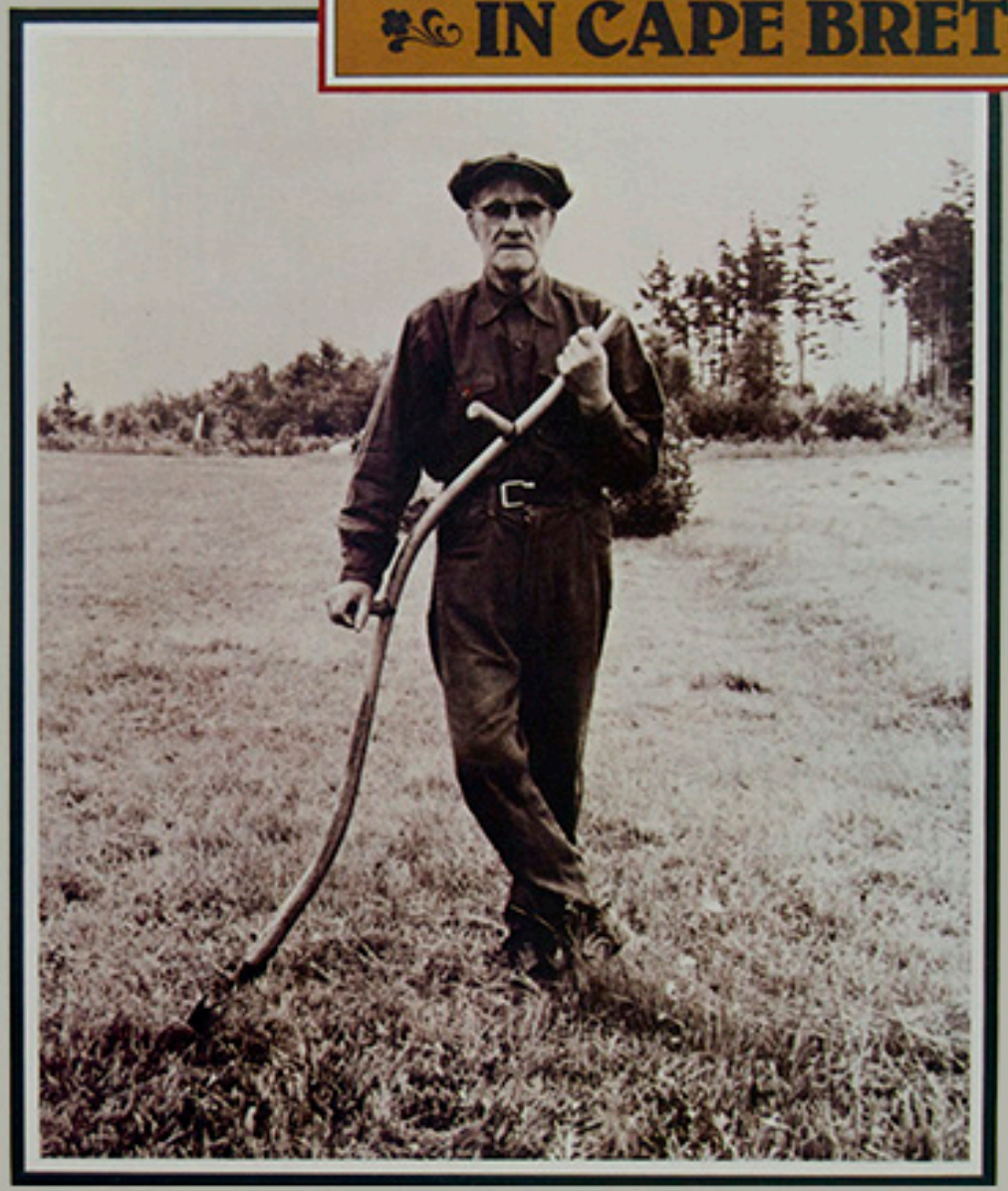
THE MUSIC OF CAPE BRETON

Volume 1

GAELIC TRADITION IN CAPE BRETON



THE MUSIC OF CAPE BRETON
VOLUME 1
GAELIC TRADITION IN CAPE BRETON

Produced by John Shaw, Rosemary Hutchison and Tony Engle.
Recorded by John Shaw and Rosemary Hutchison, August-September 1976.
Remastered by Tony Engle.
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Notes and booklet by John Shaw.
Sleeve design by Tony Russell.
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This anthology of traditional, Gaelic singing and instrumental music has been selected from recordings made in the spring and summer of 1976 in Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Until recent decades Cape Breton has existed in relative cultural isolation, and is now the only region in North America to have retained the Gaelic language, along with the wealth of songs and instrumental tunes, that arrived with the early 19th-century immigrants from the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland. Since that time a highly evolved and varied folk-culture has flourished in the Gaelic-speaking rural communities down to the present, making this small corner of the Canadian Maritimes one of the most important areas of living Gaelic tradition remaining today.

The songs recorded here (transcribed and translated in the accompanying notes) include some still remembered in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, one song taken from a Gaelic songbook and a number of songs composed on the island. Among the many areas of Cape Breton where good Gaelic singers are still to be heard, the North Shore has long been particularly admired for its fine, dynamic group singing. In these, the first recordings to be made generally available in over twenty years, the North Shore Singers give their powerful renditions of the milling songs (work-songs for waulking the tweed) that arrived with their ancestors, mostly from the Islands of Lewis and Harris. Scores of these songs have been maintained by the North Shore people, long after the economic necessity for hand-milling tweed has disappeared, in milling frolics held in community halls during the summer. The remaining songs are from the large repertoires of individual singers who have spent a lifetime acquiring the largely unwritten Gaelic songs. Malcolm Angus MacLeod and Tommy MacDonald have lived and sung on the North Shore all their lives and are both among the best known exponents of this singing style. Lauchie MacLellan of Dunvegan, Inverness Co., an area settled largely by Gaels from Morar and adjoining areas of mainland Scotland, acquired many of his songs from his immediate family, which included some accomplished singers and storytellers. Margaret MacLean of Boisdale, Cape Breton Co., likewise inherited a large part of her songs; her early years were spent in a household which was noted for its singers and located in an area where making and exchanging songs was a favourite form of entertainment.

Along with the oral transmission and fidelity to memory that are so remarkable among Gaels in Cape Breton, there has also been considerable song-making locally since the first Highland settlements were founded. Here, as in Scotland, the unlettered culture shared by all speakers of the language gave rise to songs on every conceivable subject, and Cape Breton compositions undoubtedly provide the most direct and accurate account of the Highlander's experience in this part of the New World. Whether he is commenting on the latest local election, his love for a particular lady or the condition of his neighbour's horse, the Cape Breton bard, like his Scottish counterpart, expresses himself with feeling and wit. Humour is one area where island bards, composing new songs in the old tradition, have excelled. Hector Carmichael of Munroe's Point, Victoria Co., co-author of *An t-Each Ruadh* (The Chestnut Horse), is one of the last living Gaelic song-makers on the island and has many widely appreciated comical songs to his credit.
Instrumental music has always been an important source of entertainment at Gaelic gatherings in Cape Breton, and the main force in the music of rural Cape Breton is the fiddle. The distinctive, lively renditions by Cape Breton fiddlers which continue the extensive musical tradition current in the Western Highlands at the time of emigration are very probably the only substantial survival of a native Gaelic style. This style, featuring a marked rhythmic swing supplemented by an effective use of musical ornamentation,

is fully realised in the quality of the performances by three of the island's favourite players: Alex Francis MacKay of Kingsville, Inverness Co., Mike MacDougall of Ingonish Beach, Victoria Co. and Dan Joe MacInnis of Big Pond and Sydney, Cape Breton Co. All three players, through their close personal ties with Gaelic culture, naturally bring out the *blas* (flavour) that is essential to this music.

