





Jimmy McBeath

WILD ROVER NO MORE

- 1 **The Bold English Navvy**
Navy's Boots, Wi' His Navy Boots on or With My Navy Boats on
- 2 **Come A' Ye Tramps an' Hawkers**
- 3 **Johnny McIndoe**
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The Wild Rover

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Song Word Transcription Arthur Argo

Cover Photograph Brian Shuel

The bothy ballad, with its direct sentiment, realistic humour and, on occasion, bitter irony, is to many the typical song of North-East Scotland. Like the songs he sings, Jimmy McBeath has all these attributes, for he is very much a product of his locality. Born in Portsay, Banffshire, 73 years ago Jimmy, like most of his generation, began work as a farm servant at the age of 13. He was fee'd at Brandon's Fair to a farm at Deskford and for first six months as a 'half'in he received, over and above his keep, £4. For the second half of the year this was raised to the princely sum of five guineas.

The work was hard, the hours long, and the food and conditions often little better than that of the farm-animals. Only the close-knit community life, the home-made entertainment and the resilience of the human spirit made such an existence bearable. Jimmy remembers these times well: "All hard, slavery work - up at five in the morning to sort your horse, and you didn't fasten your boots until after you got your breakfast. You went in at half past five and got a cog o' meal and milk and bread, oatcakes and a cup o' tea wi' it. You had to carry on fae that, from six till twelve o'clock and started again at one. You stopped at six and came in and sorted your horse and then you went away to your tea at twenty minutes to seven at night." The meanness of some of the farmers with both food and money made matters worse.

"Some farms were very tight wi' the food - oh yes, very, very tight wi' the food. Some farms were very good wi' the food again. But it was slavery days all the same. You workit the whole six months before you got money at all. Oh they wouldn't work that way now, no, no." To escape this drudgery, many 'joined up' and Jimmy enlisted in the local regiment, the Gordon Highlanders, in time to serve in the trenches in World War 1. His army career, some of it in the R.A.M.C. took him to England, Ireland and Egypt as well as France. During the depression he was obliged to go 'on the road' where his singing talent, developed in farm bothies and army barrack rooms, stood him in good stead, supplementing the spasmodic wages of seasonal labour. Despite all his wanderings Jimmy has remained a North-easter at heart, always returning to his native district.

In the summer of 1951 while on a collecting trip, Hamish Henderson and Alan Lomax found Jimmy in Elgin and brought to our notice one of Britain's finest traditional singers and one of the major influences on the Scottish folk song revival.

Like most living traditional things, Jimmy's singing is a complex mixture of old features and modern influences, producing an integrated and highly personal whole. His delivery is direct, often making use of swelling notes common in Music Hall performers, but he also shows an older trait, of country singers in the area, of using flicked passing notes to give the melody a running or tripping quality. This device is well-rooted in North-east Scotland, Orkney and Shetland. *I'm a Stranger in this Country*, *McPherson's Rant*, *Grat for Gruel* and *The Wind Blew the Bonnie Lassie's Plaidie Awa'* illustrate this feature best.

Jimmy shares with many traditional singers the habit of using the same air for many songs. This is a result of the commonness of ceilidh tunes in the area, and also of a personal fondness for particular melodies. The tunes of items 2, 5, 6, 7 and 13 are notably prevalent in the North-east; items 4 and 10 and 11 are common throughout British folk music and Jimmy himself seems particularly attached to the airs of *Navy Boots* and *The Moss o' Burreldale*.

Ability to create variations on the melody, both to accommodate it to the text and to sustain musical interest, is a talent found among the best traditional singers. Particularly interesting from this point of view are Jimmy's versions of *Nicky Tams*, *The Barnyards o' Delgaty* and *Grat for Gruel*.

