
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

This song telling of the dragoon captain who died for the love of the bonnie lass o Fyvie has been widely popular. There are over 20 versions in the Greig-Duncan Collection (GD 84) with considerable variation in text and tune. The song was collected by Cecil Sharp in the Appalachians under the title *Pretty Peggy O* (EFSSA 95) and Ford's 'Vagabond Songs' has a song *Bonnie Barbara O* localised in Derby. But the song seems certainly to belong to Fyvie.

There may or may not have been a barracks in or near Fyvie but it is clear from the song and local tradition that Fyvie was a staging post on the military route from Aberdeen to Fort George on the Moray Firth.

Joek: *After Fort George wis built they cam through Fyvie and they took the ford at Gicht – the roads wisna good then. In the song: 'Early neist mornin they aa maiched awa, And oh but oor captain wis sorry; An the drums they did beat ower the bonnie braes o Gicht, An the pipes*

played the Bonny Lewes o Fyvie O.' The Lewes is the name given to the land around the village – the low lying ground.

Another thing they said (in Fyvie): during the Irish rebellions that the Irish Dragoons cam over here wi prisoners heading for Fort George. They aye mentioned the name O'Connors – Irish prisoners.

That wis a very favourite song wi Willie Allen, and the wife tee, at Tifty Croft. They baith sang that een thegither.

Green grow the birks upon bonnie Ythanside,
And low lie the bonnie lewes o Fyvie O;
In Fyvie there's bonnie, in Fyvie there's braw,
In Fyvie there's bonnie lassies mony O.

There cam a troop o the Irish Dragoons,
And they were stationed in Fyvie O;
And their captain fell in love wi a very bonnie lass,
And her name was ca'd Pretty Peggy O.

Chorus:

For there's mony a bonnie lass in the howe o
Auchterless,
There's mony a bonnie lass in the Gearie O,
There's mony a bonnie Jean in the toun o
Aiberdeen,
But the flooer o them aa is in Fyvie O.

"Come down the stair pretty Peggy my dear,
Come down the stair pretty Peggy O;
Oh come down the stair and kame back yer
yeller hair,
Take a last fareweel o yer daddy O."

"For it's braw, oh it's braw a captain's lady for
tae be,

It's braw being a captain's lady O;
It's braw tae rant and rove and tae follow at his word,
And tae maich when the captain he is ready O."

& Chorus:

The colonel he cried, "Come mount boys, mount."
The captain he said, "Let us tarry O,
Let us gyang nae awa this day at or twa,
Till we see if the bonnie lass'll marry O."

"I've gien ye my answer, kind sir," she said,
"And dinna spier at me ony farther O; [i.e. any more
For I have no intentions of going to foreign lands,
And I'd scorn to follow a sodger O."

& Chorus:

On the following mornin, they aa maiched awa,
And oh but oor captain he was sorry O;
An the drums they did beat over the bonny
braes o Gicht,
And the pipes played the 'Bonny Lewes o Fyvie O.'

And fan they won tae Auld Meldrum toun,
They haed their captain tae cairry O;
And fan they won tae bonnie Aiberdeen,
They hid their captain tae bury O.

& Chorus:

His name was captain Ward and he died on the guard,
He died for the love of pretty Peggy O;
He said, "When I'm gone, you will let it be known,
That I died for the bonnie lass o Fyvie O."

For green grow the birks upon bonnie Ythanside,
And low lie the bonnie lewes o Fyvie O;
In Fyvie there's bonnie, in Fyvie there's braw,
In Fyvie there's bonnie lassies mony O.

& Chorus:

The howe of Auchterless lies to the north of Fyvie and follows the river Ythan turning west at Towiebarclay Castle to the Kirkton of Auchterless. The Garioch, or the Gearie as it is pronounced, is the land to the west of Inverurie between Benachie and Oldmeldrum.

Sleepytoon

– Brian – bouzouki; Gordon – whistle
– Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

This bothy ballad was composed by Willie Clark, ‘poet Clark’ – a farm servant on the farm of Sleepytoon near Kennethmont south of Huntly, probably around 1854 (see Ian Olson: ‘Some songs of Place and Ballads of Name.’) Through his Buchan Observer articles Gavin Greig managed to get a number of versions of the song, some with many more verses than others, and no doubt various singers added verses (GD 356, Ord p225).