Fiddling is still closely allied with singing through *puirt-a-beul* (mouth music) where Gaelic words are sung to the instrumental tunes; also with dancing, both through the uniquely Highland art of step-dancing (now lost in the Highlands) and as the lead instrument at the large hall-dances which are popular during the summer season. As pianos became available, country players evolved a special technique suited to fiddle music which is realised here in the tasteful and innovative accompaniments of Mary Jessie MacDonald. In addition to the large store of tunes which arrived with the Gaelic-speaking immigrants, there are also countless compositions made by generations of their descendants, named and unnamed, who continued the practice of the old-country fiddler-composers. Without doubt the greatest of these was the late Dan Rory MacDonald of Judique, Inverness Co., a wandering composer and near-legendary figure, whose tunes appear in two of the medleys on this recording. The Cape Breton instrumental style, in both new and old tunes, has been adapted to other instruments such as the harmonica, mandolin and, most recently, the guitar with much the same ease and authenticity with which Irish music has lent itself to the banjo. All varieties of traditional singing and music are a main attraction at the outdoor summer Scottish concerts and the musicians and singers recorded here, particularly the North Shore Singers, are in great demand at these gatherings. Yet in spite of frequent exposure as performers around and outside Cape Breton, the bearers of the tradition still see their art in terms of the enjoyment derived from singing and playing at home for friends and family. This older kind of rural *céilidh* with its lack of external 'professional' pressures has been a strong, positive influence enabling Cape Breton's Gaelic song and music to remain close to its origins, and to continue to express the vigour, imagination and independence that characterise Gaelic culture on both sides of the Atlantic.

TRANSCRIPTIONS - NOTES - TRANSLATIONS - BY JOHN SHAW

AMONG THE AREAS of North America settled by Scottish Gaelic-speaking Highlanders during and after the Highland Clearances, Cape Breton Island is unique in having retained the use of spoken Gaelic in many of its communities, along with a large part of the highly evolved folk-culture associated with the language. The areas of the Western Highlands from which the ancestors of present Cape Bretoners emigrated, during the first four decades of the last century, were (and in some cases remain) the home of a continuously transmitted oral tradition which is generally regarded as the oldest in Western Europe. In communities such as these where material means were limited, this vast oral literature was the main source of entertainment and inspiration for the great majority who did not have the advantages of land-ownership or formal education. At the time of the Clearances, it was this part of the population that was encouraged to settle in the forests of North America. Settlers from various localities in Scotland tended to remain together in their new home, and regional differences in dialect and customs can still be observed today between various areas of Cape Breton such as the North Shore (Lewis and Harris), Iona-Benacadie (Barra) and Inverness-Mabou (Lochaber). Despite the gradual inroads made by English-speaking culture in

Alex Francis MacKay

the island for well over a century, the tenacity of Gaelic tradition in the rural areas, even into the '70s, is in many ways an indication of the remarkable resourcefulness and deep cultural pride that Cape Breton Gaels possess. Today it is possible to hear songs, passed on over four or more generations, which describe in detail the experiences of the first settlers, and a few older people are still able to recite long folk-tales (*sgeulachdan*), including abbreviated or fragmentary versions of Fenian ballads and tales. Although these *sgeulachdan* may reach an hour and a half in length, reciters often apologise for not having the longer stories heard in their youth which lasted a number of hours, or evenings. Other material still retained includes historical tales regarding events in Scotland, genealogies, religious lore, numerous accounts of psychic phenomena (*taibhsearachd* or forerunners) and many hundreds of traditional songs.

From early pioneering days until some time around the Second World War, every imaginable aspect in the lives of rural Cape Bretoners found its expression in song. Songs served as an important source of social entertainment and levity during the long winters, as the media of an unlettered society and as a means of recording the passing of outstanding individuals. Particularly noteworthy among the songs for individuals is the Bard MacLean's widely admired elegy for Mrs Noble, a lady of his own native island of Tiree who died in Cape Breton in 1843. Work songs, many of them brought from Scotland, provided much welcome relief from the tedium incident to survival in rugged surroundings so eloquently described by the same Bard MacLean in his long poem *A' Choille Ghruamach* (The Gloomy Forest, composed c. 1821). Those work songs associated with individual tasks, such as milking songs, lullabies and spinning songs, are now no longer plentiful. Life in the back woods of Cape Breton, as in other parts of North America, encouraged interdependence; tasks were shared communally in 'frolics' which were often accompanied by communal work songs. The communal work songs which survive in significant numbers into this century are those for fulling the home-woven tweed (*òrain luadhaidh*). The Cape Breton term 'milling' (milling songs, milling frolics) derives from the days when this work was done by water-powered mills in some parts of Scotland. The description given below, translated from the Gaelic of Lauchie MacLellan, Dunvegan, Inverness County, provides a good summary of the old-fashioned method of preparing and milling the cloth.

"After the sheep had been sheared in early summer, some time around mid-July, the wool was cleaned, usually beside a small stream passing close by the house. It was then spread out to dry, and when completely dry, was taken inside the house, combed, and the burrs and spruce ends removed. Once this was done, the woman of the house would take her wool-cards and comb the wool out to make long rolls (*ròlagan*). The rolls were spun into yarn on the spinning-wheel, and it should be remembered here that two kinds of yarn went into the cloth: the warp (*an dlùth*) and the woof (*an t-uachdar*). The warp was spun out further and more uniformly than the woof, with much more twisting. This was done until it was estimated that enough warp and woof had been spun to make a piece of cloth about forty yards long by three feet wide.

When the web had been completed, toward the end of autumn, word was sent out to the neighbours in the immediate area that a milling frolic would be held on a particular night. By then, of course, everyone in the neighbourhood knew that there was to be a milling and was waiting eagerly for it. The man of the house, usually with a friend's help, would fetch two large planks, twelve feet long by ten inches wide and two inches thick. These were set side by side to make a flat surface on which the web (the unfulled cloth) could be milled. A fourteen-yard length of

Alexander Kerr far left

the web was placed on the boards after it had been soaked in warm, soapy water and fourteen people or so, both men and women, would sit along both sides and at the ends. Then the milling would begin:

O ho rò 'sna hó gù
Na hì ùrabh bho éileadh
O ho rò 'sna hó gù

Gura mise tha fo éislein …

After the milling had gone for two songs the woman of the house would come up and measure with the length ofher middle finger (*le cromadh a dòrn*) to determine whether the web had been milled enough, or whether another song was required. Usually it would take three songs, and the folded-over web was passed (sunwise) around on the milling-surface. When this was completed, it was usual to sing three 'striking songs' (*òrain bualaidh*) or 'clapping songs' (*òrain basaidh*) as some prefer to call them, and these were happy, cheerful songs."

Only a few of these clapping songs are remembered today, and the old country custom of blessing the fulled cloth (*coisrigeadh* an *aodaich*), if it was practised at all, is unknown to present-day Cape Breton singers. Yet a large number of the milling songs themselves are still recalled in all parts of the island and their survival is particularly noteworthy considering their antiquity. In a letter to the *International Folk Music Journal* dated May 1961, the renowned Gaelic folklore collectors Dr John Lorne Campbell and Margaret Fay Shaw of Canna noted that many very good versions of old waulking songs were recorded among people of Uist and Barra extraction during a collecting visit to Cape Breton in 1937. It would seem that differences that have developed during a century or more of separation are minor: refrains generally contain fewer vocables (meaningless syllables) than are found in comparable Scottish songs, and the waulking activity which is performed exclusively by women in Scotland has come to include men in Cape Breton. This last innovation may well have occurred when millings early on became the most highly appreciated form of entertainment that the winters had to offer; yet the work was regarded as serious business and care was always taken to fill the table with people who would mill the cloth correctly.