Introduction & notes by Peter Hall Songs transcribed by Arthur Argo

1 THE BOLD ENGLISH NAVVY

I'm a bold English navvy that works on the Iine
An' the best place I met wis Newcastle-on-Tyne
I wis tired, sick and weary while working all day
To a cot down on the hillside I'm makin' my way

I first had a wash and then had a shave
For courting my true love I was highly prepared
The moon in the skies, and the stars, they shone down
And I hit for the road wi' my navvy boots on

I knocked on my love's window, my knock she did know
And out of her slumbers she woked so slow
I knocked her again and she says: "Is that John?"
"Yes, indeed, it is me with my navvy boots on"

She opened the door and then let me in
It was to her bedroom she called me then
Well the night being warm and the blankets rolled down
So I jumped into bed with my navvy boots on

Early next morning at the break of the day
I says to my true love: "It's time to go away"
"Sleep down, sleep down, for you know you've done wrong
For to sleep here all night with your navvy boots on"

Six months being over and seven months being past
This pretty fair maid she grew stout round the waist
Seven months being over and nine come along
And she hands me a young son with his navvy boots on

Come all you pretty fair maids take heed what I've said
Never let a navvy come into your bed
For when he gets warm he'll take a leap on
And he'll jump on your bones with his navvy boots on

Like most traditional singers, Jimmy has never stopped learning songs, nor is he much worried where he finds them. He picked up this one in 1966 while singing on Merseyside. In Aberdeenshire it is more usually sung as 'Wi' his coortin' coat on', but it has been adapted to suit various trades; the rural workers making it 'Wi' his cattle coat', the miners 'Wi' his pit boots' and a recent version has the hero wearing 'McAlpine's boots'

2 COME A' YE TRAMPS AN' HAWKERS

O come a' ye tramps an' hawkers an' gatherers o' blaw blaw = meal
That tramps the country roun', an' roun', came listen one and a' I'll tell tae you a
rovin' tale an' sights that I hiv seen
Far up into the snowy north and south by Gretna Green

I hiv seen the high Ben Nevis away towerin' to the moon
I've been by Grieff and Callander an' roun' by bonnie Doune
And by the Nethy's silv'ry tides an' places ill tae ken
Far up into the snowy North lies Urquhart's bonnie glen

Aftimes I've lauched into mysel' when I'm trudgin' on the road lauched = laughed
Wi' a bag o' blaw upon my back, my face as broon's a toad
Wi' lumps o' cakes an' tattie scones on' cheese an' braxy ham
Nae thinkin' whaur I'm comin' foe nor whaur I'm gaun tae gang
braxy ham = originally the salted meat of a sheep that had died from disease

Term also used for salt ham
I'm happy in the summer time beneath the bright blue sky
Nae thinkin' in the mornin' at nicht whaur I've tae lie
Barns or buyres or anywhere or oat among the hay
And if the weather does permit I'm happy every day

O Loch Katrine and Loch Lomon' has a' been seen by me
The Dee, the Don, the Dev'ron that hurries into the sea
Dunrobin Castle by the way I nearly had forgot
An' aye the rickles o' cairn marks the Hoose a' John o' Groat

I'm up an' roun' by Gallowa' or doon about Stranraer
Ma business leads me anywhere, sure I travel near an' far
I've got a rovin' notion there's nothing what I loss
An' a' my day's my daily fare and what'll pey my doss
rickles o' cairns = piles of stones

I think I'll go tae Paddy's land, I'm makin' up my min'
For Scotland's greatly altered now, sure I canna raise the win'
But I will trust in Providence, if Providence will prove true
An' I will sing of Erin's Isle when I come back to you

If Jimmy has a signature tune, this is it. A relatively modem song, it is attributed to Besom Jimmy, an Angus hawker at the end of last century. Our Jimmy learned it from a fellow Gordon Highlander in the trenches during World War I.

It is natural that this song should be popular among singers who have been on the road and quite commonly they identify themselves with it by adding autobiographical verses. However, Jimmy is very conservative in these matters and we may assume, that as he learned it only a decade or two after its composition, his version is close to the original

3 JOHNNY McINDOE

There wis Johnny MacAtee, McGhee an' me
And other two or three were'n the spree one day
We had a bob or two which we knew how to blew
An' the beer an' whisky flew and we all felt gay

We visited McCann's, Humphy Dan's, Michael Mann's
An' 'en went doon tae Swan's wir stomachs for tae pack
We ordered quite a feed which indeed we did need
And we swallowed it with speed yet we all felt slack