Joek: *The fairmer’s son cam back fae the mill and got the meal bags drenched wi rain – and when the bowies [bags] o meal were emptied intae the girmel the wet meal stuck tae the bags. The hungry [mean] fairmer wanted the men to scrape the meal off tae mak brose for their dinner – which they refused tae dee.*

It happened at last Witsunday,
I tired o ma place,
And I gaed up tae Inch tae fee,
Ma fortune for tae chase.
 An sing airy arity adie O,
 Sing airy arity ann.

I met in wi Adam Mitchell,
Tae fee we did presume,
He’s a fairmer in Kennethmont,
An he bides at Sleepytoon.

“If you and I agree,” he said,
“Ye’ll hae the fairest play,
For I niver bid my servants work,
Above ten hours a day.”

“If aa be true ye tell tae me,
I think the place will suit,
Guid fegs, I think I’ll gang wi ye,
But ye’re an ugly brute!”

’Twas on a Monday mornin
I gaed hame tae Sleepytoon,
An he ranked us in gweed order,
For tae lay his turnips down.

I wis sent tae caw the dung, [i.e. neighbour
Likewise ma neiper Knowles,
But then the rain it did come on,
And the orders cam tae lowse. [i.e. to stop work

The rain it did ding on the worse, [rained in torrents
The son was at the mill,
“For meal,” Adam Mitchell said,
“Oor bellies for tae fill.”

The rain it soon went over,
And the day began tae break,
And oor neist orders wis tae scrape
Oor denners fae the secks. [i.e. to eat

“We’ll ne’er refuse what you command,
What e’er ye bid us do,
But tae eat the scrapins o the secks
Is a thing we’ll never do.”

“Oh ye daur refuse your order,
Oh the scoundrels that ye are,
But ye bargained for ten hours a day,
Refuse them if ye daur. [i.e. if you dare

The orders wis tae bed at nine,
And never leave the toun,
And for every time we left it
We wis fined half-a-croun.

Knowles wis fined mony's a time,
But never lost the hert,
And I masel wis fined a pound
For turmin up a cairt.

But we niver heeded Adam,
And aye we took the pass,
Sometimes tae buy tobacco,
Sometimes tae see a lass.

But noo Mairtinmas term is come at last,
Oor fee is safely won,
And we'll awa tae Rhyne Fair,
And there we'll hae some fun.

Fan we are ower in Alford, boys,
We'll gar the glass ging roun,
An we'll tell them aa the usage
That we had at Sleepytoon.

I still see Auld Adam yet,
Suppin his dish o brose,
I think I'll send him a hankie
Just tae dicht his snuffy nose.

An sing airy arity adie O,
Sing airy arity ann.

Mormond Braes

~ Brian - concertina; Pete - melodeon
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

This was one of Gavin Greig's early favourite songs. He first came across the song around 1895 and included it in his serial story Logie o Buchan. It was then printed in Ford's 'Vagabond Songs' (in 1899) and Greig gave it pride of place in the first of his weekly articles in the Buchan Observer in December 1907, a series that eventually extended to 180 weekly articles containing numerous versions of over a thousand North East songs and ballads (FSNE 1; GD 1142).

As I gaed down by Strichen toun
I heard a fair maid mournin,
She wis makin sair complaint
On her true love ne'er return.
It's Mormond Braes where heather grows,
Whaur oft times I've been cheery,
It's Mormond Braes whaur heather grows,
And it's there I've lost ma dearie.

Sae fare ye weel ye Mormond Braes,
Whaur oft times I've been cheery,
Fare ye weel ye Mormond Braes,
And its there I've lost ma dearie.

Sae I'll pit on ma gown o green,
It's a forsaken token,
An that will let the young men know
That the bands of love are broken.
There's mony a horse has snappert and fa'en [i.e.
tripped and fallen
And risen and gane fu rarely,
There's mony a lass has lost her lad,
And gotten anither richt early.