Milling songs are sung in various localities in versions which differ roughly according to dialect differences, and a detailed study would doubtless bear out the conjecture that these differences in style, airs and words originated in the various regions of the Western Highlands. The North Shore area has most actively retained its milling songs, though the last traditional milling there was held in 1941. Here too singers such as Tommy MacDonald and Malcolm Angus MacLeod are among the few who still practise the art of precenting the psalms which was once customary in scores of Presbyterian Gaelic communities in Canada.

From the time that Michael Mór MacDonald made the first Gaelic song in Cape Breton while wintering in Judique, Inverness County in 1775, song-composition by Cape Breton bards enjoyed a vigorous expansion within the bounds of the old tradition. Native bards, who were found in every community, often set their new verses to old airs. While the subject-matter of the New World songs is as varied as any to be found in Gaelic tradition, certain themes already prevalent in Celtic cultures emerged early on as clear favourites with Cape Breton bards. Compositions by Malcolm Gillis of Margaree (1856- 1929) on the popular themes of love and praise of one's birthplace contain something of the essence of the Highland way of life in Cape Breton, and are justly regarded as being among the best Gaelic songs composed during the past century.

Unrolling the web

Behind the scenes at the Glendale Fiddlers' Festival

An extensive song-literature was created concerning the production and consuming of drink, with special reference (often with underlying humour) to the numerous occasions when the forces of law and order broke up the stills (*poit-dhubh*) that produced 'heal' (moonshine). Humorous or comical songs are still great favourites, and a bard's ability to extemporise these was much admired. Songs on humorous themes have proven to be the most adaptable to changing social and economic circumstances; one outstanding 20th-century example is a song by the late Hughie MacKenzie (d. 1971), Gaelic scholar and bard from Rear Christmas Island, Cape Breton County, describing the sudden appearance of the Hindenberg dirigible over Iona (Victoria Co.) in 1936 and the fears of an imminent apocalypse that this was said to have caused among some of the observers working in the fields. Much of the humour in songs is couched in various degrees of satire (see tracks 1 and 3, for examples), which in its less mild forms was known to serve as an incitement to open violence between individuals or families. The acute observations contained in the bards' humour were put to particularly good use in their commentaries on local politics, and more than one song titled *Òran an Election* (The Election Song) provided a ready means of expression for those who did not have the advantages of *sgoil na Beurla* (English-language education).

It is fortunate for Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia that a few highly gifted Gaelic scholars from Cape Breton and the adjacent mainland began as early as the 1880s to compile collections of the living oral tradition from both sides of the Atlantic that existed in such abundance among the region's Gaelic population. The works of such devoted collectors as Rev. Alexander Maclean Sinclair, Vincent MacLellan and Monseigneur P J Nicholson (now unfortunately no longer in print) were received with enthusiasm by those able to read Gaelic, and read aloud in the evenings for the enjoyment of others. Not least among these contributors was Jonathan G MacKinnon of Whycocomagh, Inverness County, whose all Gaelic newspaper *Mac-Talla* (The Echo), published between 1892 and 1904, regularly brought the words of scores of songs, both old and recent, into hundreds of Gaelic-speaking households.

The close association between the oral and the instrumental music traditions that existed in Gaelic Scotland at the time of the migrations has continued in Cape Breton to the present day. Here, even in recent times, all Gaelic poetry is set to an air, which is often termed *caoin*. Violin and pipe tunes are frequently associated with funny or nonsensical rhymes, called *puirt-a-beul* (mouth music) and these could be sung unaccompanied if musical instruments were not available. Both pipers and fiddlers arrived with the first immigrant ships, bringing with them a great store of traditional tunes from the West Highlands whose scope can be inferred from the late 18th- and early 19th-century printed Scottish collections. A few of the original sets of pipes are said to remain on the island, and piping has continued uninterrupted in numerous Scottish settlements. It is the fiddle, however, played in a distinctively Gaelic style, that has come to represent what is characteristic of Cape Breton traditional music, and Inverness County is the stronghold of this tradition (see Topic TSDL354, CAPE BRETON SCOTTISH FIDDLE). According to the older generation of fiddle players, a large part of this fiddling style derives from pipe-music, particularly the use of musical ornaments and the drone string. The strong, rhythmical lift in the music of Cape Breton fiddlers is especially suitable for dancing. Step-dancing, which now remains in Western Scotland only as a memory from the reports of 19th-century travellers, is still commonly done to fiddle music here, and a good player's eyes will never leave the step-dancer's feet.

The fiddle has also been the preferred instrument for the region's composers of traditional music. Fiddler-composers have perpetuated the old composing tradition, and the

first collection of native tunes, Gordon MacQuarrie's *Cape Breton Collection of Scottish Melodies*, was published in 1940, containing some compositions by Dan Rory (Dan R.) MacDonald (track 4; track 10). In 1975 a collection of tunes by Dan Hugh MacEachern (*MacEachern's Collection*) appeared which is still available locally. In recent decades the output of violin tunes has far exceeded that of Gaelic songs, perhaps because music was to some extent able to survive the transition from Gaelic to English effected by educational institutions and the media.

The relative strength of the musical tradition is apparent from its history of successful adaptation as new instruments became available. The 'bare fiddle' of the earliest players was supplemented by chorded accompaniments on the pedal-organs that still occupy a special place in the living rooms of some farmhouses. These in turn were replaced by a locally evolved style of piano-chording, and the emergence of the piano as a solo instrument. By the 1920s, if not earlier, Scottish music was taken up on the mandolin (track 12), the harmonica (track 4) and more recently on the guitar through the incomparable traditional stylings of John Allan Cameron of Mabou, Inverness County. Since the late '50s, Scottish music along with some Gaelic singing has been very much in evidence at the summer Scottish concerts as well as at the immensely popular Fiddler's Festival which is held at Glendale in July on alternate years. Milling frolics, performed these days with a blanket in place of the web of cloth, are likewise a popular form of summer celebration, though those capable of leading the songs are becoming increasingly scarce. Whether or not the next decade will witness an effective continuation of Gaelic singing will depend largely on the extent to which the younger generation feels the need to regain for itself and maintain the island's Gaelic language and traditions.

1. **AN T-EACH RUADH**. Sung by Alexander Kerr with the North Shore Singers. Recorded at Indian Brook, Victoria County, September 1976.

Séist: Hi ri ù il agus ò,
Mo chridhe trom 's cha charaich e,
Cha taobh na caileagan mi,
Bho'n sheòl mi fhin 'nam mharaiche.

1. An t-each ruadh aig Roland Steele,
Gu'n do chuir na biastan tachais ann.
'Nuair a dh'ith iad dheth an fheòl,
Cha do, dh'fhàg iad móran craicinn air.

2. Eadar Nollaig 'us Bliadhn' Ùr,
A chaidh e a null gu Garrett leis.
Chual' e gu'n robh e tùrail
Airson a' bhrùid examineadh.

3. 'Nuair a ràinig e 'n Cùl
Cha d'rinn e fiù is 'aithneachdainn.
Gu'n do bhruidhinn e anns a' Bheurla,
"Can I trade this animal?"

4. "Gur e Finnigan a chuir an taobhs' mi,
'S cha'n eil mi 'n dùil do mhealladh leis
Cuir air ceithir cruidhean ùr'
'S mo rùn gu'n dean e tarrainn dhuit."