Young McIndoe wis as blue as a soo
As a plate of Irish stew he shifted out o' sight
He shouted out: "Encore!" for some more as he swore
As he never felt before such a keen appetite

He nearly took the croup suppin' soup wi' a scoop
An' he wis hardly fit tae stoop yet he didn't care a pin
He swallowed tripe an' lard by the yard, we wis scarred
And we thought it would go hard when he brought in the bill

The shopman looked dismayed as he laid
Down another feed an' said: "You're a greedy glutton, too!"
'Twas the scrapings o' the pot all he got which he brought
An' he swallowed it red hot did the bold McIndoe

The shopman brought his charge, McIndoe was so large,
That he began to barge an' his blood caught fire
Mac began tae swear, tear his hair in despair
And tae finish the affair he called the shopman a liar

The shopman he drew out, no doubt he could clout,
He knocked McIndoe about like an old football
Mac began tae howl: "By ma sowl, that's a foul,"
An' he chucked an empty bowl at the shopman's head

Struck poor Micky Flynn, knocked the skin, right off his chin,
And the ruction did begin and we all fought an' bled.
Tattered all his clothes, broke his nose, I suppose,
Nearly killed him with his blows in no time at all

The bobbies did arrive, man alive, four or five,
At us they made a dive and they marched us away.
Paid for all the meat which we eat, stood a treat,
Went home to ruminate on that spree that day

Greed, being one of the seven deadly sins, it is an ideal subject for satire as Jimmy shows by the relish with which he attacks this Liverpool-Irish piece, learned from a Scouser passing through Elgin. The form of the song helps to reinforce the sly humour of its subject matter, the internal rhyming commonly borrowed by Irish song makers of last century from Gaelic verse, being particularly effectively employed

4) THE WIND BLEW THE BONNIE LASSIE'S PLAIDIE AWA'

For there wis a bonnie lassie on' she lived in Crieff
She went into a butcher's shop when he wis sellin' beef
An' he's gi'en tae her the middle cut an' doon she did fa'
An' the win's blewn the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'

Wild Rover
No More

05

Chorus: For the win' blows east, the win' blows west
The win's blewn the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa
For the beef wis in her basket an' she couldna rise ava
An' the win's blewn the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'

For the plaidie wis lost an' couldna be f'un'
The lassie an' the butcher lad wis Iyin' on the gr'un'
O whit shall I tell tae the aul' folks ava
For I canna say the win' blew ma plaidie awa'

f'un = found

Wild Rover
No More

gr'un' = ground

ava = at all

06

For the plaidie wis lost an' couldna be f'un'
The lassie she grew ill an' swelled about the waist
An' Rab he wis blamed for the hale o' it a'
An' the win' blew the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'

hale - whole

Oot cam the aul' wife the laddie tae accuse
The ministers an' elders were there tae abuse
And the butcher lad for tryin' tae mak' ane intae twa
An' the win's blewn the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'

For the lassie wis sent for tae come there hersel'
She lookit at Rob an' says: "Ye ken hoo I fell
The beef wis the cause o't, ye daurna say 'Na'"
An' the win's blewn the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'

Rab looked at the lassie an' gied a wee smile
Says he: "Ma Bonnie lassie, I winna you beguile,
For the minister's here makin' sure o' us twa
An' that'll pey for the plaidie that the win' blew awa'"

Final chorus: For the win' blows east, the win' blows west
The win's blewn the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'
We shall get the middle cut, the tenderest o' it a'
An' we'll drink tae the plaidie that the win' blew awa'.