Sae fare ye weel ye Mormond Braes,
Whaur oft times I've been cheery,
Fare ye weel ye Mormond Braes,
And its there I've lost ma dearie.

There's as mony fish intae the sea,
As ever yet was taken,
I'll cast ma line an try again,
I'm only eence forsaken.
Sae I'll gyang down by Strichen toun,
Whaur I wis bred an born,
And there I'll get anither sweetthert,
Will mairry me the morn.

Sae fare ye weel ye Mormond Braes,
Whaur oft times I've been cheery,
Fare ye weel ye Mormond Braes,
And its there I've lost ma dearie.

The Hairst o Rettie

~ Brian - concertina

~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

One of the greatest of the serious bothy ballads (GD 408, Ord p271). This famous song tells of the change over from the scythe to the back delivery reaper which took place in a big way in the middle of the last century. Jock dedicates this song to the late Charlie Murray who 'never failed to sing a good Hairst o Rettie.'

Jock: *That wis one o Charlie's favourites. Rettie wis one o the greatest o ferm touns in the 1920s. A big place – great corn growin country. The fairmer's name wis Forbes and a brother had Dallachy a mile or so up the coast. And Charlie's first fee wis at Dallachy – Nether Dallachy, so he wis weel steeped in Rettie. Charlie aye had a saying:*

Doun at Nether Dallachy,

There's neither watch nor knock, [i.e. clock

But denner time an supper time

An aye yoke, yoke.

Rettie wis flat as a pancake, so flat that when the war started they commandeered it right away an made an aerodrome o it. Five six hunder acre went intil an aerodrome right away.

Jimmy McBeath, born just along the coast at Portsoy in 1894, also sang this famous song and Jock once asked Jimmy to sing the song when he came across him singing outside the beer tent at the Oldmeldrum games when it was revived after the war in 1947.

Jock: *There wis Jimmy, outside the beer tent an aa the boys wis roun him ready poised wi the beers in their hand listenin tae Jimmy. "Fit wad ye like tae hear," he says. "The Hairst o Rettie, Jimmy." He started and stuck at the second line. So I telt him, "Aye an twa three on*

the throne." An on he went. And then after he'd finished he cam over. "Fit wey ye ken that sang man?" Well I'd heard it from aul John Strachan

Oh I've seen the Hairst o Rettie lads

An twa three on the throne, [i.e. farms of that ilk

I've hard for sax or seven weeks [i.e. heard

The hairsters girn an groan;

For a covie Willie Rae

In a monthie an a day,

Gars aa the jolly hairster lads

Ging singin doun the brae.

Oh a monthie and a day ma lads,

The like wis niver seen,

It's beats tae sticks the fastest strips

O Vicker's new machine;

A Speedwell noo brings up the rear,

An a Victory clears the way,

An twinty acre daily yields

Nor stands tae Willie Rae.

For he drives the horses roun the parks

At sic an awfa rate,

An he steers them in an oot again

At mony's a kittle gate;

And he wiles them safely ower the clods [i.e. coaxes

An roun mony's a spootie hole, [i.e. spring of water

But he comes by nae mishanter [i.e. no mishap

If you leave him wi the pole. [i.e. in charge

An he sharps their blades tae mak them bite,

An he taps them on the jaws,

An if he fins them dully like, [i.e. blunt

Weel he brawly kens the cause;

A boltie here, a pinnie there,

A little oot o tune,

An he shortly stops their wild career

An brings the slushet doun. [i.e. into gear

He whittles aff at corners,
An maks crookit bitties stracht,
An he sees that man and beast alike
Are equal in the draucht;
An aa wir shavies lyn stracht [i.e. sheaves straight]
An neen o them agley, [i.e. none out of line]
For he can count wi ony dominie [i.e. any teacher]
Fae the Deveron tae the Spey.

Oh he's nae made up o mony words
Nor kent tae puff an lee,
He's jist as keen a little chap
As ever ye did see;
If ye be scarce o harvest wark [i.e. short of]
Upon a market day,
Tak my advice, be there on time
An look for Willie Rae.