5. 'Nuair a thòisich e 'ga chruidheadh,
Bhìg e cùl a' chlaiginn aig'.
'S ann thuirt Roland ris gu diombach,
"Bhrùth thu air a' *spavin* aige."

6. 'S ann thuirt Garrett ris gu fiadhaich,
"Cha do bhiadh thu ceart bho Shamhainn e.

Alexander Kerr far left

TSDL353

‘ Cha dheanadh e ach biadh-bhiataich
‘S tha na biastan damaint’ air.”

7. “Teich dhachaidh leis gun dàil,
Mus fhaigh an lair’s an searrach iad,
‘S na faiceam thu gu siorraidh bràch,
Amach air bràigh a’ bhail’ agam.”

8. Gu’n robh càbaill aig’ de réin
‘S bha mòran orr’ de shnaimeannan,
‘S cuip aige de *wire* an fheòir
A’ sracadh cnàimh an drom’ aige.

Chorus: Hi ri ù il agus ò,
My heart is heavy, it will not stir.
The girls wil not favour me,
Since I sailed off as a seaman.

1. Roland Steele’s chestnut horse
Was caused to itch by little beasts.
By the time they had devoured the meat off him,
There was hardly any skin left on him.

2. Between Christmas and New Year’s Day,
Roland went with the horse to Garrett,
For he had heard that he was skilled
When it came to examining the animal.

3. When he reached the Rear,
He did not so much as recognise him.
Addressing Garrett in English he said,
“Can I trade this animal?”

4. “Finnigan sent me here
And I have no desire to cheat you on this trade.
Just put four new shoes on him
And I expect he’ll haul for you.”

5. When Garrett began to shoe him
The horse nipped the back of his skull
And Roland said to him indignantly,
“You have pressed on his spavin.”

6. Garrett told him heatedly,
“You’ve not fed him properly since Halloween.
He’s only good for crow-bait
And infested with the cursed beasts.”

7. “Clear off home with him this minute
Before the mare and the foal become infested,
And don’t let me see you ever again,
Within sight of my farm.”

8. Roland had cables for reins,
With plenty of knots in them
And a whip made out of baling-wire,
Lashing the horse’s backbone.

Like many local songs, this one is set to an air already current in the stock of songs brought from Scotland. The air, originally sung at a slower tempo, has been given a more energetic ‘swing’ in order to include it in the repertoire of milling songs. The authors, Hector Carmichael (aged about 90) of Monroe’s Point, Victoria County and the late Garrett MacDonald of nearby Rear Meadows (an Cùl) have both composed a large number of humorous songs that are still greatly enjoyed on the North Shore. The story has it that a neighbour of Hector’s, Roland Steele, used to pass Hector’s house with a sleigh full of schoolchildren drawn by a chestnut horse. Its appearance inspired the bards to make these verses which contain a considerable amount of humorous exaggeration. Although Garrett MacDonald

Murdo MacAskill far right

actually was active as a blacksmith, it was understood by bards and audience alike that the encounters described in the verses are fanciful. In its less mild forms, humour used as a satirical weapon (Gaelic *aoir*) by a good bard was much feared in traditional Gaelic society, and the more explicit of these songs are still sung only in chosen company.

2. Slow Air: **COILSFIELD HOUSE**. Dan Joe MacInnis, violin, accompanied by Theresa MacLean, piano. Recorded in Sydney, July 1976.

COILSFIELD HOUSE is a slow air composed by Nathaniel Gow (1766-1834), the son of Niel Gow (1727-1807), most famous of the Perthshire fiddler-composers. The title commemorates the residence of 'Sodger Hugh' Montgomery, twelfth earl of Eglintoun (1739-1819), a composer in his own right and one of the most generous supporters of Scottish traditional music of his time. The tune is in J Murdoch Henderson's *The Flowers of Scottish Melody*, which reached Cape Breton shortly after its publication in the 1930s.

3. **HINN, HEINN THOG IAD AMACH**. Sung by Mrs Rod MacLean with her daughter and son-in-law, Mr & Mrs Hugh MacIntyre, Boisdale, Cape Breton County. Recorded April 1976.

Séist: Hinn, heinn thog iad amach,
Hinn, heinn dh'fhalbh iad.
Hinn, heinn thog iad amach,
Ri spòrs, ri anabharr.

1 Cha'n eil bean 'n Canadaidh
Nach d'thug amach 'san tìm seo,
A choimhead air an t-saoghal
'S cha'n fhaodar gun inns' orra.

2. Dh'fhalbh a'bhean agamsa
'S gu'n d'thug i amach a' Mhìnn oirre,
Cha robh ach a' chairt aice
'S bu ghlagach do bhean rìgh sin.

3 'Nuair a thill i dhachaidh
Gu'm bu mhosgalach 'na h-inntinn i,
cha bhruinneadh i Gàidhlig,
"I understand some English."

4. Dh'fhalbh bean Eoghainn Dhùghaill
'S gu'n d'thug i cùl a cinn dhuinn,
Thug i oirr' a' phicnic
Far an tric leithe bhi 'dhìth orra.

5. Chunna mi bean Larry
A' dol seachad agus stìll aiste,
Ghabh i Suas an Rabbit Road
'S cha b'fhada gus na thill i.

6. Dh'fhalbh Seònaid Alastair
'S cha'n fhanadh i ri dìnneir,
Air eagal bhi fo aithlis
Is a leanabh gun a dhìnneir.

7. Dh'fhalbh bean Eòin mo bhràthar,
'S i b'àbhaist a bhi cinnteach,
Gu'n d'thug i Eskasoni oirre
Còmhla ris na h-Innsinnich.

8. 'S e Catriona Bheag
A chuir gun teagamh foipe spìsdean,
'Nuair chaidh i sios dha'n Bharrachois,
Le parasol 's le rìomhadh.

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9. Dh'fhalbh Anna Dhòmhnaill
Is cha robh beò o'n thill i,
Thug i sios am Beàrr oirre
A' ruith nan car 's nan steamers.

10. Thug i còrr is seachduin
As na Narrows ri droch-shìde,
Gu'n d'thàinig an Neptune
Gus a h-aiseag gu Còbh Bhìbhir.

11. Cha do dh'fhalbh a cas thuice
Bu bhagarrach 'cur inbh' i.
Paidhir de Phronella boots
'S cha do cheannaich i air prìob iad.

13. 'Nuair a thug i a h-ad thuice
'S gun dad innt' ach am Bìbhear,
Lan de dh'itean peucaid,
Veil is sreathan ghrìogag.

13. Bha oirre còta calico,
Cha b'ainneamh as an tìr seo,
Agus seacaid mheilbheid
Is loinnear aist' mar shìoda.

14. Cha dean mi gin tuilleadh air,
Cha'n urrainn mi 's gun tìm agam.
'S ann a ni mi 'n còrr dheth
Am deaghaidh an fheòir 'sgun tìd' agam.

Chorus: Hinn, heinn they took off,
Hinn, heinn they set out,
Hinn, heinn they took off
In search of amusement and excess.

1. There is not a wife in Canada these days,
Who has not taken off,
To see the world,
And there is nothing for it but to tell their story.

2. My own wife left
And headed out for the mines.
All she had was the cart
Which was a shaky conveyance for the wife of a 'king'.

3. When she returned home
She was confused in her mind.
She would not speak Gaelic, (saying,)
"I understand some English."