For the win' blows east, the win' blows west
The win's blewn the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'
We shall get the middle cut, flesh, banes an' a'
An' we'll drink to the plaidie that the win' blew awa'

banes = bones

This engaging piece of symbolism, in which the loss of virginity is pleasantly represented by a plaid blown away by the wind, stands as a testimony to Scottish tolerance in sexual matters. Despite the complete lack of equivocation Robert Ford printed the song in 1899 when taboos were much stronger. Although the piece may not itself be very old its origins seem quite distant, for the 'Plaidie awa refrain appears in a broadside of 'The Elfin Knight' dated 1673 and the tune, usually called 'The White Cockade' in Scotland is very wide spread, indicating considerable age. Incidentally, Jim Connell, who wrote the words of 'The Red Flag', intended that the Labour anthem should be sung to this tune

5 THE MERCHANT AND THE BEGGAR MAID

A merchant's son he lived in wrong
Unto the beggin' he has gone
He has mounted on a noble steed
An' away wi' pleasure he did ride

Chorus: Singing Fal de ral, fal the day

A beggar wench he chanced to meet
A beggar wench with a low degree
He took pity on her distress
An' says: "Ma lass, you've a pretty face"

They both inclined for to have a drink
Into a public house they both went
They both drank ale an' brandy too
Till both o' them got roarin' fou

fou = drunk

They both inclined now to go to bed
And under covers soon were laid
Strong ale and brandy went to their heads
Till both o' them lay as they were dead

It wis early on, the wench she rose
An' puttin' on the merchant's clothes
With a hat so wide an' a sword on too
An' she's awa' wi' his money, too

It wis early next mornin' the merchant rose
An' lookin' round for to find his clothes
There wis nothing left there in the room
Bit a ragged petticoat an' a wincey gown

The merchant being a stranger in the town
An' puttin' on the old under-gown
An' down the street he solemnly swore
He wid never lie wi' a beggar no more

Wild Rover
No More

07

The first known copy of this song is in "A Collection of Old Ballads" (London, 1723), and Logan, in his "Pedlars Pack", prints a version from later in the same century under the title "The Merchant's Son and the Beggar Wench of Hull". Singers in Aberdeenshire were still giving Hull as the location when Gavin Greig was collecting at the beginning of this century although Dean Christie records hearing a version as "The Beggar Wench of Wales".

6 NICKY TAMS

When I wis only ten 'ears aul' I left the parish squeel
Ma father fee'd me tae the mains tae chow his milk an' meal
I first pit on ma nerra breeks tae hop ma spin'le trams
Then bucklet room ma k-nappin' k-nees a pair o' nicky tams

parish squeel = parish school

fee'd = hired

mains = farm

nerra breeks = narrow trousers

hap = cover

spin'le trams = skinny legs

k-nappin' k-nees = knock knees

bailie loon = cattleman

third = third horseman

yne = then gae = go

calf-hoose = chaffhouse

First I got on for bailie loon an then I got on for third
An' yne, of course, I hid tae get the horseman's gripping word
A loaf o' breid tae be ma piece, a bottle for drinkin' drams
Bit ye conna gae throw the calf-hoose door without yer nicky tams

The fairmer I am wi' the noo, he's wealthy but he's mean
Though corn's cheap, his horse is thin, his hairness fairly deen
He gars us load wir cairts aye fu', his conscience has noe qualms
When breist-straps brak there's neething like a pair o' nicky tams

the noo = meantime

deen = worn out

gar= makes

wir = our

breist-straps = part of a harness

kitchie deem = scullery maid

I'm coortin' bonnie Annie noo, Rob Tamson's kitchie-deem
She is five-and-forty on' I am seiventeen
She clorts a muckle piece tae me wi' different kin's o' jam
An' tells me ilke nicht that she admires ma nicky tams

clorts = spreads liberally

ilke nicht = every night

I startit oot ae Sunday till the kirkie for tae gyang
Ma collar it was unco ticht ma breeks were nane ower lang
I had ma Bible in ma pooch, likewise ma book o' Psalms
Fon Annie roart: "Ye muckle gype, tak' affyer nicky tams!

till = to kirkie = church

gang = go

unco ticht: = very tight

muckle gype = big idiot

Though unco sweir, I took them aff, the lassie for tae please
But aye ma breeks they lirket up aroon aboot ma knees
A wasp gaed crawlin' up ma leg in the middle o' the Psalms
An' nivir again will I rig the kirk withoot ma nicky tams

unco sweir = very unwilling

rig the kirk = dress for church

I affen thocht I'd like tae be a bobby on the force
Bit maybe I'll get on the cars tae drive a pair o' horse
Wherever it's my lot tae be, the bobbies or the trams
I'll never forget the happy days I wore ma nicky tams

This song originates from the turn of the century when the term nicky tams came into use. The phrase derives from the fact that when the farm servants trousers were tied up with straps or cords (taums) below the knee they looked similar to the then fashionable knickerbockers. The tune, a variant of a Gaelic air common both in Scotland and Ireland, is very popular, probably because it adapts so readily to many different types of song.