Noo we hae gotten the shavies in about
An aa wir ruckies ticht, [i.e. the corn ricks built]
We gaither roun a festive board
Tae spend a jolly nicht;
Wi Scottish song and mutton broth
Tae drive all cares away,
An we'll drink success tae Rettie lads,
An adieu tae Willie Rae.

Oh come aa ye jolly Rettie coves,
A ringin cheer, hurrah!
A band o better workin lads
A gaffer niver saw;
Aa eager aye tae play their part
And ready for the fray,
It was you that made the boatie row,
'Twas steered by Willie Rae.

Macfarlan o the Sprotts

– Brian - guitar, electric bass; Gordon - low whistle
& Chorus vocals
– Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

This is by George Thomson, one time trainee chemist in New Deer who was a prolific composer of songs. He clearly loved to make full use of the local broad Scots vocabulary – the Doric. According to Jock's mother he sometimes tested his songs out on the customers for approval. Jock is sure that most of his songs were lost or given away. The song was included in one of Gavin Greig's weekly Buchan Observer articles in 1910 shortly after it was written (FSNE 145). Jock first heard Macfarlan o the Sprotts on record by Willie Kemp and later heard it sung by him on stage in 1947 in New Deer.

Oh it's oh that I be tyraneesed as I this file hae been,
I'd rather run fae here tae Birse wi peas in baith
ma sheen,
I'd rather dee for wint o breath than tae pine for wint
o love,
An it's aa because Macfarlan mairried Suzie.
Noo Suzie's cankered father and me could never
gree,
An ilkae time I gaed ower the gate he'd hun his dog
at me, [i.e. chase his dog]
So I sent ma freen Macfarlan doun tae see fit he
could dee,
Macfarlan o the Sprotts o Birnieboosie.

I dinna like Macfarlan, I'm safe enuch tae state,
His lugs wad cast a shadae ower a sax fit gate;
He's saft as ony goblin an sliddery as a skate,
[i.e. soft as a nestling]
Macfarlan o the Sprotts o Birnieboosie.

Oh Macfarlan spak nae word for me but plenty
for himsel,
He reesed the lassie's barley scones, her kebbuck and
her kale, [i.e. praised; cheese]
Her fadder cried out, "Sprottie, ye should try yer luck
yersel,
Tae Macfarlan o the Sprotts o Birnieboosie."

Noo Macfarlan is the grimpest chiel in aa the
country roun,
They buy his fotygraph tae fleg the rottans fae the
toun, [i.e. chase the rats
Well he kitted up his spunk at this and spiered gin
she'd come doun, [i.e. raised his courage
Tae be mistress o the Sprots o Birnieboosie.

Oh I dinna like Macfarlan, I'm safe enuch
tae state,
His lugs wad cast a shadae ower a sax fit gate;
He's saft as ony gorblin an sliddery as a skate,
Macfarlan o the Sprots o Birnieboosie.

He said that he wis able baith tae play at cowp-
the-ladle,
Sittin on a trykle bow and caw the churn forbye,
[i.e. treacle bucket; turn
Anither o his winners wis that sawdust mixed wi
shunners, [i.e. cinders

Wis spice for feedin hens at Birnieboosie.
An educated ostrich fae the wilds o Timbuctoo,
He hid for scrappin up his neeps and he hidnae
them tae pu,

Oh ye niver heard the like o that come oot o
ony mou,
But Macfarlan o the Sprots o Birnieboosie.

Oh I dinna like Macfarlan, it's awfa but it's true,
A pewter speen wis tint in Jock Macfarlan's mou,
[i.e. was lost
He couldnae weel be grimmer, sups the brose wi
the skimmer,
Macfarlan o the Sprots o Birnieboosie.

Oh the dirl o the teethache's nae particularly sweet,
[i.e. the pain
But love's the only thing on earth that ever gar'd
me greet,

It's like kittie chilblains on yer hert instead o on
yer feet, [i.e. tickly
An it's aggravated wi the sicht o Suzie.
Noo freens and kind philosophers ye've heard fat
me befell,
Never lippen tae the middle man but dae the wark
yersel, [i.e. trust in
For I've bet my winter sarket, ye're a day ahin the
mairket, [i.e. winter shirt
Like fan I sent Jock Macfarlan doun tae Suzie.