4. Hughie Dougall's wife went off
And turned the back of her head toward us
She made for the picnic
Where she thought they often required her

5. I saw Larry's wife
Going past in a hurry.
She lit out up the Rabbit Road
And it was not long before she came back.

6. Alec's daughter Janet left,
And would not stay for dinner,
For fear of being reproached,
While her child was without its dinner.

7. My brother John's wife
Who used to be so sure of herself
Set out for Eskasoni
To stay with the Indians.

Dan R MacDonald at a Summer Scottish Concert

8. Little Kate was one
Who got herself tarted up to go
When she went down to Barrachois
with her parasol and all her finery.

9. Donald's daughter Annie left
And they've never lived it down since she returned:
She headed down to North Sydney
Chasing cars and steamers.

10. She spent over a week
At the Narrows in bad weather.
Until the Neptune came
To ferry her over to Beaver Cove.

11. She would not go a step towards the Neptune
And she thought herself superior as she put them on:
A pair of Phronella boots
Which she did not buy cheaply.

12. When she took up her hat,
Made entirely of beaver,
(It was) full of peacock feathers
With a veil and strings of beads.

13. She had on a coat of calico
which was no rarity in this country,
And a velvet jacket
which gave off a sheen like silk.

14. I won't compose any more about this,
Because time does not allow me to.
But I'll add to it when there is time,
After the haying is finished.

Two bards from a neighbouring settlement at the rear of Beaver Cove, Lawrence Gillis and a friend named MacMullin, used the device of placing well-known characters in imaginary comical situations in order to poke fun at the outside world and the fashions that it was constantly imposing on their own way of life. The allusion in verse 3 is to Gaels who left for the English-speaking areas and returned home after a short time pretending to have lost their Gaelic. This form of social affectation was a favourite target for verses by local bards, and it prompted the Bard MacDearmid, North Shore, to compose a sad and witty song titled *An Té a Chaill a' Ghàidhlig* (The Woman Who Lost Her Gaelic) some time around 1880. Mrs MacLean adds that the 'king' referred to in verse 2 was a nickname given to a man in those parts according to local custom, and that his sons were called 'The Princes'.

4. March, Reel & Jig. Joe Burke, harmonica, accompanied by Marie MacLellan, piano. Recorded at the Scottish Concert at Big Pond, August 1976.

Joe Burke of New Victoria and his mother Minnie Burke are the island's two most active exponents of Scottish music on the harmonica. THE GLENCOE MARCH is a favourite composition by Dan R MacDonald, a Gaelic-speaking composer of traditional tunes whose brilliance and large output are unequalled in the history of Cape Breton. Glencoe is a small settlement not far from where Dan R was raised in Judique, Inverness County. THE SANDPOINT is from a recent imported collection.
The great majority of Dan R's compositions have never been published or systematically written down, and the following jig is said to be one of these.

Mike MacDougall

5. **MO NIGHEAN DONN AS BÒIDHCH** sung by Malcolm Angus MacLeod, Skir Dhu, Victoria County. Recorded August 1976.

Séist: Hi ri ri, a ràill o,
Ràill o, ràill o.
Hi ri ri, a ràill o,
Mo nighean donn as bòidhche.

1. Nigheanag air a bheil am falt
Ag éiridh anns an fhasan cheart,
'S mi gu lùigeadh a dhol leat
Isteach dha'n eaglais Leòdach.

2. Nigheanag air a bheil an gùn
Ag éiridh anns an fhasan ùr,
B'fheàrr leam fhìn na mìle crùn
Gu dùraigeadh tu pòg dhomh.

3. Bha mi 'nam ghobha mar cheàird,
Bha mi 'nam shaor 'n dòigh neo dhà.
'S iomadh sgrìob thug mi le sàbh
Ged tha mi an dràsd' a' seòladh.

Chorus: Hi ri ri, a ràill o,
Ràill o, ràill o.
Hi ri ri, a ràill o,
My most beautiful brown-haired girl.

1. Young girl with hair becoming you
In a fitting style,
I would long to enter with you
Into the MacLeod (i.e. Protestant) church.

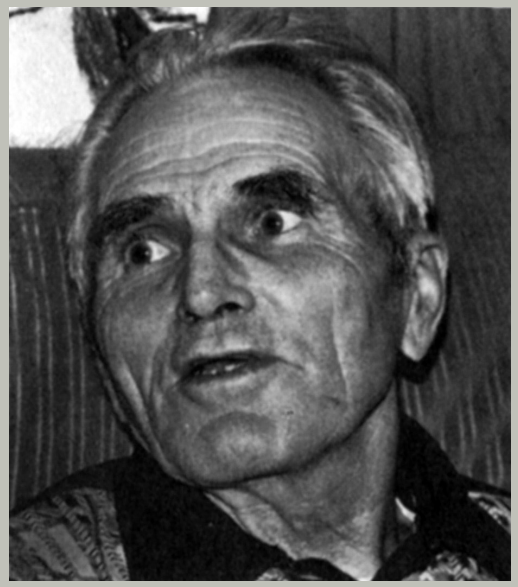
2. Young girl, your gown becomes you,
According to the latest fashion,
Better to me than a thousand crowns,
That you would wish to kiss me.

3. I have been a blacksmith by trade,
As well as a carpenter of various skills,
Many's the stroke I made with a saw,
Though I'm presently sailing.

Malcolm Angus MacLeod traces his family back to settlers from Scalpay, off the Isle of Harris. During his youth on the North Shore he acquired an extensive store of songs from these parts and frequently the most attractive variants of songs heard in the island are his. The gift of a strong singing voice and an instinctive feeling for a Gaelic song have made him a mainstay of the North Shore Singers, as well as an outstanding church precenter. Malcolm Angus, along with Tommy MacDonald and John Shaw (Seògan) of Indian Brook, has made numerous trips to the States to perform for folklorists, and was even called as far afield as Scotland in 1975. The song recorded here is a popular one along the North Shore, extending in some versions to 15 verses.

6. Strathspeys & Reels. Mike MacDougall, violin, accompanied by Mary Jessie MacDonald, piano. Recorded in Sydney, July 1976.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL (also called *Captain Campbell of Carphen*) makes its earliest appearance in Malcolm MacDonald's *Second Collection of Strathspeys and Reels* (1789). Malcolm MacDonald was a professional musician from Perthshire and a contemporary of Niel Gow. This attractive strathspey has since been included in many popular later collections, among them the Glen Collection of Scottish Dance Music, the Athole Collection and Kerr's. The MARNOCH STRATHSPEY is claimed by William



Lauchie MacLellan

Marshall of Fochabers (1748-1833) (in his *2nd Book* (1781)), a composer and man of many interests whose output of Scottish music is surpassed only by that of James Scott Skinner. Both strathspeys have been recorded elsewhere by Dan Joe MacInnis (see track 2). MRS GENERAL CAMPBELL also goes under the name *The Caledonian Hunt* (Ross Collection, 1780) and is preserved in the form of a reel in Gow's Repository, Part Third (1803). The Gaelic title of ALLT A' GHOBHAINN (The Smith's Burn) indicates the anonymous Highland origin of this tune; it may have originally been a pipe reel. The reel O, SHE'S COMICAL is obtainable in recent collections, and it is unclear whether or not this is a relatively new addition to the fiddlers' repertoire. John Campbell of Mabou, Inverness County, an active fiddle-player now living in Boston, composed his popular SANDY MacINTYRE'S TRIP TO BOSTON for a prominent Inverness County musician by that name who now lives in Ontario. SIR REGINALD MacDONALD, as it is known in the Athole Collection, has the alternative title *Mrs MacDonald of Staffa's Reel*. DAN J CAMPBELL'S REEL is John Campbell's tribute to his father, a musician greatly admired for his fiddling style who lives in Black River, near Mabou.