The 'gripping word' (verse two) is the authoritative command of the fully-fledged horseman, obtained, allegedly, by gaining initiation in "The Horseman's Word" This society, a primitive form of union, had ceremonies with witchcraft hangovers (eg. "Shakin hands wi' the Devil" was an initiation ritual as was "gya throw the calf-hoose")

7 THE BARNYARDS O' DELGATY

As I gaed up tae Turra Market, Turra Market for tae fee
I met in wi' a wealthy fairmer by the Barnyards o' Delgaty

gaed = went

fee = hire out

Chorus: Liltin adie toorin adie, liltin adie toorin ae

He promised me the two best horse that ever gaed on iron sheen
When I gaed to the Barnyards there wis nothing there bit skin an' bane

sheen = shoes

bane = bone

The aul' grey meer lay on her hunkers, the aul' dun horse lay on her wime
An' all that I could whup an' cry, they widna rise at yokin' time.

hunkers = stomach

Meg Lang Scott aye mak's ma brose an' her an' me can never 'gree
Here's a mote an' syne a k-not an' aye the ither splash o' bree

brose = porridge

syne = then

bree = brew

Jean MacPherson mak's ma bed, ye'll see the marks upon ma shins
For she's the coarse ull-tricket jaud, she fills ma bed wi' prickly wins

ull-tricket jaud =

mischievous jade

prickly wins = gorse

Barny's milk it's nae sae fine, an' Barny's meal it is gey raw
If ye dinno bile the bree, the brose they winna sup ava

ava = at all

Soir I vrocht, aye sair I've vrocht an' I hae won ma penny fee
I'll gyang home by the gait I've cam' an' o' better bairmie I will be

vrocht=rorked

gang halengo hone

gait=way

Probably the best known of all bothy ballads it is closely related to another of the genre, 'Rhynie' and verses are often found wandering from one song to the other. The last verse in this version is also used to end 'Rhynie'. Jimmy sings the old set of the tune with its line sweeping contour, and not the harmonically more conventional but much less interesting jingle usually heard with the song nowadays

8 I'M A STRANGER IN THIS COUNTRY

I'm a stranger in this country from a far and distant lan'
I went into an ale-house for half an 'oor to span'
And as I sat a-drinking, a-musing in my glass
Who stepped in but an aul' Scottish lass

Chorus: Laddie ful-a-la doodle aye doh
Fa-la-la doodle ay

There's a glass o' good liquor, o' raspberry wine
I'm a stranger in this country an' I wish that you were mine
For I've got good lodgings and away wi' me you'll go
An' we'll push a fortune without no delay

We rolled and I toiled and I took her in my ainns
I kissed her and I blessed her for to love her happy chairms
An' a' that lee-lang nicht wi' my lassie I did stay
I didn't leave my lassie unto the break of day

It wis early next morning I ran to catch the train
I left my bonnie lassie in the station to remain
In drawin' out her handkerchief, the tear dropped fae her e'e
"O, dinna gyang an' leave me ma darger loon," cried she

When you return to your auld native lan'
Aye mind the lassie whatever you're doing in han'
And as I sat a-drinking, o-musing in my glass
I drank "good health" to my auld Scottish lass

darger loon = day labourer lad

Casual relationships, such as that depicted in this piece, must have been the rule when the old system of hiring labour prevailed. In agricultural areas like the North-East, where trade unionism had little hold, these conditions are a recent memory, which probably accounts for the large number of songs of this type. "The Darger Lad", as Greig calls it, appears in his unpublished manuscripts and, although it is always foolhardy to make this claim for a folk song, it seems to be unknown outside the Scottish North-east.