Oh I dinna like Macfarlan, I'm fairly aff o Jock,
I dinna like Macfarlan nor Macfarlan's fowk,
His Suzie's been nae turtle for a tyangs or the
spurkle, [i.e. coal tongs; porridge stick
Doun ower the heid o Jock o Birnieboosie.

The author wrote this song when he worked at the chemist
shop at Lumphanan not far from the area of Birse on
Desside mentioned in the first verse.

The Plooboy Lads

~ Brian - guitar; Gordon - low whistle; & Chorus vocals
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

A bothy version of a song that is well known among the
Scottish travellers and was made famous through the
singing of Jeannie Robertson. She recorded it on her first
Topic album (now on Springthyme SPRC 1025) under
the title When I was new but Sweet Sixteen. A related
song Peggy on the Banks o the Spey is in Greig (GD
1131). Charlie Murray sang this bothy version as: For
they're awfa lads, the bothy lads, if they get fit they're
seekin; They pack their kists and they gang an they list,
An they leave the lassie greetin. (on Scots Songs and
Music, Springthyme SPR 1001).

The plooboy lads they are gey braw lads,
But they're gallus and deceivin O,
They will pack their kist and they'll gyang far awa,
And they'll leave their lassies greetin O.

Fan I wis only sweet sixteen,
And in beauty I wis bloomin O,
Noo little, little did I ken,
That at nineteen I'd be greetin O.

For the plooboy lads they're gey braw lads,
Bit they're gallus and deceivin O,
And they'll pack their kist and they'll gyang
far awa,
And they'll leave their lassies greetin O.

If I had kent fit I noo ken,
An teen my mither's biddin O, [i.e. taken
I widna be sittin at yer fireside,
Singin hushabye ma bairnie O.

For the plooboy lads they are gey braw lads,
But they're gallus and deceivin O,
They will pack their kist and they'll gyang
far awa,
And they'll leave their lassies greetin O.

Oh hushaba, noo I'm yer ma,
But the deil kens fa's yer daddy O,
But I'll tak care and I'll be aware
O the lang lie in the gloamin O.

For the plooboy lads, well they are gey braw lads,
But they're gallus and deceivin O,
And they'll pack their kist and they'll gyang
far awa,
And they'll leave their lassies greetin O.

For the plooboy lads they are gey braw lads,
But they're gallus and deceivin O,
And they'll pack their kist and they'll gyang
far awa,
And they'll leave their lassies greetin O.

Drumdelgie

~ Pete - melodeon; Brian - concertina
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

Perhaps the most legendary bothy ballad of the lot, this song gives a description of a day in the life of one of the largest ferm touns in the North East (GD 384, Ord p209). Drumdelgie is in hilly country between Huntly and Keith, the farm buildings now holiday homes and the near thousand acres converted to forestry.

Jock: *That's an interesting song. It has a bit of history about it. The song speaks about the water mill: 'It took four men tae mak tae her.' They made hand windlins o straw at the tail o the mill. The straw cam oot loose and they made small bunches wi their hands – fit ye call windlins. We didna dee it in my time [at Faddenhill] but ma faither had tae dee it fen he wis young. A windlin wis ration for two beasts for a day. They thrashed a ruck o corn most mornings at Drumdelgie to supply the strae requirements for the byres.*

There's a fairm toun up in Cairney wha's kent baith
far an wide,
Tae be the hash o Drumdelgie upon sweet Deveron-
side; [i.e. large farm
The fairmer o yon muckle toun he is baith hard
an sair,
And the caulest day that iver blaws, his servants
get their share.
At five o'clock we quickly rise and hurry doun
the stair,
An it's there we corn oor horses, likewise tae straik
their hair;
Syne aifter warkin half-an-hour, each tae the
kitchie goes,
And it's there we get oor breakfast which generally
is brose.

Use hidnae got oor brose weel suppit and gien oor
pints a tie,
Fan the foreman he cries, “Oot ma lads, the hour is
drawin nigh.”
At sax o’clock the mill’s pit on tae gie us aa
stracht wark,
It taks fower o us tae mak tae her till you could ring
oor sark.