7. **MA PHÒSAS MI.** Sung by Lauchie MacLellan, Dunvegan, Inverness County. Recorded September 1976.

Séist: Ma phòsas mi cha ghaph mi'n té mhór (3)
Gur beag an té dh'fhòghnadh dhomhsa.

1. Cha ghabh mi 'n té fhada, cha tig i rium fhìn,
'Nuair a thig i dha'n leabaidh bidh croit air a druim,
'Nuair`shineas i 'casan bidh 'phlaide 'gam dhìth,
'S bidh mise leam fhìn 's mi reòidhte.

2. Cha ghabh mi 'n té fhriodanta, radanta, ruadh,
A chumadh an conas 's am mallachadh suas,
Cha bhiodh i fad' agam airson a cur bhuam,
B'e turus gun bhuaidh dhomh 'pòsadh.

Chorus: If I marry I'll not take the big woman for a wife (3)
Only a small one will do for me.

1. I'll not take the tall one, she won't suit me.
When she comes to bed she'll have a crook in her back.
When she stretches out her legs I'll be deprived of the blanket
And left lying there alone freezing.

2. I'll not take the fretful, headstrong redhead,
Who would keep up her quarrelling and cursing.
I would not have her with me for long before I sent her away.
Marrying her would be a hapless venture for me.

These verses, set to jig time and once widely sung throughout Inverness and Victoria Counties, are reminiscent of *puirt-a-beul* (mouth music). Mouth music was originally evolved, probably during the 18th century, for instrumental tunes and helped preserve these in Scottish communities where instruments were scarce or forbidden by the clergy. Lauchie MacLellan, whose ancestors came from Morar, Scotland, in the early 1800s, has always shown an exceptional love for and interest in Gaelic songs - as a young man after a day of work on the farm he would often walk five miles in order to learn a new song. As well as being a fine Gaelic singer, Lauchie's thorough command of Gaelic and direct humour have established him as one of the most gifted raconteurs in Cape Breton and a source of much valuable information concerning local Gaelic tradition.

Alex Francis MacKay

8. **MÀILI DHONN, BHÒIDHEACH DHONN**.
Sung by John
('Seògan') Shaw, with the North Shore Singers.
Recorded at Indian Brook, Victoria County,
September 1976.

Seisd: Màili dhonn, bhòidheach dhonn,
Màili dhonn, thill i dhachaidh
Gruagach òg a' chùil duinn,
Dh' éireadh m'inntinn air t'fhaicinn.

1. Gura mise tha gu tinn,
Cùl mo chinn air an leacann,
Bha mi (i) reimhe rotach, garbh
Air an fhairge 'gam marcachd.

2. Gura mise tha gun spéird
Ann an Dùn Eideann 'sa sasann
Bha mi 'reimhe am measg nan seòid
'Cluich-an òir air na cairtean.

3. 'Tighinn timcheall Rudha Lìod,
'S iomadh gunna caol a' lasadh.
Leig mo Mhàili 'n siud m'a cluais,
Ghabh i 'n cuan; 's ann bha 'fasan

4. 'S ann 'tighinn timcheall River Powell (Liverpool)
Bha i 'roladh 's a' slaiseadh.
Chluinnte farum a cuid chrann
Air a' chabhsair ann an Glascho.

5. Thog i 'h-acraichean ann an Éirinn,
Leig i bréid ann an Sasann;
Bhuail i 'sròn air tìr a' Lìod,
'S leig i 'cridhe (?) ann an Glascho.

6. 'S ann an t-seachdain bho'n dé
Thog mi bréid ann an Sasann;
'S ann a shamhlaich mi do cheum
Ri laogh féidh 's e aig astar.

7. Bha i siùbhlach gun mheathadh
Eadar cruinn agus ragan;
Darach nach teirig a chaoidh
Eadar druim agus plangan.

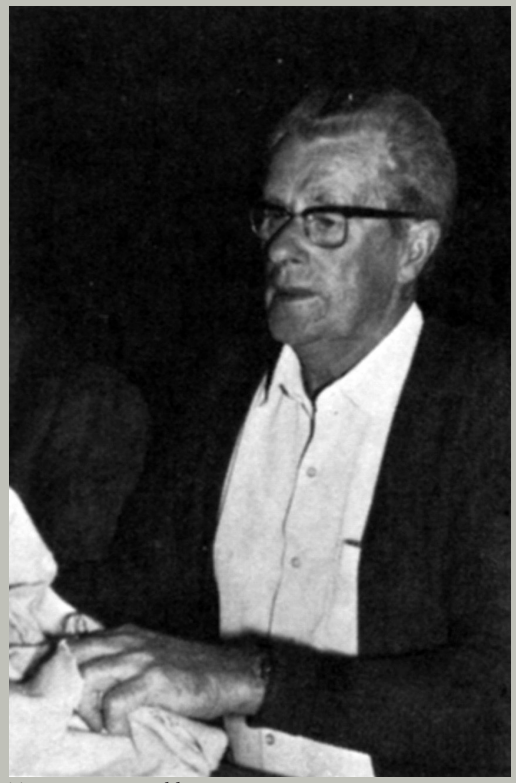
8. 'Nuair a theid mi chun na féill'
'S e do bhréid a thig dhachaidh;
Tops'l ùr 'ga dheanamh dlùth,
Ged chosgadh e crùn an t-slat dhomh.

Chorus: Brown-haired Màili , pretty Màili
Brown-haired Màili has returned home.
Young maiden with the brown hair,
My spirits would rise to see you.

1. I'm heartsick,
The back of my head resting on the slope of the mountain,
It used to be rough and choppy
On the ocean, riding (the waves).

2. I'm without energy,
In Edinburgh and England.
I used to be among the heroes,
Wagering gold on cards.

3. Coming round the point of Leith,
Many's the long, slender gun that was blazing.
My Màili came about and headed out to sea,
As was her custom.



Tommy MacDonald

TSDL353

4. Approaching Liverpool,
She was rolling and lashing.
The racket from her masts
Could be heard on the pavements of Glasgow.

5 She weighed anchor in Ireland,
She lowered her sail in England;
Her bow reached land in Leith
And she let off her heart (?) in Glasgow.

6. A week ago yesterday
I raised sail in England.
I likened your pace
To a young deer bounding ahead.

7. She was speedy and unfailing,
Both in her masts and her ribs;
Oak that never decays
In her keel and planks.

8. When I go to the fair
Your kertch will return home with me;
A new tops'l tightly made,
Though it cost a crown per yard.

The Màili Dhonn praised here is a ship which is portrayed as an attractive young woman. Gael. *bréid* means both the headdress ('kertch') worn by women in the Gaidhealtachd and the sails of a ship. Although this powerful song has been recorded elsewhere in Cape Breton, it is not well known in Scotland. John Shaw ('Seògan') was raised near Mount Smokey on the North Shore and lived for a time with Malcolm Angus MacLeod at Sgir Dhu.