9 THE MOSS O' BURRELDALE

Hove ye ever seen a tinkler's camp upon a simmer's nicht
A nicht afore a market fin a'-thing's gyan richt
Fan a' the tramps and hawkers they come fae hill an' dale
Tee gaither in the glonmin' in the Moss o' Burreldale

gyan = going

Chorus: Fan the ale wis only tippence an' o tanner bocht a gill
A besorn or a tilly pon, a shelt we aye could sell
An' we a' forgot oor troubles awer a forty o' sma' ale
As we gaithert in the gloamin' in the Moss o' Burreldale

fan = when

bocht = bought

shelt = pony

forty = fortifier

Noo time wis nae longer heard when muckle Jock McQueen
He startit tunin' up his pipes he bocht in Aiberdeen
He blew see hard, the skin wis thin, the bag began tae swell
An' awa' flew Jock wi' the sheepskin pyoke ower the Moss o' Burreldale

pyoke = bag

Noo little Jimmie Docherty, a horseman great wis he
He jumpit on a sheltie's back, some tricks tae lat us see
Bit a gallant shoved some prickly wins aneath the sheltie's tail
An he cast a shot in a mossy pot in the Moss o' Burrelreldale

prickly wins = gorse

Around the turn of the century the North-east saw an earlier folk song revival and it is to the credit of song writers of the period that many of their pieces have been taken up by traditional singers. Often they adapted existing songs, as with this one written by G.S.Morris of Old Meldrum.

Wild Rover
No More

09

10 THE HIGHLANDMAN'S BALL

There wis Hielan' men an' weemin they got up a fancy ball
It wis held ae Sunday mornin' in the cattle market hall
Alloo me to inform you it wis a gran' affair
For the Duke o' Killiecronkie an' masel' an' I wis there

Some arrived in motor con, some in big balloons
Same o' them got nearly drunk on' whistlin' pairty tunes
There wis some o' them dressed in corduroys, aye, an' some in kilts so braw
Bit the jokers jined the mobbers that wore no kilts ava

There wis Roderickie McGilpin, young Peterie McIndoo
Big tartan-whiskert Donal' frae the hills o' Tamford, too
There wis eerie-arry Muchty, aye, an' Milly frae Mulgey
An' as soon as he cam' in the hall, he shouted "Aye, hooch-aye"

Mulgey = Milngavie in Glasgow

There wis buggy Dooly Hooly wi' his creishy nose sae blue
An' Angus Cackaleerie, aye, an' Hielan' Rory too
There wis Jeemsie Hankie-Pankie wi' a concertina hat
An' Inverary Mary wi' side-whiskers like a cat

creishy = greasy

There wis Nanny an' her granny, the tyler and his chum
An' a great big hungry bobby wi' a corporation like a drum
There wis Susie Nell an' greasy Bell an' Turnich-Turnich Peg
An' bowsy, greetin' Geordie wi' a bandy widden leg

tyler = tailor

bowsy = crooked

greetin' = crying, sour-faced

There wis Yards-o'-Hokey-Pokey wi' a bandage roon his heid
An' Ru'glen Wullie couldna come because 'at he wis deid
There wis ma bonnie, black-eyed Susan an' her married sister Jean
An' funny Peter Mary fae the Shiprow o' Aiberdeen

There wis a party frae the East an' o' party frae Montrose
An' a great big Hielan' piper wi' some heather on 'is nose
There wis Lachie Auchtemiuchty an' Lachie frae Mulgair
An' a thoosan' moir o' noblemen includin' Burke an' Hare

For the way I hooch't an' danc't that nicht wis iist oboot ma death
For I think I'd better stop it, friends, I'm nearly aot o' breath
They were a' Scotsmen, Scotsmen every one
There wis Chinamen fae Aiberdeen, aye but loads o' them by John o' Groats
O, O, it's believe me if ye can - There wis Jock McPhee wi' the
North Pole in 'is han' Scotsmen every one

This song, the bothy equivalent of a Roman orgy and Chelsea Arts event all in one, is always a high spot of Jimmy's performance, with the singer acting every one of this fantastic array of characters with their bandy wooden legs, heather-sprouting noses and drum-sized corporations. Jimmy learned the song from Davie Stewart, with whom he travelled at one time, but the finale and the choreography are entirely his own.