And fan the water is put aff, we hurry doun the stair,
Tae get some quarters throw the fan till daylight
dis appear; [a quarter was 3 cwt. of oats
When daylight dis begin tae peep and the sky begins
tae clear,
The grieve cries oot, “Come on my lads, you’ll be
nae langer here.”
There’s sax o ye’ll gyang tae the ploo, and twa tae
caw the neeps,
And the bailies they’ll be aifter you wi strae rapes
round their queets.”

But fan that we were gyaun forth and turnin oot
tae yoke,
The snaw dank on sae thick an fast that we were
like to choke;
The frost it bein sae very hard, the ploo she
widna go,
And sae oor cairtin days commenced among the frost
and snaw.

Oor horses being but young and sma, the shafts they
didna fill,
And they aft required the saiddler chains tae pull
them up the hill;
But we will sing oor horses’ praise though they be
young an sma,
For they far ootshine the broadlands eens that gyangs
sae full and brow.

The term time has come at last and we will get
wir brass,
And we’ll awa tae Huntly fair tae hae a pairtin glass;
And we’ll gyang in tae Huntly toun and there gyang
on the spree,
And then the fun it will commence, the quinies for
tae see.

Sae fare ye weel Drumdelgie, for I maun gyang awa,
Sae fare ye weel Drumdelgie, yer weetie wither
and aa,
Sae fare ye weel Drumdelgie, I bid ye aa adieu,
An I leave ye as I got ye — a maist unceevil crew.

The Battle of Harlaw

~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

The Desperate Battle

~ Gordon - Highland bagpipes

~ Trad. arr. G. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

Gavin Greig wrote: One cannot visit the Garioch in minstrel mood without thinking of Harlaw. The grim battle, fought in 1411, takes us back to a time when Lowlander and Highlander had to settle which of the two was to have political supremacy in Scotland (FSNE 11; GD 112). In fact, the battle was more of a feudal conflict and Gaelic was spoken on both sides.

According to the ballad the battle was a disaster: ‘Oot o fifty thoosand Hielanders, Bit fifty three gaed hame; And oot o aa the Lawland men, Scarce twenty marched wi Grahame.’ There is reference to a song The battle of the Hayrlau in The Complaynt of Scotland (1549) but the text of this is lost and it is probable that the present form of the ballad is more recent.

Jock: *This wis a Charlie Duncan favourite. Charlie had the aul words boy, oh aye. An he pit in the ‘dirrum a doo a daddie O.’ It wis him that I got the style o that song.*

The ballad is followed by part of the pibroch The Desperate Battle played by Gordon Duncan. The origins of this ancient pibroch is not certain but it is of great age. Gordon plays the last part, the *crunluath* which

Jock interprets as representing the return of the battlefield to the grouse after the battle was over.

As I cam in by Dunideer,
An doun by Netherha,
I saw fifty thoosan Hielanders,
Aa marchin tae Harlaw.

Oh a dirrum a doo a daddie O,
A dirrum a doo a day.

As I cam on an farrer on,
An doun an by Balquhain,
'Twas there I met Sir James the Rose,
Wi him Sir John the Grahame.

Oh did ye come fae MacDonald's men,
An did ye their number see,
An were ye near and near eneuch,
Fit mith their number be?" [i.e. might

"Aye, I wis near an near eneuch,
An I their number saw;
There's fifty thoosan Hielanders,
Aa marchin tae Harlaw."

"If that be so," said James the Rose,
"I'll nae come muckle speed,
I'll hae tae tell ma gallant men,
Tae turn their horses' heid."

"Oh na, oh na," said John the Grahame,
"Oh na, that winna dee,
The gallant Grahames hiv niver been beat,
We'll see fit we can dee."

They fell sae thick on ilkie side,
Sic straiks ye niver saw,
For ilkie sword gaed clash for clash
At the battle o Harlaw.

The Hielanders wi their claymores,
They laid on us fu sair,
An they knockit us back on ilkie side,
Sax acre breadth or mair.

Sir Forbes tae his brither did say,
"Oh brither dinna ye see,
They beat us back on ilkie side
Mebbe we'll be forced tae flee."