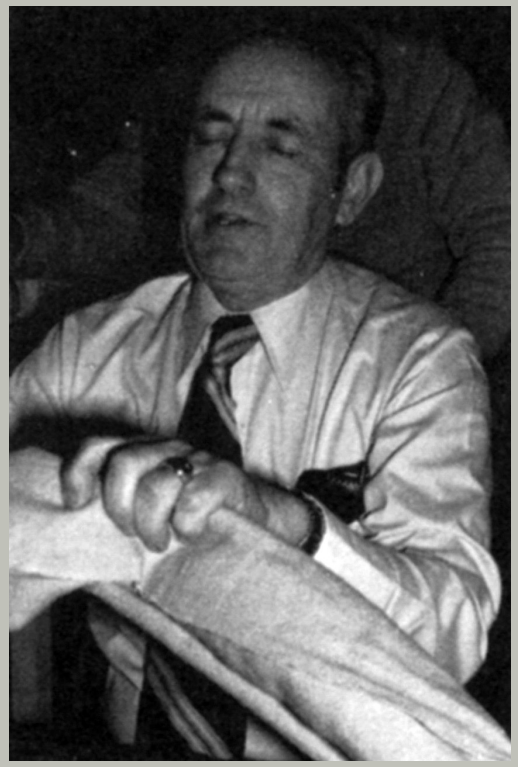
9. **THA MO GHAOL AIR ÀIRD A' CHUAN** (Jamie's on the Stormy Sea). Sung by Tommy MacDonald, North Shore. Recorded September 1976.

1. Feasgar ciùin an tùs s' Chéitein
'Nuair a bha an ialtag anns na speuran,
Chualaim ribhinn òg 's i deurach
'Seinn fo sgàil nan geugan uaine
'S bha a' ghrian 'sa chuan 'ga sìoladh,
's reult cha do dh'éirich anns an iarmailt,
'Nuair a sheinn an òigh gu cianail,
"Tha mo ghaol air àird a' chuain."

2. Thòisich dealt na h-oidhche ri tùirling,
'S lùb am braon gu ciùin na flùrain.
Shéid a' ghaoth 'na h-oiteig chùbhraidh
Beatha is ùrachd do gach cluan.
Ghleus an nigheanag fonn an òrain
Séimh is ciùin mar dhrùchd an Og-mhios,
'S bha an t-séisd seo 'g éirigh 'n còmhnaidh -
"Tha mo ghaol air àird a' chuain."

3. Chiar an latha 's dheàrrs na reultan
Sheòl an ré measg neul nan speuran
Shuidh an òigh, bha 'bròn 'ga léireadh
'S cha robh déidh air tàmh neo suain.
Theann mi fais air reult nan òg-bhean
'Sheinn mu 'gaol air chuan 'bha seòladh
O bu bhinn an caoidhrean brònach -
"Tha mo ghaol air àird a' chuain."

4. Rinn an ceòl le deòin mo thàladh,
Dlùth do ribhinn donn nam blàth-shul,
'S i ag ùrnaigh ris an Àrd-Righ,
"Dìon mo ghràdh 'th'air àird a' chuain."
Bha a cridh' le gaol 'ga sgàineadh



Neil MacLean

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'Nuair a ghlac mi féin air làimh i,
"Siab do dheòir, do ghaol tha sàbhailt,
Thill mi slàn bhàrr aird a' chuain."

The striking air of this song, considered by some authorities to have originally been a Scots pipe tune, may be the reason for its curious history. The air was first set to English words in the United States by Bernard Covert shortly before 1850. His literary creation soon became popular among the whalemen, recrossed the Atlantic and was later rendered into Gaelic by Henry Whyte ('Fionn') of Glasgow. The Gaelic version came to Cape Breton in the St Columba Collection of Gaelic Songs, from which Tommy MacDonald has taken it. The English version here is from the journal of the whaling-ship *Euphrasia* (1849). The eight-line stanzas are often found in Gaelic narrative songs.

1. Ere the twilight bat was flitting
In the sunset at her knitting
Long a lonely maid was sitting
Underneath her threshold tree
And the daylight died before us
And the vesper air shone o'er us
Fitful rose her tender chorus
"Jamie's on the stormy sea."

2. Warmly shone the sunset glowing
Sweetly breathed the young flowers blowing
Earth with beauty overflowing
Seemed the home of love to be.
As with these angel tones ascending
With the scene and seasons blending
Ever had the same low ending
"Jamie's on the stormy sea."

3. Curfew bells remotely ringing
Mingled with that sweet voice singing
And the last red ray seemed clinging
Lingeringly to tower and tree.
Nearer as I came and nearer
Finer rose the notes and clearer
Oh 'twas heaven itself to hear her
"Jamie's on the stormy sea."

4. How could I but list and linger
To the song and near the singer
Sweetly wooing heaven to bring her
Jamie from the stormy sea.
And while yet her lips did name me
Forth I sprang, my heart o'ercame me
Grieve no more for I am Jamie
Home returned to love and thee.*

*Huntington, Gale; *Songs the Whalemen Sang* (Barre MA, 1964) 253.

10. Strathspeys & Reels. Alex Francis MacKay, violin, accompanied by Fr John Angus Rankin, piano. Recorded at Glendale, Inverness County, August 1976.

The opening Strathspey, SIR THOMAS SINCLAIR RAY, was written for the conductor of the Strathspey & Reel Society of Scotland by Alex MacKay's cousin Dan R MacDonald. THE HIGHLANDERS' FAREWELL is an old traditional strathspey, consisting here of ten parts, allowing for repetitions. A complete version of this is in Alexander 'King' MacGlashan's collection published in Edinburgh in 1781. It occurs in modified form among Virginia fiddlers, and its various parts are closely parallelled in the Irish Reel called *Farewell to Ireland* (O'Neill's *Dance Music of Ireland* no. 805). The Gaelic *port-a-beul* words to the tune are from

Joe Neil MacNeil of Middle Cape, Cape Breton Co.

A Mhòrag, a bheil thu ann?
Fir a' faire a bheil thu ann.
A h-uile h-aon a thig dha'n bhaile
Ag iarraidh orr 'o làimh.

Morag, are you there?
Men are watching to see if you are there.
Every one who comes to town
Is asking for your hand.

MISS LYLE'S STRATHSPEY and MISS LYLE'S REEL are also Scottish in origin and have achieved wide currency in Cape Breton; the latter tune is popular in Ireland as Paddy Ryan's Dream (O'Neill's *Dance Music of Ireland* no. 461). SANDY IS MY DARLING dates at least as far back as Gow's Repository, Part Second (1802). BONNIE ANNIE is among the more celebrated works of the Perthshire fiddler and composer Daniel Dow (1732-83) and appears in his first collection of reels and strathspeys published in Edinburgh in 1775.

11. **O A HÙ A, NIGHEAN DUBH, NIGHEAN DONN**. Sung by Neil MacLean with the North Shore Singers. Recorded at Indian Brook, Victoria County, September 1976.

Séist: O a hù a, nighean dubh, nighean donn,
Hi ri ri ù, nighean donn, bhòidheach,
0 a hù a, nighean dubh, nighean donn.

1. Tusa 'bruidhinn ris a' ghruagach
'S mis' air bhàrr nan stuadh a' seòladh.

2. Tusa 'bruidhinn ris an nighinn
A thug gaol a cridhe dhomhsa.

3. 'S tusa 'bhuidhinn ri mo leannan
'S mi ri teannachadh nan ròpan.

4. A nighean donn a' bhroillich shoilleir
Shiùbhlainn coille leat is còmhnard.

5. A nighean donn a' bhroillich ghlé-ghil,
As do dhéidh tha mise brònach.

6. Dheanainn coinneamh riut 'san t-anmoch,
Ged bhiodh càch a' seanachas oirnne.

7. Dheanainn coinneamh riut 'san fhoghar,
'N am na sobhail a bhi 'gam bòrdadh.

8. Dheanainn coinneamh riut 'san t-samhradh,
'N am na gamhna a bhi 'gan cròthadh.

9. Anns a' mhaduinn shéid an dùdach
A bha 'gar dùsgadh 'an taigh Seònaid.

10. 'S buidhe dha'n fhear aig mo leannan,
A tha na mara (nnan) ri seòladh.