11 McPHERSON'S RANT

Fareweel ye dungeons dark an' strong

McPherson's time will no be long
Below than gallows tree I'll hing

Chorus: So rantinly, sae wantonly and sae dauntinly went he
He played a tune then he danced aroon below the gallows tree

There's some cam' here to see me hang't
An' some to buy my fiddle
But before 'at I do part wi' her
I'll break her through the middle

He took the fiddle into both of his hands
An' he broke it over a stone
Says he: "There's no anither han'll play on thee
When I am dead and gone"

It wis by a woman's treacherous hand
'at I wis condemned to dee
Below a ledge a windoe she stood
Then a blanket she threw ower me

The laird o' Grant, the Highland sa'nt sa'nt = saint
'at first laid hands on me
He played the cause on Peter Broon
Tee let McPherson dee

Wild Rover
No More

10

Untie these bands from off my hands
An' gae bring to me my sword
For there's no a man in all Scotland
But 'll brave him at his word

The reprieve wis comin' o'er the Brig o' Banff
For tae let McPherson free
When they put the clock a quarter before
Then hanged him to the tree

I've lived a life o' sturt an' strife sturt = violence
I die by treachery
O it breaks my heart, I must depart
An' live in slavery

Wild Rover
No More

11

Fareweel you life, you sunshine bright
And all beneath the skies
For in this place I'm ready to
McPherson's time tae die

Thomas Carlyle found this 'a wild stormful song, that dwells in ear and mind with strange tenacity' and the folk seem to have shared his opinion, if its popularity is anything to go by. Tradition has it that James McPherson, son of a Highland gentleman and a gypsy woman who attracted his attention while in his cups, was arrested for bearing arms at Keith market and although others equally guilty were pardoned he was convicted for being by repute an Egyptian and Vagabond and oppressor of His Majesty's Free Lieges, in a bangstree manner, and going up and down the country around and keeping markets in a hostile manner' Great haste was shown in carrying out the sentence and McPherson was executed on November 16th, 1700, a mere 8 days after sentence was passed. He is reputed to have composed the tune of the song and played it on the fiddle before mounting the scaffold. Similar legends are attached to hanged musicians in many ports of Europe. Robert Burns composed new words modelled on the old ballad and Jimmy uses two of these verses to end his performance

12 GRAT FOR GRUEL

There was a weaver o' the North an' o but he wis cruel
The very first nicht that he got wed he sat an' he grat for gruel
He widna wint his gruel, he widna wint his gruel, O - grat = fretted
The very first nicht that he got wed he sat an' he grut for gruel

There's nae a pot in a' the hoose that I can mak' yer gruel, O -
The washin' pot it'll dae wi' me for I maun hae ma gruel
For I maun hae ma gmel, I canna wint ma gruel, O -
The washing pat it'll dae wi' me for I maun hae ma gruel

There is nae a spoon in a' the hoose that you can sup yer gruel
O, the gairden spade it'll dae wi' me for I maun hae ma gruel, O -
For I maun hae ma gruel, I canna wint ma gruel - O
The gairden spade it'll dae wi' me for I maun hae mo gruel

She gaed ben the hoose for cakes and wine an' brocht 'em on a to'el to'el = towel
O, gyaе 'wa, gyaе 'wa wi' yer fal-deralls for I maun hae ma gruel
For I maun hae ma gruel, I canna wint ma gruel - O
Gyaе 'wa, gyaе 'wa yer fal-deralls for I maun hae ma gruel

Came all young lassies tak' my advice an' niver mairry a weaver
The very first nicht that he got wed he sat an' grat for gruel
He widna wint his gruel, he widna wint his gruel, O -
The very first nicht that he got wed he sat an' he grat far gruel

This satire on the weaver who thinks more of his porridge than of the charms of his new bride, was a favourite among the textile mill lassies, and some versions still use weaving terms. Of all industrial workers only the miners have produced a wealth of song and tradition comparable to that of the spinners and weavers, and it is still common to see a mill girl on the eve of her wedding paraded through the streets of Aberdeen in fancy dress with face blackened and L-plates hung round her neck