"Oh na, oh na ma brither dear,
Oh na that winna dee,
Ye'll tak your gweed sword in your han,
An ye'll gyang in wi me."

Noo back tae back the brithers brave,
Gaed in amang the thrang,
An they cut doun the Hielanders,
Wi swords baith sharp an lang.

The first ae straik Sir Forbes struck,
It gar'd Lord Donald reel,
The next ae straik that Forbes struck,
The brave MacDonald fell.

An siccan a pilacherie, [i.e. lamenting
The like ye niver saw,
There wis amang the Hielanders,
Fin they saw Lord Donald fa.

And fin they saw that he wis deid,
They aa did gyang aw,
And they beeried Lord Donald in Legget's Den
A mile abeen Harlaw.

'Twas on a Monanday mornin,
That the battle it hid begun,
It wis noo Setterday gloamin,
Bit ye'd scarce ken fa had won.

Oot o fifty thoosand Hielanders,
Bit fifty three gaed hame,
And out o aa the Lawland men,
Scarce twenty marched wi Grahame.

And siccan a weary beeryin,
Oh the like ye niver saw,
It wis on a Sunday efter
In the moss aneth Harlaw.

If ony Hielan lassie spiers at ye,
For them that gaed awa,
Weel, they're sleepin soun in their sheen,
In the howe aneth Harlaw.
 Oh a dirrum a doo a daddie O,
 A dirrum a doo a day.

The Banks of Inverurie

~ Brian - guitar; Pete - melodeon; Gordon - whistle
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; pub. Springthyme Music

A lyrical love song with some of the feeling of the older ballads that Jock learned from the great Jimmy McBeath (GD 1263).

Jock: *I aye met in wi Jimmy – sittin at the Queen in Union Street – there wis benches there. He wis aye sittin there or near or han top o Bridge Street. He wis aye ready wi a song ye ken. It wis about a fortnight afore he dee'd [in 1971] that he sung it the last time tae me – in Aberdeen, in the Castlegate – a room in the Castlegate. Jimmy resided there for aboot five year.*

Ae nicht as I went awalking and down as I did pass,
On the banks of Inverurie I met a bonnie lass;
Her hair hung ower her shoulders broad, her eyes like
stars did shine,
On the banks of Inverurie and oh gin she were mine.

I did embrace this fair maid with all the haste
I could,
Her hair hung ower her shoulders broad all in its
threads of gowd;
Her hair hung ower her shoulders broad, her eyes like
draps o dew,
“On the Banks of Inverurie I long to walk with you.”

She said, “Young man give over and don’t delude
me so,
For after kissing wooing comes and after
wooing woe;
My tender heart you will ensnare and I’ll
beguiled be,
On the banks of Inverurie I’ll walk alone,” said she.

He said, “My pretty fair maid, the truth I’ll ne’er
deny,
On the banks of Inverurie many maids beguiled
have I;
I used to flatter fair maids but now that shall not be,
On the banks of Inverurie if you will walk with me.”

He put a horn untae his lips and he blew loud and
shrill,
Till four and twenty armed men came to their
master’s call,
“I used to flatter fair maids but now that cannot be,
On the banks of Inverurie if you will marry me.”

“Now come my pretty fair maid and mount on
horseback high,
Unto a parson we will go and that immediately,
And I will sing these lines with joy until the day
I dee,
To the praise of Inverurie’s banks where first I met
with thee.”

Barnyards o Delgaty

~ Brian - concertina; Pete - melodeon; Gordon - whistle
& Chorus vocals
~ Trad. arr. J. Duncan; publ. Springthyme Music

One of the most famous of all the old bothy ballads. The farm of Barnyards is on the Delgaty estate a mile north east of Turriff. Greig opens his Buchan Observer article on Ploughman Songs with Barnyards (FSNE 4, GD 347, Kennedy 340, Ord p214). The song is no doubt a parody of life as it would really have been on this particular farm. The song, which was probably written early last century, seems to be related to Rhynie. There is an overlap between the various versions of each, both song and tune.