Chorus: O a hù a, black-haired girl, brown-haired girl,
Hi ri ri ù, pretty brown-haired girl,
O a hù a, black-haired girl, brown-haired girl.

1. You are talking to the maiden
While I'm sailing on the crests of the waves.

2. You are talking to the girl
Who gave me her heart's love.

3. You are talking to my darling
While I secure the ropes.

4. Brown-haired girl of the clear(-skinned) bosom,
With you I would traverse forest and field.

5. Brown-haired girl of the exceedingly white bosom,
I pine for you sorrowfully.

6. I would tryst with you in the late hours,
Though people might gossip about us.

7. I would tryst with you in the autumn,
At the time for boarding the barns.

8. I would meet with you in the summer
At the time for fencing in the yearling calves.

9. In the morning the horn sounded
which awakened us in Jessie's house.

10. Fortunate is the man my darling possesses,
Whose work it is to sail the seas.

12. Jig & Hornpipe. Alex MacNeil, mandolin, accompanied by Charlie Dobbin, mandolin, and Kevin McCormick, piano. Recorded in Sydney, July 1976.

In the 1920s two of Alex MacNeil's close relatives were active musicians in Benacadie Pond (Gael. *Pòn na Maiseadh*), Cape Breton County, a Gaelic-speaking area that was settled chiefly by families from the Isle of Barra in the Outer Hebrides. Their repertoire for mandolin and fiddle, which was passed on to Alex, consisted of a surprising number of Irish tunes, among them PADDY'S RESOURCE (in O'Neill's *Music of Ireland*, no. 997). The ever-popular hornpipe THE FLOWERS OF EDINBURGH was fashionable in the Lowlands by 1740 and has since gained currency as a Scottish country dance tune.

13. **NA H-ÌGHNEAGAN DONNA, BÒIDHEACH'**.
Sung by Lauchie MacLellan, Dunvegan, Inverness County. Recorded September 1976.

1. Bha na h-ìghneagan donna, bòidheach'
A' buain an eòrna an dé mar rium
Air cnocan an eadraidh
Bho'n a leigear na h-aighean.

2. Air cnocan an eadraidh, etc.
Gura trom laigh an aois orm
Bho nach fhaod mi bhi mar rith.

3. Gura minig a bha mi
'S tu air àirigh 'm Bràigh Raithneach.

4. Ann am bothan na buaileadh,
Taobh tuath Ghleann a' Gharadh.

5. Ann am bothan an t-sùgraidh,
'S e bu dhùnadh dha 'm barrach.

6. Bhiodh na féidh anns a' bhùiridh
'Gar dùsgadh le'n langan.

7. Coileach-dubh air bhàrr gheugan
Greis mu'n éireadh grian gheal ann.

8. Cha b'e an aois a chum bhuam thu,
'Fhlòraidh Ruaidh nan sùil meala.

9. Ach fear eil' a rinn suas riut
A chum bhuam thu a dh'aindeoin.

10. 'S truagh nach robh mi 's tu 'seòladh
Air long mhór nan trì chrannaibh.

11. Dheanainn sgiobair air bòrd dhuit
An am a còrcach a tharraing

12. Bhiodh srann aig ruip chaola
'Cumail a h-aodach ri gaillinn.

13. A' cur cuairt air an t-saoghal
Bheir a' ghaoth sinn gu cala.

14. Bha na h-ighneagan donna, bòidheach'
A' buain an eòrna an dé mar rium.

1. Yesterday the pretty, brown-haired young girls
were harvesting barley with me
On the milking-mound
Where the heifers are let loose to roam.

2. On the milking mound, etc.
Old age has weighed heavily on me,
Since I cannot be with her.

3. Often you and I
Were in the Brae Rannoch sheiling.

4. In the little hut of the cattle-fold
On the north side of Glen Garry.

5. In the little hut for love-making
Whose door was of brush.

6. The stags in their rutting-season
Used to awaken us with their belling.

7. And the black-cocks were perched on the branches
A while before the bright sunrise.

8. It was not old age that kept you from me,
Red-haired Flora of the honey-sweet eyes.

9. But another man who courted you
And kept you from me despite my wishes.

10. It's a pity we were not sailing
On a great three-masted ship.

11. I would be a skipper on board for you,
When it was time to haul her hempen ropes.

12. The thin ropes would hum,
Holding her sails to a gale.

13. Making a circuit of the world,
he wind will bring us to harbour.

14. Yesterday the pretty, brown-haired young girls
Were harvesting barley with me.

Variants of this love song have been recorded in various parts of the Highlands, particularly verses 3-7, which are formulaic and are sung as part of a waulking song in the island of South Uist, Outer Hebrides (information supplied by Rev William Matheson of Edinburgh University and Dr John Lorne Campbell of Canna). A large portion of the song was recorded from Captain Donald J MacKinnon of Barra by the BBC in 1955, making it fairly certain that few if any of the verses were composed in Cape Breton. The air, which

appears under the name *Bothan Airidh 'm Bràighe Raineach* in the
Skye Collection (taken from Captain Simon Fraser's collection of 1816), is also associated in Lauchie's repertoire with another song, *Cruachan a' Cheathaich* (Cruachan of the Mist), whose words date from the late 16th or early 17th century.

14. **MA BHUANNAICH THU NIGHEAN GHRINN**.
Sung by Murdo MacAskill with the North Shore Singers. Recorded at Indian Brook, Victoria County, September 1976.

Seist; Ma bhuannaich thu nighean ghrinn,
'Ille, na biodh gruaim ort,
Ma bhuannaich thu nighean ghrinn.

1. Latha dhomh 's mi'n Steòrnabhagh,
'S bu deònach mi air gluasad.

2. Chuir sinn rith' an t-aodach
'S 'dol troimh na caoil bu luath i.

3. Chuir sinn rith' na jibichean
'S gu'n do leag sinn air a' chuan i.

4. Chuir sinn rith' am fores'l
'S gur bòidheach rinn i gluasad.

5. Chuir sinn rith' am mains'l
'S gu'm beatadh i gu fuaradh.

6. Chuir sinn rith' an t-aodach
'S 'dol troimh na caoil bu luath i.

7. Dh'éireadh i air bhàrr nan tonn
Is phronnadh i muir uaine.

8. Dh'fhag iad dìreach, socair i
'S gu'n d'rinn iad laidir, luath i.

9. Bheir mi làir is searrach dhuit
'S an taobh as fheàrr dhe'n bhuaile.

10. Bheir mi mart is laogh dhuit
'S gu'n toir sinn caora 's uan dhuit.

11. Thog iad feadh a' bhail' orm
Gur leannan dha'n té ruadh mi.

12. Ach ma ni iad fìrinn dhe
Gu'n cum i cìr 'na cuailein.

Chorus: If you have won a fine maid,
Do not be sad, my boy,
If you have won a fine maid.

1. One day I was in Stornoway
And I was eager to get moving.

2. We raised her canvas
And she was swift going through the straits

3. We raised her jib-sails
And set her on the ocean.

4. We raised her fores'l
And she moved ahead nicely.

5. We raised her mains'l
So that she would tack to the windward.

6. We raised her canvas
And she was swift going through the straits

7. She rose up on the crests of the waves,
Smashing the green sea.

8. They left her straight and steady
And fashioned her strong and swift.

9. I'll give you a mare and a foal
And the best part of the cattle-fold.

10. I'll give you a milking-cow and a calf
And we'll give you a sheep and a lamb besides

11. They spread it around town
That I was the redhead's lover.

12. If they prove it to be true,
She'll keep a comb in her curls.

SOURCES

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