13 DRUMDELGIE

Come all ye jolly ploomon lads
An' hearken untae me
An' I'll sing ye Drumdelgie
Wi' muckle mirth on' glee

muckle = much

There is a toon in Cyarnie
It's kent baith for an' wide
Tae be the hash o' Drumdelgie
Upon sweet Deveronside

Wild Rover
No More

12

We rise at five in the mornin'
An' hurry doon the stair
Tae get some corn for wir horse
And likewise stracht their hair

Half-an-'oor in the stable
It's to the kitchie goes
Tae get some breakfast for wirsel's
Which generally's brose

We've hardly gotten wir brose weel supt
An gi'en wir pints o tie
When the grievie he says: "Hallo, my lads
The 'oor is drawin' nigh"

Sax o' you'll ging toe the ploo
An' two will ca' the neeps
An' the oxen they'll be efter you
As seen's they tak' their neeps

Pittin' on their harness
An' drawin' oot tae yoke
The drift an' snaw dang on sae thick
That we were like tae choke

An' than the frost it did stick in
The ploughs they wouldn't go
So we'd tae yoke the dung cairt
Among the frost and snow

I will praise my beasties
Though they be young on' sma'
They'll tak' the shine aff o' Broadlan's horse
Who gang sae full on' braw

Cyarnie = Cairnie, Aberdeenshire
kent = known

kitchie = kitchen
brose = porridge

pints = laces
grievie = farm foreman

neeps = turnips
seen's = soon as

dang on = drove on

Ye daurna swear about the toon
It is against the law
An' if ye use profanities
Then ye'll be putten awa'

O, Drumdelgie keeps a Sunday School
He says it is but richt
Tae preach unto the iggerant
send them Gospel licht

The term time is comin' on
we will get wir brass
we'll gae doon tae Huntly toon
get a partin' glass

We'll gae doon toe Huntly toon
get upon the spree
than the fun it will commence
The quinions for tae see

Sae fare ye weel Drumdelgie
For I'm gyon awa
Fare ye weel Drumdelgie
Wi' yer weetie weather an a'

Fare ye weel Drumdelgie
An' I'll bid ye's all adieu
An' I'll leave you as I got you
A dashed infemal crew

Two forms of ballad are peculiar to the bothies - those giving a list of the farm personalities, and those giving a chronological picture of a farm servant's life throughout a day or a term. For obvious reasons the latter type have greater survival value and 'Drumdelgie' is one of the best of these. This simple account of farm life is controlled and yet so vivid that it provides one of the most effective protest songs ever written. Possibly the air of 'Drumdelgie' was brought from Ireland in the early part of the 19th Century, though as it is widely known throughout Britain and is used for two Child ballads in Aberdeenshire it may well have been current before that time.

about the toon = around the farm
putten awa = sacked

wir = our
stracht = straighten

quinions = lassies

gyan = going
weetie = wet

14 WILD ROVER NO MORE

I've been a wild rover for many a year
An' I spent all my money on whisky and beer
But now I'll give over, put my money in store
An' I'll be a wild rover, no never, no more

Chorus: An' it's no, nay never, never no more
An' I'll be a wild rover no never no more

I went into an ale-house I'd oft-times frequent
And I told the Landlady my money was spent
I asked for some credit and she answered me: "Nay,
We've got O such customers like you every day"

I put my hand in my pocket drew out silver and gold
And the landlady's eyes they began for to roll
She says: "We've got wines and spirits and beers in galore
Aye, no, never, never no more, and I'll play
the wild rover no never no more

I'll go home to my parents and tell what I've done
An' I'll ask them to pardon the prodigal son
And if they accept me as they've done times before
Then I'll play the wild rover, O never, no more

A song known in England as 'The Green Bed' and common in North-east Scotland under the title 'Johnny and the Landlady', is thought to be the original of this piece. Dean Christie found the older song in Banffshire more than a century ago and printed it as 'The Brisk Young Sailor'. 'The Wild Rover' owes its popularity to its wide circulation as a broadside during the 19th Century. Musically, the Aberdeenshire versions show most similarity to those from East Anglia leading one to suspect that the song may have been carried by sea up the East coast.

Wild Rover
No More

13

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