Joek: *There's no way that any place, Barnyards o Delgaty or anywhere else, would hae a deen pair of horses. The Barnyards had aye the best horses – a great ferm toun that. I jist wonder what the present owner that cam back fae Canada thinks o the song. I aye reckon that Drunken Scot wisna mairried – that wis his sister, Lang Meg Scot, that wis in the hoose.*

As I cam in by Turra market,
Turra market for tae fee,
I met in wi Drunken Scot,
Fae the barnyards o Delgaty.

Linten adie touran adie, linten adie touran ae,
Linten lourin lourin lourin, lilta lourin lourin lee.

He promised me the twa best horse,
I ever set ma een upon;
Fan I got hame tae the barnyards,
There wis naething there but skin and bone.

The auld black horse sat on his hunkers,
The auld white mare lay on her wime, [i.e. belly
And aa that I could up and cry,
They widna rise at yokin time.

Lang Meg Scot, she maks ma bed,
I can see the marks upon ma shins,
For she's a coorse illtrickit jaud, [i.e. mischievous girl
She fills ma bed wi prickly whins.

Meg McPherson maks ma brose,
Her an me we canna agree,
First a mote and then a knot, [i.e. a little then a lump
And aye the ither jilp o bree. [i.e. spill the rest

Fin I ging tae the kirk on Sunday,
Mony's the bonnie lass I see,
Sittin by their daddies' side,
An winkin ower the pews at me.

Noo I can drink and nae get drunk,
An I can fecht and nae be slain,
An I can coort anither man's lass,
An aye be welcome tae ma ain.

The cannle noo it is burnt oot, [i.e. candle
The snotter's fairly on the wane, [i.e. the wick
burnt down

Sae fare ye weel ye barnyards,
Ye'll niver catch me here again.

Linten adie touran adie, linten adie touran ae,
Linten lourin lourin lourin, lilta lourin lourin lee.

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Credits:

Recorded at Pier House Studio, Edinburgh (tracks 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 18) in April & September 1995 and at Glenrothes Digital Studio (tracks 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17), October 1995.

Additional instrumentation and choruses recorded at Glenrothes Digital Studio, January 1996.

Mixed by Peter Haigh at Pier House Studios, January 1996.

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Other photos from the Jock Duncan archive.

Concept and design: Peter Shephard.

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The Concept:

Jock Duncan was brought up in a musical tradition in which the singing of traditional songs was an everyday part of life. Some of the singers he grew up with accompanied their songs on concertina or melodeon or sang with piano accompaniment, but until recently Jock has rarely sung with accompaniment. I have admired Jock's singing for a number of years and, in planning this album, accompaniment was discussed. Jock approved the idea and so the backing band was put together – led by Brian McNeill as both multi-instrumentalist and producer, with myself on melodeon and Jock's son, Gordon, now rated as one of the finest Scottish pipers, on Highland pipes, cauldwind pipes and whistles. In addition a few friends were brought in to lend voice to some of the chorus songs – Chris Miles, Aileen Carr and Maureen Jelks (the singing group Palaver), and myself and Tommy Bonnar. Thanks to these and all involved – especially of course to Jock Duncan and his wife Frances.

Spellings in the song texts and in Jock's introductions reflect the words as spoken or sung. Translations are given to some Scots words and phrases, and clarification is occasionally given [in square brackets]. All words may be found in the Concise Scots Dictionary.

Peter Shephard, September 1996

Jock Duncan:

Ye Shine Whar Ye Stan!

1. Gruel 2.21
2. Rhy nie 2.50
3. Lothian Hairst/
Hairsters' Reel 3.27
4. Cruel Mother 5.07
5. Hash o Benagoak
3.19
6. Bogie's Bonnie
Belle 5.28
7. Glenlogie 3.46
8. Bonnie Udney 4.27
9. Bonnie Lass o
Fyvie 4.58
10. Sleepytoon 3.55



11. Mormond Braes
2.04
12. The Hairst o
Rettie 3.42
13. Macfarlan o the
Sprots 4.06
14. Plooboy Lads
3.19
15. Drumdelgie 4.05
16. The Battle
of Harlaw/ The
Desperate Battle 6.05
17. Banks of
Inverurie 4.51
18. Barnyards o
Delgaty 3.06

The Bothy Ballad brose bowl, Elgin 1994.

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